



Great Basin Wildlife Rescue

Rehabilitation & Education.

February 2014

Volume 4 Issue #1

Mike the Eagle



Recently, you may have heard of the West Nile Virus that is affecting Utah's bald eagles. Here at Great Basin we have cared for many of these sick birds. A few weeks ago we received another eagle with West Nile Virus; the only difference this time is that the bird had several birth defects. "Mike," as the bald eagle is named, was found in Saratoga Springs and brought in by a concerned citizen. He had no nostrils in his beak and had deformed talons. While somewhat rare, birth defects do occur in animals.

Diet, pesticides, and genetic abnormalities, as well as many other environmental and genetic factors, can cause these birth defects. Mike has been able to survive despite his deformities, and we estimate that he is about 4 to 5 years old. Mike recently underwent surgery at Park Animal Hospital, where Dr. Park was able to repair the eagle's nostrils to improve breathing capability. Unfortunately, his talons cannot be repaired. Mike has lived longer than the other birds

diagnosed with the West Nile Virus, and we are hopeful that he will be able to make a full recovery from the disease. To donate to help us with the medical costs of Mike's recovery, please visit our website:

<http://greatbasinwildlife.net/Donate/Donate2.html>



Education Programs

Meet our newest animal ambassadors!

Targaryon is a male golden eagle. He joined our education team last month and has already completed a few Eagle Courts of Honor and Pow Wows. Despite a permanent wing injury that prevents Targaryon from being released back into the wild, he is a great bird and has a sweet disposition.

We are also excited to welcome a bald eagle to our education crew. He arrived at Great Basin at the beginning of December. Although

unable to be released back into the wild due to a severed wrist, we are excited to have him join our team.



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.

Avian Olympics: The fastest bird in the world

If you watched the Olympics this year, you know that while some events depend on score, others depend purely on who crosses the finish line first. So Olympic hopefuls in these sports go as fast as they can, which in speed skating can be over 30 mph, in downhill skiing can be over 70 mph, and in luge can be over 90 mph. But even that fast pace is nothing compared to the speed at which some birds travel. Which begs the question: what's the world's fastest bird?

The most common answer to this question is the peregrine falcon, which when diving after prey can reach speeds of over 200 mph. But there are other ways of interpreting what "fastest" means. For example, the fastest at level flying (rather than diving) is the spine-tailed swift (also known as the white-throated needletail), which can go over 100 mph—and that's without the help of gravity like the peregrine falcon has. The fastest migratory bird is the great snipe. These birds travel more than 4,000 miles from Sweden to Africa in two days with no rest, making their average speed 60 miles an hour. And the fastest bird for its body size? That's the Anna's hummingbird, who can go 385 times its body length per second (in comparison, a diving peregrine falcon only goes 200 times its body length in a second). As for the fastest bird on its feet, the ostrich takes that record, regularly traveling 30 mph—and that's not even counting its sprint speed.

But even these amazing avian speed records aren't set in stone. These are just the fastest speeds humans have recorded birds traveling. There's no telling how fast some birds are going when far away from human eyes and tracking devices.



Great snipe *Rostratula benghalensis*

Answers from Connery

How Can I Spot Owls?

If you don't mind your feet getting cold, winter can be a perfect time to go owling. It's great to go at night since owls are nocturnal, but dawn and dusk are also good times and have the benefit of better visibility. Just remember to dress warmly!

The first step to spotting an owl is knowing where to look. Owls tend to stay in their territory, so if you've seen an owl in a certain location before, that's a good place to start. Otherwise, look for a location that has trees next to a big, open grassy area. This might even be as close as your own backyard! At night, it can be hard to see owls because of the darkness, so it might be easier for you to use your ears to find

them. Before you go out, familiarize yourself with the calls of owls in your area (there are many websites that feature owl sounds). Not all owls hoot—and many do not sound like you might assume owls do. Plus, owls have all sorts of different vocalizations depending on what they're communicating. So if you know what the owls in your area sound like before you go owling, you're more likely to recognize their calls when you hear them.



Connery the northern saw-whet owl.



Great horned owl, *Bubo virginianus*

If you don't hear any owls, you can try playing a pre-recorded owl call to see if you can get one to respond. You may have to be patient and play different calls in different places. But whether you use a pre-recorded call or not, it's important to be quiet so you don't scare any owls away. If you hear one, you can try to find out where the sound is coming from. Remember, owls are great at camouflage, so it might take some time to find where they are in the tree. If you do see an owl, remember to keep your distance. Getting too close will scare them away, and many owls can become aggressive if they think you are threatening them or their nest. And be careful not to shine lights and camera flashes directly at them, as this can disrupt their night vision and make them nervous.

If you don't see or hear any owls on your owling trip, don't give up! It can sometimes take a few tries—and a few locations—before you find one. But if you're patient, you'll eventually spot one of these majestic predators.

Picture Credits

p.1 Bald eagle, Great Basin Wildlife Rescue.

p.2. top: Golden eagle, bottom: bald eagle, Great Basin Wildlife Rescue.

p.3 http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rostratula-benghalensis_female.jpg

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p.4: Connery, northern saw-whet owl, Great Basin Wildlife Rescue, bottom.

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