Great Gray Owl at Medford,
Taylor County
By Don G. Follen

On Sunday, December 6, 1981 as I was making firewood near the house, Mary called out the door to say that a man from Medford had called and that he was bringing along a big owl that he had found. He thought it was a Great Gray Owl, (*Strix nebulosa*), and Mary said that she thought the description fit. The man turned out to be Les Buehler of rural Medford and he had agreed to bring the bird to Marshfield if I could get that far to pick it up.

I met Mr. Buehler and his family by a gasoline station on Highway 13 north of Marshfield and after introductions he hastily opened his automobile's trunk and there was a large box in it with the covers folded in place. I anxiously pulled the tabs open and am sure I gave an excited gasp. Mary said, "It is". It seems that Buehler family that live three and a half miles north of Medford on Highway 13 had seen this large owl flying about and then it clumsily flew into the grass and stayed there. They walked out to where the owl was and it just sat there and made no attempt to move. They then picked up the bird and attempted to call the Medford Department of Natural Resources and Sam Robbins to no avail. The Buehler's daughter had remembered that during the recent deer hunting season that I had made a request for sightings in the Medford Star, a local newspaper. Then they called.

The bird was immediately taken to the Wildwood Animal Hospital operated by Dr. Roger Krogstad, DVM who has an excellent interest and background in natural history and who has been aiding me in rehabilitation attempts of injured raptors. An x-ray of the bird revealed no broken bones at all, an empty stomach, and no sign of shot or other injuries of any type. The bird proved to be quite emaciated and weak. During the time the bird was in the box it had not excreted any ureates at all. A mixture of egg yolk and high protein concentrate was immediately given to it along with an injection of steroids and B complex vitamins. We would have to await and see the outcome in the morning and I took the bird home in order to be near it.

Arising at 0430 on Monday morning I found the bird sitting on the top of our couch and thought, well that looks good. I called Dr. Pat Redig of the School of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Minnesota during the night and he gave me additional instructions. So I fed the bird some liver in the morning and it appeared to be making a rapid comeback. When I again left the bird with Dr. Krogstad, I thought our problems were over. Such did not prove to be the case. Upon calling Dr. Krogstad after arriving home from work that evening, he dejectedly informed me that while feeding the bird routinely, it suddenly had died. It will be donated to the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point where it will be mounted and put on permanent display. A fitting place for one Great Gray Owl found fairly near central Wisconsin.

**Acknowledgement**

I would like to thank the family of Les Buehler for sharing with us, even if temporarily, this magnificent creature; it is indeed a humble privilege to work with these birds.

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