



Bird Residents of the Nature Center

Luna the Barn Owl

Personal History:

Luna came to the California Raptor Center at U.C. Davis on March 31, 1997, at approximately 18 days of age. She was being rehabilitated with other owls for release when she started regurgitating and refusing her food. It was thought that she might have some brain damage from falling from her nest, and could not be rehabilitated for release to the wild. After learning that there was a home available for Luna at the Nature Center, caretakers allowed Luna to become used to humans while she was being tested and cared for at the veterinary school. She then became imprinted on humans, which means that she identifies more with humans than with owls. An imprinted owl can not learn how to be wild again and, if released, she would fly up to any human, expecting to be fed. Luna has now recovered from most of her problems, is very responsive to people and very curious about her world. This makes Luna perfect for the special job of helping to teach children love and respect for nature at the Effie Yeaw Nature Center.



Natural History: Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*)

Description: A Barn Owl's back, head and wings are yellowish-brown spotted with grays and darker browns. They have a distinctly white, heart-shaped face and long white legs with sparsely feathered feet.

Habitat: Hunts in farm yards, grasslands, marshes, and forest edges.

Food: The favored foods are mice, rats, and voles. Barn Owls play a significant role in controlling rodent populations.

Communication: Barn Owl calls normally sound like a soft and wheezy ascending screech. When threatened at the nest they may hiss.

Reproduction: Barn Owls may roost in natural tree cavities or cliff ledges and frequently use human structures such as barns, church spires, and water towers. Most nest starting in January. They don't construct a nest, but rather lay 5-9 eggs directly on the bare surface of their nesting area at 2-3 day intervals. The eggs are incubated for 32-34 days by the female.

Additional Information: Barn Owls have a special feather structure that make their flight silent for efficient rodent hunting. Their ears are asymmetrical, meaning that one ear is lower than the other. This creates exacting directional hearing and enables the owl to have pinpoint accuracy for locating prey by sound in total darkness. Barn owls are strictly nocturnal and many are killed by cars. They range throughout most of the U.S. and Mexico.