



JUNIOR FOUND
by Jody Davison

“Do you see it?” I asked, walking alongside the woman standing amongst the faded daffodils, both of us peering intently upwards into the spreading branches of the ancient live oak trees dripping with Spanish moss. She was the only observer today, so I held out little hope of seeing Junior, the pet name I had given the baby Great Horned Owl I had been photographing for weeks. Junior had become quite the local celebrity, often drawing a crowd of photographers and parents with children in tow seeking to catch a glimpse of his white downy feathers and big yellow eyes with surprisingly black eyebrows. “See this light hanging straight down in front here, if you follow that up and

look through that little hole, he's looking right at us," she explained. Searching for the spot she described, however, all I could see was moss.

I desperately wanted to find Junior, having been unable to find him my last two visits to the garden. He was now big enough to walk around on the branches, some flight feathers having grown in, so it was possible Junior had flown to another tree. Indeed, this was not the tree where I first saw him, when he was just a ball of white fluff. In fact, if another photographer had not pointed out his position to me the first day I saw Junior, I would have totally mistaken the white fluff in the tree branches for just another spot of sunlight on the Spanish moss.

Couples and parents with adolescent children were coming up behind us, each in turn looking up into the branches and receiving instructions on locating the little owlet, and each, in turn, soon exclaiming, "Oh! I see it! How adorable is that?" I, much to my dismay, remained unable to see the little critter. Finally, I noticed the expert spotter had moved to my left where she proclaimed it was a much better angle to see him. I scooted over and looked upwards again. There he was! Junior! The camera came out, the shutter clicked away as I grinned joyfully.

I am filled with gratitude every time I am able to head outdoors with my camera to shoot wildlife. Junior grew flight feathers and fledged, as all little owls eventually do. I continue to look fondly up into the branches of the live oak trees as I walk beneath them and think of darling little Junior.

Here is a link to the short video I made about Junior, the Great Horned Owlet

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TVuQwZRpdgM>