

Wind Over Wings



Conservation through Education  
**Testimony in Support of SB 994**  
**Banning Leghold Traps**

March 9, 2009  
Hope Douglas, Founder/President  
Wind Over Wings



Tough picture to look at, isn't it? This is a young Red-tailed Hawk who caught both feet in two leghold traps and was brought to Wind Over Wings. Both feet turned gangrenous from dead skin. He couldn't use his feet. The hawk had to be euthanized.

Wind Over Wings is a nonprofit, raptor rehabilitation and education service with the goal of releasing birds back to their natural environment if possible. For those that are unable to be released they may become a part of our environmental education program. The Great Horned Owl who attended the press conference today is an example of a federally-permitted resident, a faculty member. She is the same species as the Great Horned who was recently euthanized after having a foot amputated from a leghold trap. The Great Horned from Wind Over Wings had not been entrapped.

Of all the owls, the Great Horned Owl has the strongest talons, which take a force of about 38 pounds to open, and allow it to sever the spinal column of prey even larger than itself. These birds also have 500 pounds per square inch of crushing power in their talons. A normal man has about 60 pounds per square inch in his hands. Despite this impressive power, a leghold trap can snap these feet in two. While considered "perch and pounce" hunters –perching in a tree waiting for a rodent to pounce upon, sometimes this bird walks along the ground hunting small mammals, insects and reptiles, and will even wade into water for frogs, other amphibians, and even fish. Leghold traps are set where the owls' food is located.

Trapping animals may be necessary for a variety of reasons. The leghold trap usually doesn't kill – it traps and holds the animal alive and in pain. Human beings, with their remarkably creative and innovative abilities can certainly design a device that traps an animal humanely. By taking the responsibility to ban leghold traps, you are giving life to birds of prey – eagles, hawks, falcons and owls, who otherwise have no voice.