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Our neighborhood owls

Recently, we had the removal of a huge 200-year-old (dead) oak interrupted because there was a nesting barn owl residing in one of the deep cavities of the tree.

She could not be removed because the nest was too deep in the tree to reach her. Even with all the noise and commotion of the saws and equipment, she refused to leave her eggs! The tree removal was stopped until the eggs could hatch and the owlets leave the nest.

Enter the Hungry Owl Project ladies: Alex Godbe and Maggie Rufo. In those ensuing months, they taught us a great deal about barn owls and their wonderful value to the community. Hungry Owl has a live camera Web site of an owl nest that we watched (for too many hours) as we became engrossed in the life process that was also going on in our backyard tree!

We gave our owl family names and did weekly updates on their progress via a sign on the fence.

The whole neighborhood became involved and was very supportive; the children, especially were concerned about the owls. When our tree ultimately came down, it was a very sad day for our neighborhood.

But because of the education and awareness that Alex and Maggie offer, we are all much more appreciative of these beautiful animals. They are assets to any neighborhood and are beautiful, magnificent creatures to watch and are fascinating to learn about; to thank you, Maggie and Alex, for all your many hours of volunteering on the barn owls' behalf.

As you know, we have installed an owl box to replace our majestic tree and while it doesn't have the "vintage charm" of their old home, we are hoping Bettye and Barney Hooter will be moving into their new quarters soon.

Linda Riedel, Novato