



Of all the birds, our Creator chose the Eagle to be the leader

SKY HUNTERS

Raptor Education and Rehabilitation

NOTES FROM THE NEST

FALL 2014

Greetings fellow bird friends!

So much has happened since our last Notes from the Nest! We didn't think there was going to be much bird activity this year due to the drought, but boy, were we wrong!

The winds we had in late June must have knocked or forced young birds out of the nest. We started getting three to five young red-shouldered hawks every day for about a month. They came in very weak, thin and close to starvation. With a little TLC, fluids, plenty to eat, and some live hunting, most were returned to the wild for a second chance at survival.

Then the great horned owls started to come in, really late, since we usually see them March and April. The barn owls are still few and far between with only about ten this year—I still blame the drought.

Then the Cooper's hawks came in. They are not my favorite birds to rehabilitate, since they are like little kids with too much sugar! Wound tighter than a drum, they bounce up and down and around and can break tail and wing feathers. Then we have to wait for new feathers to come in, making them in captivity way too long for them and me!

The Coops, as we call them, feed mostly on birds. Yes, they are the greyish medium size raptor that goes after the cute little songbirds at your bird feeders. The drought doesn't seem to have affected our songbird populations as drastically so there has been plenty for the Coops to eat.

I get lots of calls from the public on how to get rid of the big bird going after the little birds at their feeders. The only way is to take the feeder down, since you're a restaurant, creating a buffet for the Coops!

Blessings,
Nancy and John Conney

A new program for Sky Hunters -SAN DIEGO FAWN RESCUE-

Under the Sky Hunters' permit with the California Dept. of Fish and Wildlife to rescue wildlife, we have been authorized to rehabilitate and release fawns. Under the supervision of long-time volunteer Shawnie Williams and team member Terry Lockwood, the program is called San Diego Fawn Rescue. The team constructed an excellent fawn enclosure on Terry's property in Ramona where the fawns are housed. We now have nine! There was a need, since the other two rescue facilities here in San Diego were not able to accommodate all the fawns that are found by the public. Because a fawn doesn't have a scent and is well camouflaged, hiding for the first few weeks of its life is its best protection from predators. The fawn's mother will usually move away from the baby to feed and rest, but she will still remain reasonably close by. Many people will think the fawn has been abandoned, and pick it up. Without knowing it, they have just taken a perfectly healthy fawn away from its mom.



Mule deer fawns are born with spotted, creamy brown coats that make the fawns nearly invisible to predators. Photo by Scott Root.

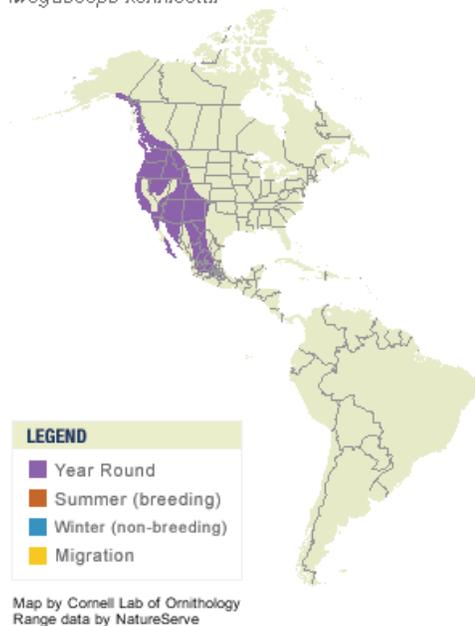
Get to Know Sky Hunters Education Raptors Western Screech Owl

Let's talk about our little western screech owl, a species that we don't get in for rehabilitation very often. Screech owls are small, like our little burrowing owl, standing only about 7.5 to 9.5 inches tall with a 21.5 to 24 inch wingspan. They are found in a diversity of habitats, but primarily in riparian habitats and deciduous trees, but also in urban and suburban parks and residential areas. Locally, woody areas like Torrey Pines State Park and other stream and oak areas are their homes. The screech owl, like some other owls is a cavity nester. They don't go out at night gathering sticks to build a nest but rather look for a broken branch, the hollow in a tree, or a large enough wood pecker hole.



Western Screech Owl
(*Megascops kennicottii*)

Western Screech-Owl
Megascops kennicottii



They can have between two to five owlets each year. The female lays an egg every couple of days, then she ends up with small, medium, and large chicks. The largest gets most of the food, is the strongest, and most likely the one out of the clutch to survive successfully to fledge. Out of all raptors born every year in the wild, only about twenty-five percent make it to the first year. Life expectancy then is about three years; birds have lived to fifteen in captivity. Screech owls feed on small mammals, birds, worms, and insects. Sometimes they take prey larger than itself, like cottontail rabbits and mallards!

In addition to habitat loss, threats to the species include predators, poisons (in their rodent prey), and humans (shooting). They are classified as a species of "Least Concern" by the IUCN. Until recently, the western screech owl was considered the same species as the eastern screech owl (*Megascops asio*).

Your Help Counts! Sky Hunters Depends on You!

Donations keep Sky Hunters going in our mission to rescue and educate about raptors. You can help!

Purchase: We have screech owl and barn owl boxes, tee shirts, and greeting cards with our birds' pictures for sale. They make great gifts! Give us a call at 619-445-6565.

Donate: Use Pay Pal by going to our website at: <http://skyhunters.org/funding.html>. Click on the funding link and scroll down to the **Make a Donation** button.

Educate: You can schedule an education program with live raptors for friends and community events, let teachers you may know about us, we even have owl pellets, a great science project!

Sponsor: Fill out the application on this newsletter to join or sponsor at the support level that's right for you!

SKY HUNTERS EVENTS CALENDAR — SEE YOU THERE!

EVENT

Raptor at the Park
Baskets and Botany
Wildlife Art Show

DATE and TIME

September 13;p 6-7:30pm
October 11; 1-3pm
November 8; 4:30-6:30pm

LOCATION

William Heize County Park
Tecolote Canyon Natural Park and Nature Center
Foothills Fine Art Gallery

EVENT ADDRESSES

William Heize County Park—4945 Heize Park Road Julian, CA 92036
Tecolote Canyon Natural Park— 5180 Tecolote Road, San Diego, CA 92110
Foothills Fine Art Gallery—4910 Memorial Dr. Porter Hall, La Mesa, CA 91942



More SKY HUNTERS News...

Our campground programs went very well this year, with lots of attendees bringing their kids to expose them to nature, birds, bugs and dirt! Kids put their little electronics away and really engaged!

We have been networking with the Fund for Animals in Ramona, helping with transport and releasing young raptors that have come in from the east county.

Adult birds are required by California Department of Fish and Wildlife to be returned within three miles of where they were found. The birds are territorial and we put them back into their neighborhood. During spring they are looking for their mate, and they may come back to the same nest every year when it's time to raise a family.

All of our raptors will keep the same mate from year to year (if they both survive over the winter) but don't live together all year. They have some kids, teach them to hunt, and then say see you next year, same time, same place! Should humans take lessons?

VOLUNTEER CORNER

THANKS TO OUR DEDICATED VOLUNTEERS!

Volunteers keep us neat and tidy and we couldn't rehabilitate, rescue and provide education about raptors without them. We have had one of our longest serving volunteers, **Lara Webster**, home from school for the summer. She has volunteered for eight years, boy we miss her when she's away at college. **Kathy Harrell**, volunteering for twelve years, is with us every week! **Travis and Whitney Gray**, have volunteered for the past three years, rescuing, transporting, and raking the enclosures faithfully every Saturday morning. **Terry Lockwood**, has volunteered for five years, transporting, rescuing, rehabbing our kestrels, helping out with education and now caring for fawns! And last but not least **Shawnie Williams**, eight years of transport, rescue, rehab, and education—now supervising San Diego Fawn Rescue!

Our deepest thanks to you all! And to others who may want to volunteer, give us a call at (619) 445-6565.



Raptor Rescue Information

What would you do if you came across an injured hawk or owl?

Most people don't know the proper care and handling, and can end up hurting themselves or the bird accidentally.

- **Protect yourself by wearing gloves and covering the bird with a towel or blanket. Remember these birds are wild and will talon and bite - they don't know you are trying to help.**
- **A cardboard box with air holes can be used as a temporary container to move the bird to safety. Once contained, move it somewhere warm, dark, and quiet. Don't try to pet or feed it.**
- **Call a licensed rehabilitation group immediately. Sky Hunters can be reached at (619) 445-6565.**

Sky Hunters RAPTOR EDUCATION & REHABILITATION

Member and Sponsor Application

RETURN TO SKY HUNTERS

c/o Nancy Conney
PO Box 1275
Lakeside, CA 92040

Visit our website @
www.skyhunters.org
THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!!

Name _____
Street _____ Apt # _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Phone _____
Email _____

Enclosed is my tax deductible gift!

Member

_____ \$15 Student/Senior
_____ \$25 Individual
_____ \$75 Family

Sponsor

CHECK ONE RAPTOR OF YOUR CHOICE IN THE CATEGORY

_____ \$ 75 _____ Kite _____ American Kestrel _____ Burrowing Owl _____ Screech Owl _____ Pygmy Owl
_____ \$100 _____ Red-tailed Hawk _____ Harris' Hawk _____ Peregrine Falcon
_____ \$100 _____ Great Horned Owl _____ Barn Owl
_____ \$250 _____ Bald Eagle _____ Golden Eagle



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