

Audubon refuge going strong

July 24 2006

Mill Grove, in Audubon, Pa., the first U.S. home of John James Audubon in the early 1800s, still provides sanctuary for birds and bird lovers.

Two centuries after the refuge was established in the Montgomery County, Pa., town -- which was named for the artist and naturalist -- Mill Grove includes a permanent refuge for birds of prey that would not survive in the wild due to illness or injury, the Philadelphia Inquirer reported.

The Audubon Center at Mill Grove opened in May 2005, and Blaze -- a 4-year-old red-tailed hawk -- has lived there ever since. The bird's left wing was injured in a collisions with a car.

Blaze was joined in April by Braveheart, a younger red-tail that suffered brain damage as a result of reckless flying as a juvenile, the newspaper said.

The hawks share one part of a large outdoor enclosure called a weathering mews. Two great horned owls occupy the other part.

All of the birds take part in educational programs.

Third graders at Valley Forge Elementary School raised \$1,600 for construction of a second, smaller mews, which was completed in June. On July 1, two American kestrels and two screech owls arrived from Red Creek Wildlife Center in Schuylkill County, Pa.

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