

One HAPPY Muskrat

By Kristin Arnot

Can you imagine opening up your front door in mid-January only to find a muskrat on your front step? When it happened to a lady from Vegreville, she thankfully knew to call WRSE. After Diana assessed over the telephone that the muskrat was a bit lethargic and confused, she asked for it to be brought to our shelter. We examined him to find two scabs on his back, most likely from a predator attack. With many other animals, we would release them as soon as we made sure there was no infection and they are healthy enough. Here's the dilemma with muskrats, though: they live under the ice in the winter, therefore need open water to be released. We all know that when Alberta gets cold there is rarely open water to be found... and brrrrrr was it cold! WRSE had the joy of looking after the muskrat until we could find enough open water to release him.

In his enclosure, we gave the muskrat a "wet" area with tubs of water to swim in, an eating area and a "dry" area full of nesting and chewing materials. We could learn a lot from a muskrat! We saw him eat the food which was perishable and store the food that takes longer to spoil. He also kept very tidy, only pooping in one of his water tubs, keeping the other clean for swimming. After many

weeks of the same routine, and him passing the time chewing on many logs (and sheets!), we lucked out and experienced a warm spell. Now that some water had melted, we knew it was time to get the muskrat out, back to the life he desired.

Muskrats love marsh areas. They also like sloughs, lakes and streams. We wanted to make sure we found the best possible spot for him, and the sooner the better! On March 27, I found a beautiful, natural marsh area near Wabamun Lake, which I felt really good about. There was a small water body, still mostly iced over, surrounded by cattails and reeds. On the other side of those reeds was a large open water body. The fact that there were ducks on it was also a good sign. This was to be the next home of our winter 2007 muskrat.

After I opened the carrier door, the muskrat silently made his way to the frozen ice. After finding a little patch of open water to swim around in, he must have got a little nervous because he headed back to where I had left his carrier, wanting back in. Naturally, this made me a little nervous too. Not to worry, though, he just needed time. After a few minutes, he made his way back to the frozen water, ran to the opposite edge, looked back, and took off into the reeds heading towards the open water. And that was that! I silently wished him well, feeling confident he would be okay as there were many marshlands around that area.

When we release animals, some look back, most don't. When they do look back, we don't know why. Maybe they memorize our faces, making sure never to cross paths with us again. Maybe they hear a noise, or are making sure we're not following them. Personally? I sure do like to think they are saying "Thank you."

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BRING ON THE WATERFOWL!

By Kristin Arnot

WRSE IS MORE PREPARED THAN EVER

Gone are the days of misting feathers to assess waterproofing in ducks and geese we receive in at the shelter. Gone are the days where we had to transfer ducks to a large plastic pool for their daily "swim". The days of having ducklings kept in an empty shallow pool and having to change their towels three times a day are a thing of the past.

WRSE has recently included a large waterfowl pen with a swimming area (which would make a fine hot tub indeed!) at the shelter. This pen has a platform area for waterfowl to sit and eat, and a swimming area which they can enter and exit as they please, all in one enclosure. This will be essential in over-wintering waterfowl and will also help us to better assess waterproofing and survival abilities.

A huge thank you to Doug Stowe, for all his hard work and extra volunteer hours put into this project. Doug did an excellent

job in building the waterfowl pen, and providing an overflow system so there can be constantly running water in the pool. Not only that, he built it so that it is easy to transport when we move. This was not an easy task.

Another huge thank you goes to David Wyness for doing a superb job at building our new duckling brooders (love you Dad!). The four brooders were built so that ducklings can have constantly running water into their water pan. When they do their bathroom business, it falls through the plastic hardware cloth that they walk on and into a

trough system which can easily be cleaned without disturbing the ducklings. A cleaner environment means a healthier animal. Doug then installed piping necessary for the brooders and the waterfowl pen and connected them. Works like a charm. The brooders have not only proven to work wonders for the ducklings but also make a great intensive care enclosure for adult ducks or gulls. Bonus!

WRSE wants to provide the best possible care for all our patients at the shelter. Enclosures are continuously being improved

and/or added to provide that level of care. Naturally, this costs money. An enormous thank you goes out to TD Friends of the Environment for funding this waterfowl project, without which it would never have been possible.

Thank you for your generosity.



New Website for WRSE

WRSE is pleased to announce the launch of our new website at www.wildlife-edm.ca. This creative and interactive website not only showcases the good work Edmonton's only wildlife shelter does in the community, but serves as an educational tool for every Edmontonian.

Some of the main features of the website include:

- Wildlife information sheets which are easily downloaded for community use
- Wildlife patient gallery
- Volunteer gallery, volunteer opportunities and application form
- Upcoming WRSE Events

Every picture on the website is an animal or bird – or volunteer! – you will find around our beautiful City of Edmonton.

WRSE would like to thank Simon Collier from www.trainingforlife.ca for his generous donation of the website and his expertise.

We would also like to send a special thank you to Steve Blomme for his commitment over the years to maintaining our former website.

You'll want to visit this new website soon and visit it often!

WEBSITE



A Day of Difference

On March 24 and 25, 2007, WRSE hosted “A Decade of Difference”, Alberta Wildlife Rehabilitators’ Association’s 2007 conference. To kick it off on Saturday night, participants enjoyed a delicious dinner at Shalom Park, south of Edmonton, before being treated to a presentation by **Dr. Gordon Court**, Provincial Wildlife Status Biologist, Fish and Wildlife Division. In his presentation entitled “Adventures in Peregrine Falcon Recovery: A 30 Year Retrospective in the Recovery of an Endangered Species”, Dr. Court touched on the impact of pesticides on the global food chain, the almost accidental discovery of their impact on the peregrine falcon population in particular and the efforts to restore breeding couples to the province. In fact, it is anticipated that the species may be taken off the endangered list as early as this spring. Watch for further news in April 2007.

The next morning, **Kim Allan, AWRA Vice President and WRSE President**, welcomed participants and expressed WRSE’s pleasure to be hosting AWRA’s third conference. **Ruth Ball, AWRA President**, provided a brief history of the organization, which is celebrating its 10th year promoting wildlife rehabilitation in Alberta, working with government to assist in monitoring wildlife rescue and rehabilitation organizations, working with veterinarians in the care of wildlife and providing help to other organizations committed to the welfare of wildlife. **Sharon Bright, AWRA Secretary**, explained in further detail some of the activities of AWRA, such as an Emergency Response plan, which arose from the 2005 Wabamum disaster, working on Wildlife Rehabilitation Accreditation and running the Alberta Wildlife Help Line (1-888-924-2444), where people who find wildlife in need can get information on their nearest wildlife shelter. Sharon encouraged involvement with AWRA by going to www.albertawildliferehab.org to see how you can help this influential organization.

Kim Goble, WRSE Raptor Program Manager, chronicled her efforts under the tutelage of Dr. Alastair Franke to learn raptor conditioning techniques in her presentation “**Go Fly a Kite: The use of Falconry techniques in Raptor Rehabilitation.**” Kim shared successes and setbacks in the program, including four case studies involving a Sharp-Shinned Hawk, a Bald Eagle, a Rufous-Mourph Red-Tailed Hawk and the Peregrine Falcon who is her current falconry subject. She indicated that the single most important piece of equipment for successful rehabilitation of raptors is a properly fitting hood, to reduce stress on the bird and hopefully eliminate the incidence of broken feathers. Her experiences have also given her insight into just how quickly a raptor can lose its conditioning in captivity, and the likely consequences of releasing them back into the wild before they’re appropriately fit.

Next **Kim Allan** presented “**Human-Animal Interactions: A look at Different Attitudes,**” based on the work of Stephen R. Kellert (1976). She highlighted ten categories of attitudes that people may hold towards animals, ranging from indifference or fear of animals, to seeing them in practical or material terms, up to appreciating them aesthetically, morally or personally. People’s attitudes are often a combination of categories and their attitudes may change over time as a result of experiences. Kim explained that we may help shape others’ attitudes towards animals by understanding and developing our own attitudes, educating others on animals (especially young people, who traditionally act on their beliefs), modelling respect and

kind behaviour and especially by understanding that attitudes can change. The personal anecdotes participants shared following Kim’s presentation illustrated her assertion that we can influence other’s attitudes towards animals through discourse and example.

Costa Rica was the conference’s next stop, when **Patti Boyce, WRSE part-time wildlife rehabilitator**, shared her adventures while in the southern country. While Costa Rica has 0.1 percent of the world’s land mass, it contains 5 percent of its biodiversity. The country has 225 mammals, half of which are bats; there are 878 bird species, of which 180 are migratory. Patti shared pictures and anecdotes of encounters with American crocodiles, coatimundi, toucans, Mexican hairy porcupines, sloths, orange-kneed tarantulas and howler monkeys. She explained how red-lore parrots are poached for pets, how iguanas are known as the chicken of the trees and are raised for meat and how white-faced capuchin monkeys will follow a woman and her husband just to throw feces at them if they pause to get a better look at the animals.

Rick Cruickshank, Fraser Milner Casgrain LLP provided a tax and legal update for charitable organizations. He explained that, in the last five years, recommendations were made to change the Income Tax Act to address issues and create different remedies for breaches of the Act aside from simply revoking charitable status. As a result, tax rules are now more flexible and Revenue Canada can deal with organizations with more flexibility.

He also announced that **Premier Stelmach** has committed to creating a **Community Spirit Fund** which will provide matching grants for eligible donations to Alberta-based registered charities. Visit the website at: www.cd.gov.ab.ca/building_communities/communityspiritprogram for more information, to keep up to date on this valuable initiative and to contact the committee with your comments and/or support for this fund!

The last speaker of the day was **Dianne Wittner, founder of the Alberta Institute for Wildlife Conservation**. She spoke of the natural history and rehabilitation of coyotes, beginning with the tragedy of persecuting creatures who are usually innocent of many accusations against them. Dianne explained that the lore that coyotes will attack dogs or livestock is simply misinformed fear. Coyotes actually will howl, scent mark or adopt threatening postures in an attempt to scare off their opponents in order to avoid fighting. Because of misconceptions about these animals, rehabilitation centres will often receive coyotes who have been purposely hit by cars, poisoned or shot; because people’s knee-jerk reactions to coyotes have reduced their estimated lifespan to only 22 months, coyotes needing care from shelters are often only pups or juveniles. Dianne provided advice and lessons learned from her own experiences with injured and orphaned coyotes on how to best help these mistreated creatures.

All presenters at the 2007 AWRA conference made sure to entertain while educating, which left participants in eager anticipation of the next conference.



Kim Goble with the Peregrine Falcon, ‘Fargo’

2007 Spring Events

May 5 – The Great Human Race

WRSE will be participating in The Great Human Race. Be a wildlife superhero, start collecting pledges in support of WRSE's Shelter and Programs today! Sign up today at www.greathumanrace.com.

May 5 – First Annual Compost Sale

How would you like to have the most beautiful garden and lawn in the whole neighbourhood, while supporting Edmonton's only wildlife shelter? Now you can through WRSE's first annual Compost Sale. Drop by the Crestwood Community League (14325 – 96 Ave) from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. or pre-order your compost today.

The price is 1 bag for \$10.00, 3 bags for \$25.00 or 5 bags for \$35.00. WRSE will receive 90 percent of the profit per bag sold! Soil will go fast, so pre-order your compost by calling Dana at 439-5964 today.

May 6 – Nature Awareness Day

Get connected to Edmonton's wildlife by joining WRSE at the John Janzen Nature Centre to celebrate Nature Awareness Day! This fun family event will take place from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. at the John Janzen Nature Centre, Whitemud Drive and Fox Drive (7000-143 St. shared parking lot with Fort Edmonton Park). Join television celebrity John Acorn as he talks about the "wild" side of Edmonton! Other highlights include: live owls, bird banding, guided garden tours, "Mother Nature's Nursery", face painting and much more.

May 24 – Wild Night of Comedy

WRSE will be hosting our first annual "Wild Night of Comedy!" at The Comic Strip on Bourbon Street in West Edmonton Mall. Tickets are on sale for \$22.00, and \$11.00 from each ticket sold goes to WRSE! They must be purchased in advance, though, so contact Dana at 439-5964 to book your tickets today before they're all sold out!

June 24 – Pets in the Park

Do people really look like their pets? Find out by joining WRSE at the Edmonton Humane Society's 15th annual Pets in the Park at Laurier Park. WRSE is a proud partner of the Edmonton Humane Society and is excited to once again be a part of their signature event!

If you see me, please don't touch me. Mom is nearby.



She likes to hide me for hours at a time, coming home at dawn or dusk to feed me and then move me to a new hiding place. If you have any questions about me, please call the WRSE hotline at 914-4118.

Volunteer Appreciation:

In Volunteer Appreciation:

This month we would like to recognize Debra Chesley for her outstanding commitment to the Wildlife Rehabilitation Society of Edmonton. For the past seven years, Deb has consistently volunteered in a variety of roles. She began her WRSE volunteer work as an animal care provider at the shelter and soon was also helping out at various special event functions and fundraisers. Deb continues to work functions and fundraisers alongside regular weekend shifts at the shelter, and has added the occasional animal pick-up, editing the newsletter, writing articles, training co-volunteers, providing various computer assistance and sitting on the WRSE Board of Directors as her contributions to the Society.

One of the many great things about Deb has been her willingness to step forward to help out whenever asked and wherever needed. She can always be counted on to get back to you with an answer of "Sure, I could do that." It has been such a pleasure over the years to get to know Deb's personality. The staff at the shelter have commented many times on the great enthusiasm that she brings with her to whatever job she is doing. She seems to be able to make any job more fun. Yes, even cleaning cages or feeding the zillionth baby bird! You can always count on Deb's very clever sense of humour!

Thanks again on behalf of the Wildlife Rehabilitation Society of Edmonton for your dedication and great spirit, Deb. It is fantastic to have you as part of the WRSE team!

We also wanted to extend a warm welcome out to all our new volunteers this year and to send out a very special bouquet of thanks to all you loyal long-term volunteers, who help out in so many ways and who have built WRSE into the great society it is today. Your help has and continues to make a profound difference to wildlife!!

Thank you!

Dana Brettelle

