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Wildlife Clinic at the College of Veterinary Medicine

Kim Papham*

A new organization has recently been developed within the College of Veterinary Medicine at Iowa State University to provide medical and surgical treatment to injured wildlife. Through close cooperation with the Iowa Conservation Commission, the group hopes to aid in the rehabilitation and return of endangered and threatened raptors and other wildlife to their natural habitats. Since it is illegal to possess any animal from the wild without permission from the proper authorities, a federal permit has been obtained by the organization to retain migratory birds and wild animals for treatment. Many members of this wildlife interest group have additionally become affiliated with the American Association of Wildlife Veterinarians.

The goals of the group include providing immediate medical care for sick and/or injured wildlife, increasing the medical knowledge of the veterinary students, and educating the public to the needs of the wildlife.

By functioning as a unit, the Wildlife Clinic gathers experience and information which focuses on the wildlife, thereby encouraging immediate, effective care for these wild creatures. Because the patients are not domesticated, and are therefore unaccustomed to human contact, the management of these cases presents unique circumstances. Reducing stress by proper handling is of primary concern. The group is fortunate to have a licensed rehabilitator/falconer, Joe Zawadowski, employed at the College of Veterinary Medicine, who has provided valuable assistance and advice with respect to the handling of the raptors. Special equipment has been assembled to provide comfort during the hospitalization period. A file containing recent journal articles on the most current diagnostic and medical procedures, handling techniques, and nutritional requirements has also been established.

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Clinicians serve as one of the greatest resources as they advise in their areas of expertise. Wildlife treatment, in turn, enables them to expand their own knowledge and teaching skills.

Interested students are able to obtain first-hand experience in the disciplines of emergency medicine, radiology, anesthesiology, surgery, microbiology, clinical pathology, and general pathology. Students from all four classes are participating, allowing practical application to their basic academics.

Since its establishment in January 1984, the unit has treated two barred owls, one great horned owl, two Cooper's hawks, one sharp-shinned hawk, and one red-tailed hawk. As the group and caseload expands, the experience gathered will not only reinforce present medical knowledge in this field, but hopefully, will also help generate improved techniques and research in the study of wildlife medicine.

Public awareness of the services offered at the ISU College of Veterinary Medicine is important to ensure admission of cases, prompt medical attention, and successful rehabilitation of the wildlife. Not all wildlife brought into the ISU Veterinary Teaching Hospital will be rehabilitation candidates, however. Animals which are healthy but crippled and would not survive if released to the wild are participating in educational institutes. They have become permanent residents of parks and zoos in hopes that the public will gain further knowledge and appreciation for all wildlife and their importance in the environment.

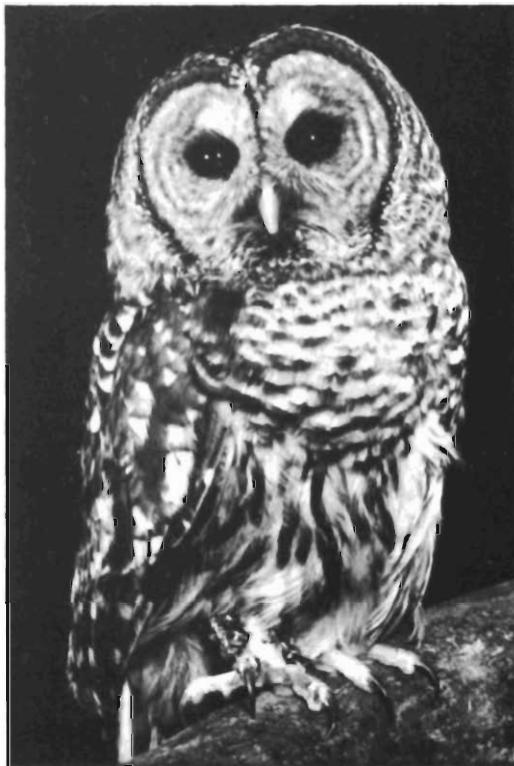
Through this organization, it is hoped that both wildlife and the College of Veterinary Medicine will benefit from the interaction. Wildlife will benefit as better immediate medical care is made available because of increased veterinary skills and medical knowledge. As training of young veterinarians in wildlife medicine continues to increase, the number of private practitioners who are able to provide

the proper treatment for debilitated wild animals will expand. Naturally, everyone benefits from helping the beauty and uniqueness of our wildlife.

The organization would like to express special appreciation to Dave Newhouse and Bruce Ehresman of the Iowa Conservation Commission, Joe Zawadowski, and Dr. Caroline Runyon for their efforts and support in the initiation of this program.



Close-up of Kirschner apparatus.



Barred owl with external fixation on repaired tarsometatarsus.

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