

Like Gulley, the now-retired Vivian and Joe Stockton of Siloam Springs, Harold Parker of Fort Smith and several other rehabilitators, Westra does much of her work with raptors — birds of prey.

Residents in the two-car garage, without cars, at the Westra home are Hope the barred owl, Martha the barn owl, Thor the red-tail hawk, Ladyhawk the Harris hawk, Beetle Juice the screech owl and the newest, Phoenix, the great horned owl. Also on hand are Fergie the pileated woodpecker and Little Bit the squirrel.

These are creatures unable to be released back into the wild because of their injuries or because they have become too accustomed to human beings — imprinted, the wildlife people call it.

Phoenix the great horned owl is the newest member of the Westra family. He's just a baby, six weeks old, and he was badly injured when he apparently fell out of a nest on a road and was hit by a car. A jogger found Phoenix, got him to a veterinarian, who diagnosed the bird's injuries as well as his near-death from lack of nutrition.

Feeding Phoenix isn't just a matter of poking hamburger meat at the bird, Westra said. This is a mistake many concerned but misguided people make when they find a helpless bird.

Westra said, "Owls eat all of their prey, and their bodies use the hair, the bones and all for nutrition. So I get dead chicks from a hatchery at Searcy. I have to pull them apart now for Phoenix to eat, but he'll learn to eat them himself."

Phoenix's hip and leg probably can't be restored so the bird will have killing power in that leg, so he'll be a permanent resident with



Westra and a frequent guest at public educational appearances.

Hope the barred owl ate a poisoned rat and suffered permanent injuries, Westra said. Martha the barn owl was blinded in one eye. Thor the red-tailed hawk flew into a wire while in a high-speed dive at a prey animal. Ladyhawk the Harris hawk was trained for falconry but was lost or escaped and was shot in a leg; she doesn't have killing strength in that leg.

Little Bit the squirrel was raised in a household with humans and cats and thinks and acts like a pet cat, Westra said. Little Bit is too imprinted to be turned out to the

wild.

Westra, before moving to Arkansas, was one of a group of five wildlife rehabilitators from the Orlando area who went to Prince William Sound in Alaska to work on victims of the Exxon tanker oil spill. That's not a venture you undertake at the drop of a hat, but several Florida organizations and businesses contributed money and materials for the rehab expedition.

"Exxon too has helped for years in wildlife rehab work," Westra said. "They [Exxon] got a black eye for the Alaska spill, but they have been involved in wildlife work for years."