

The Northern Spotted Owl Breeding Program welcomes a new addition!

It's a boy! During this time of physical distancing, toilet paper shortage, self-isolating from loved ones, and all the other stress of a global pandemic, the Northern Spotted Owl Breeding Program is happy to share some good news! On April 20, 2020 a rare Northern Spotted Owl chick was hatched after being artificially incubated, hand raised and recently returned to his parents. You can see all the action live 24/7. The Fish & Wildlife Compensation Program (FWCP), in partnership with the Northern Spotted Owl Breeding Program (NSOBP), is hosting the Spotted Owl webcam. Start watching now at <http://fwcp.ca/owlwebcam>. There are estimated to be fewer than 10 Northern Spotted Owls left in the wild in Canada, but now everyone with an internet connection has the opportunity to view a pair of breeding Northern Spotted Owls take care of their chick.

“This web camera gives an intimate look at the growth and development of a Northern Spotted Owl chick (currently referred to as “Chick J”) on the nest, which is a unique experience and great learning opportunity for everyone interested in the breeding program,” says Jasmine McCulligh at the Northern Spotted Owl Breeding Program near Langley, B.C. “We were so overwhelmed with the support of the public over the last three years and are happy to share these amazing owls again this year! Especially with everything that is going on in the world, it makes it even more special to be able to spread some joy by sharing the live stream.” Chick J was born after 32 days of artificial incubation, 80 hours of hatching, followed by nearly two weeks of hand-rearing before being returned to its parents—Sedin and Amoré—on May 3. Chick J is the second offspring for Sedin and Amoré as they welcomed their first chick, another male, named Rocket last spring.

Along with Chick J, Sedin and Amoré have welcomed Chick P and Chick Q this year as well. This marks the first time ever that a single pair of Northern Spotted Owls has had three chicks in a single breeding season. With the season not quite done yet, this puts the NSOBP on track to have another great breeding season.

Due to COVID19, the NSOBP has not been able to have volunteers on site and all public outreach events have been cancelled for the foreseeable future. Public outreach events are an important fundraising stream for the NSOBP which is a part of the non-profit British Columbia Conservation Foundation. The NSOBP has launched an “Adopt-a-Chick” fundraiser where donors will receive exclusive emails for a one-time donation of \$20. “We estimate it costs about \$1700 per year to feed just one Northern Spotted Owl in its first year of life; so we’re hopeful that this fundraiser will help out with those costs” says McCulligh. Information can be found at www.nsobreedingprogram.com.

There are currently 25 adult spotted owls at the breeding centre, including seven breeding pairs. The Program aims to house a minimum of ten breeding pairs. The goal of the breeding program, which started in 2007, is to restore the wild population to over 200 adult Northern Spotted Owls by releasing up to 20 juvenile owls per year over the next 15 to 20 years. If all goes well with breeding this year, owls will be released into 300,000 hectares of protected forests starting as early as summer 2021.

The FWCP, is a partnership between BC Hydro, the Province of B.C., Fisheries and Oceans Canada, First Nations, and public stakeholders to conserve and enhance fish and wildlife in watersheds impacted by BC Hydro dams.

“Part of the recovery strategy for the Northern Spotted Owl is to increase the population size to a more stable, resilient level as soon as possible” says FWCP Coastal Region Manager, Julie Fournier. “That’s why our board is providing funds, once again, towards this important captive breeding program.”

The peak times for seeing activity on the nest is between 8:00 and 11:00 in the morning, and 6:00 and 10:00 in the evening. This is when food is provided to the adults, although it hard to predict when they will actually deliver the food to the chick. As the chick grows, Amoré will spend more time off the nest, but for now she will remain in the nest most of the time to keep the chick warm.



Amoré the Northern Spotted Owl sees her chick for the first time after he was returned to the nest. Chick J was artificially incubated and then hand-raised by the Northern Spotted Owl Breeding Program team. Along with Amoré and Chick J, dad Sedin can be seen on the 24/7 live stream being hosted at www.fwcp.ca. This screen shot from the webcam was taken on May 3, 2020. Credit: Northern Spotted Owl Breeding Program



Chick J was returned to his parents Sedin and Amoré on May 3, 2020 and is photographed here at 11 days old. Credit: Northern Spotted Owl Breeding Program