

Chinook and Nimbus

Chinook and Nimbus and their handler visited the Optimist Club this week. Chinook is a screech owl and Nimbus is a barn owl. They were unfamiliar with the surroundings and left the speaking part of the program to Kristie Horn from Raptor Recovery Nebraska, Inc.

Kristie has been with Raptor recovery since 2002. She does not keep birds at her house, but Denise Lewis, the head of the program does. Raptor Recovery works with birds of prey, like hawks, owls, falcons, and eagles. They have a 50% release rate for recovering birds. Others are used for programs at schools and other organizations. Those birds that will be released are not used for programs because they must not become too familiar with humans.

Chinook is a male screech owl. He is about four years old and weighs about $\frac{1}{4}$ pound. As with most owls, the males are smaller than the females. Chinook was from a nest in a tree that was cut down. He has learned that food comes from humans, so he cannot be released. Raptor Recovery takes young birds like him and puts them with a foster mom bird so they learn to fend for themselves and fear humans.

Owls have fixed eyes, so they have to turn their head side to side to see to one side. They also have a silent flight, so you do not hear their wings when they fly. Most owls stay near the area where they are born, so Raptor Recovery returns them near the area where they came from.

Nimbus is a male barn owl. He was raised in captivity, so he cannot be released. As with other owls, the round features on his face help direct sound to his small ears. Owls normally live ten years in captivity, but can live 20 years.

Kristie did a lot of primitive camping with her family when she was young. She worked at a wildlife clinic when she lived elsewhere. The clinic had a hospital and did surgery on wild animals. Now she works at Fontenelle Forest, Gifford Farms, and Omaha Steaks.

For more information about Raptor Recovery Nebraska, see their website at <http://www.raptorrecoverynebr.org/>. Select the Education link for information about other birds in their education program. Additional pictures of Chinook and Nimbus are available at treynoroptimist.org.