

Berryessa Highlands Baby Owl Rescue
by Peter Kilkus (2023)

Living at Lake Berryessa is always an adventure! When I first moved to my place above the Berryessa Highlands, I had been in real country a few times, but my choice of outdoor activity was scuba diving in the oceans of the world with my two boys. So, it was a new experience to see a large mountain lion walk across my front yard and find a big rattlesnake inside my kitchen. Hearing packs of coyotes crying in the night followed by a skunk doing its skunky-step waddle outside my garage in the morning with flocks of turkeys in the driveway rounded out some of the interesting creatures wandering about. Rabbits sitting serenely challenging me to chase them away; myriad of hawks, osprey, bald eagles, vultures, hummingbirds, bats, rabbits, and insects flying around was amazing.

My neighbors have the same love of animals as I, but one of their favorites are owls. When they remodeled their house, they put up several simple owl boxes around their property to attract them. But after several years no owls had made them home. Now in 2023, 12 years after installing the owl boxes, several owls have appeared! And the owls are feasting on the gophers that have been eating up their garden.

But somehow a baby owl fell out of its nest. A baby owl is called an owlet in the same way that snipe hunters (snipers) call baby snipe snippets.

The rescue of this small bundle of cuteness was truly a family affair. My neighbor was the instigator of the owl crusade. Her husband was part of the whole episode because he was really into getting the original owl boxes. And he's the one who almost got clawed by the baby. They gathered up the owlet and called their daughter, Kelli, who raced up to Lake Berryessa from Napa and carefully drove the owlet to Napa Wildlife Rescue. Napa Wildlife Rescue took the owlet into their facility, nursed it, taught it how to fly and hunt, and sent it back to us in the Berryessa Highlands where it now lives happily feasting on gophers and other small prey.

Although my neighbor is not a stand-up comedienne, she did ask me to say that if you have any owl stories, please submit them to the Berryessa News. We give a hoot. (Groan).

Napa Wildlife Rescue (www.napawildliferescue.org/)

Napa Wildlife Rescue is a volunteer organization that can use your support. It's mission is to advocate for wildlife through rehabilitation, education, community outreach, and partnerships in order to promote sustainable and healthy eco-systems in Napa County for the present and future generations.

Hungry Owl Project (www.hungryowls.org)

Our mission is to reduce the need for pesticides and rodenticides by encouraging natural predators through conservation of habitat, nesting boxes and education. Our Barn Owl boxes are fully assembled and painted for local installation.

