

TRANSCRIPT BULLETIN

Wingmasters swoop into library

Young and old learn about local owls

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Kids (and adults) were fascinated by the native New England owls Wingmaster Jim Parks brought to the Westwood Library.

Since 1994, Parks has been rehabilitating birds of prey throughout New England. Most of the rehabilitated birds are released back into the wild, but in some cases the birds are left permanently handicapped (with issues such as wing or visual impairments). These birds are used for educational programs in schools, libraries and museums throughout New England.

“I’ve done the program in Westwood before, but it was in the old library,” explained Parks. “So it’s been a while since I’ve been here.”

“Our mission is to rescue birds of prey in need of care, rehabilitate and then release them whenever possible. Non-releasable birds are housed with us under government permits. They are the focus of the different educational programs offered by Wingmasters,” Parks explained.

“The owls that I brought here today are local - these are animals that live around here, they are not endangered or exotic. This is native New England wildlife,” Parks said.

The owls Parks brought to the Westwood Library are non-releasable, they each have some sort of impairment.

“Wingmasters does not interfere with nature,” he said.

Wingmasters rehabilitates multiple native New England birds of prey, including eagles, hawks and osprey. But the Wingmaster program at the Westwood Library on Dec. 28 focused on owls.

The first owl Parks showed the audience was the Eastern Screech owl, which is a mere 7 inches long.

Parks said that the average person never has the chance to see an owl in the wild.

“That’s because they are nocturnal,” noted one child in the audience.

Parks explained to the audience that being nocturnal does not mean that they sleep during the day. Owls often hide during the day, and are very good at camouflaging. Parks held a piece of bark up to the Eastern Screech owl to prove how well they camouflage in trees. Children in the audience oohed and aahed.

“Despite the name screech owl, these birds do not screech,” explained Parks. “Nobody knows why they have that name.”

He played a recording of the noise an Eastern Screech owl makes. Some audience members claimed it sounds like a woodpecker, another child said it reminded them of a turkey, and one kid remarked that it sounds like a tree frog.

“I think it sounds like a telephone ringing,” stated Parks.

Another owl Parks brought to the program was the Barred Owl. Despite being very large, the Barred Owl only weighs about 1 pound - their many feathers give the illusion that they are much bigger than they really are.

“The good news is that the number of Barred Owls in the wild have increased this year,” Parks stated. “This is due to more rodents being around in the winter since the season has been mild.”

Although this is good news, that also means there are a lot of Barred Owls becoming injured. The number one cause of injury for owls is being hit by automobiles.

For more information on Wingmasters, visit www.wingmasters.net, or email wingmasters@aol.com. Their mailing address is 34 Long Hill Road, Leverett, MA 01054.