



Beverly Grage with Wild and Free Again releases a rehabilitated Great Horned Owl into the wild Saturday at the Caddo National Wildlife Refuge.

FLYING HIGH

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Rehabilitated bird released at Caddo

HANNAH DECLERK

HDECLERK@MARSHALLNEWSMESSENGER.COM

Today is Earth Day, a day dedicated to increasing awareness and appreciation of the Earth's natural environment.

The Caddo Lake Wildlife Refuge, Friends of Caddo Lake, Caddo Lake State Park, Texas Parks and Wildlife and others joined forces to celebrate Earth Day this weekend with numerous events held at the Refuge.

The festivities this weekend began

Friday with the official launch of the four new paddling trails on Caddo Lake, and continued into Saturday with the raptor release of a rehabbed Great Horned Owl.

"In celebration of earth day, we opened up the canoe regalia, which we had about 70 people come and test out the trails, and we are very pleased to be able to release these birds out on the refuge," Refuge Manager Mark

Williams said.

The bird, injured eight weeks ago, underwent rehabilitation at Wild and Free Again, a facility in Lindale that takes care of injured birds.

"I think this is one that came with head trauma that got hit by a car," Rehabber Beverly Grage explained. "She just needed time to get over being faint, and she was ready to go about three weeks ago."

Originally, the refuge planned to release both the Great Horned Owl and a Red Tail Hawk, however upon release rehabber Beverly Grage spotted a sore on the hawk's back toe.

Ms. Grage explained she was contacted by the Refuge about releasing the birds onto their property in November.

She said last year she reha-



Les Hassell/News Messenger Photo
A rehabilitated Great Horned Owl was released Saturday into the wild.

bilitated 200 plus animals and of those 94 were raptors.

"I only do what is indignant to the state of Texas, I never do exotic pets," she said. "And I also do not take in any song birds, just birds of prey."

She said the funding for the rehabilitation of the animals is all "out of pocket" without any funding or reimbursements.

"I really started getting in to it 22 years ago," she said. "And I do it because I care about animals."

She added it was important to note she is a trained specialist, and those who are not experts should never try and keep injured animals.

She explained the Great Horned Owl, is the largest of its kind in this area of the United States.

At noon on Saturday it was released onto the Refuge from

the Harrison Bayou location.

Among those who were in attendance to witness the release of the magnificent bird were members of the Friends of CLNWR, and Collins Academy and Healthy Habitats at Caddo Lake.

The Collins Academy and Healthy Habitats at Caddo Lake is a group of 11 third through fifth grade Karnack students who spend every other Saturday exploring the refuge.

"It is neat that we get to be a part of the raptor release today," Collins Academy Facilitator Emily Curry said. "It is a great way to teach the students about curriculum, and science through real life experiences."

The refuge also provided a free lunch and relaxation at Starr Ranch Saturday afternoon.