

OWLS – Nature’s Best Pest Control

Owls or Rat Poison? This should be a simple choice for everyone living here in Marin. Besides the beautiful nightly call of our local Great Horned Owls and Western Screech Owls, these raptors provide a natural solution for controlling pests at your home or business. Did you know a single Barn Owl can eliminate over 1,400 rodents each year and a family of owls can catch 3,000 rodents in a four month breeding cycle? You can easily attract Great Horned Owls, Barn Owls or Screech Owls to your property by adding a simple owl nesting box which will help increase our dwindling local population while controlling pests. Owl boxes can be installed in areas containing an appropriate owl habitat, can be purchased ready-made or can be constructed at home and then attached to a tree or a pole on your property.

Anticoagulant rat poisoning has a dire impact on the environment and on many animals that are not the intended target but who ingest the poison, including our own dogs and cats! Rat poison causes a slow and painful death for any animal that consumes the poison directly or indirectly. How does this happen? Well, when you put out rat poison in a bait station, the rodent will eat the bait multiple times and each time will return to your yard or nearby open space in search of water due to dehydration. The rat will progressively get more weakened from internal bleeding until it becomes lethal to the pest. In the meantime, our raptors, including owls and hawks, as well as other wildlife such as coyotes, mountain lions, foxes, raccoons, skunks, opossums and even our pet dogs and cats who come into contact with the poisoned rodent, can become poisoned as well, often indirectly by eating their flesh. Anticoagulant poison has the same devastating impact on these animals including a slow and painful death. Anticoagulants can also drain into the Bay or other local waterways harming marine life as well. These unnecessary deaths can be avoided by not using anticoagulant rat poison.

Owls and raptors are the easiest and most pleasant non-toxic method for rodent control, but there are several additional actions you can take to rodent-proof your property. You can secure your trash lids, remove fallen bird seed, fruit and pet food from the ground, seal cracks on the outside of your home and keep branches and foliage at least 2 feet from your house. Rodent prevention, exclusion methods, and trapping are often necessary to control the rodent population, along with attracting owls to nesting boxes. If you are interested in attracting more owls and being lulled to sleep by their beautiful calls, owl boxes are easy to build and install or even easier to purchase! Barn owl boxes are more suitable for larger properties or vineyards, while smaller, suburban properties better support smaller nesting boxes that will accommodate screech owls. Owls in Marin and elsewhere in California and the West are under threat due to loss of habitat, rodenticides, and climate change. Your owl box will help support their conservation and help control the rodent population.

Marin Catholic High School Senior and Richardson Bay Girl Scout, Lauren Somerville, is working towards earning her Girl Scout Gold Award by developing a project to increase awareness of the dangers of using anticoagulant poisons and to promote nature’s pest control alternative – owls! Lauren has been a Girl Scout since first grade in Troop 10936 in Mill Valley and is a founding member of the Richardson Bay High School Leadership Council. Lauren has

worked closely with Raptors Are The Solution, based in Berkeley, California and has also been supported by All About Owls, based in Petaluma, California. Marin Catholic High School, Strawberry Point Elementary School and the Richardson Bay Audubon Society have graciously accepted one or more of Lauren's owl boxes.

To learn more about owls, anticoagulant rat poison or how to build or to purchase your own owl nesting box please visit the websites: raptorsarethesolution.org and allaboutowls.org.