



Arizona's Raptor Experience, LLC

February 2017

~Newsletter~

*Greetings from Chino Valley
and
Happy Valentine's Day!*

Love is definitely in the air – and in the trees...the resident pair of Bald Eagles is back and on the nest in Chino Valley, Red-tailed Hawks can be seen perched with their mates and Cooper's Hawks are busy building their nests. We are anxiously watching for activity in our kestrel nesting boxes!

This month's newsletter focuses on a wonderful species, the Barn Owl, that is naturally adorned for the season with their heart-shaped facial disk. We hope you enjoy it!

Don't forget to join us at Watters Garden Center, Saturday, March 4th at 9:30 a.m. Come have your photo taken with one of the birds!



The Sweetheart Owl



Among the unique features that make the Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*) recognizable is their very conspicuous and complete facial disk (or ruff) that is heart-shaped. As a result, they are sometimes referred to as the Sweetheart Owl. Their Latin name literally means “White Owl”, and over time they have been known by many names including Ghost Owl, Hissing Owl, Monkey-faced Owl, Night Owl, Barnyard Owl, etc.

Barn Owls are often associated with agricultural areas, and can be found nesting in barns, haylofts and church steeples. Natural cavities in trees, cliffs and riverbanks are also used. Although

Barn Owls are the most widespread species of owl, and likely the most widely distributed of all land birds, changing agricultural practices do threaten some of their populations. Man-made nesting boxes have aided Barn Owls in areas where they have declined (nest box plans can be found at:

<http://nestwatch.org/learn/all-about-birdhouses/birds/barn-owl/>).

These birds are typically monogamous, and a pair will usually remain together for life. Depending on where they are located, courtship and nesting can begin anytime from February to June. Eggs are laid at 2-3 day intervals, and incubation begins with the first egg. The incubation period lasts 29-34 days, and hatching is asynchronous. In other words, the eggs hatch in the same order as they were laid and at the same intervals resulting in owlets of all different ages in the nest. The owlets are altricial (naked, eyes closed) and nidicolous (stay in the nest). The owlets fledge at 7-8 weeks of age, and remain dependent on their parents for another 3-5 weeks.

The average life span of Barn Owls in the wild is very short, with as many as 75% of offspring not surviving their first year. Most birds do not live more than a few years beyond their first, however, the oldest known wild Barn Owl in the world was 34 years old.



Neat facts about Barn Owls:

Their ability to locate prey by sound alone is the best of any animal that has ever been tested.

The clutch size of Barn Owls can be from 2-18 eggs.

Barn Owls have been documented at elevations as high as 13,000 feet!

Barn Owls screech they do not hoot.



It's estimated that a Barn Owl can eat 3-6 mice or voles per night, meaning they consume between 1,095 – 2,190 rodents per year!

The Barn Owl is the most widespread of any owl species. They are found in North and South America, Europe, Africa, Australia, Asia, etc.

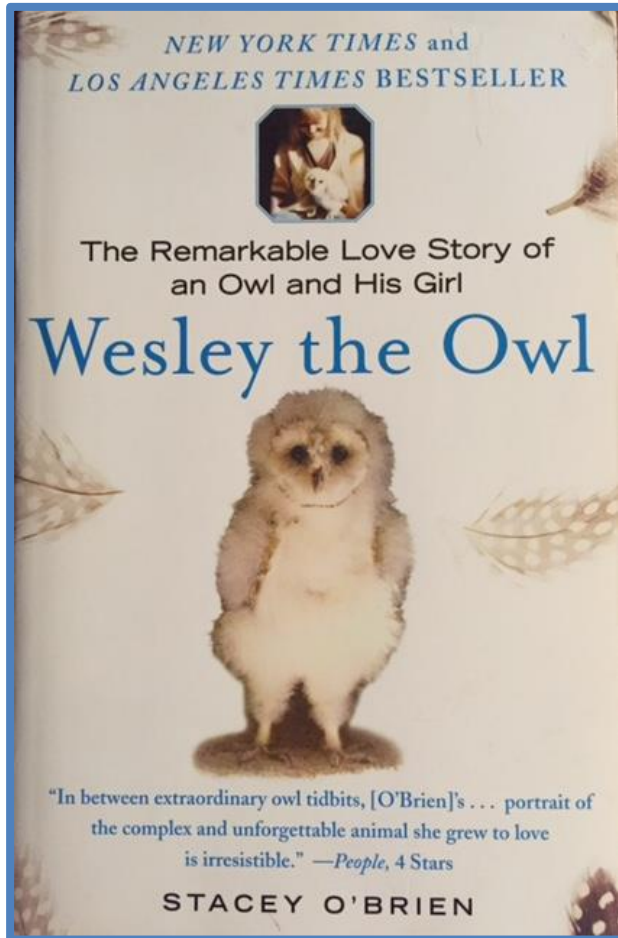


Guest photo:



Marlee
Photo by Elaine Belvin

Looking for a good book to read?



This is a wonderful story filled with information about Barn Owls.