

Society

# Owl takes up residence in Mazu's crown at Miaoli temple

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A mountain scops owl perches on a Mazu statue's head at the Quan Hua Temple in Miaoli County, where it remained for two nights and three days, before departing late Monday. Photo courtesy of the Quan Hua Temple

Taipei, Jan. 27 (CNA) A mountain scops owl recently flew into a temple in rural Miaoli, delighting and then worrying staff as it remained perched on a Mazu statue's head for two nights and three days, before departing late Monday.

The Quan Hua Temple, located on Lion's Head Mountain in Miaoli's Nanzhuang Township, said a temple custodian noticed the owl, perched on top of Mazu's crown, at around 2 p.m. on Saturday.

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As of Monday afternoon, however, the owl remained in the temple for a third straight day, having only come down from Mazu's crown to the area in front of the idol one time, temple chairman Huang Chin-yuan (黃錦源) told CNA.



An owl sits on the area in front of the Mazu idol at Miaoli County's Quan Hua Temple on Monday. Photo courtesy of Quan Hua Temple

Although the bird was not trapped in the temple -- the Mazu idol has a glass pane in front of it, but is open on both sides -- staffers started to worry about its health, given how long it had gone without food, Huang said at the time.

Chang Wei (張葦), a section chief at the Miaoli Agricultural Department's Wildlife and Nature Section, said owls can generally go several days without food or water before it starts to adversely affect their health.

He said he asked the temple's management to turn off the lights and stay out of the shrine, so that the owl might leave on its own in search of food.

If that had not worked and the owl had not left the temple by Tuesday, wildlife officials would have considered trapping it so that it could be released in the wild, Chang said.

That ended up not being necessary, however. In a social media post Monday night, the temple said the owl had flown out of the shrine at around 7 p.m., adding: "Two days without eating, we hope it's safe!"

Huang, the temple chairman, said he had asked Mazu to look after the owl. From the perspective of Buddhism and folk beliefs, he said, temples are places of purity, and the owl

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