

Bustoken, the Northern Hawk Owl

Bustoken was aptly named from the event that caused his injury. Near Tok, AK, he was hit by a car, which severed his right wing. He was transported by bus to Bird TLC in Anchorage, where he was treated for his injury. With a missing wing he was unable to be released to the wild, and was put up for adoption to a permitted education facility. Alaska WildBird Rehabilitation Center was excited to receive him as an education ambassador in 2016. His first summer he went through a heavy molt; causing his entire tail, foot feathers and much of his facial feathering to shed. Molting is an energy intensive and stressful time for a bird, especially one finding himself in new circumstances. We decided to let him have the summer to get adapted to his new home, and by late fall he was the healthy bird you see here. His training for introduction to the public is on-going, we hope to have him out strutting his owl stuff soon.

Northern Hawk Owls are birds of the boreal forest, which covers much of Alaska. They do not migrate south, but are well adapted to hunting and survival in our winters. They are generally comfortable near people, so can often be seen perched on the very top of a spruce tree at any time of year. The name hawk owl comes from their similarity to hawks, both in appearance and hunting style. They have long tails and wings, and their facial disk is less prominent than other owls. They hunt in the daytime primarily by sight, with a flight style similar to medium sized hawks. Although they have excellent hearing, it is not as important for hunting as other Alaskan owls.