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## Marin County gets OWL award from RATS group

By [Nels Johnson](#), Marin Independent Journal

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County officials won a top award from a Berkeley group that's strictly for the birds.

Raptors Are the Solution, or RATS, presented the Board of Supervisors with an Owl Wise Leader, or OWL award this week, lauding top officials for the county's groundbreaking integrated pest management program that minimizes use of toxic chemicals, pesticides and poisons.

County parks officials stopped using rat poison to control rodents six years ago, "setting a higher, more ecological standard for other counties to emulate," according to the award from RATS, a project of the Earth Island Institute.

A barn owl nesting box built by San Ramon Boy Scout Troop 888 was presented to the county board Tuesday.

"Thousands of pets and wildlife are becoming seriously ill or dying after ingesting poisoned rodents or bait," the group said in a statement. "Thousands of children are becoming ill each year after consuming rat bait."

Maggie Sergio of Fairfax, head of the county's Integrated Pest Management Commission, said the panel is "extremely proud" of efforts by county parks and public works staffers in controlling rodents "on all county land, parks and open space without having to resort to dangerous and toxic rodenticides."

The owl nesting box may join several others already posted at sites on the Civic Center campus.

### About the Author