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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Young Great Horned Owl Treated for Rat Poison – Wild Care

*Eastham, MA.* On Tuesday morning, May 14, Wild Care, Inc., a wildlife rescue and rehabilitation center located in Eastham, responded to a call about a young owl on the ground at The Captains Golf Course in Brewster. “This is the time of year when young owls are leaving their nests for the first time,” states Wild Care Executive Director, Stephanie Ellis. “We often respond to these calls by sending a staff member or volunteer out to the location to check out the situation. More often than not, the owlet is fine, and being cared for by its parents”. Kate Diggs, a Wild Care Staff Wildlife Rehabilitator responded to this particular call, and arrived at the golf course to find a young disoriented owl on the ground. The owl was not behaving normally and was taken to Wild Care for further examination…

 “Unfortunately, the owlet is showing neurological symptoms and is not in good health. The bird’s blood work indicates dehydration and anemia, and exposure to secondary rodenticide poisoning. Furthermore, the bird has traces of lead detected in its blood, though not at levels requiring treatment.”

RODENTICIDES - KILLING THE UNINTENDED:

“First and Second-generation anticoagulant rodenticides are slowly poisoning our wildlife,” states Ellis. “When people use anticoagulant-rodenticide baits commonly sold at household stores and used by some pest control companies, mice and rats become poisoned and debilitated, and become easy prey for raptors and mammals. When an owl eats a mouse that has been poisoned, the owl becomes poisoned. The poison accumulates in their bloodstream over time, depending on levels of exposure and the type of rodenticides. Anticoagulant rodenticides that contain bromadialone, brodifacoum, difethialone and diphacinone are particularly harmful because they pack a punch – they can kill a poisoned rodent after a single night’s feeding. These compounds tend to remain in animal tissues longer than first-generation anticoagulants, posing greater risk to nontarget species, and a risk to animals that feed upon rodents that have eaten the bait.

RODENTICIDE EFFECTS ON WILDLIFE:

The anticoagulants in these products interfere with the blood’s ability to clot, causing massive bleeding, liver failure, anemia, and ultimately death. A normal blood-clotting response in a bird is less than 5 minutes. This owl’s blood took several hours to clot. “This poor, young bird has not even begun its journey in the wild yet,

and is being poisoned by its parents that are unknowingly bringing tainted prey back to the nest. I wish that everyone who uses these products had the opportunity to see what anticoagulant rodenticide

poisoning looks like. These animals come to us depressed and disoriented. Some can barely hold up their heads. They are anemic and often have extensive bleeding and bruising. It is a painful sight to see.”

Treatment for rodenticide poisoning requires long-term therapy with supportive fluids, Vitamin K and nutrition, often over a period of a month or more. Wild Care staff are providing this intensive care, and are hoping for the best. “We are grateful to Mark O’Brien, Director of Operations at The Captain’s Golf Course, for alerting us about the owl.” Captain’s Golf Course does not use rodenticides on their grounds. “We hope that other local businesses and homeowners, will make a similar commitment to the environment and to our wildlife.”

ALTERNATIVES TO RODENTICIDES:

“Raptors and mammals are our most effective means of rodent control, yet we are slowly killing them with these poisons,” states Ellis. Studies have shown that hawks are significantly more effective at controlling rodent populations, than actual rodenticides. Pets and children are also inadvertently poisoned by ingesting rodenticides. “There are many humane methods of deterring and controlling rodent populations. Ensuring that food waste, pet food, and garbage is well-contained, along with exclusion (closing off the entrance holes that rodents use to get into a dwelling) are the ultimate answers. “These methods take more time, but are the most effective long-term solution for controlling rodents. “

To learn more and support Wild Care, Inc.: [www.wildcarecapecod.org](http://www.wildcarecapecod.org).

For information on rodenticides: <http://www.raptorsarethesolution.org/rodenticides-that-kill/>

For humane rodent deterrents: http://www.raptorsarethesolution.org/preferred-pest-control-products/

For humane rodent control: <http://perrylepews.com> Humane wildlife management on Cape Cod

*WILD CARE’s wildlife rehabilitators treat birds, mammals and reptiles brought to the center, with the goal of releasing them back into the wild when they are capable of independent survival. Through public education, WILD CARE works to prevent wildlife casualties and works to engage the community in conservation through volunteerism. Since our founding, WILD CARE has accepted over 27,000 wild creatures, representing more than 275 species of native birds, mammals and reptiles. If you encounter injured, orphaned or ill wildlife, please call the WILD CARE of Cape Cod helpline at 508-240-2255. Visit WILD CARE’s website at* [*www.wildcarecapecod.org*](http://www.wildcarecapecod.org) *to donate. Visit our Facebook page: “Wild Care Cape Cod” for animal updates and info on events.*

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