



# Great Basin Wildlife Rescue

Rehabilitation & Education.

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## Owls and Halloween

As Halloween approaches, people are putting up spooky decorations around their homes and businesses. One common Halloween decoration is the owl. Since ancient times, some cultures have connected owls with death and evil, perhaps because owls are solitary and nocturnal—a time that frightens many humans—and their hoot can be especially eerie in the dark. Because some people feared owls, many superstitions sprung up about the bird.

The Romans believed that owls were an omen of death and that hearing an owl meant you would soon die. They also thought that witches could turn into owls to suck babies' blood. The British used to believe that if you hung a dead owl from your door, it would serve as a warning to evil spirits and scare them away. Another superstition about owls is that they aren't afraid of ghosts, so an abandoned house with an owl living in it must be haunted. Some people also thought that on All Hallows' Eve, owls would fly down to eat the souls of people who were dying; you could avoid this fate by turning out your pockets.

None of these superstitions are true, of course, and here at Great Basin Wildlife Rescue, we know that owls are an important part of our ecosystem. Many owls prey on



Source: Wikipedia, Holt, Adern; T.T.; E. Meyerstein, Litho

rodents, keeping those populations from growing too large. Without owls and other birds of prey, rodents would over-consume resources like grasses and seeds and throw off the balance needed to maintain a healthy ecosystem.

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## Questions for Connery

How, why, and where do birds migrate?

Great question! Let me share a few facts with you about migration that will answer your question!

- About 3,000 years ago, a philosopher named Aristotle wrote about the wintering habits of birds. He observed that some birds traveled south to spend the winter. He also believed that some birds hibernated to survive the winter. While false, this theory existed for 2,000 years!
- How far birds travel during migration depends on the species of bird. Also, females and juveniles of certain species fly farther south than males.
- About 300 of the 650 bird species (warblers, vireos, orioles, hummingbirds, swallows, swifts, shorebirds, and some birds of prey) that nest in North America migrate to Mexico, the Caribbean Islands, and Central American and South American countries. These are called neotropical migrants.
- There are “highways” of bird migration called flyways—Pacific, Central, Mississippi, and Atlantic. These flyways run north and south.
- Many birds cross the open ocean during their migration between North and South America.
- During migration, some birds lose as much as one-fourth to one-half of their entire body weight.
- Back in the day, people believed that little birds, like hummingbirds, migrated by riding on the backs of larger birds. However, this is a myth and these amazing birds make it on their own!
- When birds migrate, they navigate and orient themselves by topographic features, stars, the sun, earth's magnetic field, and their sense of smell.
- During migration, some birds stop to rest and feed during the day. Then they migrate at night, following the rotation of the stars. On cloudy nights, wind direction also helps them to orient themselves.
- Other birds migrate during the day and feed on flying insects while they are in the air.



*Like us on Facebook or visit our website at [www.greatbasinwildlife.net](http://www.greatbasinwildlife.net) to receive more information about our upcoming events.*

## Volunteer Spotlight

Larry R. is a physics professor at BYU. His specialty is nuclear physics, and his current research focus is on the development of neutron detectors for applications such as Homeland Security. Larry lives in Salem with his wife, Loralee, who is a great supporter of Great Basin Wildlife Rescue. He has six children scattered around the country.

Larry has always loved nature and has enjoyed learning about and being around wild plants and animals. He heard about Great Basin in newspaper articles but first contacted them when the *Daily Herald* ran an article about the golden eagle being given an MRI. The article ended by saying that donations were always needed and that they could use volunteers at that time. Since then, Larry's become a member of the Board of Directors and also a volunteer. One specific assignment he has on the Board is to keep up the Great Basin website.

## Education Programs

EDUCATE. LEARN. CONSERVE.



Great Basin Wildlife Rescue provides excellent education programs to the public. We travel throughout Utah County with our education birds and provide presentations to schools, fairs, expos, Eagle Scout courts of honor, and many more!

If you are interested in having us attend your school or event, please contact us for pricing and scheduling information.



Larry's favorite bird of prey is the red-tailed hawk. He says that although they're one of the most common birds of prey, he always enjoys watching them. He also says that the red-tails he's met at Great Basin are usually fairly good natured.

Larry has always felt that humans are a part of nature and that we have much to learn about ourselves by understanding the world around us. When we destroy natural habitat, when we harm wildlife, when we fight against nature, we only hurt ourselves. But in our daily living, we naturally cause problems to life around us. Through education, we can become more aware of the world we live in. Through rehabilitation, we can give back a little to the world that gives so richly to us.



*"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." - Margaret Mead*