

Vet fixes broken wing of 'charming' wild owl

What eats dog food, is covered with feathers and goes hiss, hiss, hisses to anyone who dares approach? The answer is a Great Horned Owl, one of the most savage and powerful birds, but there is one which is no ordinary hooter. This feathering is learning how to get along with humans such as veterinarian Ron Trenton, of Acton, who fixed the bird's broken wing.

The owl hisses even when Dr. Trenton offers it dog food from a can. Dr. Trenton wears leather work gloves because, though the owl is barely 2½ months old, its black talons dig deeply into bare flesh.

According to Burkhard Nowak, of Hornby, the owl broke its wing after it dove to earth. Nowak, who was riding when he found it said, "I saw him swoosh down, but he did not get up". Nowak found the owl by a rock in the bush in back of Scotsdale Farm, between the 5th and 6th Lines of Esquesing, north of Highway 7.

The great bird's right wing had a compound fracture in the humerus, the bone which in a human being corresponds to the upper arm.

Nowak brought the injured bird to Trenton's Halton Hills Veterinary Services. Trenton was delighted at a chance to treat a wild bird.

The main problem in the operation, which took place last Wednesday, was how to anaesthetize the bird. Dr. Trenton phoned a friend, Dr. William Rapley—head veterinarian at the Metro Toronto Zoo—for advice.

Rapley suggested either to inject the bird with Ketamine or gas it with Halothane. Trenton decided to use the gas because he said gas would be safer for the bird.

Halothane, the anaesthetic, is used at the Metro Zoo, said head vet Rapley. However, it is not used very much outside the zoo, especially by local practitioners, he said.

A hood was fashioned to administer the gas, and Trenton said the bird went out "boom"—just like that—on the table.

The bone was broken at about its midpoint, and both the broken ends stuck out of the wing. Dr. Trenton said the protruding bone was contaminated, so he had to cut off the ends and fit the remainder together with a tong and groove.

Because the owl, though a youngster, is about a foot tall, the veterinarian decided to use a steel pin to hold the two halves of the bone together. In a smaller bird he would be able to use tape and wood, he said.

About a four-inch long stainless steel pin was screwed up the middle of the bone to tuse the halves. The pin would later be removed. The operation took about 45 minutes.

The bone was so firmly set, the bird could use the wing immediately, Dr. Trenton said.

The owl was lucky to be so young. Both doctors said the operation would have been impossible because of the strength in an adult bird.

Rapley said he was sure the owl was hatched this year, probably in February.

The Great Horned Owl has brownish colored feathers, with touches of white in front. It has wide, very yellow, eyes. Its main distinguishing feature is its tufts of feathers on the head which look like ears or horns. It is somewhat heavier looking than the Long-eared Owl which also has tufts.

Dr. Trenton said he could not tell which sex this particular owl is, from its appearance. If it is a male, it will grow from 18 to 23 inches in length. If female, it will be larger, perhaps 22 or 25 inches long.

Many people who have seen the owl note its friendliness—once it gets to know its captors. Burkhard Nowak started feeding the owl, which he calls Gatsby, raw liver from a fork. Later he was able to get the bird to take the food from his fingers. "Instantly I think she (the bird) realized this person was trying to help. For a wild

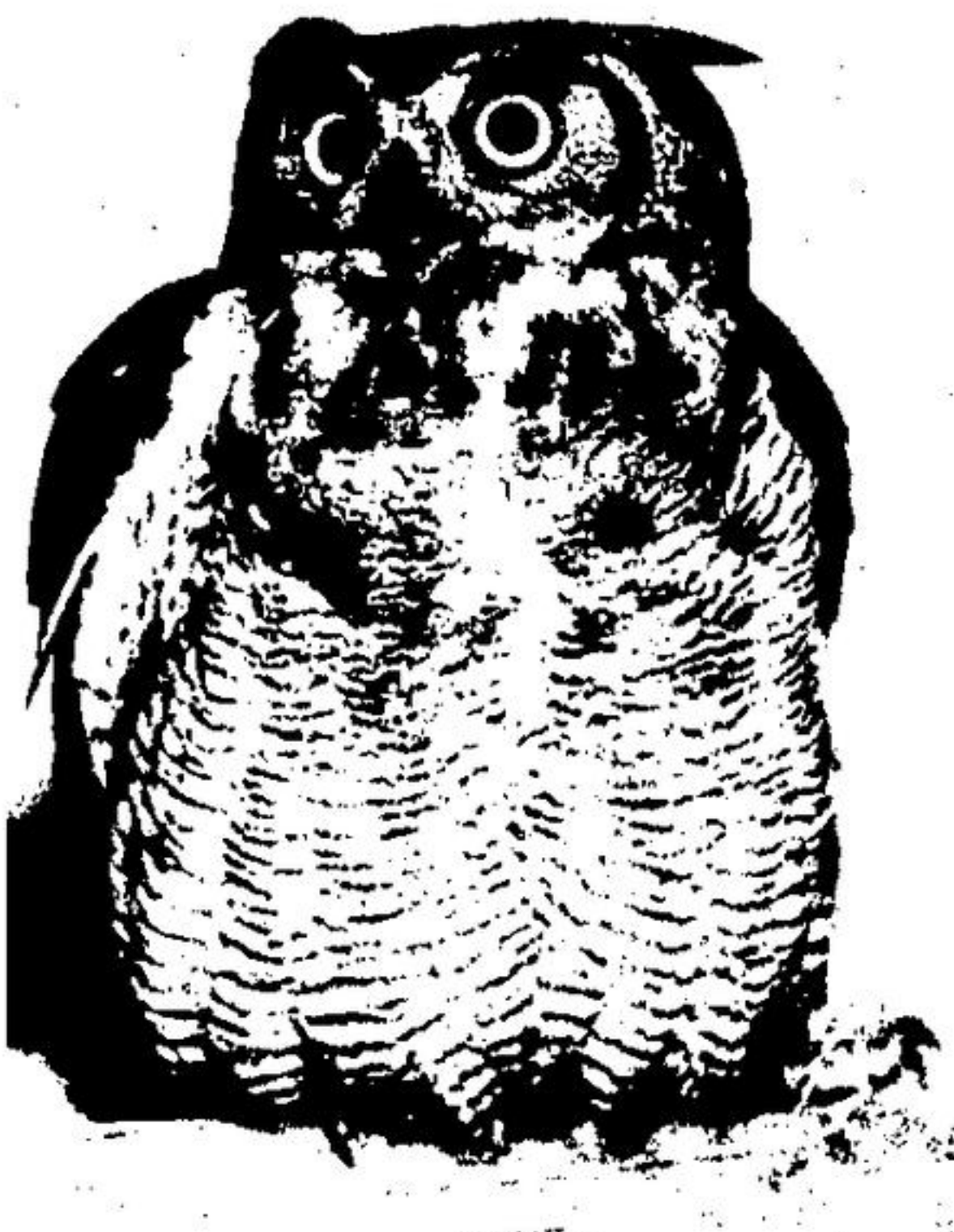
animal, she was very tame," he said.

Veterinarian Trenton said the bird is a real charmer. It winks at children but still hisses awhile when approached. Trenton theorized the bird was so amiable because it did not know how to react to humans. Other animals, such as dogs and cats in neighboring cages, the owl does not like. It shows its displeasure by huffing and puffing itself up so that it appears about half as large again as it really is.

A Great Horned Owl would normally eat rabbits, mice, rats, grouse, ducks, crows or skunks. Occasionally they have attacked porcupines.

Trenton said he really enjoyed working on the owl. "It really makes me feel good to make him better," said the veterinarian.

Nowak said he hopes to be able to nurse Gatsby back to health, then release the great owl from where he found it.



HISSESS! HISSESS goes the Great Horned Owl when anyone dares approach. The bird's broken right wing was fixed by Acton veterinarian Ron Trenton.

Police to speak to service groups

Halton Regional Police have made themselves available to speak with community service groups, or other groups in North Halton, about any topics which concern them. In keeping with their Police Week theme Working Together to Prevent Crime, officers will visit the various groups, upon request, to discuss such things as child abuse, drugs, rape, forensic photography, etc.

Police, students to get acquainted

Police officers will be visiting area schools in the next few weeks as part of the Police Week program. Police week starts May 15.

Working Together to Prevent Crime is this year's theme. By placing officers in the schools, says Constable Bill McGrath, the students will be able to get to know them as friends. He explained the men will be available half or full days to talk to the students, play basketball, baseball etc. with them. Bill Gall will be going to Milton schools, Bob Andrews to Acton, and Wayne Jessup in Georgetown.

Dogs kill

Geese killed by dogs cost the town of Halton Hills \$65 last week. The geese, owned by William Campbell, Limehouse, were killed by dogs running wild.

Campaign Vandals

Plans are being made for the annual Flowers of Hope campaign in May. Vandals marred the left front of a van and smashed its mirror while it was parked at Main Street South last week.

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Proposed Everton dam raises local objections

Most residents in the area of the proposed Everton dam are opposed to it, according to a study done by University of Waterloo environmental students.

A large percentage of the people interviewed knew little about the project, a few knew nothing. The students feel the public is not being kept informed by the Grand River Conservation Authority, planners of the dam project.

The dam is proposed as reservoir head waters for the

Eramosa River, a tributary of the Grand, and will include land east and west of highway 25 just south of Ospringe, proceeding west as far as Everton.

The class of students studying fourth year man-environment studies under Assistant Professor Greg Michalenko, spent this past winter studying the flora and fauna—human and otherwise—of the Everton Valley. Their conclusions were presented recently at a meeting in Fergus.

Michalenko says the valley is "reasonably good" ecologically but there's "nothing spectacular" about the area. The students found grousehawk and many common birds in the undisturbed habitat. Michalenko saw several beaver dams and states the students found the river water to be of good quality supporting trout and other fish. Students concluded a dam would interfere with the quality of water altering the types of fish that would survive. Thick deposits of peat from the forests keep the water well aerated but a dam would stir up the muck, says Michalenko, forcing the trout to other streams.

Part of the report enumerates ways forested areas provide natural flood protection by storing water in the soil; adding surface roughness and reducing soil freezing and snow melting.

People opposed Generally speaking,

Michalenko feels the most important fact from the study is the feeling of local people towards the project. He says there's resentment that farmers have to pay for poor decision making downstream. Headland residents, of lesser density than population downstream and therefore represented accordingly, seem to feel they're getting the worst of the deal. Farmers are concerned with land loss and residents are disturbed about changes in their home atmosphere, says the report. It goes on to state most resident and non-resident owners envision problems with major dam development and are opposed.

Michalenko feels, although the G.R.C.A. have been very co-operative with the students and will receive a copy of the report, they have not kept area residents well enough informed on the proceedings. The man-environment teacher says he'd like to see alternatives to a dam looked into—alternatives such as technical fixes like channelling and floodplain management to ease runoff situation. He feels there's not enough money devoted to the kind of research that may alleviate the necessity for spending large amounts on major projects.

"No one has bothered to provide the money to see if we can do without the money," he comments.

Six from Halton at VON annual

Six representatives from the Halton Branch of the Victorian order of Nurses attended the 24th annual meeting of the VON of Ontario in Toronto this month. Representing Halton were Mrs. M. Macleod, Mrs. J. Milne, Mrs. A. Blum, Mrs. R. Mezzabotta, Mrs. S. Gosling and Mr. H. Hansuld. The 415 nurses and 15 registered nursing assistants employed by VON make the visiting nursing service available to 96 per cent of the population of the province. In 1978, 925,625 nursing visits were made to 54,748 individual patients. Eighty-one percent of these visits were paid for by government through the Home Care Program and the Home-makers and Nurses Services Act under Provincial

auspices and through D.V.A. and Workmen's Compensation. The remainder of the visits were paid for either by the patients themselves or through grants received from United Way agencies and other bodies.

VON continues to provide service to everyone requiring assistance, whether or not they are able to pay for the service. Dr. Allen E. Dyer, Executive Chairman, Area Planning Co-ordinators, Ontario Ministry of Health, spoke at the luncheon on the Role of District Health Councils. Dr. Dyer stated that the Ministry of Health is committed to decentralization. Severe financial constraints are expected.

Renew licences

The seven existing wrecking yards in Halton Hills had their licences renewed for 1978, by council this week.

The wrecking yards include York Auto Wrecking, R.R. 4, Acton; Watson Auto Parts, R.R. 3, Georgetown; G. Johnson, R.R. 2, Acton; Brown's Wrecking Yard, R.R. 1, Georgetown; Fred Tolton, Limehouse; Lees Auto Wreckers; and Halton Hills Collision, Crewsons Corners.

Mayor Tom Hill asked if the licences are transferable. Councillor Roy Booth said the licence is issued in the name of the business, so if the business is sold the licence goes with it.

NOTICE TOWNSHIP OF ERAMOSA

No person shall anywhere within the Township of Eramosa set a fire in the open air without first obtaining from the Clerk or the Fire Chief a permit for said fire under By-Law 19-1968. Any person convicted of a breach of this by-law is subject to a fine of not less than \$25.00 and not more than \$300.00 for each offence.

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