

# WildThing

Fall 2010

Volume 9, Issue 2

## WHERE HAVE ALL THE BARN OWLS GONE?



*Photo by: Susan Berg Davis*

*This barn owl, along with ten other state-endangered barn owls, found their way to WildCare this year; ten were released and the one non-releasable owl was transferred to be an education ambassador.*

# WILDCARE

## WildCare Inc.

Providing professional care to sick, injured, and orphaned wildlife with the hope of returning them to the wild as well as promoting a biodiverse planet through live animal programming.

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Editor: Susan Berg Davis  
Layout/Design: Erin Butcher Dunn  
Writer/Proofreader: Jan Turner

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## Interns 2010

Wildlife Interns work 20 hours a week in Season, which is May through August. During Off Season, which is September through April, Wildlife Management Interns also work on compliance; Administrative Interns help with database maintenance, QuickBooks, and payroll.

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The Emeritus Board is selected annually from retired members of the WildCare Board of Directors. These representatives continue to support the Center by contributing their expertise as well as advocacy of WildCare within our community.

Shawntel Alexander  
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Elaine Yarde



Photo by: Susan Berg Davis  
Wildlife Management Intern Brad Rood feeds a cedar waxwing nestling during his center shift. Brad also did compliance data entry for year-end reports, payroll, and moving our email and website to a new host.

## WILDCARE'S WILD PORTRAITS

Sold at  
Sublime Design Gallery and Gifts  
514 West Kirkwood  
November and December

In addition to giving WildCare 100% of the sale for all the Wild Portraits sold, artist & owner, Carol Hedin, has also offered to donate 10% of all November and December sales from her art gallery and vintage collection. Just tell her you are a friend of WildCare

## THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

WildCare could not help area wildlife without the financial support of the following:

**Investing \$5,000 or more/year**  
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## IT'S THE YEAR OF THE BARN OWL AT WILDCARE

By Susan Berg Davis

September 2nd five of WildCare's eleven barn owls that came in June were released north of Bloomington. Five state-endangered owls--wild again. Five owls that eat more rodents for their weight than any other owl.

Four of the five were owls that passed from a Finder in Lynnville tearing down an old building, to the Mitchell office of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), to an Evansville vet, to WildCare for another chance. One owl came from the Greene County group. Since barn owls lay one egg every couple days and have a clutch of 4-5 eggs, the age difference can be as much as two weeks between the first and the last chick.

This was the year of the barn owls for WildCare. Not since 2005 had we seen one and that one "brancher" (name for owlets moving out from the nesting cavity to a branch) had such a fast turnaround time (3 hours) before going back to the nest, most of the volunteers at WildCare never saw it.

But this year you would have thought we were doing a scene from Harry Potter with all the owls flying around. Three came from a Greene County vet where a Finder dropped them off. Four came from a farmer in Greene County who found them nesting in his silo.

The younger ones were not released until mid October.



Photo by: Susan Berg Davis

*Framed by an old silo, one released barn owl checks out the new surroundings before takeoff.*



Photo by: Susan Berg Davis

*Barn owls do not reproduce if there are no suitable sites. When Indiana had trees, they loved those cavities. When there were barns, they loved those because it was close to their food source. Now that our farms are giving way to suburbs, there are fewer of these owls. They have such exquisite hearing they can hunt in almost total darkness.*



Photo by: Susan Berg Davis  
Center Manager Jennifer Cunningham treated the dehydrated owlets with Electrostat through a feeding tube daily until they reached a healthy equilibrium. .



Photo by: Susan Berg Davis  
The nestling barn owlets from the Greene County silo were very dehydrated. All had pink mouths, sticky mucous, and sharp keels indicating lack of food. One had bleeding on its right leg. All were given Sub-Q fluids and placed in the raptor closets inside that simulate hollow trees.



Photo by: Fred Cate  
Stronger and older barn owlets means that close approach by humans is met with bodies swaying side to side, heads shaking no no, and finally, the hissing sound, so characteristic to the barn owl.



Photo by: Fred Cate  
Once outside in a nesting box, they prefer to hide from the camouflaged volunteers. Still, it's hard not to peek.



Photo by: Susan Berg Davis  
Wearing the camouflaged Ghillie suit makes caring for the older owls more difficult; however, barn owls imprint easily, and so every precaution was taken to keep them wild.

# INDIANA'S CANID SPECIES IN DANGER

By Jan Turner

I have been WildCare's team leader for the coyote and fox team for over ten years, and have seen dozens of both species beat seemingly insurmountable odds with their determination to live and to return to their homes in the wild. As it becomes more difficult to find safe release sites, many rehabbers of the canid species are refusing to accept them, resulting in more pups and kits arriving at WildCare's doors from all over the state. Seven coyotes arrived this spring, forcing the doubling of the cage that was designed to accommodate just a couple. Additional calls were referred to other rehabbers and one very small pup was transferred to a facility that had a single her size. The unusual cases of the 2010 season included a tiny red fox kit that lost a leg to a steel-jawed trap in Hamilton County and a coyote pup that survived a Johnson County forest fire.

**"...As a nation we have banned both dog fighting and cockfighting and it's time we do the same for penning."**

Lately it seems that coyotes and foxes in our area are being attacked from all sides. They are losing their habitat at an alarming rate due to urban sprawl; being shot by hunters and homeowners, often leaving a litter of helpless pups or kits to starve or be killed by predators; and being caught by trappers and sold as live bait for training hunting dogs. The owner of a bait store near McCormick's Creek State Park holds an annual contest and offers a



Photo by: Fred Cate

*Less than half of the coyote pups born each year survive to adulthood, falling prey to hunters, trappers, dog attacks, and vehicles.*

bounty on each coyote killed. And now, an issue under consideration by one of the State's wildlife agencies would, if passed, seriously compromise the health and safety of Indiana's coyotes and foxes.

Several WildCare volunteers spent a portion of the rehab season attending monthly meetings of the Department of Natural Resources, the Natural Resources Council and the Natural Resources Advisory Committee. Volunteers submitted written comments and Executive Director Susan Davis spoke on behalf of WildCare and the animals as we attempted to stop a practice that kills thousands of coyotes and foxes each year.

Most Indiana citizens are unaware that there is a legal penning facility located in Linton. Owners of penning operations purchase coyotes and foxes from trappers and place them in escape-proof pens. Hunting dogs are then released into the pens to chase the animals to exhaustion, and the owners of the dogs who kill the most prey are awarded trophies, cash, and other prizes. The DNR has recommended to the NRC that this practice be banned in Indiana; but hunters from across this state and Illinois rallied in force to protect the long-standing tradition that they consider to be their right as citizens of Indiana even though this is a relatively new practice and not heritage hunting that respects fair chase. WildCare, the Humane Society of the U.S., the Indiana Coyote Rescue Center, and other organizations have cited ecological as well as humane reasons for a ban.

Florida's citizens recently won a hard-fought battle when their Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission voted unanimously for an immediate shutdown of a similar facility and a ban on all future operations. "We commend the FWC for this decision," said Camilla Fox, Executive Director of Project Coyote and Wildlife Consultant for the Animal Welfare



Photo by: Fred Cate

*This coyote pup somehow survived a forest fire when his mother was unable to return for him. Fortunately, he was discovered among the embers and saved by firefighters.*

Institute. "The Commission was under a lot of pressure from a small, vocal minority of pen operators to sanction this activity. But they made the right decision today by banning a practice that should be relegated to the recesses of America's dark past. Florida's commendable stand on this issue sends a clear message to the other states that sanctioning such brutal killing of wildlife is unacceptable. As a nation we have banned both dog fighting and cockfighting and it's time we do the same for penning."

Sadly, at the request of the Indiana NRC, on November 16, the DNR presented rules language that would allow the operation of live bait pens in Indiana under a permit. A public comment period will follow prior to final approval; meanwhile, the pen owners continue to destroy hundreds of wild animals under the guise of sport.

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

WildCare supporters who want to help ban the inhumane penning operations can address written comments to Sandra Jensen (Sjensen@nrc.IN.gov) with a request that your comments be distributed to all members of the NRC. The Commission may reach a decision as early as mid-December, so the sooner comments are received, the better chance we have of stopping this horrific practice. Please also submit comments to Governor Daniels. Go to <http://www.in.gov/gov> and click on "Ask Mitch" in the left-hand menu and complete the comment form online.

# FOR IN THE END, WE WILL CONSERVE ONLY WHAT WE LOVE. . . . BABA DIOUM

By Jan Turner and Susan Berg Davis

A retired policeman pleads for help. While a crew from Duke Energy is cutting up a tree blocking his driveway from the previous night's storm, they find a 6-8 week old raccoon cub hanging by one forearm. He has been dangling that way for seven hours. When his tree home started to fall and his family rushed to safety, he became caught in a crack. Now human hands lift him to safety.

This rescue took place the beginning of May. By mid-July, with forearm fully functional, this raccoon was returned to the wild on private property in Brown County with five foster brothers and sisters, because this Finder called WildCare. This Finder didn't have to learn how to care for a single raccoon that studies have shown do not survive long without a clan for support. Or worse, try to keep it for a pet, which is unwise and illegal. This Finder knew we would do the best we could to return this animal to the wild.

But this situation, one of over 50 just this year for raccoons at WildCare, 4 for foxes, and 7 for coyotes, is threatened by proposed new rehabilitation rules now before the Natural Resources Commission.

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) wants to have raccoons, opossums, skunks, foxes, coyotes, and deer released ONLY in the county from where they came, which flies in the face of what's best for everyone.

One of this raccoon's foster brothers came from Brown County; the rest from Lawrence and Monroe counties. WildCare blends orphaned cubs by age as they come in to maximize pre release cage space, to comfort them by providing littermates, to make deworming and vaccinating more manageable, and to improve their chances of survival once released. Since our

incorporation in 2001, we have helped over 11,000 wild mammals, birds, and reptiles. We receive no state or federal monies and leverage over ninety volunteers.

The DNR says the new rules will contain the spread of disease, but they have not shown that diseases, naturally occurring in nature to control overpopulation, are a problem. Our raccoons, which are with us on average of three months, are dewormed, vaccinated, and not released unless healthy. They are released with the foster clans forged during their stay with us and into various county locations where landowners do not allow hunting or trapping. Our fawns are released on a sanctuary in Owen County, far from

(IWRC) strongly recommend that coyote pups, fox kits, and raccoon cubs be raised and released in groups. WildCare networks with other facilities and individuals around the state to place single arrivals into adoptive family units so they will gain the important socialization skills that are learned only when interacting with others of their species. They also become more independent as they turn to each other, rather than their caretaker, for comfort and playmates.

We have urged the DNR to rethink this part of a major overhaul of the rules, most of which are excellent, and rather than insisting on county releases, create a radius of miles. One hundred miles would work.

But our emails, letter, and comments at the meetings have not moved them toward the change we need so far, and time is growing short. The proposed changes to ensure clean housing, trained rehabbers, and release standards that reflect proper carrying capacity guidelines will improve the care of wildlife. The release guidelines for some mammals will not.

These wildlings come to us from mushroom hunters, children playing in school yards, hotel managers, bank vice presidents, IU professors, mothers doing errands. We take animals from DNR conservation officers and animal control officers both in the city and county. Our wildlife conflicts keep our pagers buzzing year round, seven days a week, 24 hours a day.

Your Indiana government is at the crossroads trying to decide whether our wildlife is simply a resource to exploit as it has always been, or to reflect the growing consensus that our wild animals are sentient creatures who have a place in nature worthy of respect.

## ACTION ALERT

You may share your comments by going to the website <http://www.in.gov/nrc/2377.htm> and clicking on the "Wild Animal Rehabilitation Permits" link, which is at the bottom of the scroll. 312 IAC 9-10-9 (n) (5) (A) reads: "A mammal must be released in the county from which it was originally found or obtained. . . ." WildCare would like it to read, "A mammal must be released no more than 100 miles from which it was originally found or obtained. . . ."

populated areas, as are our foxes and coyotes.

Monroe county touches on six counties, so not to expect animals to come to us from those counties is unrealistic. Many counties have no rehabbers; many counties do not have a big ten university nearby to supply interns. To limit our release sites by county is not only unnatural, since foraging wildlife regularly crosses these boundaries, but also sets up unnecessary barriers for licensed rehabilitators to maximize their resources.

Two professional associations for rehabbers, the National Wildlife Rehabilitators Association (NWRA) and the International Wildlife Rehabilitation Council



Photo by: Susan Berg Davis

This young male hung by his left forearm for 7 hours before Duke Energy found him. Lightning had felled a tree during the night, and he became trapped as the family scrambled to safety.



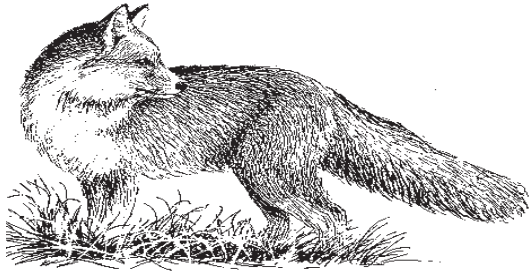
Photo by: Doug Davis

His swollen leg healed over time and became fully functional. This feeding was the first time we knew his shoulder was not permanently damaged.



Photo by: Susan Berg Davis

He was raised with foster brothers and sisters because studies by the Humane Society of the United States show that releasing a single raccoon without the support of a clan is practically a death sentence.



Robert Savannah, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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To those friends and supporters of WildCare Inc. who wish to help us by means of a provision in their will, the following general form of bequest is suggested.

"I give, devise, and bequeath to WildCare Inc., an Indiana nonprofit, 501 (c) (3) Corporation at 198 N. Hartstrait Road, Bloomington, Indiana 47404, the sum of \$\_\_\_\_(or specifically described property. . .)"

WildCare Inc. welcomes any inquiries about bequests. Call (812) 323-1313.

## INVEST IN US THROUGH STOCK TRANSFERS

Call Adam Estes at Hilliard Lyons (812) 332-6333 or (800) 790-6333 and ask for the DTC# to have stock transferred to WildCare Inc. directly from your broker to ours.

We have a standing order to sell the same day and direct deposit with our bank. It's a great way to save you capital gains and support us at the same time.



Robert Savannah, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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- Dorothy Cate in honor of her son Fred Cate's birthday
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- Judith Vitaliano in memory of her friend Isabelle Burnside
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- Paula Sunderman in memory of her husband Frank E. Cotton, Jr.
- Linda & Jon Stafford in memory of Linda's mother Dorothy Berg
- Anne Sipe in memory of her husband Richard G. Sipe, who had a pet owl as a child



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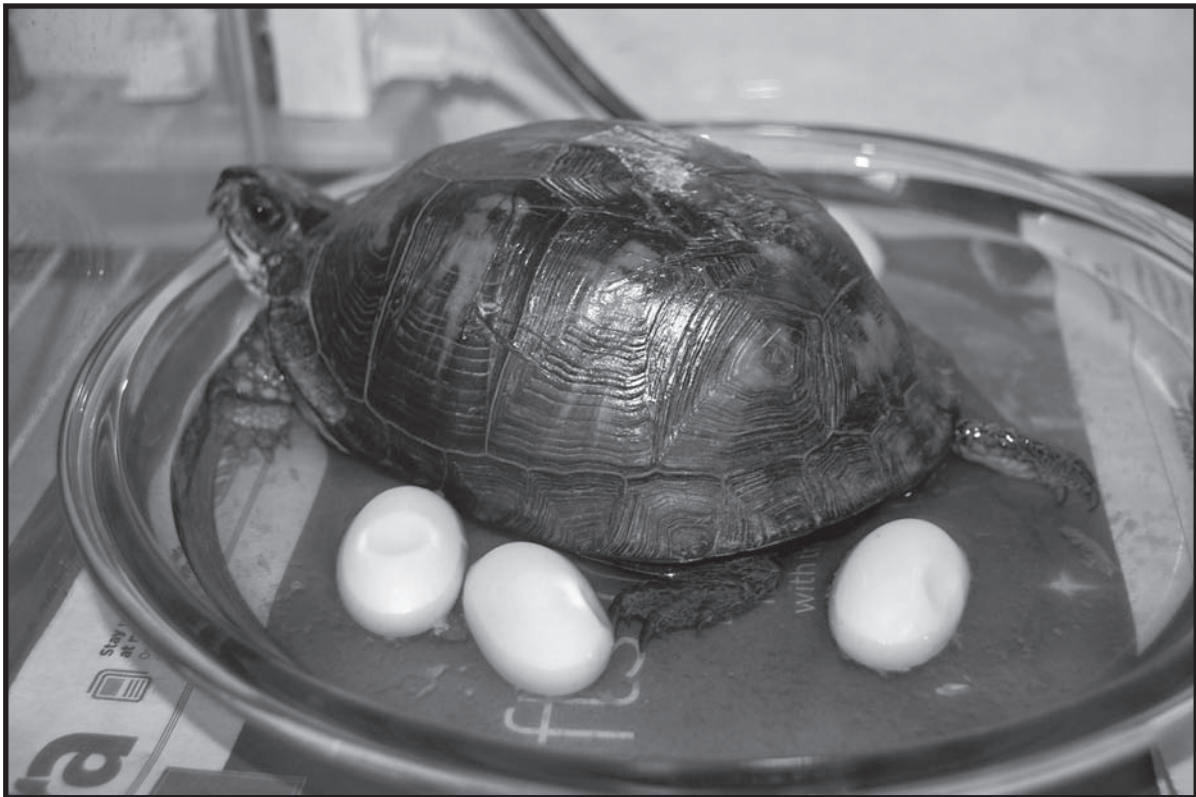


Photo by: Susan Berg Davis

*It's a girl. We knew the plastron wasn't concave on this injured Eastern box turtle indicating it was a female, but we had no idea she would lay eggs in her soaking dish. Five pretty large white eggs surrounded her one day, so a volunteer researched how to bury them in the woods. With any luck they will hatch next spring.*