



# Santa Barbara Audubon Society Eyes in the Sky

Quarterly Newsletter

Spring 2009

As a supporter of Eyes in the Sky (EITS), we want to welcome you to our first quarterly newsletter! In this and future issues we will share with you some of our recent accomplishments, tell you a little bit about our busy upcoming calendar and reveal some personal stories of our feathered ambassadors and our volunteers.



During last year, an estimated 3,400 community members, students, families, seniors and out-of-towners benefited from EITS' programs. The majority (98) of these programs took place at the Museum of Natural History (SBMNH) and were presented free of charge as part of our cooperative agreement with the Mu-

seum. Other programs were presented at Youth Enrichment Adventures (YEA), SBMNH fee-based presentations, United Boys and Girls Club (Camp Whittier), Cachuma Lake Nature Center, Jodi House, Newcomers Club, SB Wildlife Care Network, Washington School, Harding School, Monroe School, St. Andrew's Preschool, Lou Grant Parent-Child Workshop and the Alisal Guest Ranch.

Many of the programs were presented by twelve enthusiastic and devoted volunteers – over 1,700 hours of service! Our heartfelt thanks to these twelve: Elliott Chasin, Coni Edick, David Eldridge, Fred Ennerson, Betty Flesher, Suman Kasturian, Margo Kenney, Patty Malone, John O'Brien, Komran Sockolov, Snowfox Walkinshaw and Reanna Wights. Without their support, which includes time spent cleaning and maintaining aviaries and TLC of the birds, EITS' community outreach would not be as broad and successful as it is.

*Are more volunteers needed? Yes! A new group of 4 volunteers starts training this month. Call Gabriele (898-0347) to interview for the next volunteer class.*

We also wish to thank the High Tides Foundation, Coastal Fund, and Santa Barbara Audubon for their generous support, and to all of you who responded to our Annual Appeal. Your continued support is greatly appreciated.



2009 is already shaping up to be a busy one. Seven first and second grade classrooms at McKinley school are busy learning about 12 of the most common birds in our five-week "Meet Your Wild Neighbor" (MYWN) series. Educational achievements with MYWN consistently show students gain impressive levels of knowledge of local birds and their habitats. The excitement, interesting observations and questions by the school children makes every MYWN program a fun and enlightening experience.

We continue to make progress on establishing the new aviaries at the SB Museum of Natural History. We will keep you apprised of progress in future newsletters.



**IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR...**

...when Max, our Great horned owl, eagerly awaits the arrival of orphaned owlets. Each year Max adopts several orphaned owlets that are brought into rehabilitation for various reasons: their tree may have been cut down; they may have accidentally fallen from or pushed out of their nest, or they may have tried their first flight before they were ready, and ended up on the ground next to a freeway or in a dog owner's backyard. Although we try to return nestlings whenever possible, often the nest is too high up or the chick may be injured.

Parents always will try to continue to feed and protect their young on the ground, but in our urban settings the owlets face many dangers, and rescue is often necessary for their survival..

Since 2000, Max has fostered 69 baby owlets. All were released back into the wild.



**RAPTOR TALES: A WEIGHTY QUESTION**

Ivan, the program's Red-tailed Hawk, is always a popular draw wherever he goes. His sheer size makes him hard to miss. One of the most frequent questions we are asked in our presentations is, "how much does he weigh?" "It's my favorite question," says Coni Edick, one of Ivan's handlers. "I never answer it directly." Instead, she throws it out to the audience. What do they think?

"100 pounds!" exclaims one young audience member. "50 pounds!" shouts another.

Some people approach the question by making comparisons. "Well, if a ham is about this big, and Ivan is about the same size..." "That turkey we had at Thanksgiving was a 12-pound bird, and Ivan is smaller than that...": "25 pounds!" "15 pounds" "10."

Others start using different lines of reasoning. Birds have hollow bones, right? So he's probably lighter than he looks. How much could Ivan possibly weigh if someone has been holding him at the end of her arm for who knows how long? And this has *got* to be a trick question anyway! "I'd say 7 pounds." "5" "4?"

"I get a kick out of watching people's faces when I finally let them know that Ivan is 2¼ pounds," Coni confides. "There's a real shift in perception and it always spurs more discussion." That such a powerful creature can be so light in weight is only one of the many fascinating things people can learn when they get up close and personal with a wildlife ambassador like Ivan. And that's what Eyes in the Sky is all about.



**EYES IN THE SKY •**

P.O. Box 91917 • Santa Barbara, CA 93190 • 805-898-0347 • [eyes-in-the-sky@cox.net](mailto:eyes-in-the-sky@cox.net)  
[www.santabarbaraaudubon.org](http://www.santabarbaraaudubon.org)