



PRESS RELEASE

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***Chouette à voir!* Year-Round**

UQROP Inaugurates Major New Infrastructure

Saint-Hyacinthe, May 13th, 2026 — The Union québécoise de réhabilitation des oiseaux de proie (UQROP) is proud to announce the official inauguration of three major new infrastructures at its natural site, *Chouette à voir!*: a birds of prey interpretation centre, a bridge, and an outdoor boardwalk connected to an interactive installation. These additions mark an important milestone in the organization's development and further support its mission of education and conservation.

The official event took place on May 13th, 2026, and welcomed journalists, elected officials, and partners wishing to discover these new facilities. The event began with powerful symbols: the release of a Red-shouldered Hawk admitted through the UQROP network, ready to spread its own wings, followed by the traditional ribbon-cutting ceremony.

A Year-Round, Eco-Friendly Interpretation Centre

Thanks to the new interpretation centre, *Chouette à voir!* has been open year-round since February 2025. Eventually, nearly 30,000 people per year will benefit from this important tourist attraction for the Maskoutains region.

This eco-friendly and resilient building was designed using a passive house approach. It features a highly efficient building envelope that begins beneath the foundation slab, continues through the walls, and ends in the attic — a building literally wrapped in insulation! Its energy efficiency is 54% higher than the average Canadian building. It was built primarily using eco-friendly materials, and its systems reduce potable water use by 40%. The building reflects the organization's sustainable development values and is universally accessible. Most of its furniture and equipment were recovered, refurbished, or custom-built, including pieces made from wood harvested on-site.

Covering an area of 1,668 m², the centre includes the reception boutique, the permanent exhibition *Kings of the Sky*, and a birds' area partially visible to visitors. The upper floor allows for presentations about birds of prey, conferences, and group activities. Eventually, a second phase will complete the upper level with an elevator, washrooms, a multifunctional room, and a discovery room.

In collaboration with the UQROP team, the building was designed with professional firms and consultants specializing in this type of sustainable construction: Studio MMA, Pageau Morel et Associés, BCA Consultants, Pluritec, Designspace, and Concordia University.

The “Second Life” Bridge

The new bridge also reflects the organization’s sustainable development values. Metal trusses from the original Champlain Bridge were purchased by UQROP and integrated into the structure, thereby recycling steel. It replaces the bridge built by the Armed Forces in 1994. It meets the standards of the Ministère des Transports et de la Mobilité durable, ensuring accessibility for visitors and transport services alike. The bridge was designed by engineer Christian Tremblay of PIVOT Consultants Inc. and built by Construction Lemay.

Boardwalks Designed to Protect and Observe Wildlife and Flora

The outdoor boardwalks extend a safe pedestrian trail for visitors and provide access to the interpretation centre. They offer an immersive experience in the heart of the site’s natural environment, encouraging respectful observation of local wildlife and flora. The longest boardwalk also features the interactive installation *Perches for Humans*.

The boardwalks were designed and built by Jefo Construction. Their structure incorporates maintenance walkways recovered from the original Champlain Bridge. Their untreated cedar surface ensures durability — yet another example of sustainable development.

Projects Made Possible Through Community Support

These new infrastructures were made possible thanks to grants from the governments of Quebec and Canada, the MRC des Maskoutains, and several municipalities. The community, dedicated donors, and institutional partners such as Desjardins also contributed financially. Dedicated fundraising campaigns were also launched and remain active: *Chouette à voir! Builds Its Nest*, *Your Name on the Bridge*, and *My Name on THE Boardwalk*.

Quotes

“Chouette à voir! has now been open to the public for 30 years! What wonderful anniversary gifts these new infrastructures are, allowing both children and adults to enjoy this natural site year-round. Birds of prey become a gateway to reconnecting with the agroforestry environment of our region throughout the seasons. Seeing the wonder in the eyes of children and adults during the release of a bird of prey back into the wild and while discovering the beauty of nature is priceless. That is our greatest reward.

May the remarkable infrastructures inaugurated today carry that same energy. Thank you to the volunteers, donors, and financial partners who believed — and continue to believe — in these major achievements. This long-term project required great courage and boldness while remaining faithful to sustainable development values. Chouette à voir! is becoming a unique public site in Canada, accessible in every season and combining rehabilitation, education, and the enhancement of natural environments. We believe our activities have the potential to become a major driver of economic development for the greater Saint-Hyacinthe region.”

— Guy Fitzgerald, President of UQROP

“In addition to enabling UQROP to fulfill its educational and conservation missions, this project enriches Montérégie’s tourism offering. By attracting thousands of visitors each year, it will generate socio-economic benefits for the region. I am pleased with my ministry’s support for this initiative, which is another example demonstrating that tourism is a powerful driver of regional development.”

— Amélie Dionne, Minister of Tourism

“The inauguration of these new infrastructures at Chouette à voir! is excellent news for the entire Richelieu riding. This unifying project, rooted in sustainable development values, demonstrates our community’s ability to join forces in support of conservation, education, and tourism development in our region. I am proud that our government contributed to bringing to life the vision passionately carried by UQROP for so many years.”

— Jean-Bernard Émond, Member of the National Assembly for Richelieu

“I am delighted to highlight the \$3.5M in funding from CED for UQROP and its new infrastructure, including its energy-efficient building to house the birds of prey interpretation centre. This is excellent news for the Montérégie region and its appeal! Through our government’s investments in tourism experiences such as those offered by UQROP, we are also assisting in reducing its ecological footprint, in addition to helping to welcome tourists from home and abroad.”

— The Honourable Mélanie Joly, Minister of Industry and Minister responsible for Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions (CED)

“This CED investment helps to raise the profile of UQROP and its mission and to raise awareness among visitors around the protection of birds of prey. Our government has always recognized the importance of tourism in the country and remains committed to businesses and organizations in the sector. This investment announcement represents significant support for the region and for its tourism sector, recognized for its richness and diversity.”

— Bienvenu-Olivier Ntumba, Member of Parliament for Mont-Saint-Bruno—L’Acadie

“Over the years, Chouette à voir! has become an essential component of tourism development in our territory. Such infrastructure located in a rural environment represents a tremendous asset for the MRC des Maskoutains. The council has always been committed to financially supporting UQROP in order to sustain its projects and promote the organization and its mission. In fact, more than \$250,000, mainly from the Fonds régions et ruralité, has been allocated to UQROP by the MRC since 2017. On behalf of myself and the MRC council, I congratulate UQROP and the Chouette à voir! team for their accomplishments and wish you continued success in the years ahead.”

— Simon Giard, Prefect of the MRC des Maskoutains

“At Desjardins, our cooperative model commits us to being much more than a financial partner: we are an active contributor to the development of our community. By supporting the Union québécoise de réhabilitation des oiseaux de proie, we are collectively contributing to a project that reflects our values of cooperation, sustainable development, and education, while generating positive and lasting benefits for the Maskoutains community.”

— Anne-Marie St-Germain, President of the Caisse Desjardins de la Région de Saint-Hyacinthe

Invitation to the Media and Elected Officials

Media representatives and ministers who were unable to attend the event are invited to contact the UQROP team to discover these new infrastructures and speak with team members.

About UQROP and *Chouette à voir!*

Founded in 1987, the Union québécoise de réhabilitation des oiseaux de proie (UQROP) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of Quebec's birds of prey and their natural habitats. UQROP fulfills its mission through two mandates: rehabilitating injured or sick birds of prey received through its provincial network and educating the public.

Each year, UQROP receives more than 400 injured birds of prey, approximately 45% of which can be released back into the wild. Its sustainable development values guide both its daily and long-term decisions. Since 1990, UQROP has reached an average of 10,000 people of all ages annually through its educational programs in schools, social groups, and the general public at *Chouette à voir!*

Chouette à voir! celebrates 30 Years!

The *Chouette à voir!* natural site has welcomed visitors since 1996. Along two walking trails, visitors can observe birds of prey in 11 presentation aviaries. Guided tours of the rehabilitation complex allow visitors to observe birds training before being released back into the wild. During the summer, free-flight presentations are offered to visitors. In addition, the site includes 2.5 km of nature trails through diverse environments that change beautifully with the seasons — the perfect place to reconnect with nature.

Source and Information

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