

For Immediate Release

March 30, 2018

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Baby Barn Owls Break Record at Teton Raptor Center

19 Owlets Admitted in 24 hours

March 30, 2018 - It began with a call from Idaho Fish and Game on Wednesday, March 29th, reporting that they had received a clutch of six baby Barn Owls that were displaced from their nest when a hay bale was being moved near Camas, Idaho. The next day thirteen more young owls, ranging in age from 5 to 35 days old were also displaced under similar circumstances.

Fortunately, Teton Raptor Center (TRC), a nonprofit raptor conservation organization in Wilson, Wyoming provides care for injured, ill and orphaned birds of prey, but the organization tries to minimize the number of orphans it admits because young birds are best left near their parents. Often TRC or Idaho Fish and Game will supply nest boxes to create a home in the same area where a nest may have been disturbed -- transferring the young to the nest box and allowing the family unit to stay intact. Unfortunately, for two of the three clutches of owlets admitted in the past two days, locations were unknown, so there is not a means of reuniting the young with their parents. An alternative to get these birds back to the wild is to identify "adoptive nests." Raptors will accept other young of the same species into their nest and the parents will feed their growing brood. TRC is seeking help from citizens in Idaho to help identify nest locations for all owl species. If you know of a nest (please do not approach and disturb it), you are asked to provide that information to Teton Raptor Center, 307-203-2551 or raptors@tetonraptorcenter.org to help these young owls get back into the wild.

"Young raptors do best when raised by wild parents. The best case scenario is that we can place these 19 babies into 8-9 active barn owl nests. That way, the wild parents aren't overwhelmed, but the youngsters get a wild upbringing," said Meghan Warren, Rehabilitation Director at Teton Raptor Center. "We need help finding nests as soon as possible."

Presently, the owlets are being cared for by an expert team of staff and volunteers, who dress in camouflage when feeding the birds to prevent them from imprinting on humans. Because they are at their peak time of growth, these young owls may eat up to eight mice per day each. At that rate, mice consumption at Teton Raptor Center has spiked to as many as 152 mice daily for just these nineteen owls, at a cost of \$114 per day (each mouse costs 75 cents). TRC invites community members from throughout the region to support efforts to keep these birds healthy and find new homes back in the wild.

Barn Owls are a protected species under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. They are found across most of the lower 48 states and around the world. They nest in tree cavities and on cliff ledges, as well as in barn lofts, haystacks, and other human structures. Most active at night, this species has some of the best hearing of any bird and they are exceptional at keeping rodent populations in check.

While many raptors are still returning to the area from migration, Barn Owls breed throughout the year, so it's not unusual to have babies this early in the spring. Barn Owls also lay more eggs (up to 18!) than most raptors and they hatch sequentially, so the oldest chick could be two weeks or more older than the youngest chick. Since they grow incredibly quickly and reach full adult size at 8-9 weeks old, there can be a huge size difference between the oldest and youngest chicks. This enormous developmental difference among a clutch actually makes placement in fosters nests easier, as identifying nests with similar-sized nestlings is not as crucial as it is for other species.

What you can do...

- If you find Barn Owls that have fallen out of a haystack, leave them where they are and notify Teton Raptor Center's Raptor Hotline: 307.200.6019 or Idaho Fish and Game: 208.525.7290, so that a nest box can be placed to keep the birds in the same area close to their parents.
- Without disturbing the nest, please notify Teton Raptor Center (307.203.2551) of any active owl nests to help create an inventory of possible foster nests for Barn Owls or other owl species.
- Don't use rodenticides. The best way to manage rodent populations is through healthy raptor populations. Rodenticides can be lethal to birds, dogs, cats, and other wild creatures.
- Consider building a nest box and donating it to Idaho Fish and Game (Upper Snake Regional Office). Recommended plans: <http://www.scvas.org/pdf/cbrp/BuildingBarnOwlBoxes.pdf>
- Make a donation to support the birds. www.tetonraptorcenter.org/support



ABOUT TETON RAPTOR CENTER

Teton Raptor Center (TRC) advances raptor conservation through education, research, and rehabilitation. TRC is a nonprofit organization of conservation biologists, educators, veterinarians, wildlife rehabilitators and volunteers, working together to keep wild birds wild. TRC is located at the historic Hardeman Ranch, a Jackson Hole Land Trust protected property in Wilson, Wyoming. If you find an injured raptor, please call the Injured Raptor Line: 307.200.6019.

For more information: 307.203.2551 or www.tetonraptorcenter.org.