

Together We Make a Difference

The Bird Rescue Flyer

Volume XXVI, Nos. 3 and 4

Winter 2009

Please remember the birds in your year-end donations with the most generous gift you can make to the birds and The Bird Rescue Center.

Hospital hours for injured or orphaned wild native birds are 365 days a year.

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Call the Center at 523-BIRD with any questions.

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Membership Expiration

Please check your membership expiration date on your mailing label and send in your renewal if your membership has expired or is close to expiring.



President's Message

It is hard to believe that another year is almost at an end. Yet we have just celebrated Thanksgiving, and the Holiday Season is just around the corner. This issue is dedicated primarily to our Rehab effort and Education Program for 2009. We have just finished our year-end review of the 2009 Baby Bird Season and have already started implementing improvements, both in our techniques as well as our hospital, in preparation for 2010. Each year we examine what worked and what we can improve. Because of this, and the dedication of the core staff which implements the changes, I can confidently say that our successful treatment and release rate continues to improve.

Although the raptor rescues and releases often provide the more dramatic stories, it is important to remember that the vast majority of birds which come to us for care are songbirds. The many volunteers who join us to feed babies and the individuals who provide release sites for birds in soft-release cages help to ensure that the many orphaned birds are fed, cared for and released. The soft-release program has truly become the cornerstone of our release effort for baby birds. This system essentially provides a "half-way house" for youngsters learning to find their way in the real world outside of the Bird Rescue hospital. Personally I thoroughly enjoy the antics and interactions of graduates from the soft-release program as they begin to learn the ropes of survival in my garden.

Our Education Program and its program Coordinator continue to amaze me. Mary Ellen Rayner works with Mela Brassett, our Raptor Program Coordinator, to schedule resident raptors and their handlers for many events ranging from school groups to seniors to Farmers' Markets, the Tolay Lake Fall Festival and many other events. Along with these we were honored this year when the California Academy of Sciences invited us to participate in their one-year anniversary celebration of their new building. This was a special treat for all involved.

I want to extend a heart felt Thank You to the Area Coordinators, Rehab Supervisors and all of the many dedicated volunteers who put in countless hours of effort in every area of the Center. Your hard work, dedication and perseverance enable Bird Rescue to thrive and to continue to improve. Most importantly, literally thousands of birds owe their lives to your efforts!

Many thanks to all of you for your monetary support and to the many, many concerned individuals in the County and beyond who take the time to rescue and bring to the Center birds in need. You are all a vital component of our success.

Happy Holidays and Best Wishes for 2010! Do not forget that our gift shop has great stocking stuffer finger-puppets as well as T-shirts, hats, tote bags and our special Christmas Edition mug!

– Your Board President, Alida Morzenti

*Happy Holidays And A Very Happy New Year
To All Of You!!*

Released and Reunited

One of the most satisfying jobs I have at the Bird Rescue Center is being involved with releasing rehabilitated raptors back into the wild. In April I released a red-shouldered hawk. This was a release I will never forget. The hawk had a wing injury, mostly likely received by crashing into a fence while chasing its prey. The bird had been found on the ground in a horse paddock at a boarding stables ranch in northeast Sebastopol. The woman who owned the ranch had rescued the bird and brought it to the Center. After allowing a couple of weeks for the injury to heal, followed by a week of daily creancing (flying the bird in an open field while it is tethered to a light flexible line) to build the bird's flight strength, this hawk was ready for release.

I drove to the ranch and met with the owner. She explained to me that she believed the hawk's mate was nested in a nearby redwood tree and had been calling out for the missing mate on a daily basis. I must admit I had my doubt as to whether that was actually the case. Red-shouldered hawks are pretty



Red-shouldered hawk being exercised on Creance.

vocal birds, and I thought she might have been hearing almost any hawk out hunting in the area. She then took me to the paddock where she had originally found the bird on the ground. I placed the transport box containing the hawk in the middle of the field and we both moved away to observe. Within a few minutes the hawk

blasted out of the box and flew to a nearby tree. After seemingly getting its bearings, it flew to the lower branches of a large redwood tree nearby. It then began a 15–20 minute process of flitting from branch to branch, eventually ascending to the top of the tree. During this entire time the hawk never made a sound. It remained silently in the top of the tree for several minutes. Then came a series of long, almost mournful cries from our newly freed friend. It was a sound I had never before heard. A few moments later we heard a responding call of a red-shouldered hawk from a tree about 200 yards away. It was from the vicinity where the horse ranch owner had pointed out she believed the nest was located. All of a sudden a red-shouldered hawk emerged from the nest tree and began flying towards the tree containing the released hawk. It circled above the tree for a bit then flew right to the branch where our hawk was located. Both birds remained there for several minutes. They then came out of the tree together, flying side by side, and flew off north towards the Laguna de Santa Rosa. It was an amazing sight, and a truly a magnificent experience.

–Brad Marsh, Rehab Team

One Pooped Owl

I am constantly amazed at what our volunteers are willing to undertake but this story truly tops the list and pushes the bounds of "above and beyond the call of duty." Thank goodness for such dedicated bird lovers! – Alida

As a volunteer for both the admissions desk and the field rescue team, I am continually amazed at the different situations in which a bird can get itself entangled. On Sunday of Labor
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Bird Day at Schlumberger

Wow – talk about an OUTSTANDING event! I hope you were there because, if not, you missed the event of the season. This past Saturday we hosted **Bird Day at Schlumberger** – a fundraiser for the Bird Rescue Center of Sonoma County. With the super-human assistance of about 15 volunteers we were able to pull off something that was both educational and entertaining.

The action started at 9:00 AM when three local bird experts armed with binoculars, a vineyard map and coffee and breakfast treats (supplied by Downtown Bakery in Healdsburg) began leading walks around our spectacular bird-filled estate. Meanwhile, Wild Birds Unlimited of Santa Rosa had scopes set up to check out and chat about the multitude of birds on our feeders. As the birders returned they were quite pleased to find plates full of pizzas and bruschetta topped with goodies from the organic garden made by Winemaker (and chef) Mike Brunson. And, of course, there were some killer wines poured for all (and an old-school lemonade stand run by Mike's kids, Taylor and Zack).

The highlight of the day was a presentation by The Bird Rescue Center. Four volunteer handlers busted out some incredible raptors for a fun and informative show & tell. These folks know their birds and were



Mela Brassett and great horned owl

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Production Manager
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Circulation Managers

Mary Ellen Rayner, Alida Morzenti,
Barbara Jean Veronda

Articles, pictures and information for
The Bird Rescue Flyer are to be e-mailed to
Pamela Kennemore at kcorners1@comcast.net
or mailed to:

The Bird Rescue Center,
P.O. Box 475, Santa Rosa, CA 95402
Attn: Pamela Kennemore

Special thanks from BRC to...

Dr. David Rupiper and Dr. Ray Visco,
for their donations of supplies, as well as their time
and their continuing veterinary care of our resident
and rehab birds.

Windsor Raley's Market

Thomas Kitchen, produce manager and John
Moore, store director for their continuing supply of
fruits and vegetables each week.

The Teddy Foundation

for continuing significant donor support
of the BRC's programs.

AM Printing In Rohnert Park

to John and Mindy for their help with photos in
our newsletter.

Whole Foods Markets

for making us a recipient of their "Nickels for
Nonprofits" campaign.

Colleen Caubin

for donating her time and artwork.

delighted to share their knowledge with the enthralled crowd.
Who knew that the Western Screech Owl doesn't actually
screech? Or that a barn owl can actually hear the heartbeat
of a mouse from a distance? Or that a turkey vulture is really
an incredibly beautiful bird when you get to see one up close,
eye to eye?

Some vital statistics for the day:

Total attendance: 147 (including a great turnout of kids!)

Total bird walks: 11

Total bird species identified: 25

Number of pizzas consumed: 48

*Raptors displayed by Bird Rescue Center handlers: 7
(kestrel, merlin, red-tailed hawk, turkey vulture, western
screech owl, great horned owl, barn owl)*

Percentage of happy and enlightened guests: 100

Total funds donated to the Bird Rescue Center: \$605

*--From Benchland Blog by Tony Wasowicz, Vineyard
Biologist Michel-Schlumberger Winery, Healdsburg*

Mission Accomplished

On July 13, 2008, Chief of Police Mark Cortor and I rescued
a great horned owl caught in the barbed wire fence beyond the
shooting range at the Two Rock Coast Guard Training Station.
(See the article about this rescue reported in our Fall 2008
newsletter).

As a result of the efforts of Dr. Rupiper, the veterinarian
who so wonderfully offers his expertise in these situations, and
the tremendous team of staff and volunteers at The Bird Rescue
Center, this owl successfully underwent two major surgeries to
repair tendons in its left wing. Subsequently, it received the highest
quality of care in our raptor hospital for more than one year while
we waited for it to molt and grow new essential flight feathers

damaged in the original struggle with that barbed wire.

Recently with growth of these critical feathers, we tested
the flight capabilities of this owl in order to access its ability to
survive in the wild. We were thrilled to see how powerfully and
successfully it could fly during our physical therapy sessions
on a nearby soccer/football field.

Hoping that we could connect to release this owl back
to the wild in the same location, I called the number that
Chief Cortor originally gave me, only to discover that he was
no longer stationed at the Two Rock Coast Guard Station.
Since he was so interested in that bird from the beginning, I
sent an email to the address he originally provided asking if
he was nearby to observe its release.

While we are not encouraged to give our rescue birds
names, this great horned owl earned a title of "Gunner" since
it was rescued on a shooting range. During the time this bird
was recovering with us, the staff and volunteers affectionately
referred to it by Gunner rather than by its admission number.
Imagine my delight and surprise when I received a call back
from Mark letting me know that he was now stationed in
Florida and that his new title was Gunner Mark Cortor! Some
events come full circle. Mark was delighted to hear that the
bird was OK and offered any assistance he could provide to
help arrange the release at the Petaluma training station.

On September 14 with permission from the Coast
Guard, Brad Marsh and I placed the release box in a beautiful
open field just west of the water tank above the Coast Guard
property. The territory was wide open with eucalyptus and pine
trees providing perimeters. This seemed a perfect spot for a
great horned owl. These owls do hunt at dusk and in the early
dawn, so we thought 6:45 pm was a perfect time to construct
a release and capture the perfect photo of its flight back to
the wild. We opened the carrier at 6:45 expecting Gunner to
blast right out of the box. Instead, we waited observing the
owl while it peered over the top assessing the territory until
we could no longer even see the box. At 8:00 pm, Brad called
our director, Alida, for advice. "Wait until totally dark and then
check the box. They are so silent they can fool you." At 8:30
pm, Brad trekked carefully through the dark to check the box
with both of us agreeing that we would have had to hear it
leave the carrier. Guess what? Gunner was free again and
apparently decided there would be no more photos!

--Mary Ellen Rayner, Field Rescue Team



Gunner peeking over box

The 2008-2009 Baby Bird Season Comes To An End...As We Are Preparing For 2010.

We don't want to bore you with a lot of numbers but there are SO many numbers regarding both the birds and our wonderful volunteers that are very impressive and worth noting.

Bird Numbers: We received 2932 birds as of December 8, 2009 so it appears that we will, once again, have helped over 3,000 by the end of this year. This represented 90 distinct native species that live in or pass through Sonoma County.

Volunteers: Seventy-four adults attended spring orientations. Forty-one of those signed up for training, and thirty-six new volunteers were able to schedule regular commitments to weekly shifts to support the birds. Seventeen experienced adult volunteers returned to renew their commitment to the Rehab team for another season.

Fourteen new junior volunteers (12 to 17 years of age) and five experienced junior volunteers worked in the Rehab Hospital this year.



Transport Team: We have a number of reliable volunteers who transport water birds from BRC to the specialized care facilities at the International Bird Rescue and Research Center (IBRRC). This season, a new volunteer, Ken Welke, and a long time volunteer, Elaine Woodruff, did the majority of those trips to Cordelia. To really appreciate the dimensions of their contribution realize that the total mileage Ken and Elaine logged on these 120 mile rescue trips, often made on very short notice, exceeded 3,000 miles—a journey between San Francisco and New York City!

Refinement of Care: It is a joy for staff and supervisors to work with these volunteers, watching and learning side by side. Each of them grew in their abilities and knowledge. There is great pleasure for all when a baby bird comes in orphaned or injured and through all of our coordinated efforts, we can nurse it back to health and then ultimately to maturity and release. Our core team worked many hours creating written documentation of our training program, incorporating current husbandry protocols and procedures. We called this manual "The Syllabus", and it formed the basis for initial training and for maintaining consistency of care throughout the season. In the midst of the season, when more than 50 distressed birds of all ages and species would arrive in a given day, having this documentation was invaluable in assuring each individual bird received quality care. The time



invested in codifying best practices was well worth the final result. After initial or refresher training each volunteer received their sown copy and used it as a guide for consistency and proper protocol. As part of this improved documentation we updated our bird diets and diet preparation instructions to make the process of providing species and age appropriate diets less labor intensive and more practical. The changes also focused more directly on the specific dietary needs of each species.

We worked on updating transitional habitats for the birds so that we had more appropriate and quiet space to rehab the many species that must be sheltered for extended periods to recover from injuries or to fledge to maturity. This summer for the first time young fledges were housed in isolated habitat away from the bustle of hospital and nursery activity.

Continuing Improvement and Preparation for 2010: After a short break in late September the core staff team of Rehab began a review of the medical records of each bird received during this year's baby bird season. Twenty of the volunteers who contributed large blocks of their time to the season's effort were interviewed about their personal impressions of the season and of the opportunities presented to them. The results of the medical data review, the impressions of these key volunteers, and the personal recollections and improvement suggestions of staff were melded into the agenda of an all day review and planning session held on a Saturday in early November.



This November review and planning session reinvigorated our understanding that the distressed birds we serve and the opportunities for volunteer service we create at Bird Rescue require all of us to share a commitment to continuously raise our standards of care and efficiency of resource use. As this calendar year closes we are already

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Bird Rescue Wish List

- Incubator/brooder
- Kennel Pads (K&H Pet Products Lectro-Kennel Heated Pd. LG. 22-1/2x28-1/2 www.khpet.com)
- Plastic file storage boxes to store 5" x 9" cards
- Hanging file folders
- Manila file folders, 3- positions w/attached fasteners
- Viva brand paper towels (white, no design)
- Movers boxes, heavy-duty cardboard, 2'x2'x2' or 18"x18"x18"
- Bleach - (no Clorox Ultra, it contains lye)
- Pea gravel - any amount
- Door mats - non-slip with rubber borders
- Commercial dish washer

Education Program 2009

The 2009 Community Education Program concluded with several events held at the Center including scout troops, pre-schools, California Virtual Academy, and three groups of third and fourth graders from Sunridge and Mark West elementary schools along with The Sonoma Day School and the members of the Oakmont Kiwanis club. It is truly encouraging to observe interest in our new egg display along with the feathers and nests as visitors tour the Martha Bentley Education Room. In addition our ambassador birds and their handlers made an appearance at both the Steelhead Festival and the Halloween Owl Prowl at Lake Sonoma and surprised 40 children with their parents at the conclusion of the Christmas Bird Count for Kids



Gail and kids

sponsored by Tom Rusert and Darren Peterie of Sonoma Birding. We also provided programs for three classes of third graders at Monte Vista Elementary School in Rohnert Park, The Redwood Empire Caged Bird Club, Cloverdale Garden Club, Sonoma Soroptomists, West End Neighborhood Club, Montgomery High School, Doyle Park Head Start, the Redwood Empire Food Bank Summer Lunch Program and the members and their wives of the Scottish Rite.

Our ambassadors were present for Expand Your Horizons at Santa Rosa Junior College. EYH is an opportunity for middle school-aged girls to learn about careers in the science and math areas. We appreciated the opportunity to introduce them to some aspects of the biological and environmental importance of our native bird population.

This year we also participated in several summer camps for kids. In June we partnered with four other nature/wildlife organizations, Point Reyes Bird Observatory, Madrone Audubon, Kenwood Wildlife and Redwood Regional Ornithological Society, to provide instructors for the Summer Camp for Kids organized by Sonoma Birding. During this five-day event, which included 13 children ages 10-14, we introduced a red-tailed hawk for Raptor Day and taught the entire class about owls on the last day accompanied by our great horned owl, barn owl and western screech owl. In his follow up report, Tom Rusert commented "*The live hawks and owls added wonderful depth and excitement! The last day the parents and past campers were invited back for a "reunion" and learning about owls on top of it. The parents were totally blown away by the week-long experience and immensely appreciative of your collective effort.*"

Early in July, we traveled to the Charles Schultz Museum where we joined Woodstock, Peanuts, Snoopy and the rest of the gang to help instruct the 22 campers about the value of birds of prey to the environment. Campers, instructors and parents enjoyed meeting a turkey vulture and a great horned owl up close and personal—a great experience for all.

The Sonoma County Fair was in full force from Tuesday, July

28th through Sunday, August 9th and on each day our representatives were present manning the booth. We had the privilege of introducing many of our resident ambassador raptors as well as showcasing some of our new merchandise. Fair attendees of all ages came by to talk, shop, give a donation, or sign up for the Fall Raptor Lecture series as well as indicating interest in becoming volunteers.

A highlight for 2009 was our invitation to participate with live birds in the first year anniversary of the California Academy of Science in Golden Gate Park. Mela, Gloria, Kathleen, Gregor, Christina, Gail, Michelle and Sheree were willing to make the trip to San Francisco and provide birds for the mornings and afternoons of September 26 and 27. Not only was this a wonderful opportunity to present the mission of the Center and introduce our resident ambassadors, we also learned how quickly we were able to act when suddenly hearing a fire-alarm accompanied by an emergency announcement to evacuate the building immediately. Alida and I had just left the handlers and birds for the first time to get refreshments from the hospitality room. We found ourselves 'swimming upstream' to return to our team as thousands of people headed to the nearest exits and quickly left the building to gather on the lawns outside. We were fortunate enough to have a very wonderful security guard near us who guided Alida, Mela, Gloria, Kathleen and myself to a safe location in the shade with five boxed birds. Gail and Michelle had just dropped off their birds for the afternoon session and left to park the car when this exciting opportunity arrived. Our guard was on his radio the whole time, so we were the first to hear the 'all clear' and he saw to it that we were back in place before the crowds were streaming through the doors. What an amazing experience!

The raptor ambassadors and their handlers were happy to conclude an active year at the fourth annual Tolay Lake Fall Festival organized by Sonoma County Regional Parks as part of our commitment to Sonoma County. This eight-day festival takes place annually over two weekends in October. The Bird Rescue Center is featured in the 'night time creatures barn' that includes five resident barn owls in the rafters overhead! This annual park program provides an excellent field trip for the county's school children on both Thursdays and Fridays. The event coordinator advised me that



Michelle Lanting and great horned owl at the California Academy of Sciences One-Year Anniversary Celebration.

they limited attendance for field trips to 900 children for each of these four days. We were continually amazed to see a parking lot full of yellow school busses when we arrived. On Saturday and Sunday families arrive from many localities in Northern California. We met families from Walnut Creek, Sacramento, and San Francisco to name just a few. Our education team agrees that we are looking forward to future participation in this very wonderful family festival in the ensuing years.

—Mary Ellen Rayner, Community Education Coordinator

So Many Successful Happy Endings

Although the raptors often grab center stage, the majority of the work and success of Bird Rescue revolves around the hundreds of orphaned and injured songbirds received every year. The orphans arrive in every manner of conveyance and range in age from tiny nudies with mouths agape still housed in their nest to youngsters taking their first flights and running into trouble. Unfortunately, trouble often comes in the form of the neighborhood cat. Injuries range from damaged feathers (tails often pulled out) to puncture wounds. Although feathers often regrow, punctures are too often terminal. More than one third of the songbirds arrive in our hospital as a result of encounters with cats.

Successful release of injured adults requires care and time. Many of these birds recover in the hospital while others requiring longer periods to grow new feathers are housed in our aviaries. When they have recovered, they are test flown to insure mobility and then released

into a suitable location. Babies, however, require special handling and back-up to give them the best opportunity for survival. We developed our soft-release program several years ago (based upon the strategies and reasoning to release orphaned baby raptors using a program called hacking). When young songbirds are close to fledging age they are placed into a soft-release cage and moved from the Baby Bird Room outside to a partially open building where they can acclimate to the ambient temperatures and are then taken, in their cage, to a suitable release site. The cage is hung in a shady and protected location oriented in such a way that the youngsters can observe local birds coming and going from feeders and birdbaths. The results are truly amazing and the interactions between wild birds and our hand-raised youngsters are very rewarding and encouraging.

To handle the increased demand for space to acclimate birds we added a new enclosure for the caged fledgling birds. Additional cages and more soft-release providers enabled us to move birds through the process in a more timely manner starting them on their way to a life in the wild. The soft-release program improves with every season thanks to the help of our dedicated volunteers and the interest and donations of the public. It is very gratifying to see a baby bird which came to the Center featherless and with closed eyes fly out the door of its cage. We are thankful to the many members of the public who make this possible by taking the time to bring birds to us,

sometimes from great distances.

Stories abound of interactions with our caged birds and their wild neighbors. During the height of the season, adult birds will often come to the cages and attempt to feed the youngsters through the wire (the drive to nurture and feed is impressive). Sometimes other youngsters will also perch on or hang off of the cage. When doors are opened, wild adults will sometimes enter and start feeding. In one instance, an adult



Thistle sock attracts wild finches.

wren adopted two released birds and spent the first couple of days flying in and out of the cage with them and perching inside at night. A young Nuttall's woodpecker was observed coming back to feed from the suet feeder in his cage every day for at least six days before finally switching to the feeders hanging nearby. Young juncos were seen lining up on a branch with wild babies. All were begging for food and the adult bird busily fed her own as well as the new comers. Apparently it is

difficult for them to pass up a gaping, cheeping mouth! This summer, one of our soft release providers, at the suggestion of her husband, hung a partially filled thistle sock inside the cage of a lesser goldfinch with the empty top hanging over the outside of the door. The local goldfinches started eating from the sock by hanging on the part outside the cage, a great way to introduce the caged bird to its own species. When the cage door was eventually opened, the local finches joined the orphans in the cage. My favorite release this year was a chestnut-backed chickadee, a friendly little bird who returned to the cage for naps and food for two weeks after release. Even nuthatches and titmice would enter the cage for food once the chickadee had been released as did goldfinches in the above case.

It takes more time and effort to raise and release youngsters in this fashion. However, we have the assurance of seeing most interact with the local populations as they begin to forage on their own and learn to utilize the nearby feeders. The most important thing is that we provide backup for these youngsters until they learn to find their way, thus helping to ensure their chance for survival. We may provide the birds with care but they provide us with pleasure and entertainment which makes it all very worth while.

Final note: well after this year's Baby Bird Season was over a baby western scrub jay was brought to the center in November. What are these parent birds thinking?

--Norma Halbersma, Rehab Team

The Bird Rescue Center has two primary missions:

First: To rescue, rehabilitate and release orphaned, injured or ill native wild birds, and,...

Second: To educate the public regarding the ecological importance and natural history of these birds.

Memberships and Donations

We have devoted every bit of available space to our rescue, rehabilitation and release stories in this issue. In our last newsletter we told you that we would make this the grand finale edition of successful rescues and releases. These articles are a testament to our success. Therefore, we are delaying announcing individual new members, donors or memorials in this newsletter and will dedicate our 2010 Winter edition to thank and acknowledge all of our members, donors and volunteers. In that issue,

we will be listing the names of our contributors for 2009. All memberships and donations are gratefully accepted and appreciated. Any amount helps to fund our daily expenses, and we value every donation including the \$1 from a first-grader to the generous support of the Teddy Foundation and others who have made us the Benefactors of their Trusts. For now, know that we appreciate each and every one of you and that without your contributions we would not be able to help all the birds which come to us.

...continued from page 2.

Day Weekend, I truly believe we hit the jackpot of strange and unusual entanglements. Summer, a Santa Rosa resident, called in to report that her children were traveling north on Pacific Coast Highway One and stopped to use the outdoor restroom facilities provided by the California State Parks at Vista Point Trail where Myers Grade meets the highway. To their amazement they spotted an owl inside the facility, then quickly found a place where they had cell phone reception and called home requesting that she call the Center. I asked if she could call her family asking them to stand by while I contacted the Ranger Station at Salt Point to see if we could get a park ranger to check this out. Immediately, I called Salt Point and talked to Suzanne, a ranger at this station who is always helpful in assessing reports of injured birds on the north coast. She said she would send someone out and let me know the status. In the meantime, Summer called back to make it clear that the bird wasn't just in the building, it was in the bottom of the pit! "Good grief—what next" was all I could think.

Fortunately, Mela Brasset was at the Center, and I quickly described the situation taking advantage of her knowledge and experience in all kinds of different rescue situations over the years. Soon Suzanne called back to say that she had dispatched a park ranger, who at first couldn't see the bird but called a maintenance crew to come out and remove the cover over the pit. By radio to Suzanne, who then reported to me by phone, the ranger relayed the information that the bird was 6-8 feet deep in the east side of the pit and that a net of 2-3 feet in diameter would probably go through the top of the open vault. Mela and I looked at each other and understood immediately that, while we were each willing to go, neither one of us relished the idea of going alone. She said 'tell them we're on our way'. Upon hearing this, Suzanne reported that the ranger would leave the vault open for us.

While I got directions, Mela gathered a large net with an extension pole, latex gloves, several towels and some old scrubs. Off we went for an hour's drive north avoiding any discussion of what we were ultimately facing. When we arrived at the parking lot at Vista Point, the park ranger was standing by his car apparently keeping people from approaching the open pit. Mela and I walked over, knelt down and looked in (each pretending not to recognize the surroundings). Sure enough, there was a very bedraggled, soaking wet, miserable, sorry-looking barn owl peering

back at us from the highest point it could find. Returning to the car to get the equipment, we could only shake our heads in disbelief. Mela grabbed the net and secured the pole. Laying down on the ground and extending her body, she bravely leaned to the inside directly over the opening. (Ahh, if only I had a camera...it all seemed very surreal in the moment and words just don't describe it.) Soon she said, "I think I've got it" and brought out the net. Reaching into the folds, she found and grabbed the legs, and voila! She had rescued one smelly, exhausted (pooped) barn owl. Working quickly, I opened the carrier, helped stabilize the wings as Mela placed it carefully in the box. Whew (literally) – the hard part was over. As we headed back to the car, the attending park ranger said, "You two must have some very special place in heaven!" We considered that quite a compliment. Now for a very long drive back to the Center with windows open as much as we dared because we didn't want to chill the bird any more than it's current condition.

We called Sheree Green, our rehab supervisor, to report that we had the bird and that its condition was pretty bad, to say the least. As we neared Highway 101, she reached us by cell phone indicating that our director, Alida Morzenti, wanted us to use the side entrance with the bird and equipment. She also wanted Sheree and Mela to use the haz-mat equipment while cleaning up our unlucky, now lucky, little rescued barn owl. I'll let Sheree tell the "...rest of the story."

--Mary Ellen Rayner, Field Rescue Team

Even with all the calling back and forth, I was not prepared for what Mela and Mary Ellen brought to me in rehab. The barn owl was so sad looking and obviously not carrying a pleasant aroma. There were scrapes on both legs but otherwise it appeared to be a healthy, hardy bird. I had the haz-mat suits and gloves ready as well as a tub of warm water and Dawn soap. Mela and I donned our suits and began the cleaning process. We had to dip the bird two times to clean it off and help diminish its scent. Once soaking wet, it looked like the winner of the ugly dog contest. We towel dried it and then settled it in the raptor hospital. Unfortunately, there was still a definite aroma wafting from the hospital all day long. We offered mice for its "dinner" which it ate overnight. The next day, the feathers were dry and the bird actually looked and acted like a typical barn owl.... Hissing Posturing.... And generally demanding 'Why Am I Here?'

--Sheree Green, Rehab Team

...continued from page 4.

busy with facility improvements, relocation of activities to more efficient locations within our tightly used buildings, setting up procedures for improved procurement of bird diets and supplies, and planning how we can create even more exciting and efficient training opportunities for those volunteers who will join us to serve the orphaned and distressed birds of 2010.

Yes, the 2010 baby bird season really has begun already around Bird Rescue! The babies aren't here yet, but we know that they are coming. *And, the way things have been happening the last couple of years, they will be coming earlier!* The entire Rehab team wants to take this opportunity to thank

all of you who have provided the resources that make Bird Rescue possible with your memberships and contributions that pay the bills and keep the doors open for so many birds that need shelter, care and a boost back into the wild. To those of you who have also committed so much of your time as volunteers our heartfelt thanks. You provide the direct care and professional support to the birds that makes it happen. May we presume so much as to voice a *Thank You* from all the birds you fed and helped care for. Keep an eye on your feeders. A lot of them got back out this year and a couple may be out there.

--Tom Whiteman and Sheree Green, Rehab Team