

With the help of ICF, the Decatur's Illinois Raptor Center gets a new home for educational birds.

A New Mew or Two

Story by Elizabeth Eberlin
Photos by Kathy Andrews

The first chills of fall could be felt in the breeze the day that two mews were brought to the Illinois Raptor Center near Decatur. A stately snowy owl perched on the glove of Jane Seitz, executive director of the Center. Squadrons of homing pigeons surveyed the scene from the sky. "Who, who, whooooo?" asked another owl from an enclosure as a craftsman delivered the structures, but the better question would have been "What?"

More than 20 educational birds are full-time tenants at the Illinois Raptor Center, unable to fend for themselves in the wild after injury, abuse or birth in captivity. Without the opportunity to build a real nest, these birds reside in the next best thing: mews.

Mews are living enclosures for birds of prey. These large wooden or metal sheds provide a weatherproof and airy environment for the many birds housed at the Raptor Center. Here the birds are sheltered, fed and exercised when not on center stage as spokes-birds to groups statewide on the life history and importance of birds of prey.

"Birds of prey are a magnificent and valuable constituent of Illinois' wildlife,"

"Our program is different than others. We are brutally honest and don't use glossed-over depictions of birds of prey." said Jacques Nuzzo, program director of the Center, with a golden eagle wing amputee.



The raptors' new habitat was built by an Amish craftsman from the Sullivan area.

stated Sam Flood, chairman of the Illinois Conservation Foundation Board. "The preservation of these raptors and the education of the general public regarding them are of great importance to the ICF."

As long as there are birds of prey, there will be birds in need of the care and shelter the devoted employees at the Raptor Center provide. And because captive birds or birds with serious injuries are not able to survive in the wild, there will always be a need for more shelter for these animals. "All the mews at the Illinois Raptor Center



A snowy owl will be an occupant of the new mews.

are donated by individuals," said Jane Seitz. "The donation of a mew by the Department of Natural Resources puts new worth on our program."

The Illinois Conservation Foundation, an IRS 501 (c)(3) not-for-profit corporation, has raised more than \$20 million to support the programs of the Department of Natural Resources. Contributions are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law. For more information, including details on the grant program, contact the Illinois Conservation Foundation, One Natural Resources Way, Springfield, IL 62702, phone (217) 785-2003 or visit www.ilcf.org.



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