

On January 3, 2011, Native Bird Connections was honored with a very rare, exciting and historic privilege to be part of the Governor Jerry Brown's Inauguration Reception at the Railroad Museum in Sacramento. And, as with most events, a lot went into it. Here was our day:

4:45am -- First thing, no matter what or where we are going, all our non-releasable birds must have their mews (aviaries) cleaned out and then be fed for the day necessitating a two hour lead time. There were two of us going. We finally got on the road to Sacramento at 7:30 am. Complete with birds, perches, educational materials and high excitement.

We took 2 raptors: our Eurasian Eagle Owl and the Snowy Owl. Both are fabulous ambassadors for their species. The Eurasian Eagle Owl (non-native to North America) is used to illustrate global issues and the Snowy Owl is a wonderful example of the issues with climate change here in North America. She is a species in very real danger of extinction as her habitat disappears due to climate change.

9:45am -- We arrive at Old Town in Sacramento and make our way to the Railroad Museum. The reception theme was built around a Farmers' Market arranged by Whole Foods. There were many different booths offering goodies to eat and drink, seeds to grow, organic soaps, and lots of environmental vendors, including us. NBC's participation was sponsored by Three Hoots Winery of St. Helena, California. On the Native Bird Connections Facebook page, check out our Inauguration Photo Album of the day's events. (Not a fan? Become one at <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Native-Bird-Connections/271753284271?ref=sgm#!/pages/Native-Bird-Connections/271753284271>)

We shared a booth with Audubon California, which we both then set up. The security sweep came through during the early afternoon involving bomb sniffing dogs and secret service everywhere. The actual reception was scheduled from 4pm to 7pm, but we were told to be ready by 3pm. We brought NBC stickers, brochures and our Barn Owl Nesting Box along with educational materials.

11:00am – New Governor Jerry Brown was sworn in at the California Memorial Auditorium, about a mile from the Railroad Museum. After the ceremony, our new Governor and his invited guests slowly made their way to the Railroad Museum for the reception.

3:00pm – It was a good thing we were ready early, because the invited guests started showing up! Somewhere between 30 and 50 vendors filled the Railroad Museum with booths and tables full of food, wine, brochures, and displays. Guests quickly filled the aisles.

The Native Bird Connections table was hopping! Our two owls, representing the importance of the environment, attracted a crowd. Talking with everyone was such a joy! There was a constant buzz in the air. Excitement was everywhere! Everyone was so thrilled to see live owls up close and personal, while learning how they too could help, not just owls, but all birds in their area by putting up nesting boxes and not using poisons. It was also photo central, as virtually everyone had some kind of a camera. We felt like rock stars.

We had the privilege to meet several dignitaries, including Ruth Coleman, Director of California State Parks, and Aunt Connie, Governor Brown's 99 year old aunt. We briefly had the opportunity to meet the Governor and his wife and have a photo taken with the eagle owl.

8:00pm -- The reception was scheduled to be over at 7pm but guests did not leave until 8pm. Over 2000 guests were invited to reception. I don't know how many we talked to, but our voices were gone by 8pm! Both the Eagle Owl and Snowy owl did a fabulous job despite the crushing crowds and unending adoration. We took down the booth, buttoned up the birds, as we say (put them back in their carriers), and loaded up the SUV. By 8:30pm, we were on our way home!

We had no traffic, either direction. We arrived at the birds' final stop at 10:15pm, unloading the car of all items. The owls finally got their dinner. Some tasty rats! YUM!

10:45pm – Everyone was finally home. The end of a very long, but very worthwhile day.

Words can not express what an honor it was for Native Bird Connections to be included in Governor Jerry Brown's Inauguration Reception. We had a wonderful time! We want to specially thank Three Hoots Winery of St. Helena, California for sponsoring our participation.