

SURREY NOW-LEADER

Owl found dead in South Surrey after eating rat poison

‘Who’s to say a kid’s not going to be the next one to go?’

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LOCAL NEWS



Barred owl, found in South Surrey and is said to be less than one year old, was killed after eating rat poison. (Contributed photo)

A South Surrey resident says she’s concerned for the safety of her pets after learning that an owl, which was found dead on her property Thursday, was killed after it ate rat poison.

Christine Trozzo, who lives on Cranley Drive, noticed an abnormally lethargic barred owl perched high in her birch tree on Wednesday and called Orphaned Wildlife Rehabilitation Society (OWL), based in Delta.

“I just knew that there was something wrong with the bird,” she told *Peace Arch News* Friday.

OWL raptor manager Rob Hope told Trozzo that it was unsafe to retrieve the bird because of how high it was in the tree, but told her to keep an eye on the animal and call him immediately if the bird moved to the ground.

The next day, Trozzo found the bird’s body in her yard.

Later that day, Hope went to investigate how the bird had died, and later told *PAN* that the juvenile owl was in perfect health, but it “just dropped dead.”

“Just examining the bird myself, from what I saw and where the bird was found. The fact that the bird is healthy, mouth is pale, and there’s a little bit of blood there. It appears that it was a poison,” he said Friday. “We’re 90 per cent sure it’s poison.”

Hope said that the owl most likely ate a poisoned rat. After a rat ingests poison, which contains the chemical bromadiolone, it becomes lethargic, making it an “easy target” for birds of prey.

“That’s exactly how it happened,” Hope said. “Once that bird ingests it, the bird’s got days before, of course, it will die. It’s an anticoagulant. Basically, the bird is bleeding and there’s no stopping it.”

Trozzo, who owns two small terrier dogs, said she was “really upset” to learn of the cause of death. She said she will be posting a bulletin around her neighbourhood to warn pet owners and young parents to be extra cautious when out for a walk.

“My dog, a while back, killed a squirrel. I don’t imagine that they would ever eat it, but I thought geez murphy, that’s dangerous to animals. Never mind just birds, and what about children?”

Hope shared Trozzo concern over a child inadvertently eating rat poison.

“Who’s to say a kid’s not going to be the next one to go?” Hope said.

Hope said that rat poison is required to be locked in a stationed box, however, there’s a chance that the rat could grab the poison and remove it from the box.

He said the poison is a “cool blueish green colour,” and that it may attract the eye of a young child.

OWL will send the dead raptor to a federal agency for a toxicology test, which Hope expects will confirm his suspicion that the owl was poisoned.

Raptors dying from eating poisoned wild life happens “more often than not,” and just last month, Hope retrieved two dead barred owls – both suspected of dying from poison – from the same area in North Vancouver.

“As far as pure numbers go, we don’t know... but it’s definitely out there. There’s no ifs, ands or buts about it. It does happen,” Hope said.

Hope said the OWL organization are advocates for rat traps and “removing poison from the environment.”

“It’s not only birds, but it’s dogs, cats, kids. Almost anything is susceptible to it.”

Trozzo said it’s “common knowledge” that there are rats in South Surrey, and that people should use traps instead of poison.

“What’s wrong with people?” she said.