

LOVE OF OWLS FOR THE

Written
and
Illustrated
by
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by
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Andrea Louvieux is an artist, author and researcher of owls and raptors and lives in Bray—Belgium in a wonderful old farmhouse , with her husband, Pascal, 3 children, dog and cats and of course, her magical Barn Owl—*Kadabra*.

About us

Sandra Griffith is a journalist, writer and beachcomber, based in Queensland Australia . She is married to Gwyn and has a son—John.



FRONT COVER

The front cover is a portrait of a wonderful wild Great Grey Owl from Canada that Andrea has painted and entitled “*Nimble*”.

With thanks to James Duncan PhD for use of the original photograph.

Dedication

*This book is dedicated to
all the owl beings in the world—
be they human or non human
and to their right to go in safety and peace—
understanding each others needs,
respecting each others rights and
enjoying each others contribution to global systems.*

With grateful thanks to
Deane Lewis
&
Owlpages.com

For Sandra

*Without whom this great adventure would not have seen the day.
You are a true friend who just keeps my spirit sound and high. Like a
Min Min bold, dynamic and luminous you are nothing short of a
miracle that changes lives forever. Thank you for your guidance and
for choosing me to pass your message on to.*

Pour Pascal

*...mon mari qui fait preuve d'une patience surhumaine face à ma
passion pour les strigiformes, mes projets et mes ambitions. Sans
ton soutien constant dans tout ce que je fais je ne serai pas la
femme comblée que je suis maintenant. Je t'aime.*

PERSONAL

DEDICATIONS

For Andrea

Lover of Owls

*My Spirited Co-Adventurer & Fellow Eco-Warrior
Whose clarity of thought and energy lifts me into clear soaring*

And for

John

Through the Ages

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Magical, mysterious, mythological and sometimes even maligned—owls have been deeply embedded in the human psyche since time immemorial. Many cultures have depicted owls in diverse roles and guises—all designed to capture the spirit of this wonderful species. Images of owls can be found in hundreds of places and millions of ways—from costume jewellery to precious objects d'art throughout centuries of time.

Humans have sought out the company of owls for all sorts of reasons. As companions, as hunters and as subjects of art and literature, the owl holds a special place in human understanding and belief systems.

This book hopes to raise humans' understanding of owls. Many countries today permit the breeding and keeping of owls by humans. To make the decision to share an owl's life is a great privilege and responsibility. We hope our readers find this book a useful contribution to both owls' and humans' quality of life. We also hope it will promote interest in global conservation of this important avian species.

Andrea Louvieux & Sandra Griffith

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eeeping
Owls

In many countries, the keeping of owls by private individuals is illegal. However, in Europe and United Kingdom and elsewhere the keeping of all birds of prey, of which owls are included, is legal provided the keeper is appropriately licensed and has legal documentation for the bird.

But the issues are not as simple as that implies. Whilst some folk are very comfortable in the knowledge that they are sharing their lives with their owls, others prefer all birds, including owls to live wild. This book has taken the approach that the quality of life for the bird is the paramount issue. The owls to which we refer are either captive bred owls or those being cared for with the intention of return to the wild.

Whilst most folk like to see wild species it 's good to recognise the fact that practices such as falconry are time-honoured traditions and respected in many cultures as fine examples of humans and birds working together in partnership. For others, these practices are not acceptable. We recognise diverse belief systems, but we are also realists and strongly believe our mission is to provide as much information as possible to ensure best quality of life for owls, whether they be in keeping, in rehabilitation or in the wild.

For one who is very serious about caring for an owl will have to keep a few but very important points in mind:

- Is it legal in the country in which you are living ?
- Does authorisation have to be granted? Is there an exam to be taken?
- Do conditions have to be met; do aviaries and equipment have to be inspected?
- Do you have sufficient space?
- What will you be expecting from your owl?
- What training will you require and where would you get it from?
- Where will your owl be flown
- Where will you get food, supplies and medical help from?



No matter where you are in the world, always check on whether it is legal to keep owls. Many countries do not allow this. For those who do allow it check around and find the organisations that will help you start your procedure and advise you on what you should start preparing and how to go about doing it. DEFRA (UK), DNF (B), ANFA (F) these are just some of the European ones. Some countries such as the United States require an exam and an apprenticeship before hand which helps to ensure you know what you are doing and that you are capable of taking care of your owl. I personally like this idea as cases of ill-treated birds is just too common and with this in place it could reduce these sad stories.

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aking the
decision to
share an
owl ' s life

The decision to keep an owl can be made at any time of life but it is not one to be taken lightly.

A captive-bred owl, kept in good conditions, as they should be, can live for a very long time. They can live up to 30 – 40 years for some species so it will be a life time commitment and not one you could turn your back on because the novelty has worn off and you get bored.

A few really unacceptable reasons for wanting owls are because some book or film made a good character out of them, they are perceived as a status symbol or simply because it is the fashion. Owls are beings and have the right to be offered a good quality of life. If you are not sure, don ' t contemplate on getting one but instead turn off the television, go out and enjoy the wild ones. You can have just as much fun looking for them and observing them but leaving all the maintenance and feeding to them.

Some countries do not require exams but certain conditions are laid out and have to be met. This means that before being given the authorisation an inspection has to be carried out on your owl 's living quarters, equipment and working area to make sure they are decent, hygienic and suitable to keep your owl healthy and happy.

They are not toys or cuddly pets on the contrary—their predatory roles deserve respect as such.

On the other hand, there are countries that do not carry out any of the afore mentioned issues and it is down to the future carer to take it upon him/ herself and be mature enough to obtain the necessary knowledge and training before taking on the responsibility of an owl. I may seem to go about this in a severe way but it is very important that you realise what the owl 's needs are to be happy.

Now we have the legal side sorted you will have to check to make sure you have what it takes to keep your owl happy and healthy. This does not mean a lovely huge cage in your living room but a decent size aviary (its called a '*mews*') outside along with a nice size lawn to exercise your owl during the initial stages of training (if of course you choose a bird to fly free).

If you do not have the room then you shouldn't be thinking of keeping an owl at all. Unfortunately there are people who think tethering an owl with a little shelter is suffice but it is not! Owls should not be tethered other than for cleaning or working in the aviary. Even this should be kept to a minimal amount of time and under your strict supervision.

Deciding which owl is a very lengthy process. I have always loved owls and caring for wildlife so I spent years deciding which one I would love to care for personally. I am only getting one or maybe two so I need my decisions to be the right ones. Take time to read up all you can and join falconry forums. The latter is extremely useful as it is a great way to meet people who have owls and care for them on a daily basis. Some kind souls often offer to show you the ropes which is the best training along with taking falconry courses. You will find out where to get your food supply, equipment and also a good reputable veterinarian who can deal with raptors. This is a very important detail because rather than be in a situation where time could be of the essence, all will be prepared well ahead of time and you will know exactly who to call instead of wasting precious time fumbling through the phone book. It could save your bird's life.

Spending time with your owl is extremely important so there is no point in getting one just to play with at the weekends or when you eventually get some free time. You should be looking at spending minimum 2 hours per day with your owl plus extra flying time.

Before choosing your owl it is a good idea to know what you are expecting from this relationship. So by asking yourself these questions you could help yourself choose the bird best suited for you.

- Do you wish to care and spend time with an owl to train it to fly free?
- Do you wish to have an owl to care for but do not wish to take part in training?



Training an owl to fly free is an amazing experience and a wonderful sense of achievement can be felt if you have the patience, time and understanding which are the main ingredients for this special relationship. It goes both ways and you have to earn your owl 's trust for him to be able to perform and in return you will have years of pleasure and excitement. Be prepared, it is a long process but a very rewarding one.

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Where do owls fit in the ecological picture?

view of

Owls place in the
ecological niche

For those who have had the chance to observe owls in the wild will understand just wonderful an experience it is, and one that is very rarely forgotten. But for others, even people who have even the slightest interest in owls often ask why they can never see the owls? The answer to this is simple. Apart from the very obvious question ‘*are you looking in the right place for that specific species?*’ just take a look around you, does the environment have what it takes to attract our feathered friends?

I love looking around admiring the country side, just looking at vast greenery. How breathtaking that is! I can see for miles as it is very flat here. All the farm fields all neatly squared off making a lovely picture of geometrical shapes of different colours.

Nature has created things in a way that everything is linked to everything. So with those wonderful trees, hedgerows, bushes, long grass and brambles slowly making way for neater and tidier fields, the smaller mammals, which are owl 's, and other predator 's, main meal items are no longer to be found readily. If the food source is scarce then there is only a very slight chance you will see any owls around.

This is not only happening in fields, just take a look around your own home and you will notice that even back yards are being ' humanised' . How many people have replaced a hedge with a metal or even a wooden fence and keep their lawn so short that worms have a hard time trying to hide? It may look very beautiful and neat but this tidiness is what is contributing to loss of good habitat.

It is hard to believe but a garden left to become scraggy and over grown is so much richer in wildlife (biological diversity) as it has so much more to offer. When people look in disgust at my lawn I can answer with pride that my garden is left that way for ecological purposes. So not only is it a good thing for wildlife, it is a fantastic excuse to get out of doing that boring job of mowing when you know that you could use that time for doing fun stuff!

The same applies to larger landscapes, old trees, even dead ones, woodlands; hedgerows that look really shabby are such important factors for many species as their survival depends on this.

Please if you have old dead trees that are not potential or dangerous hazards, leave them in place. You would be surprised who will put those trees to good use. One dead, hollow tree can house many different species of wildlife! As I said before, Mother Nature never wastes anything and always has someone that will be in need of such a home. Another human invention which is a huge threat to owls is BARBED WIRE. Owls get caught on these, wings ripped and are generally left to hang there and starve. It is a gruesome and extremely slow and painful death. The death rate can be reduced dramatically if you would be kind enough to use alternative measures or just look around and collect and remove wire that is no longer needed but just left in place to rot.

Owls may seem and are, for some species, extremely powerful but even the larger species of owls such as the European Eagle Owl (*Bubo bubo*), the Great Grey Owl (*Strix nebulosa*), which are very capable of taking large prey items tend to prefer the smaller mammals such as the voles, shrews and mice with Snowy Owl (*Nyctea scandiaca*) preferring lemmings. Owl numbers are related to the abundance of food supply. So if there is a crash in the number of prey items owl numbers for that year will follow suit. This is something many people forget but is also an issue that I would like to help people understand more about.

Laying down rodenticides willy nilly while not taking two minutes to think of the impact this action will have is a prime example of this negligence and 'forgetfulness'. As I have mentioned earlier in the

book, poison does not only kill the intended target. The effect of an animal poisoned does not stop at the victim's death, it carries on down the natural food chain and ripples out to kill a second and even third time.

I really want to raise your understanding that if you eradicate the prey items and their habitat, owls just don't stand a chance. Humans are here not to take over, remodel or reshape the world to how we want the place to be, but to use what we have to the full and live amongst other species who also share the land and wonders of the world. '*Sharing*' unfortunately is a word slowly being wiped out of the dictionary nowadays. Many people are no longer able to adapt their ways to get the most out of what they have, they would much rather pull down, rip apart and do things their way regardless of the circumstances and outcome. This, amongst other human greediness, is what is forcing our owl numbers, regardless the species, to decline. So the next time you are outside, when you are planning ecological action, take time to think of what your actions could entail. You can and will have an impact – good or bad – the choice is yours!

Strolling around and noticing peeping little owl eyes looking straight you is such a wonderful feeling. The Tawny owls are good at this especially around the time when little owlets are branching. This means their wings are now in use even though they do still have a lot of down on the body, and are trying out their new hopping/flying skills on different branches. This is generally the period when

people find them on the ground thinking they are lost and bewildered when really it is only a training session that has gone a bit wrong. Please, if you do see a young owl on the ground, it is a very good idea to leave him there because 95% of the time they will scramble back up the tree. This is a very important part of their training and they are learning skills to enable them to survive on their own. Unless they are in immediate danger of other predators or cars then they should be left alone. If you do see one that could get into serious trouble then just place him on a higher branch out of harm 's way. I know I keep going on about this but it is so important and I will keep reminding and reminding you all until you are able to teach others this important lesson.

The best time to see a Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*) is at dusk when the sun is just setting. Open fields are the best place to look as this is their preferred place to hunt. I remember my first encounter with a wild Barn Owl. I was out late at night watching the sun go down and the fruit bats flittering around giving a good aerial display of low flights and sharp turns. They are wonderful to watch then all of a sudden the black silhouette of a Barn Owl flew against the red hot evening sun within in meters of me. It is a memory that will stick with me for a very long time. Barn Owls love to hide in the tiniest of holes in buildings during the day and are absolute master energy conservationists, in other words they do absolutely nothing during the day except sleep. Even though eyes are shut tight, they are always alert listening to the slightest move beneath them. The barn owl prefers small mammals such as mice, voles, shrews and rats but will also catch birds. Frogs are also taken by some.

Having the wonderful opportunity of living with a Barn Owl I have been able to learn so much about their language. They have very different calls for every feeling they wish to express and have even more syllables than I initially thought.

Tawny Owls (*Strix aluco*) are very much the same; they are very inactive during the day but not necessarily for the same reasons as the Barn Owl. The poor Tawny Owls, as do many other owls quite surprisingly, have an awful time with other day time birds who will not hesitate to peck, pick and be an absolute nuisance to the owl. That is generally a good indication to look for when owl hunting: a lot of birds making a racket. Crows give the best indication as they will circle, stoop and make an awful noise and are obviously more noticeable. It is not only the larger birds who will torment an owl in this way, the smaller birds such as robins and other finches are also as guilty of this act. It always amazes me as to why they do this, surely they realise what they are actually taking on. The Tawny Owl prefers much more secluded areas such as deciduous and mixed forest. They can be found in parks and even in towns as long as there are old leafy trees for cover they are happy campers. They are not the kindest of owls and will not tolerate people too close to nesting sites. So please bear this in mind when going out on spring/summer walks. They are extremely territorial. The Tawnies are the owls that make that lovely twit twoo sound and I'm sure English woodland would not be the same without its Tawnies. Tawny owls will eat absolutely everything

available to them such as mammals, birds even up to the size of crows, pigeons and smaller owls. Rats, hamsters and even squirrels are often on their menu.

The Long-eared Owl (*Asio otus*) are much more social birds. They enjoy creating roosts outside the breeding months and will happily sit aside 10 other Long-eared Owls in the same tree. These owls have eyes that range from a dark rich red to an orangey yellow colour. They do prefer to hunt round dusk and will happily take small rodents, especially voles. Other vertebrates are also taken as well as insects. The edges of forests and along hedgerows are their favoured places to hunt. These owls are funny as they will watch you go merrily on your way but once they know you have spotted them and eye contact has been made they sort of freeze and stand very upright and close to the trunk of the tree.

Short-eared owls (*Asio flammeus*) I find are just such beautiful creatures. I could look at them for hours. One evening I received the most beautiful pictures of a Short-eared owl that lives with a great ornithologist and owl expert James Duncan Ph.D. I looked at the pictures for ages and came to the conclusion that his owl's facial disk looked like frost has settled upon the edges whilst in another email Jim wrote that the breast feathers were beautifully displaying what looked like flames. I just thought the wonderful combination of ice and flames sounded just grand. These owls are slightly different from other owls in that they are migratory. Short-eared owls prefer open lands pasture fields

with scattered bushes, swamps and humid grasslands. Again, voles are a very popular prey item on their menu but they do also hunt rats, birds and insects.

Now for a nomadic bird, the Great Grey Owl (*Strix nebulosa*). I say these owls are nomadic because in times when food is scarce they will move to places where the prey items are more plentiful. These are the largest North American owls. I used to find these owls quite eerie because their eyes seemed to be lost in that big facial disc. But after a lot of reading about them and thanks to James Duncan's wonderful book '*Owls of the World*' and '*Lady Gray 'I*'; an owl with a mission by Robert W Nero, I am now totally hooked on these owls. I think one of the most amazing things about the Great Grey owls is the fact that this rather large bird can land and sit on the skimpiest of branches. Great Grey Owls are another bunch who enjoys those scrumptious voles. They will take other mammals such as shrews, small hares and squirrels. Birds up to the size of grouse and insects are also hunted. Breeding is exceptionally successful when voles are abundant.

Now for a very large owl and the largest of all owls, the European Eagle Owl (*Bubo bubo*). These are difficult owls to spot as there are not that many out there due to human persecutions, though numbers are rising due to breeding programs. These owls prefer rocky areas such as quarries and mountainous areas to set up home. Being very large owls (females reaching a weight of 4.5kg) they are capable of taking extremely large prey. But as I mentioned earlier, despite their size, small

rodents are preferred such as the hare and shrews. Hedgehogs are also a favourite. These owls are very sensitive at nesting times so every precaution has to be taken if this species of owl is nesting around your area as they will abandon the nest site if disturbed.

I have covered the largest owl and now for a much smaller species; our much loved Little owl (*Athene noctua*). These have to be the funniest of all the owls (along with the burrowing owls-*Athene cunicularia*). Their heads seem so large for their little bodies and have extremely long legs. Something that will always amuse me is the way their head bobs then just tilts to the side. Their diet is essentially made up of beetles, grasshoppers and other insects but they will also hunt lizards, mice and small birds. They are not fussy about land and we can observe them if we are lucky practically everywhere from open pasture lands to desert land, rocky to orchards, along rivers and not to forget places where willow trees are to be found. When they are disturbed they will also take on that very skinny look then bob up and down and eventually fly off. They usually prefer dusk for hunting but can be seen during the day.

I have often mentioned how owls react when disturbed or even when they have sighted potential predators but what I find truly amazing is the way the owls display their threats. I find the smaller the owl the more he has to puff up and spread out. For example the Barn Owl will stretch the head forward and sway it from left to right bringing it forward to make snapping noises with the beak, feathers on the back will puff up just to add to size. The wings are extended to the maximum length and turned inwards towards the threatening party. On many occasions even foxes will get very confused and back off when encountering a Barn Owl' s threat display. The larger owls such as the Great grey and Eagle owls are amazing to watch. All their feathers just stick out making a huge ball but the wings tend to drop rather than extend out. This is only based on personal observation so others may beg to differ. But I personally have yet to see an eagle owl extend the wings to threaten away unwanted visitors.

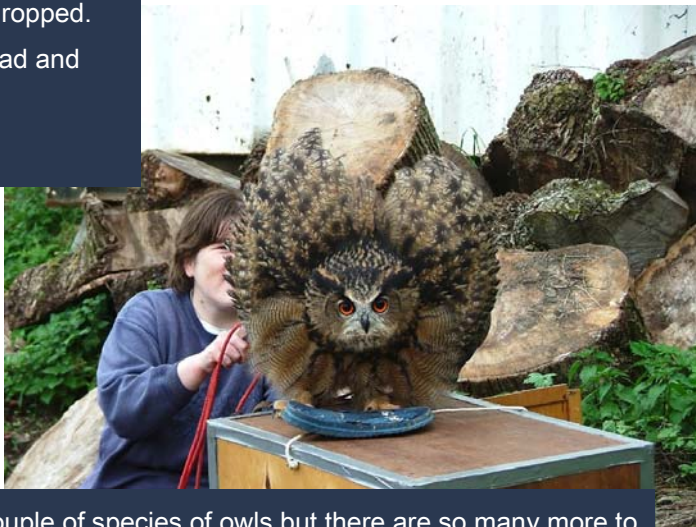
Threat displays in owls

Unfortunately I do not possess any pictures of wild owls doing this but one day Kadabra, my Barn Owl watched me dust the cobwebs away. All I heard was snapping and I turned round to see what it was and it was my owl. He had never seen the duster before. But notice how the wings are extended and turned towards the offender.



The European Eagle Owl does this differently. Again I only have a captive bred owl to demonstrate the display.

This is Jester whom you will meet later in the book. Notice the wings are barely dropped. But just look at the awesome big head and drop dead gorgeous eyes.



These are only a couple of species of owls but there are so many more to observe and enjoy watching but unfortunately my knowledge is limited.

Owlfacts

A lot of birds regurgitate (cough up) funny little balls called pellets but what are they exactly? Why do we look for them? and why do we find them so interesting?

The best known birds to do this are the raptors; the owls (strigiformes and the diurnal birds of prey (falconiformes) but other birds such as blackbirds, magpies, crows and many other species also do this. Owls mainly eat their prey whole if the size permits, they generally check that no feet are protruding and that the head is just right. For larger prey, the owls used their sharp beaks to tear off and eat smaller morsels.

Digestion begins in the stomach then the easy much needed digestive matter proceed into the intestine. Depending on the stage of growth the owl has reached (and of course the species) thinner bones may also be digested. Young owls have a higher pH in the stomach than adults do which help them break down and use all the essential nutrients needed for them to grow. But the fur still remains indigestible which can be decomposed by bacteria that may come from some invertebrates.

The owls do not need this hard matter so much therefore it is compressed into a small sausage like mass. These balls of waste are called pellets and are formed shortly after eating their prey. Owls digest almost immediately as the food is swallowed. By keeping the pellet in the stomach the latter is protected from the digestive juices. As it does not go through the gut, the debris may not be expelled in the form of urine or faeces so the only other issue is the beak!! Yes, you guessed, it goes right back up the throat and is ejected through the beak. They eject the pellets just before taking off for another hunting session or when they are disturbed. Pellets are coated with a mucous film protecting the tubes from stomach acid burns.

So, now we know what they are why do we need to look for them?

Well, an owls' stomach contains a very low acid which does not disintegrate the bones. Therefore, we are able to find out what prey each species eat which in turn offers details and clues as to what their hunting habits are like such as: their preferred hunting time of day, the location, amount of different types of prey and we can also learn more about the small prey themselves. Pellets are not only used to learn and understand the eating habits of the raptors but also scientists use them to discover the distribution and habits the small mammals (micro mammalia) such as mice, voles, shrews etc. and micro vertebrates.

Just one issue though if you do go pellet hunting and this is extremely important:

**NEVER DISTURB
ROOSTING, NESTING
BIRDS OR THEIR SITES.**

The best way to start pellet hunting is to know a little about the where the owls of your region are most likely to be found. Owls are generous enough to provide us with clues to help find their hiding places. One being the 'white wash'. This is basically the pooh splattered on potential perches, ledges, tree trunks and branches, and such.

Another aspect to keep in mind is hygiene. Many people have been fooled into picking up what they genuinely thought were owl pellets. It is only when they have made a closer examination that it was revealed they were handling fox droppings eeeeww! So make sure gloves are worn, you never know. They are so much alike and are in fact, subjects of mammalian predator diets, but this is another issue.

Gloves are also a good idea as the pellets are exposed to the elements and to other little beings: fungus, bacteria and moths. These are with out doubt incredibly useful beings as they help with the decomposition process. But for those who suffer with allergies, it would be wise to wear a mask during the dissection, though less necessary just for collecting them.

Getting back to the moths though, the pellets provide the perfect environment as the larvae thrive on the fur and debris. These insects are actually useful friends to the biologists who study the pellets as they give a helping hand eating away at the fur thus making the bones and other pieces easier to

extract. This is a fine example of all kinds of beings, large and small, working together!! Don ' t you just love it. So don ' t be too surprised to find these little buddies in a pellet. Besides, if you look at them with through a magnifying glass they can be fun!! So, if you do find some please remember to place them back out in the wild where they belong well away from anywhere they could do damage! Not near your house!

Photos courtesy of T. Jovanović MSc



Now we have our pellets, what do we do with them?

One thing you have to remember is nothing is wasted in the wilderness and everything our dear Mother Nature makes always plays an important role in some way or another. The proverb ' one man ' s waste is another man ' s treasure ' can certainly be applied to the letter especially where the pellets are concerned.

Pellets are auto-infested by moths as I have mentioned earlier. So it would be best to bag them and use them straight away. If you do have to store them for any reason then keep them outside, I ' m not sure moths would be welcome once they set up home in your house. But the best way would be to put them in a box and freeze them for 24 hours preventing any larvae to continue growing thus keeping your clothes safe!

When you are ready to use them, put them in a little luke-warm water with a couple of drops of disinfectant, (one that doesn ' t make the water cloudy if possible) , leave it for about ½ hour and the pellet will be as good as fresh. This is what is known as the ' wet technique ' the fur can easily be prized away and the bones can be extracted with tweezers or cocktail sticks (j ust remember to throw the latter away when you are finished with them!)



Photos: Andrea Louvieux

I used the dry technique (j ust dissecting without soaking) as this was a pretty fresh caught pellet from a Barn owl just left to dry out on the paper.

You may also want to use a combined technique, to moist them just a little bit with the solution mentioned above as this will help them regain their original moisture. This also helps to prevent producing dust and also potential bone breakage allowing bones to be separated more easily than with the dry technique.



How many prey items in one pellet?

Photo: Tatjana B. Jovanović

There are so many bones so what belongs to who?



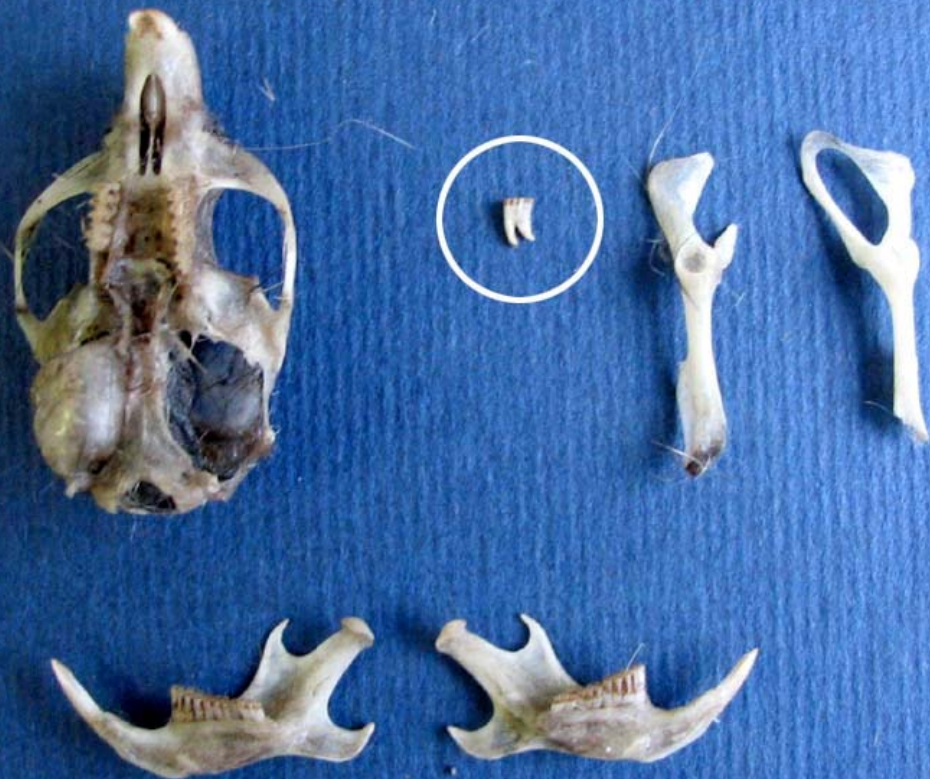
Usually after grouping the different types of bones, the skulls are counted. Longer bones such as the pelvic bones are also taken into consideration and which are in fact key clues themselves. It can happen that the skull of the same victim be found in another pellet from the same bird.

Photo: Tatjana B. Jovanović



Biologists who dissect pellets can identify contents from 5 to 50 pellets per hour depending on their experience. One exceptional biologist, Tatjana B. Jovanović set a high record of identifying 2000 vole skulls in pellets in one day.

Photo: Tatjana B. Jovanović



Clethrionomys glareolus

The contents are also good to prove to farmers, Town Hall authorities, and neighbouring villagers just how beneficial it is to have owls around working as allies. No money has to be spent on dangerous rodenticides who not only kill the prime targets but also spread out in a ripple effect poisoning their predators known as secondary poisoning.



Owls are a 'state of the art' pest control service and all they ask for in return is for us to ensure they have healthy poison free grounds and to provide or keep natural nesting sites available to them. It is not really much to ask for when you consider what could happen. Human poisons prey, which poisons predators, no predators we get over run by vermin. You may think well it is only one packet of poison but when you think of all the people doing the same thing, it turns out to be millions! Then they have some farming chemicals to contend with. Think about it !

Besides, crop fields are treated against vole infestation with rodenticides that in turn are ending up in various amounts as residues in our own food! Remember voles are the favourite meal on many predators menu!

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Kadabra's Diary

By Andrea Louvieux & Kadabra the magical Barn Owl.



After all this time waiting, I can finally start my first page. The day I actually left to pick her up was really terribly foggy and expected my hubby to say we weren't going. But he didn't so I loaded the travel box lined with carpet and we were off. The day had finally come. It took forever to get to where my Kadabra was and my hubby was getting stressed out 'cos of the weather. To make matters worse he asked me which road to take I can't even direct someone that only lives five minutes from me to my house. Anyway, after getting into a lot of trouble he got us back onto the right road and we made it to the destination point. I tried to keep my excitement under control and not bolt from the car as soon as it stopped. I succeeded in this mission but failed miserably in the next. As soon as we met the breeder I just blurted out '*where is she*'. It came out all by itself, I could no longer control myself. **I WANTED MY OWL!** He just laughed and showed me where she was and I melted just at the sight of this bundle of candy floss. She was gorgeous! We got through the chitchat and headed off home. I couldn't get home quick enough. Got in, hubby sorted the kids out whilst I sorted my baby out. She was fantastic! I cuddled her for hours until I remembered that I had three children and a hubby to feed!



I'll take that bundle of candy floss thanks!



Everything is going really well but she is finicky about her food. She is very alert and loves to sit on my hand. She will even look for it if she feels unsettled. I had her out on the blanket playing and she just loved to look around at everything. Then whilst sitting on the sofa with her, she noticed shadows and that got her head bobbing. She is fantastic with the children and didn't seem to be too fussed but will stand upright and walk backwards to me if they head towards her too fast or noisily. I just spent the whole day holding her, playing with her on the floor and sofa and then a feed. The breeder told me to feed her at 7, 12, 16 and 22hrs but today I just fed when she let me know she was hungry and noted the times. Even though she is still only picking she did eat a little more than the day I got her. I decided to give her mouse that evening as I wondered if it was because she doesn't like chick. Apparently that seemed to be the case. She ate a whole mouse cut into bits. I again woke at 2am just to check and she was screeching so I offered her a little more grub and she took a tiny bit. Her tum was tight so I could have even left her (but being a mother hen I offered it to her just in case).



Owls are curious!



I was still worried about Kadabra's intake of food. Even though her stomach was tight, I was not satisfied about the amount she was eating. I bugged a couple of friends on the forum who kindly reassured me that everything was ok. But yesterday evening, I phoned the breeder to ask just how much food she took with him to make sure she is getting enough. Kadabra was taking just two mice a day and for a growing bird I figured that couldn't be right. But her tum felt tight and she does look healthy and alert. He did say it was rather low but it was probably due to her new surroundings and all the new changes in her life. It was exactly that!

Even though I have only had her for four days now, I can see remarkable changes in her. So last night when the kids went to bed, I put her blanket down and had a good play with her. I wiggled her jesses and she loved to catch and nibble on them. Then she was looking for my hand as she loves to sit in it. She nibbles my fingers and entices me to preen her facial feathers and give a little tickle under her chin. I think the quills are irritating a little as they are pushing through and the face is a little hard for her to sort out. She enjoys me doing it and she comes over do my hair too! She is lovely—once she is comfy in my hand, she grabs my fingers and gives a little nibble and closes her eyes.



She rests for about 10 minutes then off again, wide awake and taking in her surroundings.



I rolled a ball for her and she seemed to be very inquisitive and the head was bobbing everywhere. She just toddled around looking at new things and then screeching at me.



She looks at everything from many angles it is quite funny and always makes me smile.

The endearing typical bobbing and head turning of the Barn Owl.



Round about 10.30pm I gave her the last meal of the day—but she only took about $\frac{3}{4}$ mouse and just wasn't hungry so I left it at that. We had another little play with the jesses but this time she did something very new. Once she had the jesses well in sight she jumped, grabbed her blanket in her talons and held tight. Looks like the stimulus is really doing her good and is responding with good reflexes. I put my hand in different places and rustled some tissue and she found that really fun and went bobbing and turned her head to pinpoint the sound. Her hearing is perfect and she enjoys the stimulus. I cuddled her till 11.45pm just to make sure she did not want any last bit of mouse and that she was completely settled and put her to bed. I then put myself to bed I was shattered and my cold had really stuck in. This time I did not do my two o'clock check when she screeched (well I did but I didn't feed her) I figured that it would be a good idea to space the feeding time.

7th December 2004

This morning she was screeching and I could tell she was well ready for brekkie, the wings were flapping and she was screeching. She wolfed down two mice no problem. I was over the moon as that meant that we are now getting on tracks and I know she will eat at least one or two more mice this evening. She will be having a pretty good intake today. So I was all smiles this morning. I checked for her pellet before feeding but couldn't find one. I sorted her little nest box out and found that she had chewed the pellet to bits. But I was well chuffed she ate two mice. Not giving her night titbits seems to work for her.



After feeding, she settled on my hand and rubbed to clean her beak on my fingers then started preening her feathers pulling out some down and making way for the feathers. They are becoming more and more visible. In only four days there is a remarkable change in her feather growth. The colour is also showing under her down. Got the blanket out again (as the tiles are pretty cold) and we had a good play (with the jesses again) and she also likes to bite the poop out of a little toy dog. After that she looked for my hand again so that meant cuddle time and a little rest. It was now time to sort kiddies for school. But I was so happy she ate two mice this morning.

The magical feather pattern of the Barn Owl.



Came back from school and checked on my baby and she was dozing quite happily. So I actually managed to do a bit of tidying. I heard a screech so dropped everything and went to spend some time with her. Believe it or not she was hungry again so down went another $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mouse. After that she felt rather full and dozy so I put her in her little box and she fell asleep. After about $\frac{1}{2}$ hour she was awake and up for a play. I put my hand behind her feet and she steps up already no problem so that is one task covered already. And we just cuddle and play. At the time of writing she is sitting next to me watching what I'm doing and having fun watching my barn owl cursor moving around. She flicks herself up and bobs her head around staring at it. Whilst reading posts on my beloved raptor forum, Kadabra kept eating the keys on the keyboard and turned now and again to jump on her jesses to kill them yet again.




The sweet expressions of the Barn Owl are beautifully displayed by the round facial disc.



She looked as if she was tiring and I was right. She was looking for my hand and stepped onto it herself and snuggled in. She just puts her legs in the crease of my hand and grabs my fingers. She rests her beak on the tips of the fingers and off she goes to the land of nod. But before she dozed off, she preened herself and making a general mess with her down and stuff and decided that I obviously needed a preen. She got to it, my hair, my cheek and chin then she stuck her head up and closed one eye. I couldn't really miss the hint—it was my turn to do her!. I started on her facial feathers and she moved her head so I would hit just the right spot. The head is a hard place to preen on her own and she appreciated the help. With no word of a lie she sat there for 10 minutes letting me rummage through. I put her in her box and she dozed off.

She didn't wake until gone five and was really out for the count. I came into check on her and my heart jumped out of my throat. She was on her side motionless. I went over to her but she was fine, she was just sleeping on her side. what a panic! It took me ages to get my emotions settled. She had yet another mouse around 4 pm and had a good play with me and the kids. I put out her blanket (which she seems to feel very secure with) and she walked around the playroom. She enjoyed the huge fire engine and had a good mooch around and nibbling on everything.

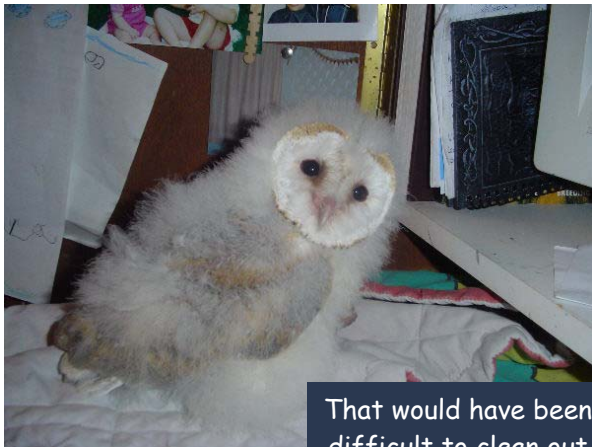
A photograph of a small, fluffy owl chick sleeping on a brown, textured surface. The chick is curled up, and its feathers are a mix of white and brown. A dark blue text box is overlaid on the top right of the image.

The not so endearing sleeping of the owl chick that scares their keeper witless!



After, I showed her off to my mates with the cam. She is a little star. She started whistling and the beak was opening so a pellet was obviously on its way out. Indeed it was a huge thing. The size of a decent size mouse. Now that room was made she ready from some grub. A yummy mouse went down a treat, first the stomach, then the bum and tail, the head then the torso. Yum it all went. then she started to walk backwards, I whipped the keyboard out of the way 'cos a squirt was imminent. Phew! She is now in bed zzzzzzzing and I did the same.

Kadabra is coming on in leaps and bounds literally. But she only ate one mouse this morning and one chick this afternoon. She still has another feed to go so she is doing well. This is so much fun. She is a cracker. We had loads of fun today. She was running around the living room and she could hear the sound of her talons tapping on the tiles. She kept jumping around tightening her talons so she was obviously trying to kill the noise hehehe. She is not fussed with mice tails so I cut them off and play with her with 'em. She loves it, she bobs her head and goes for an attack on the tail. It is hilarious!



That would have been difficult to clean out of the keys!



Yesterday she was in the play room with me and the kiddies. Hiding in little dark places. then all of a sudden my son Nicolas said 'Oh look Kadabra has just shown me how to open my truck door. He had spent ages trying to get his little men in his lorries and Kadabra, whilst playing with one of the lorries lifted the top with her beak thus showing Nicolas where to open it up. He was really chuffed!

She was playing and nibbling all the toys.





Yesterday evening whilst on my falconry forum, Kadabra was keeping me company. I gave her a little mirror and she found that fascinating. She wasn't at all scared but very inquisitive and the head was bobbing everywhere. She really is a love. Then she started making her 'frilly' noise as I call it (rather like a little whistling noise) so I expected a pellet was on the way. I thought right. It was huge (not surprising as she ate 4 ½ mice that day hehehehe). She enjoys sitting on my hand and wrist. She is also starting to flap her wings and using them to make little jumps now. She still loves to preen my fingers to entice them to preen her. She is just the greatest! she is not at all noisy or vocal. Any one reading this diary will think I do nothing all day long except spend my time with Kadabra. Well just to set the records straight, I don't do anything except spend my time with Kadabra —can anyone blame me!

Just look at this little stunner !



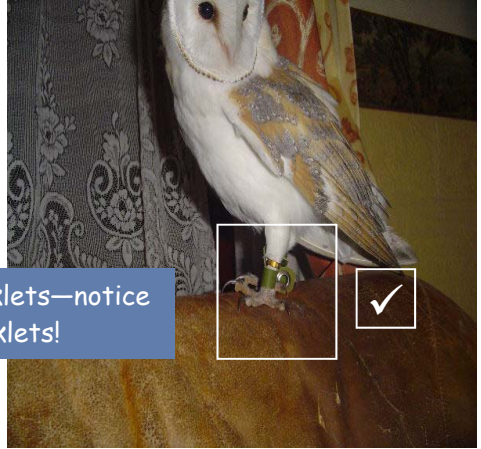


The gentleman I got Kadabra from put these anklets on.



This is the wrong way to do it! Anklets should go below the identification ring and ONLY when the bird is almost fully grown and the legs are strong enough but never before.

See right properly fitted anklets—notice the ring above the anklets!

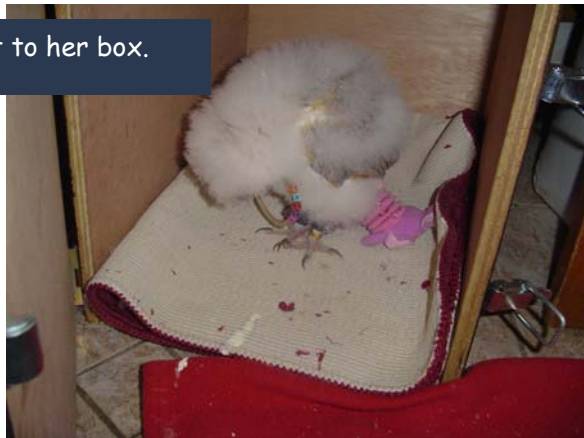




This evening I took her into the living room with me and sat snuggled in my hand with her beak resting on my thumb. Her grasp is starting to get stronger and is really holding onto my fingers now. Her balance is excellent and keeps it whilst I move around (I still keep a hand behind her I don't want anything going wrong now). Then without any warning such as her usual little whistle she dropped a pellet in the middle of my hand—yum! She hopped onto the sofa. I gave her one of my daughters rubber bracelets with letter beads on it and also a Cheshire cat soft toy (which is basically just a head on a soft cloth spring with a tail on the end). Kadabra spent at least half an hour jumping on it, holding it, trying to pull the tail off. It was hilarious then she ran off with the bracelet in her beak and just stood there with it as she had no idea what to do with it.

She took it to her box.

Today we had loads of fun. She played with the little rubber bracelet. Now she can keep her balance and uses her feet and wings really well I let her play on the tiles. I was always worried she would slip and splay her legs. But she is fine. I took her bracelet and tapped it on the floor making a scurrying noise. She was really interested. I slid it so it just went past her. Her eyes were fixed on the bracelet, she pounced and killed. We played this game for ages until she again ran into her box with it.





Kadabra is doing really well. She only has a little down under the chin and the back of the head to go. The body is now fully feathered (as looks sooooooooooooo beautiful). She is using her wings more now and can manage hops with a little flight onto higher places. (only 20cm higher but it is a start.)

When she is on my sofa, she hops up onto the cushion or the arm rests. She found my dogs water dish (which is a very old saucepan) and she can now hop up to the handle and sit on it. She is very intrigued by shiny light and shadows. They seem to interest her more than things with colours. But the reflect in the water seems to attract her. She only has access to this water pot whilst I'm there though.



I gave her a shallow dish but she much preferred the old saucepan.

Her feed is still the same, three chicks plus two mice. Yesterday, she was pretty hungry and I had quite a small mouse, so I put it on my hand and wiggled it a bit, scratched the floor to make a sound and she was well interested. She pounced over, landed on my hand (which was on the floor) and she grabbed the mouse. I was happy because she came over for it. She didn't eat it in one go, she took morsels and took her time ripping it up.



Yesterday we had a slight mishap. Because I am surrounded by fields, farms and riding stables the amount of flies I get here in the summer is disgusting. I think I get the whole of the Belgian fly population in my house.

They are the only insects I really loath and will go to any lengths at anytime to splat one. So I put up sticky fly catchers (the type that just hang down from the ceiling) they catch more in a day than I would a month. But, I still had one left up (basically because I forgot about it, yeah I know pretty disgusting. Getting back to the story, this fly paper decided it would take itself down as I was too lazy to do so and it fell on the floor. Kadabra spotted it and pounced on it and yes it was still rather sticky. I managed to put my hand down just in time in front of her wing and facial disc to prevent the paper reaching her brand new feathers. It just caught the tips of the downy ones. So after manoeuvring quickly with extreme caution we managed to get it off without any damage (but she did screech a bit). I may be rubbish and lousy at a load of things but one thing I do manage to get right is to act efficiently in any emergency (then poop in my pants an hour after the situation is dealt with!)

I suppose if I sprayed it with a glittery spray I could have used it as a crimbo decoration!

When I leave Kadabra on her own, I put her in a play pen I built for her just for extra peace of mind but now she enjoys running around the rooms watching all the commotion of the coming and going. I don't really have to look too hard for her, she screeches in reply to my whistle.



Kadabra has this fascination with sparkly objects, be it metal, sweet wrappers, water or anything that makes a noise

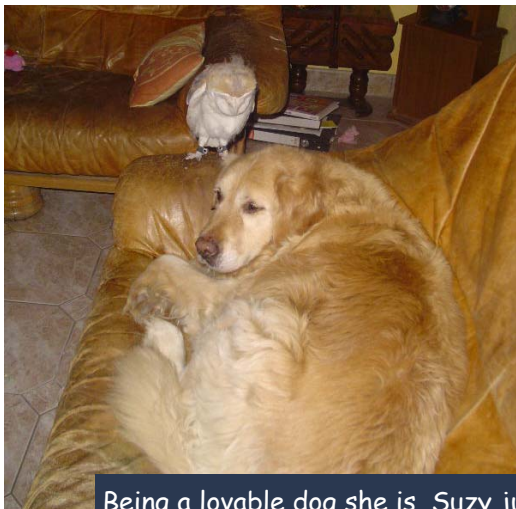
She had real good fun when she found a huge sheet of bubble wrap. She was pouncing and grabbing the wrap with all her might. So much that she ate her dinner and nodded off for three hours. The piece of tinsel that came off of the tree stood no chance—she was having a whale of a time with it!





I particularly enjoy it when the kids are in bed, and we can spend time just playing . She sits on the sofa jumping at shadows, or her toys. Now when she grabs her toys she makes a little squealy noise (I think just to let me know it is hers so mitts off!!) but if one of my kids come in she will run over to me and sit close by. My children were just putting the swingball post away and my littlest daughter came in with the tennis ball attached to the rope. Kadabra spotted it and was running all around the kitchen table after it—

hilarious! When my daughter stopped, she gave a huge pounce and grabbed the ball. It was fun to watch. Some one let the cat in today but now Kadabra is slightly bigger and not as vulnerable I was curious to see how she would react. The cat walked over very unsure of this rather large bird and all of a sudden Kadabra opened her wings and ran straight over to the cat and bit the nose—good show! No more cat issues! My golden retriever is just as unlucky. She has this wonderful invention called a tail, made just for Kadabra's benefit. It was put there for her to pounce on and pull out those hairs.



Being a lovable dog she is, Suzy just humppfffs and sits there hoping the little pest will soon find some other intelligent pastime!



Weighed her today, 348g, pretty good going for an 8 wk old!



Yesterday I got my knickers in a twist. Kadabra was sleepier than usual, and eating just a bit less than usual too. Alarm bells were ringing already and my stomach was on the turn. So I kept a closer eye on her than I usually do. She played and pounced around as normal but not for very long and went to sleep. She did keep putting the same foot to rest though so I checked it over just to make sure all was a ok. That evening I got myself so worried and thought there was actually something wrong. Alan came to my rescue yet again. He brought me to my senses. I put her in her room to rest and I checked on her about an hour later and she hopped up onto my big plant pot (which is the first time she hopped up and perched on anything like that) when I whistled, she answered in a way I knew she was hungry and she wolfed down a whole chick. I decided to just go to bed and check on her in the morning. If I still felt this uneasy feeling then I would just take her to the vet anyway (even if it is only to pay to look silly). But this morning as soon as I whistled she let me know where she was. She came running out from behind the sofa. Not only is she okay but we got a first flight later today!



After I ran into see her first thing this morning, I picked her up (check for the pellet) spent some time with her and she just looked at me (probably thinking what a sad person I am) then it was play time. She wasn't particularly hungry but ate a morsel just the same but she loves to play on the sofa first thing in the morning. She was pouncing everywhere and looked just like a flea. She loves her sofa there are shadows and holes that she makes bigger. Or I hide a finger down it and scratch the leather.



That always deserves a huge pounce!



She is standing on my fist just perfectly now and instead of me putting my hand behind her she just steps on now, she is definitely confident on my fist and hand. She was looking at the sofa and the head was going one to a dozen so I pulled back

about 50 cm keeping my hand a good 30 cm above the sofa.

She looked, aimed and flew!

Yipppeeeeeeeeeeeee. It was fantastic! Now the training has really just started. When I got back from picking the kiddies up from school I found her on the arm of her sofa. She flew up there herself (obviously). This evening she flew from my hand to my shoulder then from my knee to the floor. Someone is becoming a clever little missy!





Kadabra has now been cutting her food intake down herself and is now flying pretty well (around the house). when I go into her room in the morning she will have a stretch a screech and then fly down to my shoulder. She sits there for quite a while (meaning I can't do much with her there - not that I do anything anyway—hehehe!) Once she is wide awake she flies around to different parts of furniture sometimes flying as much as five meters.



Yesterday morning she was at 318g and was not interested at all in flying to the glove nor was she interested in her food. I'm not saying I panic but I do wonder if she is ok. My husband says the only thing she has wrong with her is having me stuck to her all the time but I decided that training does have to get underway and that if she doesn't want her food then I'm gonna leave it 'til the night feed. Which is exactly what I did. (though I did give in and check to see if she wanted something at midday) she didn't seem at all interested, she just wanted to fly around the house and play with her toys. When she tires of that she either flies to my shoulder, to her box or sits on the door.

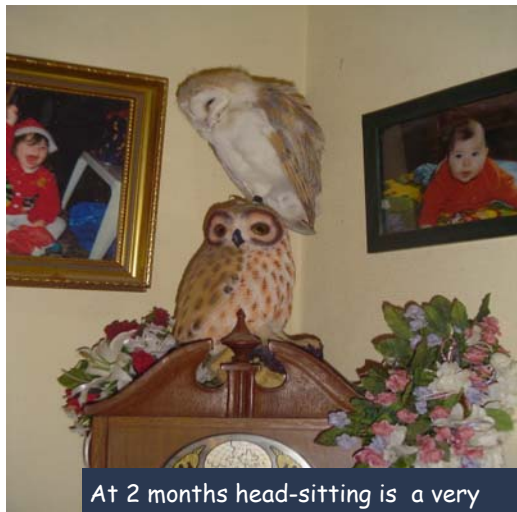
I do love it when she flies to me!



Shame she doesn't yet aim at my glove—never mind she will get there. Yesterday evening we spent a lot of

time playing hunting games, pouncing games and her just preening my fingers in hope of preen in return she then flew to my husband (on his shin as he had his feet up - typical bloke hehehe.) Then she flew to his head. That is when I got the 'AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAndrea—your bird is on my head!' I took her off but she wasn't having it, he was far too interesting, she flew right back to him. She gave up in the end and came and played with me. I thought whilst she is pretty active I would give her the food on the glove. She was obviously ready 'cos she flew straight to the food on the glove I was really chuffed. I let her feed off of the glove with the rest of the stuff and turned into bed.

Today, I went into say good morning as usual and she flew to my shoulder I always love that welcome and then she wanted to fly from chair to chair for an exercise. Once she had finished flying around the place she ran into the playroom and spotted my husband. He knew she was going to fly at him. He was sitting on the couch in the playroom and she jumped right up he is really getting to like her a lot. I picked her up and weighed her. She weighed in at 309g.



At 2 months head-sitting is a very popular sport!



I must admit I do worry that she loses so much weight in one night. But I'm not far off her flying weight that is for sure.

The first couple
were only biddy
jumps then I got
a good 1m flight.
I was really
chuffed with
that!

This morning she flew to the glove for each morsel. As it is the first time outside with no wind, lovely and sunny I decided to take her out. It was great, she just held onto the glove and looked around. She did startle a little when someone approached her but she shuffled backwards and went to hide closer to me but we stayed out for a good half hour then went in. I can feel things are going just great!

The temperatures here are maniac at the moment. One day it can be +8 the next it can be -7. I am weathering Kadabra everyday but he is still kept with me until the temperatures stable a little more. Now he is going outside he just loves to watch what is going on through the windows.



After closely studying Kadabra I have noticed the markings are more like those of a male rather than of a female. His facial disk is pure white, the breast is pure white with only around 10 spots just by the wing but not a spot in sight else where on the breast. Time will tell but I am pretty certain. Usually weight is a good indication as for most owl species, the males are lighter in weight than the females.

You may be asking why am I calling Kadabra a he?



The toes are also very spindly, whereas the females' are stubby.



Anyway, back to what he is up to. I saw my dog running out of the room where we all were and I noticed she was not alone. Kadabra had hitched a ride. He was clinging to the thigh of my poor Goldie (the claws did not touch the dog because of her thick winter coat).

Just thought I should mention my dog is very trust worthy!

The weather was pretty nasty yesterday so I couldn't take Kadabra out but around 10pm there was no wind at all. I have already taken Kadabra on a nocturnal walk around in the garden so we did another yesterday. It went ok. Instead of flying Kadabra just from a perch to me I decided to let my children join in the fun. Kadabra flew from me to my eldest daughter, then to my son, over to my youngest daughter then back to me! we got some great flights from him. It was very comforting as I now know he understands what he has to do and doesn't see me just as his food source!



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oday was going to be the day that I was going to try little hops outside. I got everything prepared then got Kadabra ready. He weighed 285 (10oz) spot on and I put on the jesses and leash. we were ready. We spent around 10 minutes just walking around so he could get used to watching the goings on around him and then felt he was ready to do some training. I put a piece of wing on the perch and he hopped straight to it.

I put some more meat on my glove and moved back just a couple of centimetres so it was a rather large hop. I called him and he came no problem. He was really focussing on the glove and not the surroundings. I left this first outside session on that good note and let him feed on the glove outside. we finished the morning outside in the garden he hopped in the kiddies sandpit and on the lawn for a walk about then came back to me. His expression told me it was time to go and have a doze. We got in, gave him a bit more feed and he is now snoring his head off I just love it when things go so right!

I was so thrilled I
had trouble
keeping my
excitement under
control!



My Mister Handsome is coming on in leaps and bounds.

I weighed him this morning, he was 294g (10 ¼oz). I took him outside but as I knew a pellet needed to come up we just spent the time walking around. He hopped onto the lawn and picked at the tiniest of insects (a little ant that he killed but it got lost in his feathers). He enjoyed watching little bugs crawl up a wall and pouncing on the little leaves that blew along the ground. The pellet came up after about 20 minutes then we walked and played 10 minutes more then decided it was time to work a little. As he was on the ground mooching for bugs and stuff I called him up to the glove and he came no problem (that was about a 1metre jump up, he was about 0.50m from me). I put a piece of meat on a perch about .50m away from me and he went immediately. I moved back and he flew 1metre towards me—I was well pleased! I left it at that, he did really well and deserved his nap.



He was up at
294g $10\frac{3}{8}$ oz
today

Kadabra weighed in a bit too high today. Instead of doing anything new I just thought I would take him for a walk and maybe do a little jump. After a little walk around the garden I tried a little hop and he seemed to respond quite quickly. I moved further back and he jumped but it took a bit longer. I tried once more but he was just not interested so I left it there. There was no point in carrying on so I just picked him up and took him in. I decided now was the time to be a little mean even if it was against what I really wanted to do—but no flight, no food. I stuck with this till 9pm when I offered him some chick for the night he just picked at it instead of gulping it down.



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his morning the alarm clock went and he screeched 'cos he heard the clock from the other room. He knew I was on the way and waited for me outside my door.

He flew to me as soon as I came in to see him. he was hungry so I weighed him and he was at 274g—9 $\frac{3}{8}$ oz I couldn't believe that loss (and I almost fell to the floor) so I gave him a tiny mouse which he gobbled in one go. I got back after taking the kiddies to school and doing other bits. It was freezing outside, -6 this morning so whilst I waited for the sun to come out a little bit I did my washing up. The sun still never appeared but at least there was no wind at all and it was dry. Kadabra was two rooms away from me, I called for him to get his jesses and equipment on. He looked for me and came through the two rooms and found me, It doesn't matter how many times he does this I still get a feeling of excitement when he looks, finds and lands on me. I could tell he was still a little hungry so I used this opportunity to get some good flights. We went out and just walked about the garden but he spotted his post and looked keen to get there (but did not attempt to fly off to it—fortunately.) So I took it he wanted to skip the walk and get flying for his food. I popped him on his perch and he was looking at me constantly so I moved back 2metres to see his reaction and called him. He came straight away. It is very hard not to jump around with excitement but put him on the post again and tried it once more and he performed brilliantly. Instead of just putting him on the post this time I put a piece of meat on there and let him go back himself and he did. Tried one more still at 2metres which he did just as good as the first but decided that was good enough for me. I gave him the rest of the chick on the glove and he was happy too. So a pretty good morning for both of us.



esterday I went in to see Mr Wonderful and he was up and ready to go. That was a good sign because today was the day we were going to do a longer distance. I finished busy boding around the house, getting kids and dogs sorted then I went to get my equipment and food ready. I could tell he was ready and with the amount of food he had the day before he should be well on track. I was just about to get Kadabra then I heard 'vroOOOOm' and saw my next door neighbour had his huge tractor mower out. So I couldn't possibly get Kadabs out with that noise. He can't even concentrate for two minutes on a quiet day. I waited and decided to go and get a bit of shopping in the mean time. Everything looked good when I got back and the sun was even shining making the frosty grass glitter and it was nice and quiet. I grabbed my stuff together and called Kadabra who just didn't seem bothered anymore. I thought it a little strange because he usually comes when I call him. I got him and weighed him and the scales showed 10oz—I re- weighed him because that couldn't be right he was far too keen this morning and he didn't have full rations the day before. I couldn't possibly try anything new now and I so desperately wanted to try 5metres! I took him out anyway for a nice walk and to soak up some vitamin D from the sun rays. He saw his post and looked up for a bit of flying so I tried him anyway but only a 2metre flight. He was just about to take off and a huge blue bottled buzzed in front of him and landed on the wall not far from him. 'Woaaah' that was far too much fun and interesting to watch so much better than flying to mum. He almost got it but landed on the floor. then the grass looked extremely exciting and spent five minutes jumping around like a flea grabbing at the grass. After his silly five minutes I called him up to the glove and he came I was pretty surprised but happy all the same. We just spent time walking and hopping



The weather has and is still pretty grotty so that does mean we have not been out yesterday or today I did use this time to do some good quality training though inside. I used to fly Kadabra to chicks but I know just how much he loves his mice so I spent a lot of time sorting out my mouse stock into big ones and teeny ones. The teeny ones are for training as I'm gonna use mice from now on. The result is amazing! Even though the weight is the same $9\frac{1}{2}$ oz the reaction is quicker and he is much more keener. He is with mice how I am with Cadbury's just so you get the piccy hehehehehehe! As we couldn't go out I made him work a bit harder than usual. We went up to the floor above the garage which is big place and has nice beams for him to perch (it was the part of the barn where the straw and hay was stored, it is useful when we have stinky weather like now). He gave 10 - 15m flights straight away and was keen to get hold of them mice!

Today we worked in the house but instead of from one side of the room to the other he had to find me and that meant coming through no less than three rooms. I could hear him screeching, answering to my calls and he could hear me tapping on the glove (which actually works better than my call or whistle). I saw him coming to me but what was really cool was that as he got up to the corridor (which is the junction of four different rooms, he turned his head to in order to spot which room I was in! He WAS looking for me and he found me! We did this three times and I hid in three different rooms. He found me twice no problem and the third time he had to think a little harder or my call was not getting to him clearly enough! So that was a good training session methinks it must have made him work harder than usual 'cos once those mice were gone he was out for the count so from now on, we're training with mice not chicks! Yum!



Got up early this morning as the weather forecast said it would rain later in the day so I wanted to get Kadabra out before the nasty weather set in. And getting out early means no one around to make noises and distract our session. So got equipment on and out we went. Kadabra was looking eager even though he was $9\frac{5}{8}$ oz. I put him on his post and he kept his beady eyes on me so I just kept going back and I could see him still watching. I realised that I must have been about 10metres and called him. He was off like a shot and got that mouse!

Brilliant!

We tried it again, and he came just as well but dropped the mouse so he had a weeny foot and made him try again (that way I felt I got a freebie 10metres in) and he did it just perfectly. He managed 4 x 10metre flights so I guessed that was good going and let him feed up on the glove. I just love the puffin face he does when eating, it goes all very round revealing more of the beak.



The training is getting more and more exciting by the day. Yesterday was awful weather, gales and rain, so we didn't do much apart from a bit of hide and seek. .

His weight needed dropping just by $\frac{1}{4}$ oz so I didn't give him his mouse for the night.

This morning he was spot on $9\frac{1}{2}$ oz and was keen to get out.

Whilst sorting my stuff out I called for him and he came from the other side of the house so I got his swivel and stuff on. The break of dawn is a good time to fly him as he is keen and it is quiet outside. I fly him from different posts now in different areas of the garden as he is more confident and knows what he has to do. I feel it is less boring for him. He had his beady eyes on me all the time but stayed on his fence post. I moved back and he did the 10metres no problem. I upped it immediately to 15metres to see his reaction and he came. We did this twice more and he did really well. Whilst he was digesting we just walked around the garden admiring the lovely gleaming frost on the grass and the peace and quiet. After 20 minutes I was feeling the cold so decided it was time to go in. Tomorrow we are flying in the field as he is getting too confident and if I give anymore lead he may just go over the wall. So off for an early start tomorrow in the field.



I jumped out of bed bright and early today 'cos I wanted to take Kadabra out in the field before peeps got up. I weighed him and he was $\frac{1}{4}$ oz down which was perfect and got him kitted out and off we went. I was excited but a little stressed at the same time. I could feel he was too, but not sure if it was because he was still not too familiar or if he could feel that I was a little uneasy.

Kadabra enjoyed spinning his head watching EVERYTHING. . He hopped to the ground and starting pouncing around. It is fun watching him do that. He now nose dives down then flings his talons out—pretty cool!



He was happy with me just watching but I thought as he was there I might as well just move back and use this opportunity to get him flying. He heard me move and stood upright all skinny. I could see the mummy? Muuum? Muuuuuuuuummy? I was not more than 5metres away and he was on to me. Bless him. Not sure he appreciated that! I put him on a post and let him watch me move back and I managed to get to 10metres away and he came—no worries. Did it again but he decided he wanted to go off in another direction—h'm'm'm that is not so good. I put him back on the post and moved back 10-12metres and he flew straight to me. Best leave it at that on a good note.



He spotted something in the grass and I encouraged him to go for it

I was happy and he was now full as I let him feed up. We got back, he shook himself and preened and I checked to make sure feet were nice and squeaky clean and he went off to sleep.



About two hours on, I called for him just to make sure he was okay but I got no reply. I called again and not even a titchy screech to say '*leave me alone*'. I tried to keep some self control and just hunted around, checked to make sure toilet lids were down and doors leading to outside were locked (kids are well drilled for this). Every thing was cushty but still no Kadabs. I hunted for what seemed hours until I found him!



He sneaked in one of the wardrobes and settled himself down!



Last night we had a terrific gales and even snow. This morning was gleaming white everywhere. Kadabs was waiting on his log to go out and fly but I had to get the kiddies sorted for school. I wasn't going anywhere 'cos I couldn't get the car out of the garage. The bus was skidding around every where and it was a mess on the roads out here. I'm not a keen driver but I wasn't going out on that ice!



So, Kadabra was in luck we were out after all but only in the garden no field trips. Got him weighed and he was at $9\frac{5}{8}$ oz a little up but is was okay for the garden exercise. Once out he was looking around at the snow. I did wonder if he would react differently. I cleared the snow off of his post (don't want his tootsies going cold) and placed his little feathery bum on it. I gave him the 15metres lead and he came wonderfully we just spent time flying like that in the garden and for the last mouse he dropped onto the ground and ate it. He sunk down in the snow a bit but I'm glad he did 'cos he ain't had a bath since he's been here the snow got all the grot off.

He's a lovely proper little *Tyto alba alba* but he is now snoring!



The door bell rang and it was a very wet and dripping postman, he slipped on the ice—I did ask if he managed not to break anything, and I sincerely meant him—but he handed my parcel and said rather grumpily that *'it is still in one piece.'*

And to my great delight a mate had send some beautiful handmade leather jesses for Kadabra.

Mews Jesses



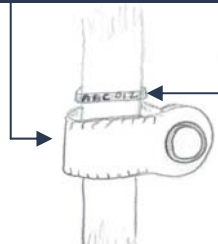
Aylmeri Anklets



Eyelets

Aylmeri Anklet fastened with eyelet below identification ring

Permanent Jesses/Hunting



Eyelet Tool





ther owls we
know and love

A kind young gentleman, Adam Barrett, is currently living with his two wonderful Barn Owls Mollie and Mia and his Harris Hawk Skye. Mollie and Mia have both gone through their training and are tame hacked. This means that they are able to fly around in the wild then come back home for tea or a flying session and be put back safely in their aviaries for the night. This is what I plan on doing with Kadabra once he has cottoned on and is finished with his training.

Mid January, around 11.30 at night A lady called him explaining that she had spotted an injured owl by the side of the road. Without any hesitation, Adam went to the owl 's rescue and here is their story.

I got dressed and went to where the lady told me the bird was. After about 15 minutes of searching I found a little male Tawny owl cuddled up at one side of the road. I could see it had blood dripping down its beak and on its face. I went in to pick it up and it didn't even flinch even though this is a wild bird . I put it on the passenger seat of my car and drove home it barely moved all the way there. When we got home I gently cast it in in towel to have a closer look at its injuries and clean it up.

Usually birds who have just been involved in an accident suffering from head injuries often react as if they are tame by tolerating your approach. They are not tame just simply shocked and concussed. Some trauma creates pressure in the head preventing the birds to fly off.

To cast a bird means to hold the bird securely to prevent feather damage

It was very under weight and so weak it couldn't stand so I resulted to force feeding it. I left the owl in a box really thinking the poor little fella wouldn't see the morning. But next morning the owl was standing in its box but still looked very weak. I cut a mouse up in to four and left it with it and after about half an hour it ate it. He was starting to gain more energy and he was obviously petrified of me so I decided to take his little box and put it into my spare aviary. I checked on him about two hours later and he was on the perch. So really since then its just been a case of throwing some food in with him everyday but I've watched the little guy go from strength to strength. So anyway that's my story.

Adam made sure the owl was fit enough and the weight right up to scratch and he opened the door. The owl took off. Two hours later Adam went out to put his Barn owls safely in their aviary and feed them all and found the Tawny owl came back and settled himself back down in the little convalescing apartment temporarily offered to him. Being in an aviary he could be easy prey for dogs and cats wondering around so Adam decided to close the door for the night to keep him safe.

Photo: Adam Barrett



At 3 o'clock in the morning, Adam re-opened the door and Rufus went. He stayed for about an hour watching out and then returned home. Not many owls are this lucky, had it not been for the lady who spotted him and Adam, who helped him recover Rufus would not be out there carrying on the cycle of a Tawny life and who knows maybe we'll get to see his offspring. So thank you on behalf of Rufus.

Rufus a couple of days after being taken in

In this chapter I would like to present to you some of these wonderful people starting with a very special gentleman, Alan Davidson. I am not allowed to tell you just how kind and caring he really is because he has a mean biker reputation to keep! But in the following paragraphs and pictures you will see owl

I have spent a lot of time researching and studying owls and their habitat and hopefully will be able to do more. I initially planned to go on to further education at university level in order to become a veterinarian or an ecological biologist but obstacles just got in the way. Nevertheless, my love for nature, owls in particular, and the science behind it all is more than enough to fuel my will to learn. Hands on experience is sometimes so much more valuable.

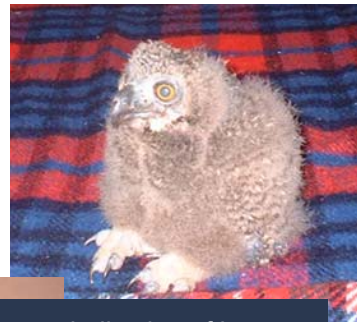
With the help of modern technology, research became a lot easier and I could read and learn from others training their captive bred owls (even though I was green with envy) and read posts about wild injured owls being cared for and released where possible. It all happened on a magical site I found ' Owlpages ' .

The thing I cherish most in my quest of finding owl information is all the friends I made in the process. They come from all walks of life and from all around the globe. From those who train and care for captive bred owls through to those who promote owl conservation projects right up to the expert biologists and ornithologists.

I met Alan on the Owlpages forum when he presented his newest member of the family, a baby European eagle owl, Jester. He kindly kept me updated on Jester's growth, training progress along with all his other milestones on a day to day basis. So even if I was not physically looking after an owl I was so fulfilled by sharing someone else's.

Jester was picked up and taken to his new home at the very young age of 2 weeks. He went everywhere with his new dad, Alan, even to work!! Jester had a comfortable spot in his portakabin to provide the care he still so very much needed during the day. At the very early stages of his little life, Jester was kept indoors for warmth and gradually as he got older, he was introduced to his own little quarters in the garden. But even this was done gradually as the owl needed to be weathered to get used to the

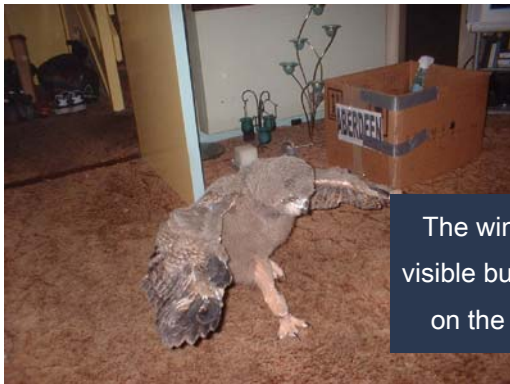
temperature change.



This little fuzzy leaves us no indication of how beautiful he will become.

No, he is not dead, just a very tired young baby.





The wings are now very visible but still a lot of down on the head and body.

Jester enjoying the softness of the grass but also getting used to being outside.





A fully grown handsome European Eagle owl.



Nothing will escape this owl ' s eyes!

Filo 's Story

The story I am about to share with you is quite a lovely one about Filo, a Tropical Screech Owl (*Otus choliba*) from Brazil.

I say it is a lovely story as not only does it show the kindness of some people but also how encounters like this can arouse such passion for owls and the will to help their cause.

Not many people have seen real owls let alone know what to do when they find one sitting on the ground looking rather bedazzled. So many people with good intentions bring them home. But on many occasions things go terribly wrong. The wrong diet, for example, causes owls such irreparable health conditions which handicap the birds for life. Others receive good advice and manage to get the owls back to where they found it or off to a rehabilitation centre if the former option failed. In the story I am about to share with you, a young Brazilian gentleman, Gustavo was given a young fluff ball to take care of. Yes, you guessed—it was a baby owl!

Gustavo had never seen an owl before the day she was brought to him. Had he not cared enough to find out about her species and her diet habits she may not have lived to be the healthy owl she is now. Her living conditions at home with him were made so that she felt just as she would do in the wild. Only one problem occurred. No-one explained to Gustavo that owls imprint so very easily. 'Imprinting' means that an owl will grow up thinking he is just like the food supplier be it another owl or a human being.

This is what happened. Even though Gustavo got the food items were correct and offered the very nutritious and varied diet young Filo needed he did not realise she was becoming imprinted and tamed. Now you may think that this is cute and can see no problems with that! WRONG ! an imprinted owl will not survive on his own in the wild. If he is not attacked by other individuals of his own species he may get harmed by trying to find refuge and food from other human beings. Not all humans will accept or understand why an owl is flying right at them.

Now Gustavo realises the impact his actions have had as he sought advice from people who have more experience with owls. Gustavo wants to arrange for little Filo to participate in a breeding program to help give back to the wild what was taken. But before any program should be underway, research should be carried out in the area where the owls would be released. Would the environment be able to sustain more numbers? Do numbers need to be increased? Is the supply of food plentiful and sufficient to create the right survival conditions? Would other species suffer or decrease in numbers creating an upset in the ecological system already installed and existing? So as you see it can be a very complex issue. It is pointless breeding owls and releasing them if no study of the area has been done. So a lesson has been learned here and the owl is safe.

I personally believe that stories and experiences are always at their best and emotions are better felt when left to be told by the author themselves so I will let Gustavo Dias tell you his story of how Filo has made her way to our hearts.

'Kiko, Mariana 's father, is a biologist and loves animals, especially dogs. Once day he was on his ranch and his neighbour stopped by to explain that a small owl was in the bushes and asked Kiko to come and check it out.

At first Kiko did not touch the owl and kept an eye out to make sure the dogs wouldn 't do anything and just left it there thinking one of the parents would appear or the owl would eventually climb back up to the nest.

A couple of hours later some children came over to say the owl had wondered off into the middle of the street. It was then Kiko decided to remove the owl from it 's present place as he was exposing himself to too many dangers.

I was at Mariana 's house when he appeared with a little grey ball in his hands telling us all the story. I always liked animals, especially birds, but when I saw what he was holding I gasped as I realised it was an owlet. " s he was the most vulnerable little thing I 've ever seen " .

But all of Kiko 's time was taken up due to his work but also due to a very poorly dog of his who was suffering from a tumour so he handed the owl over to Mariana and myself. This was an enormous responsibility and we would have to take extra special care.

Filo was roughly three to four weeks and it was late September so she stayed in our room until she was 2 months old. It was the most amazing feeling having a baby owl sleeping with us. I remember on many occasions waking up to an owl who had jumped towards us to settle down in the middle. No one really believes me when I tell them this story but it is an unforgettable moment. She used to stay on my shoulder staring at my face asking why her dinner was not already being served. Filo was served eggs for the first week then a variety of insects especially bunches of meal worms and other types of meat.

One day Mariana told me Filo was acting very strangely as if she was drunk, she kept falling with her head down. She stayed this way for three days and we got extremely worried but fortunately it was a one off thing and has never happened since.

Filo was getting bigger and so was the mess she was making so it was time for her to move to a more appropriate room, the bathroom just for one more month, but only when she had to be left on her own.

Our rapidly growing owl was now ready to occupy the aviary built just for her as she was now starting to fly. I had to fly to Italy so any further handling was carried out by Mariana and/or her dad. When I returned from Italy, good news awaited me. I managed to contact an organisation which deals with the prevention of cruelty and illegal trafficking of animals. A process is in motion to get papers sorted out for Filo so she can participate in a breeding program to help promote owl conservation and up their numbers.

The beautiful Filo continues to live with Gustavo & Mariana as they await confirmation of the breeding program.



I am truly grateful to one gentleman who not only provided this story accompanied by such beautiful pictures but who has also given the perfect example of what SHOULD be done when an owl is found looking helpless on the ground.

This also proves that falconers do have that love and respect for the wildlife and the environment around them. Here is Clives ' story.

I've just got back from my mornings shooting session with a mate, and we had a bumper morning of wildlife to see: 1 Roe deer, a couple of foxes and 3 brancher long eared owls. One of them, the smallest was sitting precariously on a low branch and we were able to get to within 3 feet of it before it tried to fly off. It must have been the youngest of the 3 as it was much downier compared to the other 2. They also had the start of the 'ear-tufts' showing.

It didn't get far and plopped onto the ground. I was a little concerned as the foxes were not far away and didn't want it to be got at. We watched for a bit but it just sat there; so I went closer and it went into defence mode. Open wings and snapping its beak. I was able (rightly or wrongly) to get it on my arm and put it into a tree high up. We watched it a little longer but it decided to jump back onto the ground. I wasn't going to leave him on the ground, especially as there are a number of foxes about. I can honestly say that I wanted to bring him home but we all know that would have been a major NO-NO! The other 2 were calling but we couldn't see or hear the parents.

I put it back up into another tree nearer its siblings and moved on. When we came back 20 minutes later, we could see them up in the tops of the tree. We then saw a barn owl 50 yards up the way.

I was in two minds about moving it but the thought of the foxes coming in and taking it would have upset me. (I know its nature). I didn't 'touch' it though as such; I placed my cap over its head and placed my arm by its feet. It climbed up and sat there in defence mode but very soon settled. 'I wanted to hug him and pet him and call him George!'

I have been told that they are not very common down this way, so I will be keeping the location secret and hopefully keeping a close eye on them in the near future.

Well I just had to go back this morning to make sure that 'George' was OK....we saw all 3 again in a dead tree but the 2 older ones flew to a dense nearby tree.



Dopey George came
down to the ground
again.....

Enjoy
these!





I took the camera today here are his 2 'brothers in hiding' not very clear but the excitement and the fact that I didn't want to disturb them too much got the better of me.

I contacted the RSPB today regarding 'George' and his siblings, to find out how scarce they are in our region. I sent them a few pictures so they could give a definite Id and they confirmed that they are Long Eared Owls and that they only know of 2 breeding pairs in the Sussex area. They also asked me to give them the exact location but I politely declined as they are on private land and I don't want all and sundry trapesing all over this place, or drawing any unnecessary attention to them. I told them a vague area location and they were happy with that.

A couple days later I went back to check and all 3 were in the same dead tree; I have been looking for the parents but they are going to be much to well camouflaged. Well today we didn't see them in the usual tree but after coming back 30 minutes later we spotted 2 youngsters, virtually all feathered up sitting tight up together. We watched them for a few minutes and moved a few feet up the path; overhead, an adult flew out and went into deep cover 30 yards away. As I looked back towards the 2, I could see George, sitting all by himself about 6 feet from the others!!!! He looked at me and just blinked. I decided to get closer and the other 2 moved to a nearby tree. George sat there until I got to within 5 yards, then he flew to another tree this pleased me as he is showing his natural instincts and keeping clear of us humans!

If I go out again in the morning, I will try and get some more pictures to be able to compare them with 2 weeks ago. We also saw, 5 roe deer; 1 mother and a youngster together, then 3 others, 2 'spiked' males and possibly a stag (we only got to see the back quarters as it passed between the bush)

After a morning out on the grounds, we headed for the LEO site. They were very elusive today but we managed to see them in the end and get a few snaps. Unfortunately, because of the distance mine are not too clever but hopefully the pictures my friend Chris took are a lot better.

They looked like they were fully feathered up even compared to yesterday, except for some downy parts around the facial disk. In all we saw 4 birds again and they were much more independent. We

did get to within 10 feet of one, which I imagine was George. All feathered up now and just look at the change!



And finally as I got back from a mornings outing and we saw George and his siblings and 1 adult. They are flying superbly and hiding much more in the dense cover. George even gave us a couple of fly-pasts so we got a real good look at him in the air.



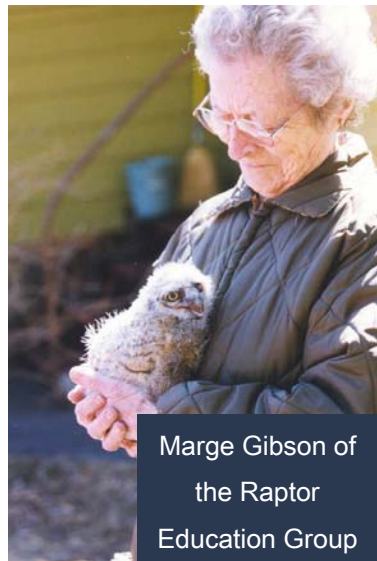
Karla and Alice

Alice 's Story

How a Great Horned Owl and her Carer changed lives.

An amazing success story of how an owl and human partnership used their teamwork and charm to convince the US Senate to protect Great Horned Owls in Minnesota

Alice, the Great Horned Owl, had an accident at a very young age. One day this young owlet fell from her nest in the City of Antigo, WI, when she was only 3 weeks old. Her upper wing bone was broken right at the elbow joint. This kind of injury is too serious to mend thus rendering any possibility of release impossible. This misfortune turned out to be one of those blessings in disguise. Due to Alice' s wonderfully calm temperament, the future looked pretty bright. Alice was teamed up with Karla Kinstler from the Houston Nature Center and together they have made considerable changes to the owl world and even to Alice 's own species.



Marge Gibson of the Raptor Education Group in Antigo cared for Alice and got her sorted out.

Alice accompanies
Karla to work on a
daily basis and returns
home of an evening
where she leads a
very pampered life.



But Alice 's life does not stop at being very well
cared for, she goes on to have a good bash at the
second chance of life she had been given.

Karla and Alice have accomplished many miles
stones together raising owl awareness but I would
like to share one very important change, amongst
the many they have achieved in the 6½ years they
have been together – Great Horned Owls
protected in Minnesota.

Wednesday, February 9, 2005

As strange as it sounds, Great Horned Owls are on the "unprotected birds" list in Minnesota, right along with House Sparrows, European Starlings, and pigeons. But they are federally protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. So they are protected, but it does create confusion.

The first I knew of this issue was when I applied for permits to get Alice in 1998. The federal permit office informed me no state permit would be needed. This seemed weird, since you always need an accompanying state permit to keep raptors, or for salvaging dead birds, etc. So I called the state permit office. They confirmed that Great Horned Owls are the only raptor in Minnesota specifically exempted from the law.

At the time I thought it was not right, but hey, one less permit for me to deal with. I didn't really give the issue another thought until a few years later.

In 2001 the Houston Nature Center was being constructed. This brought out the vocal minority opposed to the nature center, who until that point had nothing really to say on the matter. There were public meetings and things got kind of ugly. But by then Alice was already the symbol of the nature center.

The opposition took it out on her to some degree.

People started talking about "shooting that owl." This certainly upset me, but I figured it was just a way for some people to blow off some steam on the subject.

It went too far, though, when some kids were overheard at their daycare pretending to shoot "that owl" and make "owl soup." It's one thing for adults to talk big, but when it affects kids who don't know any better, that's crossing the line.

So I called my local state conservation officer and explained the situation. He told me that he had no jurisdiction on the matter since Great Horned Owls are specifically exempted from state law. That's when it hit me. Something needed to be done.

In the meantime, our local police officer had a chat with the adults that had been talking about shooting the owl and making owl soup in front of the kids later overheard at their daycare. I think it made them think twice about what they were saying and who they were saying it in front of.

I didn't really know how to go about getting a law like that changed, and had no idea how hard it would be. I basically worked on collecting information: the actual state and federal statutes themselves, and doing research about the level of protection for Great Horned Owls in other states.

Then one day while visiting my former advisor at Luther College, my advisor pointed out one of his current students who's father was in the Minnesota Legislature. Apparently he had recently received an award for his environmental work. Finally a connection--his daughter had the same college advisor as I had!

So I looked up Representative Ray Cox and sent him the information I had gathered. I didn't hear anything, but I didn't really have my hopes up.

Then several months later, when I was talking to someone at the federal permit office about another permit, the woman mentioned that I may in the future need a state permit for Alice. I asked why, and she replied that a state representative had been inquiring about the matter with state and federal officials to get their take on the issue. It was Ray Cox!

Last session wasn't the appropriate time for him to introduce such a bill, but I'm proud to say that on January 24, 2005 he introduced HR0419, a bill that would remove Great Horned Owls from the unprotected birds list. It's counterpart was introduced into the Senate (SF0628) on January 31.

Representative Cox said the bill should come to a vote in the next months, and he doesn't anticipate any problems with its passage. Although it's too soon to celebrate, I'm one happy camper, and I'll be the first in line to get my state permit for a Great Horned Owl.

March 17, 2005, Alice and I drove up to St. Paul. It was Alice's first time up there, and we were there to testify before the House of Representatives Natural Resources Policy Committee regarding HF0419, a bill to remove Great Horned Owls from the "unprotected birds" list in Minnesota.

Needless to say, I was nervous. It's not like this is Roe vs. Wade or anything, but hey, I've never testified in front of a legislative committee before!!!

When we went into the hearing room, quite a few folks were already abuzz, asking each other "Where's the owl?", "Where's it from?" etc. It seems Alice was going to be the highlight of their day. Then the cameramen came in, then more guys with regular cameras. Apparently this was a thing for the press!

The testifying part actually wasn't anything super exciting. I just told Alice's story, which covers most of the basic Great Horned Owl biology stuff and also covers the issue of confusion regarding the conflicting state and federal laws about Great Horned Owls.

There were a few questions, but nothing of major importance. Someone from enforcement was there, and he confirmed my assessment of the regulations as questions were asked. One of the Representatives on the Natural Resources Policy Committee, Jeanne Poppe, is originally from Houston and a dedicated Alice fan...a nice surprise! She was happily telling everyone about Alice, her personality, and that Alice was from her hometown.

Representative Cox had really done his homework on this issue...already contacting the timber and ag industries to make sure they had no opposition. An amendment was added to the bill just to clarify that no state depredation permits are necessary when a federal depredation permit is issued (some states do require one, some states don't), but I need some clarification as to if this removes the need for ANY state permit regarding Great Horned Owls....such as the special purpose possession permit for a live owl for educational purposes.

Such permits are required for all other raptors used in educational programs, so it would be unusual to exempt Great Horned Owls from this.



May 13 2005

Great Horned Owl Bill Passes Minnesota House

The Minnesota House of Representatives voted on HF419, a bill to remove Great Horned Owls from Minnesota's "unprotected birds" list, on Monday, May 9. It passed unanimously, 134-0!!

The following is what "Session Daily", reporting news from the House of Representatives, had to say:

Game and Fish

Give a hoot, change the statute Published (5/9/2005)

Alice the great horned owl may have fewer sleepless days, under a bill that unanimously passed the House.

[HF419](#), sponsored by [Rep. Ray Cox](#) (R-Northfield) , would remove the great horned owl from the state 's unprotected bird list. It aims to clarify the protected status of great horned owls in Minnesota.

The measure now moves to the Senate, where [Sen. Thomas M. Neuville](#) (R-Northfield) is the sponsor.

Currently, great horned owls appear on Minnesota 's unprotected birds list, along with such avian cousins as sparrows, blackbirds and pigeons. Great horned owls are, however, protected under the federal [Migratory Bird Treaty Act](#).

Alice 's handler, Houston Nature Center Naturalist Karla Kinstler, testified in committee that the classification is causing confusion among conservation officers.

Here's hoping all goes well in the Senate too!

May 22, 2005

Great Horned Owl Protection Bill Passes Senate

The bill to remove Great Horned Owls from Minnesota's "unprotected birds" list passed the Senate on Friday, May 20 with a vote of 62-0! Add this unanimous vote to the House's unanimous vote, and I think we can be pretty well assured the governor will sign the bill, which is the final step in the process.

Wednesday, June 1, 2005

Great Horned Owl Protection Bill Signed By Governor

Well, it's official! Apparently everyone figured it was high time the Great Horned Owl got off the "unprotected birds" list in Minnesota so that state law agreed with federal law (under which they are considered protected.)

The House of Representatives voted unanimously to pass the bill, the Senate voted unanimously to do the same, and the Governor signed the bill on Friday, May 17. The new law goes into effect on August 1, 2005.

What does this mean for Alice? It means I now need to get a state permit to have her like I'd need for any other raptor. The woman in charge of permits can expect me on her doorstep at 8:00 AM on August 1st.

How did Alice celebrate? She brought her leftover gopher head into our bedroom last night and ate it on our bed.



Karla Kinstler
&
Alice the Great Horned Owl

After this incredible adventure they both went through, I personally wish to congratulate both Karla Kinstler and her beloved partner Alice for achieving such a goal. It is extremely kind of Karla to have kept this procedure updated as you may know realise just what it takes to actually obtain such results. .

Karla also organises a full week-end event each year to celebrate Alice's hatch day, this year was her 8th. Many experts come along and share their information with us all and there are many activities to do and watch and good fun is had by all.

Our backbone presenter every year at the Festival of Owls is Marge Gibson of the Raptor Education Group in Antigo, WI. She is truly amazing with birds, and she brings along owls of six different species to use in the live owl presentations she does each year. What makes this extra special is that she is Alice's rehabilitator.

So, keep an eye out for the announcements on either her personal blog or on www.owlpages.com and you will be informed of this great event. Well done Karla for all your hard work!!

A picture at the Owl Festival, March 4-6, 2005 Houston, MN from left to right: Karla Kinstler, Jim Duncan with Alice 'Bumper' the Great Horned Owl and Marge Gibson with 'Thea' the Barn Owl.



Thank you

To all the owlers who shared their wonderful stories with us—

Adam Barrett & Rufous - Britain - United Kingdom

Gustavo Dias & Filo - Brazil

Alan Davidson & Jester - Scotland

Karla Kinstler & Alice - United States of America

Clive Wingrave & George - United Kingdom

I rejoice that there are owls

Henry David Thoreau

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Books

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H. Baudvin, J-C Genot, Y Muller *Les Rapaces Nocturnes*
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Links

- <http://www.falconryforum.co.uk/index.php>
<http://falconryforum.proboards46.com/index.cgi>
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Trusts & Centres

- <http://www.owls.org>
<http://www.gentleshawwildlife.co.uk>
<http://www.dryburghfalconry.co.uk/>

Well—little did I know just what was going to happen as soon as I submitted my registry form off to Deane Lewis, creator of my second home, OWLPAGES. My life just took a 180° turn. This site has tightly knitted a web of very close friends. Many have helped me along my path to gain a better understanding of the birds I love most. I would just like to say a big thank you to Sandra Griffith once more because she saw the determination I had lingering inside of me and was able to ignite it and bring it right out to bloom.

I would also like to thank Jim Duncan for sharing so many stories and pictures with me and also for his guidance. Even though he has a very tight schedule Jim always found time to answer my e-mails full of lengthy questions and would go into great detail in order for me to understand. Jim's knowledge and kindness, not to mention his wit are also great factors which urged me to search far deeper into the world of owls. We need people just like Jim to ensure others will keep that owl flame burning.

I could not end this very exciting project without saying a thank you to Tanja Jovanovic who has also helped me understand a lot of the biology behind all of this.

So a big thank you to you all and for a wonderful friendship.

Bubo

