

## Illinois Guardsmen Learn About American Raptors, Soar

Written by National Guard PAO Illinois  
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MARSEILLES, IL (04/26/2013)(readMedia)-- Story by Capt. Dustin Cammack, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

Members from Save Our American Raptors, Inc. (SOAR) gave a wildlife presentation to Illinois National Guard Soldiers and staff at the Illinois National Guard Marseilles Training Center (MTC) April 24.

The intent of SOARs visit was to educate and train MTC personnel on the importance of raptors in the local habitat and what to do if an injured or sick raptor is found.

"I asked SOAR to come to help educate the Soldiers here at MTC," said Sgt. Maj. Timothy Forest of Marseilles, MTC security manager and falconry apprentice. "So when my range control people find a downed raptor, they will not necessarily be afraid of it. This will give them an opportunity to identify it, rescue it and possibly reintroduce it back into the wild."

Save Our American Raptors, Inc. is a not-for-profit organization created in 1989 with the sole purpose of rehabilitating sick and injured raptors and releasing them back into the wild, said George Richter, founder of SOAR.

"We are here today to talk to people about how to handle sick and injured raptors and who to

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call. With windmills and other hazards out there, there is a good chance if people start looking for sick and injured birds, they will find them," said Richter.

The Soldiers saw the value of the presentation.

"We had a lot of our range control personnel in here," said Spc. Alicia Gutierrez of Streater, MTC scheduling technician. "With spring here the birds might fall out of their nests, and it will be good for Soldiers to know what to look for and who to call."

The Marseilles Training Center is home to several species of raptor to include the red tailed hawk, great horned owl, screech owl, Cooper's hawk, barn owl, and the rare long eared owl, said Forest. "I alone have seen 16 red tailed hawks here at MTC. We have a substantial population."

Acquisition and development of the 2,552-acre training center was a direct result of compatible needs of the State of Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) and the Department of Military Affairs of Illinois (DMAIL).

"It's about sustainability of the habitat and the ecology," said Jason McNamara of Marseilles, MTC natural resources manager. "Raptors play a vital role in the food chain – just like the other species do in our training area – and awareness of those species for the Soldiers is just as important to the ongoing health of the environment."

For more on the Illinois National Guard Marseilles Training Center, visit <http://www.il.ngb.army.mil/departments/mtc/>

For more on SOAR, visit <http://www.soar-inc.org/>.