

# Taking Flight

Winter 2025

TAKING FLIGHT  
35th Anniversary  
Edition



## From the Director...

Golly, it's been a while since we last published a printed newsletter, and we've heard from our friends and supporters that they've missed receiving it. We're excited to be back in print, sharing news and stories about our amazing patients, providing updates on our growing programs, and covering many other aspects of our organization. We have so much to share, I hardly know where to begin.

## Celebrating Thirty-Five Years of REGI

This year marks the thirty-fifth anniversary of the Raptor Education Group Inc. (REGI), which my late husband and I founded in 1990. It feels like only a moment ago. Over the decades, REGI has experienced remarkable growth and transformation, continuously adapting to meet the evolving needs of wildlife care and the public's growing interest in native wildlife in our region. We host college interns from universities nationwide and also welcome veterinarians and veterinary students from around the world

to train with us. What began as a small facility focused on rehabilitating raptors has expanded its mission to include caring for all protected native bird species, training wildlife professionals, and providing educational programs for schools and the public. We approach wildlife care differently from many others. Our focus is not on what has been done in the past, but on improving patient care by providing natural housing and developing innovative treatments tailored to each patient's unique biological history. We have adjusted our handling methods to prioritize patient well-being through low-stress handling and housing techniques during recovery. Stress is a significant threat to wild species and can hinder or prevent their recovery. Wildlife care differs significantly from domestic animal care because it must also account for animals' natural histories. Wildlife care is a unique blend of veterinary medicine and wildlife ecology that differs significantly from domestic animal care because it must also account for animals' natural history.

## Lifetime Achievement Award

Earlier this year, during the National Wildlife Rehabilitation Association (NWRA) Conference in Seattle, WA, I was reminded, in a most wonderful way, that I have spent my entire life working with wildlife. I received the incredible honor of the NWRA Lifetime Achievement Award. I am deeply grateful to NWRA and my amazing friends and colleagues for this recognition. Wildlife will always be my heart and life's work.

## Looking Forward

As we look ahead to 2026 and beyond, we are excited to continue our mission to support wildlife and inspire future generations. Reflecting on REGI's 35-year milestone, we celebrate the unwavering support from our community, dedicated staff, and passionate volunteers who have been instrumental in our journey. Their commitment and enthusiasm have helped us achieve many successes, and we are grateful for their ongoing involvement, which makes our work possible.

Together, we can keep them flying!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mary Jane".

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P.O. Box 481  
Antigo, WI 54409  
715-623-4015  
[www.raptoreducationgroup.org](http://www.raptoreducationgroup.org)

# NWRA Lifetime Achievement Award



We have always appreciated having Marge Gibson as the Director of REGI. She is the reason REGI exists, and why it has become the world-renowned avian rehabilitation and educational organization it is. Earlier this year, Marge was honored with the Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Wildlife Rehabilitators Association. This well-deserved recognition has highlighted her career in avian rehabilitation, education, and research.



Marge founded REGI in 1990 with her husband, Don, to fill a need in Northern Wisconsin. At the time, there were no other avian rehabilitation centers in Wisconsin that could fully rehabilitate large birds, such as eagles and swans, that were injured. Over the years, the need grew for REGI to care for all native avian species. Currently, REGI typically cares for between 800 and 1,000 birds yearly, which arrive from all over the state for rehabilitation. Marge's passion for birds began before she could speak as a toddler; her first word was "birdie." She developed a deep respect for nature, guided by her parents; her father was a deputy game warden. Her passion for avian care evolved into a distinguished career.

As the leader of the Eagle Capture and Assessment Team after the Exxon Valdez oil spill in 1989, Marge set standards for wildlife response efforts in emergencies. She played a pivotal role in establishing professional standards of wildlife rehabilitation, founding the Orange County Bird of Prey Center in California and later REGI in Wisconsin. She has served as president of the International Wildlife Rehabilitation Council and has always been a steadfast advocate for the wildlife rehabilitation community. Marge has presented hundreds of programs to the public and has published numerous articles in peer-reviewed journals and popular publications. She has mentored hundreds of students throughout the United States and the world who have gone on to practice the values that Marge has taught them. Marge's dedication, leadership, and lifelong commitment to avian welfare will always be felt in the rehabilitation community.

Congratulations, Marge, on all of your achievements and the impact that you have had in the avian (and human) world!

From the REGI Board of Directors: Tracey, Steve, Carrie, Megan and Gary

## A Shiny New REGI Van

The education team has recently acquired a new van, made possible by the generous support of the Community Foundation of North Central Wisconsin and the James E. Dutton Foundation. This significant contribution has enabled the purchase of a reliable vehicle for outreach programs. Previously, the team relied on a 2015 model van with nearly 200,000 miles. Over time, this vehicle has become increasingly unreliable, particularly for long journeys and travel during winter months. Given that the education team conducts hundreds of programs annually and travels across the state, a dependable and safe vehicle became essential.

With grant funding, the education team purchased a 2025 Chrysler Pacifica. This model offers essential All Wheel Drive and several advanced safety features, ensuring the safety of staff, interns, and education ambassadors, especially during inclement weather or winter conditions. The new van will significantly enhance educational outreach efforts, supporting the team's mission throughout Wisconsin. The generosity of the Community Foundation of North Central Wisconsin and the James E. Dutton Foundation is sincerely appreciated. Their support allows us to promote wildlife and conservation education, making a positive difference in our state and communities.





# The Evolution of REGI: A Journey Toward Relocation

## The Time is Right

For years, we've discussed expanding or relocating Raptor Education Group, Inc. (REGI) to Marathon County. When we moved to Antigo, Wisconsin, in 1990, my husband was nearing retirement and I was engaged in Bald Eagle research in Alaska. I looked forward to continuing research, writing papers and children's books, and establishing a small raptor rehabilitation facility and education program to manage by myself. This would let me write and spend time with my aging parents and family, who still lived in the area. My late husband was an understanding soul, and when faced with challenging situations, he would say, "We can do this." And that is exactly what we did!

After sharing the idea of REGI, it quickly gained support from agencies, wildlife groups, and enthusiasts well before it was a reality. In 1990, the populations of Bald Eagles and Trumpeter Swans were both increasing in Wisconsin. Bald Eagle populations, which had been critically low due to DDT poisoning, began to rebound after the poison was removed. Trumpeter Swans were being reintroduced to the state after being extirpated in the 1880s due to overhunting. The increase in the populations of these two large bird species influenced our work in the early 1990s because more of them required rehabilitation services. The populations of both species were located mainly in the northern part of the state. At that time, only a few wildlife rehabilitators were based in Northern Wisconsin, and they lacked specialized flight enclosures or large fenced ponds to house large species, since such features weren't necessary for most native wildlife. Few could have predicted the evolving needs of these rehabilitation services. At the time, only a small number of facilities nationwide could successfully care for adult Bald Eagles or Trumpeter Swans from intake to release. The closest facility in our region was in Minnesota.



## The Need for Expansion

Our original, well-designed retirement plan was abandoned even before we finished building our home. Just weeks after arriving in Wisconsin, it became clear that the need for wildlife care, especially for large birds like Bald Eagles and Trumpeter Swans, was much greater than anyone had expected. For many years, we considered relocating to Marathon County, but the timing was never right. Several factors make it necessary to expand our facility to a more central, accessible location. We work with the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point (UWSP) and its distinguished College of Natural Resources, as well as Northcentral Technical College (NTC). In the past, we also hosted students from the UW-Madison Veterinary School. However, our rural location has made it difficult for these students to participate in regular volunteer opportunities.

Our education department is constantly expanding, as education plays a vital role in our mission. Our dedicated educators travel across the state, delivering live bird and conservation programs to schools and adult groups. We strongly believe that today's children are the future of our world, including its wildlife and conservation efforts. Children often surprise us with their understanding and love for nature—sometimes even more than the adults around them. However, our current location makes it challenging to host educational programs, even in nearby areas like Marathon County, due to long travel distances. REGI educators often spend over an hour each way on rural roads, which can be especially hazardous in winter. This results in more time spent traveling than teaching, which limits what we can achieve with our resources.

Expanding into Marathon County would benefit students at UWSP and Northcentral Technical College (NTC), the UW-Madison Veterinary School, local public and private schools, the public, and our vulnerable wildlife patients who need prompt care. In addition to live bird programs, we are now developing educational curricula for public and private elementary and secondary schools, further solidifying our commitment to wildlife education and conservation.

We are seeking land to develop, primarily for a wildlife education facility where families and schools can gather for programs and classes. One of the most requested classes in recent years has been classes for adults and seniors. The ideal location would be in Mosinee or the surrounding areas of Marathon County, with closer access to UWSP. Ten to forty acres or more would be preferable. The large flight buildings and long-term rehabilitation cases will stay at the Antigo location for now.

Please get in touch with me if you have questions or are interested in helping REGI fly to Marathon County.

# 2025 Summer Interns

Our college internship program is something we at REGI take great pride in. Every year, college students from all across the country flock to Antigo to learn hands-on with our rehabilitation and education staff. We are very proud that interns who have studied with us are now professors, veterinarians, research biologists, and other professionals, all of whom are making our world a better place.

## **Mercedes Roesler, Florida Gulf Coast University:**

My internship at REGI was a life-changing experience! I worked alongside excellent mentors, peers, and volunteers, making a difference in the lives of our native Wisconsin birds! I learned how to handle raptors for the first time, how natural history is an integral part of avian rehabilitation, and how much work it takes to get a bird from intake to release. My favorite part of the internship was having a blast with my new summer friends, including the birds I had the pleasure of presenting during education programs. I could not have asked for a better experience!

## **Julia Davis, University of Arizona:**

My time at REGI was amazing. I got to spend every day doing my dream. I loved working with the ambassador birds. Education truly is power and if even one person walked away with a different mindset or understanding of conservation or wildlife, I knew I did my part. While I loved teaching, my favorite part was hearing the crowd's reaction every time I brought out a new bird. I saw so many people with pure joy and awe in their eyes. I also gained valuable experience in caring for injured birds. To be able to care for and eventually release them makes me love birds even more. I am so thankful to have been an intern at REGI and for my experience.

## **Mike DeBona, Mississippi State University:**

My summer at REGI was an incredible experience! I learned how to administer medications, and handle and care for avian patients. I was also able to build my communication skills by presenting the ambassador birds to the public. My favorite moment was when we released a great blue heron back into the wild. I took the phone call and was there when he was admitted, so seeing him get released back into the wild was awesome to be a part of!



**Pictured above:** Mercedes poses with Benji, the American Kestrel.



**Pictured above:** Julia poses with Fang, the Harris's Hawk.



**Pictured above:** Mike poses with Storm, the Western Barn Owl.

The arrival of our summer interns is a highlight of our year. The 2025 summer intern group was no exception: these bright, energetic individuals brought their passion for wildlife from all across the United States. The eagerness of all our interns to learn and grow is an inspiration year after year, and our interns consistently impress us with their readiness to jump into our busiest season. In a single year, REGI takes in between 800 and 1,000 patients, with the majority admitted during the summer months. Interns also join our education team on various programs and tours, helping to connect audiences with wildlife by working with our education birds. This also allows them to develop valuable public outreach skills. Our interns help keep things afloat during this chaotic time of year, not just by providing extra sets of hands, but also by bringing enthusiasm to both the clinic and the education department. THANK YOU, Summer 2025 interns! We will miss you, but we are proud to know you are all changing the world.





## A Second Chance for a Grounded Peregrine

It was a Saturday in June when Justin Hielema and his son were on their way to a local farm for an outing when they noticed an object discarded in their yard in the city of Wausau, - "I pulled back in to move it, and that's when we realized it wasn't a bag at all — it was a bird," said Justin. Initially believing the bird was eating, they realized something was wrong when they returned an hour and a half later and it had not moved from that spot. "I approached slowly, and it just stared at us without attempting to move. That's when it became clear that it was badly injured."

A DNR representative connected Justin with REGI, where a rehabilitation staff member discussed the safe rescue of this bird of prey. While making other calls, he used online resources to identify the bird as a Peregrine Falcon. These state-threatened species are among the fastest animals on the planet! These birds are known for their high-speed dives, reaching speeds of 240 mph. This Peregrine, however, was grounded, emaciated, and missing most of his beak. "We drove him out to REGI and stayed while he had his exam and radiograph — which my son found fascinating," said Justin. This radiograph revealed the reason for his plight: this Peregrine had survived being shot through his mouth and into the head with a BB gun pellet. The pellet remains in his head. Shooting or any intentional harm to a native bird is illegal. REGI still receives many birds that are shot every year. Each case is just as gutting for our staff and those who love wildlife. Many of these birds do not survive, but this two-year-old Peregrine pulled through his first major hurdle by making it through his first night. With each passing day, he grew stronger and more spirited, and eventually began to eat independently. Due to his broken beak, he initially required soft foods, such as muscle meat like beef heart, but over time, he has been able to eat his food on his own.



**Pictured left:** Courier, the Peregrine Falcon, the day he was found. Without a human helping hand, this was likely his final day.



**Pictured below:** An x-ray showing the BB lodged in his head.

While he recovered, he no longer displayed the behavior of a typical Peregrine Falcon. Anyone who works with these brilliant birds will tell you they are spirited and full of energy. Our patient was remarkably calm for a bird with no previous experience in human care. When he was shot, he sustained significant head trauma, which caused some brain damage; therefore, he no longer behaves as a wild Peregrine Falcon would. As a result of the issues stemming from his head trauma, veterinarians deemed him non-releasable to the wild.

Non-releasable birds must be issued a federal permit by the USFWS for educational purposes before they can be kept at REGI or other wildlife education facilities as educational outreach birds. His calm demeanor was a good sign that he would be well-suited to life as an education ambassador for his species. He has a compelling story to tell. We have named this Peregrine Falcon 'Courier,' representing the messages it will send to those attending our educational events.

On his very first tour, he had special visitors: the Hielema family came to see his educational debut! "Being able to come back and see him recovering was really special for us," Justin said, "we feel genuinely blessed that we were able to help save this bird, and we hope he goes on to live a long, happy, healthy life." Needless to say, he has many years ahead of him as a valued member of our education team. We would like to extend a special thank you to Justin, Trish, and Lyric Hielema for their assistance in Courier's rescue as well as their contribution to this newsletter article!



**Pictured above:** The Hielema family is pictured with Samantha, Director of Education, and Courier the Peregrine Falcon. This was a special, healing experience for all involved.

# 2025 Kids Adventure Camp



Every summer, our education team hosts two sessions of our Raptor Adventures Summer Camp for children ages 7-9 and 10-13. This five-day day camp is full of fun games, educational activities, and up-close encounters with our avian education ambassadors—each day centers on a different theme. On Monday, campers learn all about feathers, flight, and migration. This included lessons on the different types of feathers and their various uses, as well as the long, intense journey of migration that many birds undertake twice a year. Tuesday is all about wetlands - how important they are, how we might protect them, and how birds fit into these habitats. Wednesday focuses on extreme environments and how different animals have developed adaptations to survive in harsh habitats, such as deserts, mountain peaks, the deep sea, and other challenging environments. On Thursday, campers explore the various parenting strategies employed by bird species to raise their young and the challenges faced by baby birds. Friday marks the culmination of everything the campers learned throughout the week, with the day focused on how humans impact the environment and how we can help birds survive in human landscapes. Our summer campers develop a sense of responsibility for our wildlife, and we genuinely believe these kids are the future!

We are immensely grateful to our supporters for enabling us to offer scholarships to any camper who needs financial assistance. These donations have allowed us to provide this opportunity to any child interested in learning more about wildlife and the environment, without financial barriers.

A special thank you to the following for making this camp possible for every child interested.

- Lisadawn Schram Memorial Scholarship
- William Lazarz Memorial Scholarship
- William Cahak Memorial Scholarship



**Counterclockwise from top left:** Intern Julia Davis teaches campers about extreme environments by making volcanoes; campers pose with intern Alyssa Dumas, who holds Benji the American Kestrel; campers make an interactive ecosystem-wide food web; the star of their camp tee shirts; intern Mike DeBona introduces a camper to Patrick the American White Pelican; campers compare wingspans with certain native raptor species; Board President and regular volunteer Camp Counselor Tracey Grimek introduces campers to Tilly the Northern Saw-whet Owl.



# Educating for the Future

At REGI, wildlife education is at the heart of our mission to safeguard native bird species. Our programs are designed to prevent wildlife deaths by raising awareness of critical issues, such as the dangers of toxins in the food chain and understanding the natural developmental stages of birds. By equipping our audiences with this knowledge, we strive to minimize practices such as the use of poison for pest control and the unnecessary "rescue" of fledglings, both of which are common patient cases we see at our clinic. One pressing issue we also address is the use of lead ammunition and fishing tackle, which poses a significant threat to species such as the Bald Eagle, Common Loon, and Trumpeter Swan, among others. Our educational initiatives aim to shed light on these challenges, highlight the natural history of these magnificent birds, and outline practical steps we can take to protect them.

Over the years, our dedicated educators and avian ambassadors have been working to spread our message, adapting to the growing demand for our programs. In 2023 and 2024, we reached approximately 10,000 people annually. From January through October of this year, we've already engaged 11,000 individuals—a testament to the increasing interest in our programs. These interactions with the public encompass a diverse audience, including children and adults, participants in our on-site tours, attendees of outreach events at schools, libraries, and nursing homes, and college students eager to learn about wildlife rehabilitation and the care of captive wildlife. Our goal is to make each educational program meaningful and tailored to the unique needs of every group, ensuring the most impactful experience possible.

The goal of our programs, featuring live avian ambassadors, is to offer unforgettable experiences that resonate deeply with our audiences. Each bird has a unique story, often tied to human activity, and witnessing these incredible creatures up close offers a rare opportunity to understand them and their place in nature. By learning about their experiences in the wild, we aim to highlight the significant impact of our actions on wildlife, cultivating a deeper understanding and a more substantial commitment to conservation.

At REGI, we genuinely believe that children are our future, and we aim to inspire the next generation of conservationists to advocate for and protect our natural world. We are proud of our programs and remain dedicated to expanding our reach to make a meaningful difference in the lives of both birds and people through education.



- 1: Students on a first grade field trip venture into the great outdoors to go birding with guides and binoculars in tow.
- 2: Intern Anna Molnar teaches a mixed-age group about American Kestrels at the Chippewa Falls Public Library.
- 3: Director Marge Gibson teaches UW-Stevens Point students about rehabilitation techniques.
- 4: Students board the bus back home after a fun day of learning about nature and how it works.

## The Joy of Loons



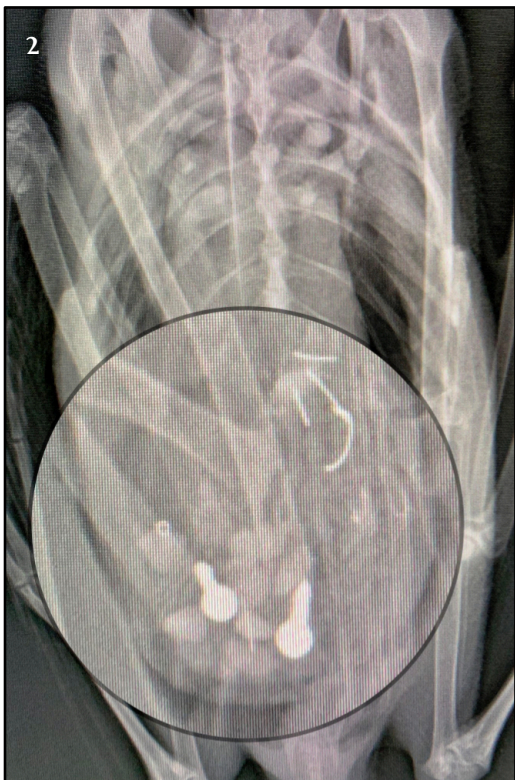
We treat and rehabilitate many loons at the REGI clinic. In fact, we rehabilitate more loons there than at any other facility in North America, except during oil spills or other toxic events. This experience has allowed us to develop rehabilitation techniques and to understand this sensitive species, which rarely comes into captivity. Loons require specialized handling, housing, and treatment throughout their rehabilitation.

The reason we have many loon patients is that REGI is located in North Central Wisconsin, where remote lakes still exist, providing the exact habitat loons need to live and breed successfully. Loons seen in other areas are during migration. We take pride in our ability to rehabilitate complex loon patients; however, capturing and admitting them to our clinic is always the crucial first step before we can begin our work.

We are very fortunate to work closely with Linda and Kevin Grenzer, founders of Loon Rescue Inc. Together, they form an incredible “dream team,” with Linda's extensive experience as a field researcher for Dr. Walter Piper's loon project, and Kevin's unparalleled role as inventor and creative genius, has led to the development of innovative methods to safely capture and transport loons while protecting both the loons and keeping the capture team safe.

Loons are unlike other waterfowl—they cannot walk because their legs are positioned far back on the body. They cannot take off quickly from water like most waterfowl; in fact, they have to run across the water for a quarter to a half mile before they can become airborne. They are labor-intensive and challenging patients to rehabilitate, requiring specialized care and housing. Capturing injured loons for treatment is also complicated and labor-intensive. Capture often occurs late at night, as they are adept at diving deep and swimming long distances underwater. Capturing a loon without causing further injury is also a challenge, especially if they have hooks embedded in their bodies, mouth, or face, or are entangled in mono-filament line.

The call of the common loon is described as haunting or enchanting. Once you hear that sound, it stays in your memory forever. For those of us lucky enough to live in these areas, it is not just a privilege but also a growing responsibility, as the loon population is sharply declining, with human activities being the biggest threat to these remarkable birds. I encourage residents who live or recreate on lakes with nesting loons to take on the challenge of sharing accurate information about loons and teaching friends and neighbors ways to help protect them. We are losing the battle to keep their numbers stable. You, your friends, and your family can and must make a difference just by helping to educate others. If you live in remote areas where loons breed, there is little opportunity for agency oversight. You can and will make a difference. If you see something, say something! Loons are a protected species, and in our society, they need guardians. You will be rewarded by hearing and seeing these magical birds.



**1:** A baby loon separated from its parents during a fireworks display, awaiting the Grenzers to reunite it with its parents.

**2:** A loon x-ray showing ingested lead sinkers and a fishing hook.

**3:** Linda is using a specialized sled made for thin ice to rescue a loon iced in on Sunset Lake, unable to take off without open water. She is roped into the shore - safety first!

**4:** A loon with a fishing hook impaled through the soft tissue of its eye into its head. He recovered and was released.

**5:** Kevin and Linda Grenzer with a late-night delivery.



### BE AWARE OF THESE DANGERS TO LOONS

**Disturbance:** It is vital to keep a respectful distance from loon nests, even if you are curious or wish to take photographs.

**Lead Poisoning from Fishing Tackle:** Lead fishing sinkers pose a significant hazard to loons. Replacing them with non-lead alternatives is essential for the safety of loons.

**Discarded Fishing Line:** Discarded fishing line can entangle swimming loons, making escape nearly impossible. Always bag used line and dispose of it properly in the trash, never in the water or on land.

**Hooks Embedded in Loons:** Never feed a loon from a boat. When loons become comfortable around humans, they are at higher risk of ingesting hooks and sinkers. Remember: **A fed loon is a dead loon.**

**Fireworks and Firecrackers:** The Fourth of July is particularly dangerous for loons. Baby loons hatch during this period, and parents will not abandon their young even in the face of danger, such as speeding boats or loud noises. Loons cannot walk or quickly fly from the water like ducks—they need up to half a mile to get airborne. Speeding boats further endanger loons, as they cannot move out of the way quickly.



**6:** Loons must have fresh water with each swim and catch their own live minnows - Thanks, R.J. Hilger and Sons!

**7:** Marge works on a loon admission with interns Michael Dodd and Mercedes Roesler.

**8.** Marge delicately removes a hook that impaled the tongue and lower jaw, preventing her from being able to eat. She was successfully rehabilitated and released.

**9.** A loon dries off after a swim in the tub - with a full belly of minnows and ready to rest.

## Education Birds on the Move!

Many facilities, including zoos and wildlife education programs across the country, utilize “animal ambassadors” in their environmental education programs - animals who live in captivity and join handlers on programs to help the audience establish a connection with their species and gain a greater understanding of their role in wildlife conservation. REGI is one of these facilities. Many of our education ambassadors are former REGI patients who were deemed non-releasable. REGI also places our non-releasable birds in permitted zoos and wildlife centers around the country. This year, one of these cases was “Baby”, the Great Horned Owl. A hard fall from her nest during a storm left her with vision issues, which would not bode well for her survival in the wild.

We were contacted some time ago by the Outdoor Discovery Center in Holland, Michigan, which hoped to add a young great horned owl to their wildlife education program. When we called to ask if they were interested in our sweet patient, they responded enthusiastically. At that point, we went “pedal to the metal” training her for her future life in education. She quickly became a favorite of all of our staff and summer interns. Throughout the summer, Baby Owl trained with us to ensure she would be comfortable with her upcoming placement as an education ambassador. She worked with various audiences, from preschool-

and elementary-age naturalists to adult groups, including artists with large equipment, such as easels, which can be intimidating to young birds. She also interacted with active adult and senior citizen birding groups, including those with wheelchairs and disabilities. Each experience prepared her for her future.

We were delighted to hear that she is just as impactful at her new facility. “She has quickly become the favorite of all of our staff from our preschool naturalists who know she will be calm even when surrounded by wiggly children to the naturalists who teach adult programs who ooh and ahh over her beauty,” said Kim, the Wildlife Manager at the Outdoor Discovery Center. “We are so happy and feel so lucky to have her as one of our ambassador animals!”

It is always a bit bittersweet to see a bird off to its new home, but it was a truly special experience to raise this bird for its future career as an ambassador for its species. It is gratifying to know she is as successful at her new facility and is as beloved by the staff there as she was here. Our interns also played an integral role in socializing Baby Owl. They ensured she was exposed to a diverse range of people, which ultimately made her comfortable as an educator. We are so happy to hear that “Baby”, no longer a baby, is thriving in her new role as a teacher!



**Pictured left:** “Baby”, a non-releasable Great Horned Owllet out and about on a program with REGI’s education team prior to her journey to her forever home. Exposing baby ambassadors to new stimuli is important for their future success, so she traveled to many programs!

**Pictured below:** Intern Alyssa Dumas handles “Baby” on a summer program at the Wildwood Zoo in Marshfield.



**Pictured above:** “Baby” enjoys her favorite enrichment item, a ball with some newspaper to rip up, at her new home at the Outdoor Discovery Center.



# Wonders of the Web



### Donate Online

Would you like to make a donation to REGI? Just visit our web site [www.raptoreducationgroup.org](http://www.raptoreducationgroup.org) and visit the “Donate” page under “Support”, or scan the QR code on the left to go there on your phone!



### Switch to Our Electronic Newsletter

You can switch to the e-newsletter and help REGI lighten its environmental footprint. Visit the home page of our website and submit your e-mail address to our online mailing list. With any questions or to be removed from the physical mailing list, e-mail [newsletter@raptoreducationgroup.org](mailto:newsletter@raptoreducationgroup.org).

## In Memoriam

This edition of *Taking Flight* is presented in memory of the following individuals. Thank you for being lifelong friends to wildlife.



Bill Cahak  
Gene Davis  
Norm Dickman  
Roger Doran  
Red Echardt  
Don Guse

Bill Kelly  
Bill Lazarz  
Ginny Meharg  
Diane O’Shasky  
John Rys  
Lisadawn Schram

Mary Jo Schuettpelz  
Jane Schulz  
Don Simon  
Marilynn C. Smith  
Renita Sutherland  
Nancy Winter



## Special Thanks

We are very grateful for our supporters. Without your support, we would not be able to continue our wildlife work. State and federal wildlife agencies continue to suffer budget cutbacks. Services once offered by natural resource agencies are increasingly handled by nonprofit wildlife organizations, such as Raptor Education Group, Inc.

A special thank you to our veterinarian, Dr. Desiree Gentile, and her team of technicians for your time and expertise. Thank you as well to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the State of WI Department of Natural Resources, and the Police, Sheriff, and Fire Departments throughout the state for their frequent assistance with wildlife calls and rescues. Thank you to Lakeside Pharmacy in Antigo and Cousineau Recycling for continuing to serve as our drop-off points for aluminum cans, and to Mike and Robbin Dailey for picking them up. Thank you to our fantastic loon and cold-water rescue team of Loon Rescue, Linda & Kevin Grenzer. Thank you to all of our volunteer transporters, especially Tim Bassett, Robin Baum, Benny and Cheri Bowman, Wayne Cooper, Jean & Joe Diedrich, Kathy Esqueda, Steve & Evie Fisher, Jason Fowler, Brandi Grahl, Linda Hamann, Jeff & Kathy Konopacky, Ken Krautkramer, Alan Lancaster, Nancy Maas & Dan Miller, Janet Macklin, Judy Marshall, Ben & Christina Mott, Mark O’Shasky, Claire Romanak, Pete Solin, Dale and Dixie Spees and Dawn & Gary Stein, who put thousands of miles on their personal cars getting patients safely to REGI. Thanks to the State of Wisconsin DNR Fisheries – Strawberry Creek for their generous donation of salmon to keep our eagles fed throughout the winter months. A huge thanks to Dale Waterhouse and Great Lakes Baits for our weekly supply of waxworms. Thank you to R.J. Hilger and Sons Baits of Antigo for supplying thousands of minnows for our loons and fish-eating patients. Thank you to Shelley and John Jansky for planting and maintaining our soft-release area garden. Thank you to Bill Resch for the upkeep of our pond pumps and so much more. Thank you to the Post Lake Association for donating bullheads for our birds. Thank you to our neighbors Nick and Jeanette Salm for the waffles that keep staff fed and for the use of your kayak and land for water rescues and releases. Thank you to Beth Kelly for so many years of keeping the REGI staff fed with homemade pies, breads, cookies, and soups. Thank you to Andy and Deb Kaminski for the beautiful artwork. Thank you, Gary Stein, for keeping our lawn cut and our spirits up. Thank you to the hunters and trappers who provide us with deer hearts, venison, muskrat, and many other valuable resources. Thank you to the Year to Volunteer and RV Volunteering Friends groups for their incredible contributions to REGI’s facilities using their own time, tools, and labor. Thank you, Steve and Judy Golubic, for everything you do. Thank you, Bob Adams of Adam’s Meat Market, for supplying beef hearts. We thank Wausau Homes and the Schuette family every day for their donation of The Nest, our intern house, and Nature Center. A big thank you to everyone who has improved and/or planted habitats with wildlife in mind, as well as to those who have stopped using rodenticides or other toxins in their yards or farms. Thank you to all hunters and sportsmen who have switched to copper ammunition and lead-free tackle. You are making a difference for wildlife. Thank you all!

Thank you to all those we may have missed who have transported, donated, sent auction items, or helped us in numerous ways throughout the year. We are very grateful for your help. Finally, thank you to our hardworking and incredible Board of Directors for everything you do to keep REGI running smoothly!



P.O. Box 481  
Antigo, WI 54409



## **Hello Everyone!**

Do you recognize me?  
I am an American Bittern.

My family is timid, and our habitat is marshy. Our feathers, coloration, and behavior are natural camouflage, so few humans get to see us in the wild. But let me tell you, we're not only cool, but our sound is legendary! It sounds like a pump! Yup, if you hear "pump-er-lunk" coming from a marsh, I am there, but you will rarely see me. I had an encounter with a predator when I was young. It was terrifying, but I recovered. Now I am all grown up and have been released back into my natural habitat.

Here is the thing...  
**I HAD NO HEALTH INSURANCE!**

The great folks at REGI took care of me anyway, but as a 501 (c)(3) non-profit, it does not get any state or federal funding and relies entirely on public support to cover medical costs and other expenses for me and other patients.

**Please, we need your help!**

Thank you!  
*Pumpy the American Bittern*