



A much needed update!

We all blinked again and Earth Day will be past by the time you are reading this. We're in the midst of spring field trip season with school groups, public releases, baby raptor season is just starting, and injured birds continue to be admitted. To say we're busy is pretty accurate.

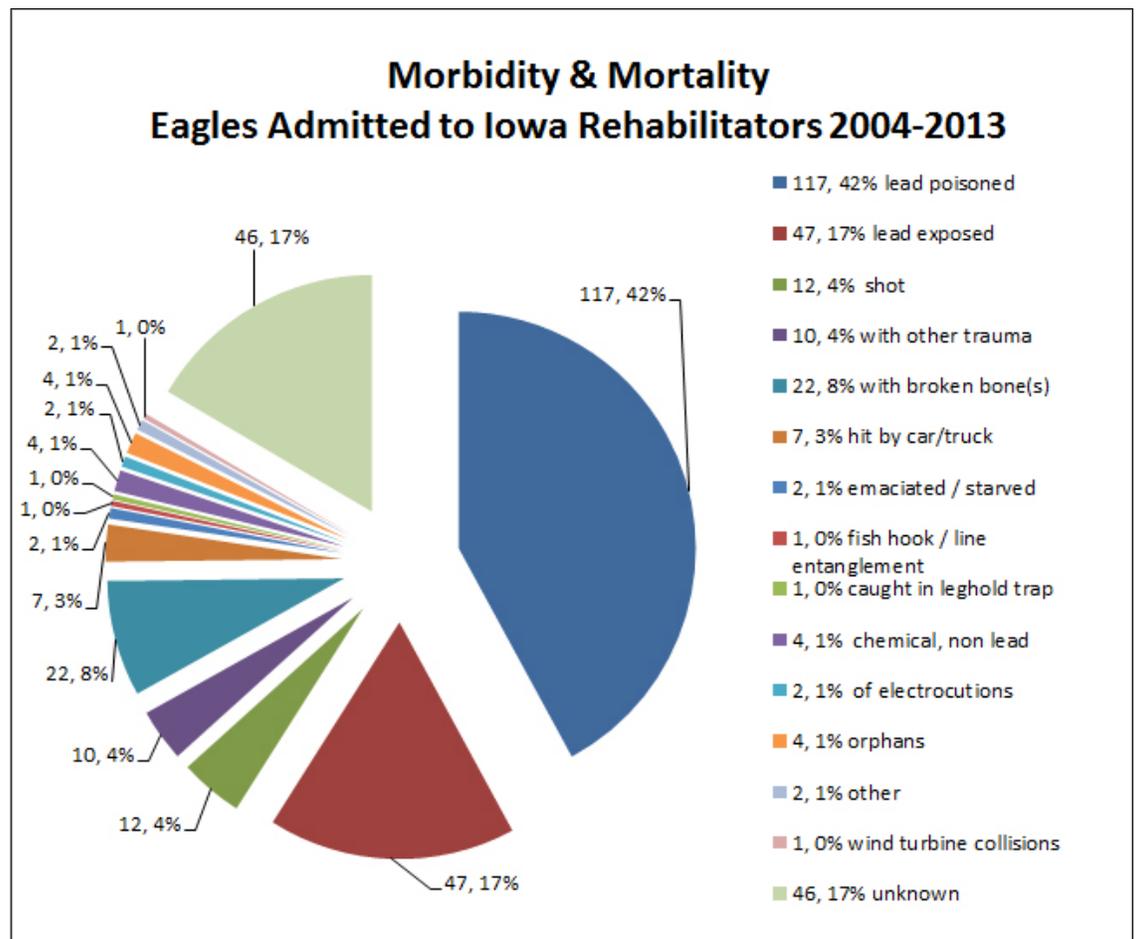
Eagles and Lead -- Research presented

SOAR's eagle and lead research was presented to The Minnesota Chapter of the Wildlife Society by SOAR Executive Director Kay Neumann and former SOAR intern Megan Cook and by Paige Neil, Iowa State University student and Wildlife Care Clinic volunteer, this past winter.

Since 2004, wildlife rehabilitators in Iowa have been gathering data on lead poisoning in admitted bald eagles. The statistics are alarming. With over 270 eagles in the current database though year-end 2013, almost 60%

have shown abnormal lead levels in their blood, livers, or bone. An animal brought into a wildlife rehabilitator is considered a wild mortality or death. If someone can pick up a wild animal, it will not survive on its own in the wild. Lead poisoning is, overwhelmingly, the main cause of death for bald eagles in Iowa.

This poisoning rate is not merely an artifact of more eagles wintering and nesting in our state. Wildlife rehabilitators are also admitting more Coopers hawks than in years past. Their numbers have increased as they discovered suitable urban habitats. However, the cause of mortality (or reason for admission) for Coopers hawks, remains a random assortment of trauma, disease, and orphans. Rehabilitators have seen an increase in bald eagles being admitted, but instead of a random assortment of injuries, more than half of them are dying from lead poisoning.



Eagle Data

Iowa wildlife rehabilitation facilities collect data on all admitted eagles (alive and DOA) and include: Black Hawk Wildlife Rehabilitation Project, MacBride Raptor Project, SOAR, and the Wildlife Care Clinic.

For calendar year 2013, 36 eagles admitted:

- 34 of these were tested for lead
 - 25 of the 34 showed lead exposure or poisoning as revealed through blood, liver, or bone testing
 - 18 of the 25 were DOA, died, or were euthanized
 - 5 of the 25 were released
 - 2 of the 25 are still in rehab
 - 9 of the 34 showed normal lead levels
 - 4 of the 9 were DOA, died, or were euthanized
 - 3 of the 9 were released
 - 1 of the 9 is still in rehab
 - 1 of the 9 was transferred to an education permit
- 2 were not tested
 - 2 of the 2 were DOA, died, or were euthanized

Boil this down and 94% of all eagles admitted to Iowa wildlife rehabilitators in 2013 were tested for lead and 74% of the eagles tested for lead had exposure or poisoning levels of lead in their body.

These, of course, are only the eagles that are found and brought to rehabilitators. We can use band

return rates for eagles to estimate the rate at which the public finds and reports eagles. Of all the banded eagles out there, available to be found and reported, only 15% are turned in. If only 15% of the lead poisoning cases are being turned in, we may have poisoned more than 160 eagles in Iowa in 2013!

Lead Availability

Lead availability has been studied and x-ray evidence from prey sources, both white-tail deer carcasses and gut piles, and eagles themselves shows that lead ammunition is the key source of ingested lead in bald eagles. Our bald eagles are an indicator species of environmental health -- sick eagles should be an alarm bell to all to remove lead from our environment. Many in the medical field say there are no safe levels of lead to be in the human body.

Go Lead-Free!

Remember, the solution is easy. No human or animal should eat lead. Hunt and fish lead-free to keep more lead from being deposited into the environment and to reduce the risk to all from lead ingestion. Non-toxic options for ammunition and fishing tackle are available. Check out the Non-toxic Alternatives page on the SOAR website at

<http://www.soarraptors.org/nontoxic.html>

Connections



SOAR educators know that live animals make lasting impressions upon people and that these impressions and feelings help folks make connections with environmental information or issues being presented. Sometimes, the individuals that find or rescue an injured raptor that is treated at SOAR will develop an intensely personal connection to that particular bird or species. That connection often means a lifelong awareness of conservation and preservation issues.

Knoxville area resident Diane M called the Sheriff's Office to report an injured eagle on her family farm. She and other family members helped SOAR rescuer, Marla, with the rescue of a juvenile eagle. Diane explained the emotional and spiritual connection she felt to that particular eagle and all eagles at a SOAR program at Red Rock Visitor Center on 19 April. The juvenile that Diane helped rescue and hoped she could release back on the family farm died as a result of lead poisoning. Diane was able to release a different eagle that had recovered from lead exposure.

Diane explained at the event that she hadn't even thought about animals being lead-exposed and that with her new knowledge, she'll be sure to educate others to 'get the lead out' and go non-toxic when hunting and fishing.

2013 Patient Census Data

208 patients were admitted to SOAR during calendar year 2013. (For perspective, 166 patients were admitted in all of 2012!)

Patients received by species:

- ❖ American crow - 2
- ❖ American kestrel - 19
- ❖ bald eagle - 26
- ❖ barn owl - 1
- ❖ barred owl - 15
- ❖ broad-winged hawk - 1
- ❖ Canada goose - 1
- ❖ common nighthawk - 5
- ❖ common raven - 1
- ❖ Cooper's hawk - 12
- ❖ Eastern screech owl - 22
- ❖ great blue heron - 3
- ❖ great horned owl - 30
- ❖ long-eared owl - 3
- ❖ Merlin - 2
- ❖ Mississippi kite - 1
- ❖ northern flicker - 1
- ❖ osprey - 1
- ❖ peregrine falcon - 3
- ❖ red-tailed hawk - 45
- ❖ rough-legged hawk - 1
- ❖ sharp-shinned hawk - 5
- ❖ snowy owl - 1
- ❖ Swainson's hawk - 2
- ❖ trumpeter swan - 2
- ❖ Turkey vulture - 2
- ❖ Whip-poor-will - 1

We wish that the outcome for each and every one is to return to the wild, but that is sadly not the case. Here are the happy results:

7 Transfers:

- ❖ 1 each: crow, kestrel, eagle, barred owl, Merlin,
- ❖ 2 common nighthawks transferred to another rehabilitator for continued care!

93 Releases:

- ❖ American kestrel - 15
- ❖ bald eagle - 4
- ❖ barred owl - 9
- ❖ broad-winged hawk - 1
- ❖ Canada goose - 1
- ❖ common nighthawk - 2
- ❖ Cooper's hawk - 11
- ❖ Eastern screech owl - 15
- ❖ great horned owl - 15
- ❖ long-eared owl - 1
- ❖ red-tailed hawk - 14
- ❖ rough-legged hawks - 1
- ❖ sharp-shinned hawk - 3
- ❖ Swainson's hawk - 1

Wow, 208 patients! I truly think that is a record. The key to releasing 93 birds by year-end is having a good supply of quality food and needed medications and



services. *Your donations help restock our freezers with quality food for our patients and education birds and are greatly appreciated.*

As of 19 April 2014, 105 of the 2013 admits have been released and about 20 patients are still pending a final outcome.

Look for SOAR here:

- ❖ 29 May -- Indianola Public Library Program at Annett Nature Center from 6:30-7:30 p.m.
- ❖ 18 June -- Ringneck Rendezvous at the Rock Valley Gun Club in Sioux County starting at 5:00 p.m.
- ❖ 21 June -- Wings and Wetlands at the Palo Alto County Conservation Center from 2:00-3:00 p.m.
- ❖ 5 July -- Adams Homestead in North Sioux City, South Dakota starting at 1:00 p.m.
- ❖ 12 July -- The Nature Conservancy Broken Kettle Grassland Bison Days
- ❖ 14 July -- Manchester Public Library from 6:30-7:30 p.m.

This is the schedule so far. Keep an eye on the SOAR website event page for details, times, and more. Remember, all times are Central Time.

Please help us keep our mailing and emailing database current! If you received this more than once or would prefer to receive correspondence in another way, please email Linette at admin@soarraptors.org and tell her your preferred and / or correct address.

In the works...

Raptor rehabilitation, education, and research are ongoing. However, just as in our personal life, there are many projects and activities SOAR wants to do, if and when the pieces fall in place!

- ❖ Help Carroll County Conservation with osprey release this summer;
- ❖ Work on train-the-trainer workshops to help others learn about copper ammunition;
- ❖ Develop a portable display to be used at events to help teach about the benefits of non-toxic ammo and fishing tackle;
- ❖ The fall raptor release may become an annual event.

Maybe you might be inspired to help with one!?

Thanks for your support

Please share this newsletter with others and tell them about our website. If you're connected to social media, please "like" the SOAR Facebook page.

Linette Bernard, Communications Director

What to do if...

Many patients received in the spring are still considered nestlings and they should still be in their nest but for unknown reason(s) were not. Below are terms that SOAR uses to describe raptor development:

- ❖ **Nestling** - rely 100% on parents to feed them, will still be covered in down, some feather growth. A raptor this age cannot tear their food. If a nestling is no longer in the nest... it will not get fed.
- ❖ **Brancher** - a young raptor that has lost their down, is mostly feathered, has left the nest but has not gone far and still relies on adults to bring food.
- ❖ **Fledgling** - fully feathered, starting to fly and still relies on adults to bring food. Eventually will start making attempts to hunt on own and will do so with increasing success.
- ❖ **Juvenile** - an independent bird that does not yet have adult feathers / plumage.

If you do see a young bird on the ground, please go the National Wildlife Rehabilitators website and read this PDF first (<http://www.nwrawildlife.org/sites/default/files/FoundBird.pdf>), when it says to call a wildlife rehabilitator, call SOAR at (712) 830-6116 and we'll help you find the nearest rehabilitator.

