

# NEWS HAWK

OHIO BIRD SANCTUARY



FALL 2020

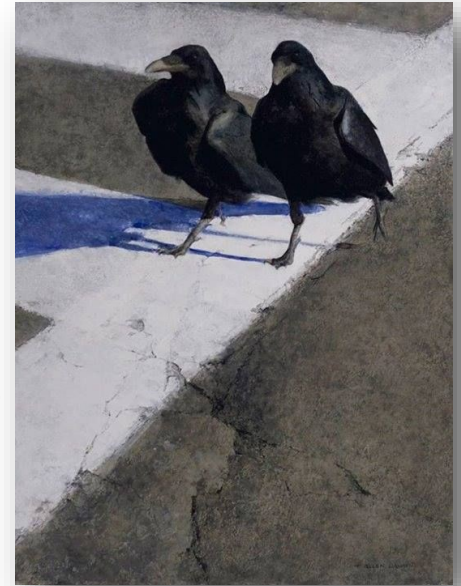
---

## Nature Teaches Us To Adapt

by Gail Laux, Executive Director

One of the first lessons taught in my Animal Physiology class was that successful species are those that possess the ability to adapt to their environment. Those species that can alter their behaviors and if given time, change physical attributes are those that will survive and thrive. Survival also depends on the ability to diversify and adjust how needs are met. Often species with greater problem solving skills such as crows, fox, and racoons adjust to the rapid changes humans impose on their environments and are able to flourish. Whereas more instinctual species with specific habitat needs such as Barn Owl and Monarch Butterfly populations often decrease. Species that are “stuck in their ways” and have very specific habitats and foraging requirements are going to struggle to survive if their environment changes. As environmentalist we often bring these threatened species to the forefront as examples of why we need to protect fragile environments. We also can use these species as examples of how to learn to survive our rapidly changing environment.

Species with problem solving skills study the situation. For example, crows have learned how to use traffic to crush the shells of walnuts. Their beaks are unable to crush the shells of this potential food source, but by observing cars crushing nuts, the crows learned to place the nuts in the road. The secondary challenge for the crows was how to use this knowledge but not get crushed in the process. Through observation they noticed a pattern of the cars stopping due to the traffic lights. Crows learned to wait for the red light, place nuts in front of the stopped cars, wait for the cars to drive over the nuts, and then retrieve their prize! This ability to learn and apply the knowledge has made crows very successful in all environments. The Barn Owl, in contrast, is highly driven by instinct instead of problem solving. This species is a cavity nester and forages in total darkness preferring small rodents that reside in tall grass. They are perfectly designed for this job. When conditions are right, the Barn Owl is one of the most prolific species of owl. But, if their environment rapidly changes through the loss of barns and farm land or eradication of small rodents their population can plummet. They are not designed to hunt wooded areas or larger prey. If they venture into wooded areas for nesting or hunting, their white plumage is easily spotted by their natural predator the Great-horned Owl. Fortunately, the success of the Barn Owl population can be assisted through grassland management programs and by providing manmade structures for nesting.



### So, what can we learn from this?

1. Don't panic. Take time to study what is happening.
  2. Inventory what your primary needs are and focus on them. Can you get them from another source?
  3. What changes are you capable of making? How can you benefit from the changes?
  4. Learn from the process and build on your strengths.
  5. If needed, make allies and reach out to friends and neighbors for assistance.
-

Dear Friends of OBS 

The last six months have been a journey. It has caused many of us to be introspective on what we hold most important. At the Sanctuary, the staff and board strived to keep a positive attitude while addressing the concern around the corona virus. Recently, I was asked to speak to the Mansfield Optimist club and explain how the Sanctuary adjusted operations and what we implemented to navigate the loss of income. I thought that this would also be something our readers would want to know. In summary, OBS is very fortunate to be an organization that could adjust operations to remain open and that has very loyal supporters to help us navigate the changing environment.

There were three main phases in which the Sanctuary had to make adjustment to operations: Stay at Home Order, Safely Reopen, Return of Programming. Under the "Stay at Home" order, staff members continued to provide care for the educational birds and received birds requiring rehabilitative care. Staff also took this time to tackle administrative work and repairs that needed done but had been pushed aside by more pressing items. Although income from visitors and programs came to a screeching halt, the Sanctuary was able to apply for federal assistance for payroll to keep essential staff in place. Our ability to keep staff in place put us in the position to be a statewide resource for the public to resolve wildlife issues. The majority of Ohio's rehabilitation centers were not open nor receiving animals during the "Stay at Home" order. We provided information through phone conversations and emails. Consequently, we experienced a 50% increase in bird admissions. This put an added strain on our budget, but with all trials come treasures. We reached out to the public to help reduce the impact on the food budget by asking for donations of fish for the eagles. This created one of those wonderful moments from a trying situation. This plea for help gave many individuals a reason to try fishing for the first time or for the avid fisherman, a reason to fish more. We have three large chest freezers full of fish and have returned four well-fed eagles to the wild!

During the first month of the "Safely Reopen" phase, we opened the trails and outside bird display area. The Visitor Center, however remained closed. Due to school closures and the restriction of large gatherings, school visits, field trips, and Mohican Wildlife Weekend were all cancelled. Staff reworked many of our programs to fit the CDC and Governor's mandates to be able to serve the public. We were able to implement a new program entitled "Time with the Birds". Tickets could be purchased for the opportunity to meet many of our birds up-close. The star of this program was St Alice, the Bald Eagle. Proceeds from these bimonthly events generated income to help purchase food for our raptors. By summer, we were able to hold camps and reopen the Visitor Center. We saw an increase individual enjoying being outdoors and experienced an exponential growth of new visitors and members.

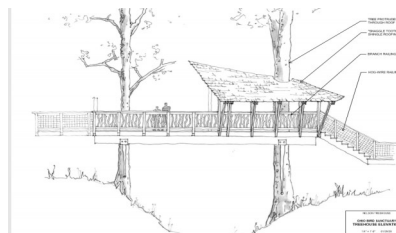
The Sanctuary, like many businesses did suffer a loss in income. A special thank you to the Carl & Anna Marie Fernyak Fund and James C. Gorman Fund of the Richland County Foundation for providing grant support to replace the loss of programming and admission income.

Now we are on to planning for the future! We have made changes and additions to programs that will be implemented moving forward. New protocols that we have implemented out of necessity have streamlined and improved our operations. The board and staff have decided to postpone the construction of the Treehouse-Classroom until July of 2021. This is due to many factors including additional funds are needed and coordinating of volunteers at this time poses additional challenges. We will be kicking off a community campaign to assist with raising the remaining funds and to coordinate in kind and volunteer efforts. Stay tuned, we are very excited to get this project off the ground!!



St. Alice greeting guests at "Time with the Birds"

Gail Laux





# Jake, the Turkey Vulture's Story

This is a story of perseverance. A young vulture, "Jake" as he is currently known to staff, fell from his nesting spot and broke both his legs. Turkey Vultures typically nest on the ground in stumps, caves, or manmade structures. Their skeletal and wing structures are not ready for hopping flights until they are almost 3 months old. Jake came from a nest that was on a high ledge in a barn that unfortunately was also inhabited by hornets. The hornets drove the young vultures from their platform. Jake's sibling was unharmed, but Jake sustained two broken legs. The young vultures were immediately rescued by the homeowner who had been diligently watching the vulture family. The uninjured sibling was placed back up in the nest (after hornets were removed) and Jake was brought to OBS. Usually two broken legs would not have a good prognosis, but they were not complicated fractures and the bird was young enough that we suspected he might remain quiet in a nest structure to allow proper healing. This was going to require ingenuity on the staff's part and cooperation on Jake's part.



First, we created a hammock that had two holes for his legs and one for his vent. This allowed the legs to hang naturally in their casts and for all excretions to be easily caught on "puppy pads". The hammock was stretched over a large plastic tub so he could be easily transported for 24 hour care. A mirror was positioned so he would only see himself when eating to keep him identifying with his own species. Jake tolerated this set up for about three weeks. That was all we needed for the fractures to stabilize. The next step was to encourage use of the legs and encourage partial weight bearing. Staff engineered a soft harness that we could hold allowing him to flap his wings and stand with assistance. This progressed nicely for about a week and then the first complication arose. The ligaments in his hock joints were weak and the joint luxated. Bandages were altered to create a type of knee brace that would allow for the joint to only flex in the correct direction.

Weight bearing was very important for the strengthening of the joints so we increased the number of exercise sessions. After four weeks the bandages were finally removed, but unfortunately he did not like the way the joints felt and started to pick at his own legs. The legs had to be rebandaged. We had hoped to be able to return him to his original nesting site in time to fledge with his sibling, but the open wounds on his legs delayed his release. On a positive note, we were able to foster another orphaned Turkey Vulture into Jake's original nest and the parents accepted him as one of their own.

We tried many times to remove the bandages from his legs, but he continued to cause damage. This created the third opportunity for staff to be creative. We made him pants! We sewed sheep skin leggings that could be fastened up over his back allowing for full use of wings and that would not interfere with his vent. We all laughed when we realized they looked like khakis and decided to nickname Jake, Jake from State Farm. The soft fabric protected his legs while he adjusted to them being more exposed. After about a week in pants we were able to remove them and were pleased to see that he would leave the legs alone.

By the time this newsletter goes to print, Jake will have been released! We were able to give him a surrogate sibling due to another young vulture coming to the Sanctuary requiring care. Our plan is to release the two birds together at the Sanctuary. We have set up a feeding site for the local vulture flock to encourage them to forage close to where we will release them. Our hopes are that they will be accepted into the flock and be ready to join them for migration.



Jake in his "pants".



Surrogate sibling checking out his pants.



---

# OBS Summer Internship Experiences

## Summer Bird Care Intern, Megan Williams

There aren't words to describe how fantastic my internship experience was this summer! I am an Animal Science, Vet Tech senior at OSU, and my OBS internship was worth every minute of my hour and a half drive. The internship looked a little different this summer because of COVID, but there were plenty of birds who needed our help. I worked with 16 bird of prey species, a few dozen species of songbirds, and I even trained a crow and a Red-tailed Hawk!

Along with daily care of about 30 resident raptors and an aviary full of songbirds, we had over 100 sick and injured birds come in during my 10-week internship. I loved working with these wild birds because each case was so unique! There is no better feeling than seeing a bird I worked with eventually be released. Thank you so much to the Richland County Foundation and everyone at the Ohio Bird Sanctuary who made my internship possible.



**Megan & Ray the Red-tailed Hawk**

## Summer Education Intern, Stacey Rybolt

I was fortunate enough to have the experience of being the Education Intern at the Ohio Bird Sanctuary for summer 2020. I am a zoology student at Kent State University and have always wanted to do work with education and rehabilitation, so this opportunity was everything I could have asked for. My responsibilities this summer primarily included doing programs such as guided tours of the Sanctuary, close-up bird encounters, and offsite programs such as the ones at the Mohican Lodge. I started out just shadowing my supervisors, but by the end of the summer, I was able to put on these programs unassisted. I also assisted with our summer camps, which was an incredibly rewarding experience as I was able to teach groups of children to appreciate animals and the environment. I was also taught the basics of general bird care, including husbandry for our resident birds and assistance with rehabilitation, as well as overall being a positive representative of OBS and our mission. Being able to educate our visitors and allow them to see these birds up close is an incredible experience that I have developed a strong passion for.



**Stacey & Winnie the Screech-Owl**

I started out with little to no experience working with birds other than a few Ornithology courses under my belt, but I learned a lot from my coworkers and supervisors as the summer progressed. Through all of this, I was fortunate to finish the summer with a wealth of knowledge and a clear idea as to what I want to do with my career post-graduation. I am incredibly grateful to all the staff at the Ohio Bird Sanctuary for being so kind, helpful, and entrusting me with the responsibilities that they did. The birds and people that I have worked alongside this summer have certainly had a positive influence on my life, and I will treasure the experiences I have had here.

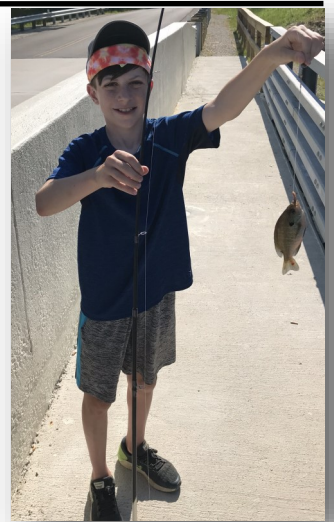
# A Summer Outdoors

by Emily Smith, Education Coordinator

## Summer Camp:

I am proud to say that we successfully ran a full season of summer camps! At our five 3-day camps and one evening camp, we explored topics that included wilderness survival skills, plant and animal identification, animal tracks, nocturnal animals, and more! We built fires, explored streams, solved mysteries, and played so many games. We were as busy as ever but so grateful to be spending time with many adventurous and inquisitive young campers!

A huge thank you to the Richland County Foundation for providing a Summer-time Kids Grant. This grant allowed us to offer a one-week scholarship camp to Richland County students that would benefit from the camp experience and otherwise could not afford it. We are grateful for the Foundation's continual support. I would also like to sincerely thank Sarah Mace and Jim King for their help with summer camp this year. Camp was a huge success because of them. Thank you!



## Junior Naturalist Program:

Our Junior Naturalist Group also had a busy summer! In June, July, and August, the Junior Naturalists completed volunteer shifts at the Sanctuary. They were a dedicated work force that tackled a ton of grounds and maintenance projects. From gardening and push mowing to maintaining the meadow and trails, they really kept the Sanctuary looking nice! While they were at the Sanctuary, they also monitored seven bluebird boxes that are located on the property and collected water sampling data for the Soil and Water Conservation District. They made a huge difference at the Sanctuary!



In addition to all their hard work, they did have some fun! In July, we went on a camping trip to Kelleys Island. While on the Island, the students participated in Lake Erie Water Snake research, water sampling, kayaking, fishing, hiking, and learned about pollinators, geology, and astronomy! In August, the group also visited Pleasant Hill Lake Park to practice archery and help with a trash cleanup project.

## Moving into the School Year...

Now that summer has come to an end, we are excited to be preparing for a full school year of programs. While this school year is certainly different, more than ever before, we believe getting students outside is incredibly important! Whether your child is in school part-time, home schooled, learning online, or doing hybrid learning, we have programs that will suit them. This school year, we have added to our typical home school program in order to serve more students while also maintaining smaller groups. In this program, students meet once a month to explore different topics through games, hikes, crafts, animal encounters, and more! We have field trip options for individuals and groups. You can sign your child up for a field trip at the Sanctuary that includes a live bird presentation, guided tour of the avian displays, animal encounters in the aviary, and a guided nature hike. If you are a part of a home school group, consider having your group come for a field trip. We have also started selling Owl Pellet Dissection Kits that you can do as an activity on your own!



This summer was certainly a unique, wild, challenging summer! We learned a lot about how to adjust and adapt. Nevertheless, we are grateful to have had the ability to provide students with opportunities to get outside and enjoy nature.

“Children cannot bounce off the walls if we take away the walls.”  
– Erin Kenny





**BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

President: Preston Boyd  
Vice President: Julie Schwartz  
Treasurer: Zachary Bramlage  
Secretary: Jay Allred  
Valerie Ashcraft  
Phillip Chatman  
Donnie Clark  
Matthew Garrison  
Alex Kulka  
Nicole Lewis  
Sarah Mussman  
David Siebold

**Executive Director**  
Gail Laux

**Operations Assistant**  
Abby Bramlage

**Curator of Birds**  
Mary Meixner

**Director of Programs**  
Emily Smith

**Bird Care**  
Stephanie Lewis  
Alyssa Hilton

**Grant Writing**  
Susan Kalkbrenner

**Building & Grounds**  
Carrie Lardinais



**Ohio Bird Sanctuary**  
3774 Orweiler Road  
Mansfield, OH 44903

# NEWS HAWK

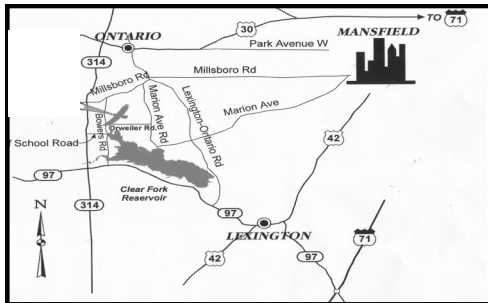
**Non-profit  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Mansfield, OH  
Permit # 114**

**Return Requested**

## Visitor Center and Trail Hours

Tuesday-Saturday 10 am - 4 pm Sunday 12 -4 pm  
Closed Monday and Holidays

**Admission to Bird Display Area**  
\$1/Child & Military \$3/ Adult  
Members Free



[WWW.OHIOBIRDSANCTUARY.COM](http://WWW.OHIOBIRDSANCTUARY.COM)

**Become an Ohio Bird Sanctuary member today and receive free admission and discounts on programs and events!**



**Owl \$25**

Free admission for one household to bird display area, and discounts on camps, programs and events.

**Hawk \$50**

Owl level benefits plus free admission to bird display area for four guests and \$5 gift certificate.

**Falcon \$100**

Owl level benefits plus free admission to bird display area for eight guests and \$10 gift certificate.

**Eagle \$500**

Owl level benefits plus free admission for ten guests, \$25 gift certificate and discount on rentals.



Name \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_