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Raven Hill Discovery Center is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt corporation.

Mission: Raven Hill provides a place that enhances hands-on and lifelong learning for all ages by connecting science, history & the arts.

To: Friends and Family everywhere
From: Cheri and Raven Hill
Date: January 23, 2021
Re: Weekly update

Hello, Everyone!

Raven Hill is frequently the recipient of some intriguing items. Because we have state and federal salvage permits, we often inherit wildlife that has died recently or in years past. Some taxidermied specimens come to us ready to display. Other times, if the specimen is in good condition, a donor will pay for an animal to be mounted. Some animals that are in less than prime form are buried in our “Dead Zone”. Dermestid (skin) beetles and other detritivores, like earthworms and fungi, feed on dead and decomposing organic matter, cleaning the bones for us. At some point in the future, college paleontology students and summer campers will simulate digging for dinosaur bones and excavate the skulls, which will then be added to the Center’s extensive skull collection or used in other displays in the museum. Raven Hill is a place where these objects acquire a new purpose and help us provide opportunities for our visitors to learn.

Living animals also find a home at Raven Hill. Exotic animals reside in the Animal Room. Wild animals inhabit the Center’s acreage or visit here. In 2006, a snowy owl spent about three weeks in Raven Hill’s Ancient World. Instead of using fence posts, telephone poles or hay bales, this juvenile used the Moai (Easter Island head) as a perch for hunting rodents and other prey, before it finally moved on to new hunting grounds. We often see snowy owls here in northern Michigan during the winter. The juveniles and even adult snowy owls frequently leave the Arctic tundra and migrate south, just as our robins fly south for the winter.



Photographer Kris Busk snapped this majestic shot out in the Ancient World on a warm January day. When snowy owls fly, they usually stay close to the ground, just as this one did.



This photo is proof of our visitor’s unusual choice of a perch! For this guy, flying south doesn’t mean a place like Florida, it means somewhere like northern Michigan!



It is really against the law to keep a live snowy owl in captivity, but in Harry Potter’s fantasy world, Hedwig was a birthday present to Harry on his eleventh birthday!

We fondly named this adult snowy owl, Hedwig, after Harry Potter’s pet owl. Sadly, this particular male got its talons caught in some farm machinery down in Waters, Michigan. The specimen was donated to Raven Hill and mounted by Nature’s Reflection taxidermist, Jim Haveman. Titled “White on White after White”, Jim deftly portrayed the owl in action hunting its next meal. We are fortunate to have such talented people in northern Michigan working with us and supporting our mission.

Elmer Fritz worked as a repairman for Michigan Bell Telephone. He took a correspondence course in taxidermy and displayed this great horned owl mount in the company’s annual hobby show in April of 1948. This taxidermied owl is the oldest specimen in Raven Hill’s collection.



Believe it or not, our great horned owl is older than I am! The owl was salvaged & donated to amateur taxidermist, Elmer Fritz, by a conservation officer working in Howell, Michigan in Livingston County. That was in 1947.

Photo: Detroit Free Press Graphic | Sunday, April 4, 1948



An alcove in Raven Hill’s Great Room houses the majority of our taxidermy collection. These animals, once scattered throughout the Center, were consolidated in 2011. The display now makes quite an impression on visitors.

“Advice from an owl: stay focused, be whoo you are, trust in a wise friend, live off the land, glide through the dark times, be observant...”
-- Speaker and Storyteller, Ilan Shamir
Wise words for us all right now!

I continue adding email addresses. If you know of anyone who might be like to receive our weekly updates, please send email addresses to info@miravenhill.org and I will be glad to add their names. Previous updates are available on our website—www.MiRavenHill.org

Keep the email notes coming! I enjoy hearing from you, so text me or call my cell at 231.675.6025. You can also email me anytime. My email address is cheri@miravenhill.org. Meanwhile, continue playing it safe: wash your hands often, wear your masks, socially distance and stay away from crowds. We can’t slack off yet.

Cheri