

AAV Member Spotlight: Guy Fitzgerald, DMV, M.Sc.

What was the first bird job you ever had?

While I was a senior veterinary student, I worked as a summer job at the Macdonald Raptor Research Center in 1986. There was no veterinarian to take care of a colony of hundreds of American kestrels, some peregrine falcons, gyrfalcons and eastern screech owls. Furthermore, a raptor rehabilitation program was beginning at this center. I had to learn the hard way since there was not much teaching of individual avian medicine at our veterinary college at that time.

What is your favorite avian species and why?

No doubt, I like birds of prey in general. I have worked with them for 30 years. They are fascinating by their adaptations and biology and there is so much to do for their conservation. Each species has at least one point to appreciate. I can hardly say which one is my favorite. I like the snowy owl for its capacity to survive in the North, the osprey for its skills to fish and the challenge of rehabilitating them, the gyrfalcon and northern goshawk for their combativity, the peregrine falcon for its spectacular flight, the golden eagle for its fierce beauty and so on.

What was the last interesting avian medical or surgical issue you dealt with in your work?

We admitted a wild snowy owl with an extensive wound on the dorsal aspect of one foot; tendons and joint were exposed. Euthanasia was considered, but after 9 months of wound management, hydrotherapy and a xenogeneic graft (porcine small intestinal submucosa), the bird was finally released back in the wild.

If you had not chosen your present career, what would you be doing?

I would probably work as a field biologist on conservation issues. But I would certainly keep in touch with students or the general public. It is essential for me to transmit the passion I have for the birds and the knowledge acquired by studying them.

Describe an anecdote that would be of interest to your colleagues

I am always amazed to see the strength of nature. On few occasions, I saw new feathers growing back from an extensive wound that healed by second intention. That means that cells from a scar tissue can regenerate into a different function like stem cells would do.



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