

WildThing

Spring 2012

Volume 11, Issue 1

GETTING FIT TO FLY



Photo by Susan Berg Davis

The larger they are, the harder they fall. Red-tailed hawks may spend a lot of time perched to pounce along our clear-cut road edges, but when it counts, they must be able to hunt accurately and well, or suffer the consequences.

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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WildThing is printed by Fine Print on tree-free paper twice yearly, spring and fall.

Direct comments to WildThing
info@wildcareinc.org.

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PRESIDENT'S PERCH

WildCare is extremely dedicated to the continuing education of our volunteers. As an example of this, several of our volunteers attended the National Wildlife Rehabilitators Association symposium in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, last month. This week-long symposium was a goldmine of knowledge, a great opportunity for networking within the rehabbing community, and a lot of fun. Great amounts of wonderful information about medications, feeding and caging were brought back



President Gabe Hinds

to Indiana. The center and the animals will benefit immensely from this influx of very valuable information. We made some great contacts with other rehabbers and centers that will allow us to have conversations in the future that will aid both us and them. We also had a table in the vendor area selling T-shirts, tote bags, and photos. So, along with all that knowledge, we also brought home some cash!

HOPE IS THE THING WITH FEATHERS

by Susan Berg Davis

Emily Dickinson was using metaphor when she wrote "Hope" is the thing with feathers-/That perches in the soul-/And sings the tune without the words-/And never stops-at all-," but who among us has not thrilled, as she must have, to watch a large bird of prey spread its wings and soar on oceans of air.

Restoring the capacity to survive in nature, where those wings can set sail, is what the Raptor Team at WildCare works to do day in and day out year round. But how to do that with large wings and strong talons. . .

On the last day of 2011 a red-tailed hawk was discovered grounded at the Hebron Addiction Recovery Center at Camp Hunt in the Morgan Monroe State Forest. In the spirit of one grounded species helping another, the grounds keeping crew, comprised of men coming out of life-dominating drug and alcohol addictions, stumbled upon this first-year hawk just "sitting in the grass near a tree."

"None of us had seen a hawk that close up before. We showed it to a few of the children who were visiting their father," said Jacob Schlegel of the Wheeler Mission Hebron Center. "They were very intrigued."

First year downs is a term used for those young hawks that have not been able to hunt well enough, or had a string of bad luck,



Photo by Susan Berg Davis

When our large birds of prey such as this red-tailed hawk need time to recover, they must have an opportunity to get back into shape before release. That involves flying in a straight line as well as banking and using the tail feathers, which is difficult if all you have is a linear flight cage.

(Continued on page 4)

THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

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to survive. They become grounded to face death by starvation and dehydration. A few are discovered as this one was and given a second chance to return to the wild. The man in charge of maintenance and grounds keeping is a Bloomington native, so knew about WildCare.

Fluid therapy and restoring the weight needed while managing external and internal parasites is not the hard part. Certainly it takes expertise, it takes funding, it takes time. The hard part is restoring flight conditioning before release.

Since WildCare cannot afford to build the size cage it needs for this part of release, we must use the falconry technique of creance flying learned by one of the Raptor Team Leaders at the Raptor Center in Minnesota.



Photo by Susan Berg Davis

Black vultures are more common here than they used to be. Radiographs at the Bloomington Veterinary Hospital showed a fused break in the left foot but an abscess required lancing and treatment by our volunteers. Creance flying will be necessary when the time comes to prepare for release.

Three days a week two volunteers would come to fly this hawk on a nearby field. It involves holding the struggling bird so that anklets and jesses can be fitted while managing strong wings that would like to slap you silly and a beak that means business. It involves driving to a nearby field. It involves tying the jesses to a line of 150 feet. It involves giving the bird an opportunity to fly, but only so far. Each session adds more flight time until the bird is judged ready for release. Since the stronger the bird gets, the more it resists captivity, it's more art than science knowing when to release. This "thing with feathers" was released the beginning of March.

Our project this year is fundraising for a Raptor Track to aid in this process. More and more we are getting bald eagles, large hawks, large owls, and vultures that need the circular design to practice banking and flying laps. Even smaller birds could benefit from this. With the addition of our waterbirds such as the great blue herons, flight conditioning is also a concern.



Photo by Fred Cate

This great horned owl needed all the flight conditioning possible before its release.

The Tony Stewart Foundation has helped get us started with \$5,000. Two donors have stepped forward with \$1,000 each. Then we were given the opportunity to participate in Dancing with the Celebrities. Every dollar donated not only helps us get closer to building this track with three large pre release cages in the middle, but is also a vote for our young dancer who will perform at the Buskirk Chumley May 26th.

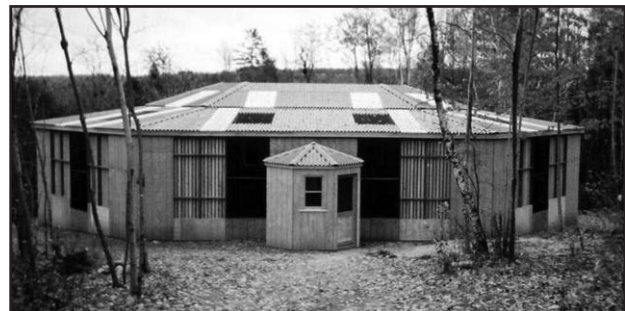
Hope: "I've heard it in the chilliest land-/And on the strangest Sea-/Yet, never, in Extremity,/ It asked a crumb-of Me."

LET'S BUILD THIS TOGETHER

Donations toward this project will be honored on plaques secured to the track:

- Checkered Flags: \$5,000 or more
- Crew Chiefs: \$1,000 to \$4,999
- Pit Crew: \$500 to \$999

Contact WildCare at info@wildcareinc.org for a presentation. But please remember we need our operating funds more than ever. Donations have fallen during the current economic climate, so don't dedicate monies you would normally pledge toward this project. It won't do us any good to have a Raptor Track if we can't pay for food and medicine.



Courtesy photo

Unlike the linear cages of old, or creance flying, this innovative design offers unlimited opportunities for bald eagles, red-tailed hawks, peregrine falcons, great horned owls, great blue herons, or black and turkey vultures to fly continuously. Three separate pre release apartments in the center can allow periodic access to the flight track. The entire footprint of the proposed Raptor Track is only 52X64 feet.



Photo by Susan Berg Davis

DANCING WITH THE CELEBRITIES

**Six local charities
have been selected to participate
in this 6th annual local event.**

Ticket sales benefit all six charities, but every dollar donated to WildCare for any reason until the performance is one vote toward our celebrity dancer, Crystal Olry, winning the Mirror Ball Award.

Presented by Arthur Murray who donates the teachers such as Mike DeSante dancing with Crystal, the benefit culminates May 26th at the Buskirk Chumley Theatre where dancers will compete. Have fun and give our wild neighbors another chance at the same time.

Please put DWTC on your check's memo line.

Tickets may be purchased in advance by calling WildCare 323.1313.

WHY DO TURTLES CROSS THE ROAD? THEY WANT TO GET TO THE OTHER SIDE.

by Beth Reinke

The majority of turtles we get in at WildCare have shell injuries from cars, lawn mowers, or other moving vehicles. One small female Eastern Box Turtle who came in in late October was no exception. She was the last of the turtles to come to WildCare before winter began. She had been found in the middle of State Road 45 and had been hit by a car and skidded across the road. Her plastron (the bottom part of the shell) had road rash and her carapace (the top part of the shell) was broken in two places. Between the breaks on the shell, the keratinous scute that protects the hard bone underneath had broken off. We performed a normal exam and bandaged the pieces of the carapace together as best as we could. The plastron would heal on its own and, luckily, was not broken.

Over the next few weeks, she showed no signs of getting better. The bone between the break turned a dark brown and we did what we could to keep out infections. She was active when we moved her, but was hardly eating or drinking on her own. We worried about the exposed bone but didn't know what else to do. She already had to overwinter with us because the temperatures had dropped outside, so she had plenty of time to heal under our care.

One day, we found the exposed bone lying on the ground of her tank. It had died and broken off completely, leaving a gaping hole in the side of her shell. But a turtle losing a bone is nothing like a human losing a bone. Though the place where the bone had been was red and raw the day it happened, the very next day, a new bone was growing in its place! Though this one will be slightly discolored and misshapen, it will soon harden and completely fill in the gap in her shell. Turtles are amazing!



Photo by Susan Berg Davis

Our overwintered female will be one of the first turtles to spend time in WildCare's new outdoor turtle pens before she is released sometime in the next few weeks! These outdoor turtle pens were funded and built by the Indiana University organization Revitalizing Animal Well-being or RAW. They will provide the direct sunlight so important to the production of vitamin D in a protected environment.

CONGRATULATIONS, BETH

WildCare volunteer and Revitalizing Animal Well-being President Beth Reinke was recently awarded the National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship. It fully funds three years of a Ph. D. program. She plans to do a Ph.D. in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology.

SPRING IS IN THE AIR — WATCH OUT FOR WILDLIFE!

by Jan Turner

Ah, spring! The beauty of the flowering trees, the sweet smell of honeysuckle, the happy songs of a myriad of colorful birds . . . and interspersed with all this beauty, the buzz of lawn mowers, the hum of weed eaters, and the whine of chain saws.

As you begin your spring landscaping and lawn care projects, please watch for signs of wildlife in your yard. A couple of minutes spent inspecting the area prior to mowing, raking, tilling, and trimming of tree limbs may save the lives of several wild babies.

Over three dozen infant squirrels have already arrived at WildCare this year, many of them victims of tree trimming accidents. Squirrels often use abandoned woodpecker nests inside trees to raise their babies. Because the entry holes are only a couple of inches in diameter, they are easily overlooked by homeowners and commercial tree trimmers.

Mowing is often a danger to baby rabbits. Adult cottontails construct their nests by digging shallow indentations in the grass, often in the middle of a yard, golf course, or school sports field. The nest is lined with fur and soft grasses, then the infants are covered with a thin layer of grass. The nursing mom visits the nest at dusk and dawn to feed the babies and remains hidden nearby during the day while keeping watch over them. If you discover a nest of infant cottontails, please consider waiting to mow that area until they are old enough to leave the nest. Baby rabbits grow very fast and will leave the area in a couple of weeks.

Care should also be taken when weeding fence rows and dismantling or rebuilding retaining walls. Many litters of chipmunks have been discovered in the crevices of retaining walls and wood piles, and also tucked among small areas of brush that have accumulated during the winter. Burrows have been destroyed while tilling ground in preparation for a vegetable garden or flower bed.

And finally, use a stick or rake handle to tap on several areas of brush piles prior to burning. A baby rabbit was delivered to WildCare recently by a homeowner after it was burned slightly when the brush pile it was hiding in was set on fire.

It only takes a few minutes to inspect your property prior to beginning a project. You can then proceed while being certain that you are not unknowingly endangering the lives of any wild babies.



Photo by Susan Berg Davis

Eastern Grey Squirrel



Photo by Susan Berg Davis

Eastern Cottontail



Photo by Susan Berg Davis

Eastern Chipmunks



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Here is my tax-deductible donation to help local wildlife.

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Mail to WildCare Inc. 198 N. Hartstrait Road, Bloomington, IN 47404

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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

IN HONOR OF OR IN MEMORY OF

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with
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2nd Annual Ride & Drive
Saturday, Sept. 15th

Join us on Facebook
www.wildcareinc.org/Events



Photo by Susan Berg Davis

WildCamp is a one-week day camp from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. for children entering grades 3-6 July 16-20 at our Center, 198 N. Hartstrait Road. Applications are on our website under Education or Events. The emphasis is on learning how to share the earth with our wild neighbors. Here they are dissecting owl pellets.