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to Our 15
Sponsors

The Summer of the Albatross

Leah Birmingham

He was one of our most popular patients this summer. He drew international attention to our small but mighty organization. This was likely what made him one of the most stressful patients yet. At the same time, he was such a majestic bird, a once in a lifetime encounter, and under our care he flourished which made me so proud of the work we do

at SPWC. I first heard word of him on Facebook of all places. I was away for the weekend when I read Eleri's (one of our fantastic 2010 interns) status update, "Eleri has just tube-fed her first albatross". What... an albatross? I thought there must be a mistake. But when you work with wildlife, anything is a possibility. Sure enough when I came back on Tuesday morning, there he was. A

magnificent bird with a vibrant yellow nose, with a red tip to top off his huge, slightly intimidating bill. He had sleek feathering with long wings that he kept tucked into his body when in a resting position. His massive webbed feet looked out of proportion to his short, frail legs. He made no noise at first, but was aware of those around ...

(cont on page 10)



Leah assesses Alby's condition. Photo by Michael Lea, Kingston Whig Standard

Director's Editorial

Once again you are receiving this newsletter because you have helped our native wildlife in some way. You may have rescued a wild one, lent a hand with fundraising, or assisted with transportation. Thank you for helping us to help them.

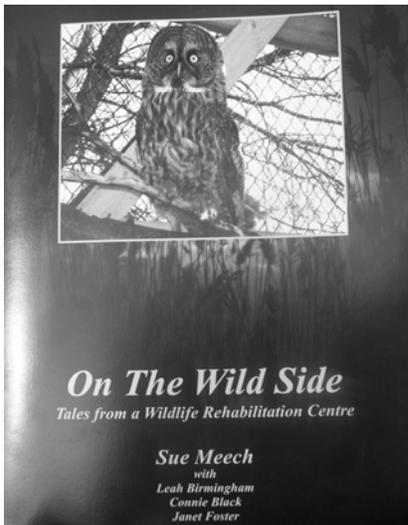
This year has been busier than usual in many ways. Numbers are rising and as I write this at the end of October, we are past the 1,500 mark for admissions. Our busiest year ever!

We are running out of room and really need to expand our facility. We are unable to give the quality of care required for the ever increasing number of animals, birds and reptiles that we are called upon for which to care. With this in mind we have a volunteer architect who is planning out a new clinic for us. In the spring we will start fundraising in earnest for this building.

This year was a year of "firsts": our first Peregrine Falcon, Loggerhead Shrike, Musk Turtle, and of course our Albatross. Our first success with hatching turtle eggs came as quite a surprise too.

We have also admitted our first Virginia Opossum. We knew they were coming this way as they are now in South West Ontario. Whenever we get a new species, we hit the books and learn all we can regarding care and feeding - it is never boring here.

I learned a lesson this year. I was ill, probably from working too hard. Leah and Julia had to take on an extra load, and I want to thank them for all the extra work they had to do. Next year we will have to hire a new staff member, as I am not getting any younger!



Also this year I published my book of short stories from the Wildlife Centre, appropriately named "On the Wild Side". It has been in the works for a few years, and I decided to self-publish. This way all the profits from sales will go to SPWC.

If you are interested in purchasing a book or anything else from our gift shop, check out our website at www.sandypineswildlife.org.

Thanks to all our volunteers who worked hard this year. It is great to have such a good team working with us. A special thanks to our "hands on" volunteers who lighten our load on a regular weekly basis. We could not make it without you.

Sue Meech

Sue Meech, Director

"I published my book of short stories from the Wildlife Centre, appropriately named On the Wild Side."



About Sandy Pines Wildlife Centre



The Sandy Pines Wildlife Centre has been in operation since 1994. Our goal is to help all injured and orphaned wildlife, and to release them back into their natural habitats. We also give advice and assistance to property owners who are having problems with their wild animal neighbours, and can offer humane alternatives to solve these conflicts. We work closely with veterinarians and Humane Societies across Ontario.

We are licensed provincially by the Ministry of Natural Resources and federally by the Canadian Wildlife Services to provide care and shelter for birds, mammals, and reptiles. We are unable to offer tours of the Centre to ensure the well-being of our patients.

*This year
alone over
1500 animals
have been
rescued and
admitted to
SPWC!*

**Please help us help the
wildlife of Ontario!**



All of our income depends on your generous donations; we receive no funding from the government. You can also donate on our website with the "Canada Helps" button.

Receipts will be issued for donations of \$20.00 or more. Please make your cheques payable to the Sandy Pines Wildlife Centre.

Registered Charity #81402 0210 RR0001

To donate, please use the Canada Helps button on our website or send cheques to:

8749 County Rd 2, Napanee, ON K7R3L1



Weekly Updates



We are
committed to
helping
wildlife 365
days of the
year.

We are unable to offer tours of the Centre because of the potential stress on our patients, so instead we make available weekly news updates to keep you up to date on the animals admitted and treated over the previous week. There is also a “Who Am I?” feature for those interested in learning more about the species of fauna native to Ontario.

In this way, you are able to see what is going on at the Centre and learn about the wide variety of animals we treat and how they are rehabilitated. A big thanks to Connie for all the work done over the last few years on this feature. Linda has now taken this over and is also doing a great job. To be added to the mailing list, please contact:

info@sandypineswildlife.org



Rescue, Rehabilitate, Release

Our mission is to rehabilitate injured, sick or orphaned wildlife and return them to the wild.

Upcoming and Recent Events

We have some exciting events coming up in 2011. All proceeds go to SPWC for the care and rehabilitation of injured, orphaned, and pollution damaged wildlife. To find out more, visit the “News & Events” section of our website. Our Annual Wildlife Baby Shower event in May was an outstanding success and the weather cooperated too. Many thanks to Leah who spent countless hours on this project. A big **THANK YOU** to all our volunteers who do so much over the year in donating items, organizing events, baking goodies, and more!

Don't miss our **Previously Loved Art Sale**, taking place February 11 to 13, 2011, at the Frontenac Mall in Kingston. If you have any jewellery, artwork, or frames to donate, please contact Faye at info@sandypineswildlife.org. Pick-up can be arranged if transportation is a problem.

Some successful recent events were...

Death by Chocolate: A Chocolate Tasting Extravaganza! November 28, 2010

Howl-o-ween Bash, October 30, 2010

Sponsored by Urban Paws Pet Foods & Accessories



Enjoying a snake show at the 2010 Annual Baby Shower

Our Interns of 2010

Leah Birmingham

When asked to do a write-up on the 2010 Intern Program, my first thought was "It rocked"! We had a fantastic group of women who all contributed to a very successful and incredibly busy season. Heidi Kulla started the season off in April. She was hard working and eager to learn. Very early in her learning curve she was already able to help train the next interns when they started. She mentored them with patience, and their bonds grew strong. In May, Eleri Jenkins, Nicole Hogle, and Heather Zimmerman began their internships. Eleri would have a job done well before you could come up with her next task. She was efficient and cheerful keeping the general mood up beat. Nicole (Niki) was a straight shooter and kept the workplace lighthearted and fun. Heather was our collective memory; she might not remember what she was doing, but she could tell me

verbatim what I had said earlier in the day! She worked with the fawns, and kept a keen eye on her herd without raising them to be human friendly. Lauren Ricer joined us in June, and her fun-loving, outgoing personality allowed her to adapt quickly. She also worked with the fawns, waking an hour earlier than the others and feeding later into the night. Lauren was always willing to put in an extra feed for any of the other orphans who needed a midnight meal. At the end of June we had to say goodbye to Heidi, but we were happy for her as she had found a position with Aspen Valley Wildlife Sanctuary, and worked there for the rest of the season. It made me proud that our program had allowed a young person with no previous wildlife rehab experience to get a paying job in the field immediately after completing her training with us! Next up was Joanne Brown who started in July and took on the supportive tasks of laundry, dishes, and most of the essential chores that are



critical to getting our work done. She got her crack at baby season when the second batch of squirrels started to come in late August! The only shortcoming of the Intern Program is finding enough people who can cover the April and September shifts, since most students are in school then so we are often shorthanded. This September, we were lucky enough to have our very first intern, Angela, back for a couple of months to get us through the end of the season. We would not have been able to handle the work load if it wasn't for her support. So nice to have a fresh yet knowledgeable teammate join us, when everyone else is starting to wonder if this busy season will ever end! Best of luck in all your future endeavours ladies! There were over 1500 wild animals helped this year, and your blood, sweat and tears made it happen. I hope you all find yourselves proud of what you accomplished and are inspired to help more wild animals when they cross your path. On behalf of Sue, Julia, SPWC volunteers and patients, **THANK YOU!** □



Snapping Turtles Hatch!

Baby turtles
being
hatched in
moist
substrate



In June this year we received a large Snapping Turtle that had been hit by a vehicle and was badly injured. She sadly died soon after admission. One of our interns Heidi Kulla had worked at the Tur-

tle Trauma Centre in Peterborough, and suggested that we harvest the eggs from the open shell and try to hatch them. We placed the eggs in a covered container in vermiculite and kept it moist. I must admit I forgot them from time to time. One day a movement in the container caught my attention and I couldn't believe my eyes; they were all hatching! Twenty-five turtles all trying to get out. This caused great consternation - should we overwinter them or release them? After talking to the Turtle

Trauma Centre veterinarian Dr. Sue Carstairs, we decided to release them near where the mother was found. We contacted the volunteer who rescued her, and she was able to release the young back into the same area. Although some advocate overwintering and giving the turtles a head start, there has been little research into any damage that it might cause the hatchlings. Also, after watching them trying desperately to climb the sides of the aquarium, I was happy to release them.

Peregrine Falcon Released Downtown

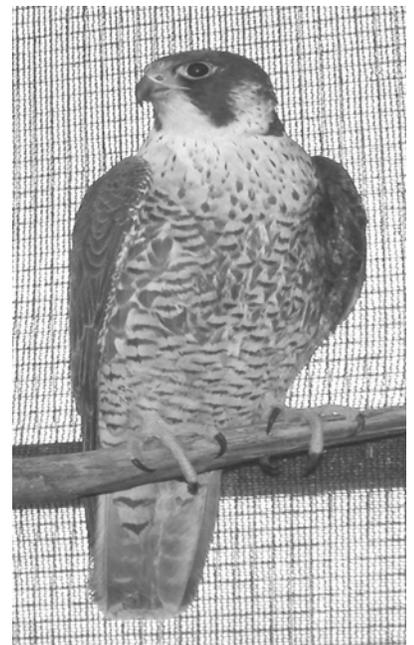
This falcon and her mate successfully raised a family this year in their downtown location.

In our last April newsletter we mentioned that a Peregrine Falcon had been rescued by a volunteer in downtown Kingston. It had been banded and released after recovering.

Later in the summer, we received word from a naturalist in Kingston that the falcon and her mate had successfully raised a family this year in their downtown location. Peregrine Falcons are making a comeback in this area and we hope

to see more of them here.

The Peregrine Falcon became an endangered species in many areas due to the use of pesticides. Since the ban on DDT from the beginning of the 1970's onwards, the populations have recovered, supported by large scale protection of nesting places and releases to the wild. They seem to like man-made structures for nest sites and can be found in many cosmopolitan areas.





Otter Playtime

This year we had three young otters rescued and brought in when they were orphaned. Two were from one litter and the third was a single male. Fortunately they came in at roughly the same weight and age and could be raised together. Singles are impossible to raise as they bond too quickly to the human caregiver. These were old enough to know that we were not family, and they growled and hissed at us even though they drank the milk substitute offered to them. We do not have the facilities to raise these pups as they have

to be over-wintered. Most young pups do not know how to swim and they are taught by their mother. First they learn to float, then to swim and dive. These ones had already completed swimming 101 with their mothers before they were orphaned, and so needed to be in water most of the time. They love to play and are very vocal, forming close family bonds. We transferred them to the Aspen Valley Wildlife Sanctuary in Rosseau, Ontario once they were stable and drinking formula. They are all doing well and in spring 2011 will be released near where they were found.

A Stinky Guest

Also known as an Eastern Musk Turtle, the Stink Pot Turtle will emit a musky, skunk-like smell if disturbed or handled. It is a Threatened Species Provincially and this is the first one we have seen at the Centre. It was found floating in a lake, and was probably either hit by a boat or preyed upon as he did have some minor injuries. We transferred this turtle to the Turtle Trauma Centre where they could examine him more closely, such as taking X-rays and doing blood work to try to determine the nature of the problem, before going on to help rehabilitate him back into the wild.



Join us for the 6th Annual PREVIOUSLY LOVED ART & JEWELLERY SALE

Date: February 11 to 13, 2011

Location: Frontenac Mall,
Kingston (mall hours)

**Many original oil &
watercolour paintings,
antique, modern,
impressionist, decora-
tor, and cottage art**

1,000 pieces of vintage,
ethnic, costume & new
jewellery

Gallery art by well known
artists valued between \$200
to \$700 and selling for only
\$75 to \$300

Decorator art selling from
\$5 to \$20

All proceeds go to SPWC

A Rare Visitor: the Virginia Opossum

Sue Meech

Most wildlife rehabilitators in South West Ontario are familiar with these unusual mammals, but the only ones I have seen are dead on the roads as I travel around Ontario. So when I received a call from the Peterborough Humane Society saying that they had rescued an opossum, I was a little surprised. It seemed a little too far north. To be honest I half expected a weasel or ferret.

When he arrived via our volunteer drivers he was in rough shape, cold and lethargic, but was definitely a young opossum. Why he was able to be picked up is a mystery, as except for

the fact that he was chilled, he was uninjured. These animals originate in South and Central America and are slowly spreading northward. They are marsupials, and young are born after only two weeks gestation. They then make their way into the pouch of the mother and stay there for two to three months.

Once warmed, we rehydrated the opossum with subcutaneous fluids and then began a course of antibiotics.

Although they have a huge mouth with fifty sharp teeth, they are only aggressive when cornered. When really scared they can play dead, which is where the expression “playing possum” comes from. They

are omnivorous and eat anything and everything. Life is hard for them especially in our cold winters, and since they have no fur on their tails or ears, they are very prone to frostbite. Their average lifespan is two years.

Within 24 hours the opossum was active and eating up a storm. We will probably have to over-winter him here, as after an illness or trauma of some kind he would find it hard to survive the cold.

If you should see a dead opossum on the road, check the pouch to see if it is a female. The young may be in there trying to survive. □

The rescued Virginia Opossum sleeps off the cold



Virginia Opossums are now emerging in southern Ontario

“Although they have a huge mouth with fifty sharp teeth, they are only aggressive when cornered.”



Blanding's Turtle Success Story



Sue Meech On one of our last feedings of the day last year, a call was taken in late evening that a turtle had been found on the road. It was badly injured, but the driver was willing to transport it to us even though she was an hour away. I remember opening the box and my heart sinking. The turtle was literally in pieces and I knew it would take a long time to stabilize the fractures. Sleep would have to be put off for a few more hours! The turtle was in extreme pain, as it's shell is the equivalent to our spine

**“Blanding’s
Turtles are on
the endangered
list and their
numbers are
dropping
significantly due
to habitat
fragmentation.”**

and ribs. Turtles don't show pain as humans do, but they do go into shock. The prognosis was guarded. Pain medication was immediately given and I prepared the duct tape pieces. It was a hot, humid evening as I worked to put the puzzle pieces of the shell back together and tried to stabilize the fragments. I realized quickly that some fragments would need surgical wiring. In the morning I contacted Dr. Sue Carstairs from the Turtle Trauma Centre to take over the case. The next day, the turtle was transferred to the Toronto Wildlife Centre by one of our volunteers, and she underwent several surgical procedures over the following months.

By the end of the following summer, the turtle was rehabilitated enough to be ready for release. As is our usual process, we asked the finder to release the animal in the same spot it was found. In this case the finder was away, so the turtle was released by volunteers at the Toronto Wildlife Centre. Blanding's Turtles are on the endangered list and their numbers are dropping significantly due to habitat fragmentation. As well, it takes them 14 to 20 years to reach sexual maturity (similar to humans) and then produce young. Thanks to the prompt action by the finder who rushed the turtle to our Centre, this Blanding's Turtle survived despite her severe injuries. □



Turtle at the end of her recovery

*Photo by Scott Wight,
Toronto Wildlife Centre*

The First Loggerhead Shrike

Our first ever Loggerhead Shrike was not so lucky. She had been attacked by a cat and unfortunately died of her injuries. A small robin sized bird with a large hooked bill doesn't look like a hunter, but they dine on insects and small birds too.

These birds are on the species at risk list and their numbers are dwindling due to loss of habitat and pesticide use. There are many recovery projects underway in the Frontenac and Lennox and Addington counties.



The Summer of the Albatross (*cont*)



Sue tests the strength of Alby's wings

"When most people were giving somber prognosis for how he would do this long landlocked and in captivity, he proved them wrong."

(*cont from page 1*) ...him, and obviously confused by his current circumstances. He tolerated only a few people working with him, and required a fair amount of patience. His recovery was more like a rollercoaster ride than a road, and Sue, Julia and the interns pulled him through the worst of times during his first weekend there. He came into SPWC unable even to walk due to emaciation and dehydration. He was in rough shape, and it is easy to push patients in this state too fast. We have had the experience of other migratory or local water birds in this state (usually due to Botulism poisoning), and Sue knew to start with oral and injectable fluids. After he was rehydrated for 24 hours, they started with an easily digested liquid diet, and by the time I was back he was ready for us to start alternating some fish with his liquid

meals. Julia had run some blood work when he was admitted, and when we repeated it, he had already shown improvement. He was gaining weight steadily, standing more often, but he would not tolerate his pool time. When he came in he was too weak to keep on water for any length of time, which is common in sick water birds.

We started slowly with short soaks in a small pond insert. As the bird's strength improves we usually leave them out in their pool for longer periods. There was very little progression with his desire to be in water. He seemed to panic quickly and want to haul himself out of the pool. We were concerned with the amount of time he was spending on his keel (breast bone of a bird) and feet. So we rigged up a sling for him, an albatross hammock of sorts! Our efforts were appreciated at night when he would stay on the hammock,

but during the day he preferred to wander around his enclosure, likely looking for a possible escape route as most wildlife in captivity do. Sue had begun the paperwork to transfer "Alby" (more of a short form than a name, as we try not to name our wild patients), and with this we had a couple of options.

The first was the daunting task of trying to get him back to the Tristan Da Cunha Islands in the Southern mid-Atlantic Ocean. The likeliest take off spot would be from a Wild Bird Sanctuary in Africa. They have not been keen in the past to accept birds that had shown up so far away from their normal range, likely due to concern with introducing new diseases to their native population. We had been consulting with Dr. Florina Tseng from Tufts University. She had successfully rehabbed an albatross before, and was willing to work with us at



Testing his legs in a temporary pool

getting the paperwork in place to transfer him to their facilities where he could have the best possible diagnostics, housing, and nutritional care. In the meantime he had formed a limp, a shocking discovery that put my heart into my throat. We had been told by experts that two weeks seemed to be a landmark time for these birds in captivity, anything longer and they generally form leg or feet issues and deteriorate. Here we were just past the two week mark, and he was forming what appeared to be a "foot-drop".

We pondered the possibilities and kept him confined and resting while on anti-inflammatory medications. We deduced that he had strained his leg in the enclosure, and hoped that time would resolve the limp. The word back from the Canadian Wildlife Services was that the permit to transport him across the border would take one month or longer due to his Endangered Species status. We put out a plea to the community for help with a larger pool that we could use to house him in. We needed to keep him off his legs and work on his waterproofing which had deteriorated since he was refusing to spend much time in the water. Shelin Pools of Napanee donated a 20" above ground pool. They were unable to install the pool, so The Pool Doctor of Belleville offered to put it together for us. It was basically a race between whichever could happen first, either the proper enclosure for housing him long-term, or the red tape clearance to ship him off to Dr. Tseng. While Sue pursued the permits and

flight arrangements, I made pleas to the community for assistance building an aviary around the pool, and fish donations to keep our hungry patient healing. We were excited to meet Paul Gooding of Shasta & Associates who has offered to build our aviary even after "Alby" was gone and the rush was over. He brought on the help of Gord Colbourne (P.Eng.) who drew up the plans for the new enclosure. We are working on funds for the supplies, but thankfully Paul is still willing to build when we are ready!



Photo by Michael Lea, Kingston Whig Standard

The paperwork came through and I drove our famous feathered friend off to Toronto. He looked like a well travelled guitar-case, covered in stickers/permits/clearance certificates. It was hard to pull myself away from him. It had been almost a month of ups and downs, sleepless nights, stressful decisions, and during that time my bond with him had grown strong. Transferring him meant not having control over where he would end up. I felt strongly that he needed to be released in the Southern Hemisphere, but we had taken him as far as we could. His limp was gone, he was stronger, and he had become very

vocal and stubborn! We had done exceptionally well with him. When most people were giving somber prognosis for how he would do this long landlocked and in captivity, he proved them wrong. On one of her updates Dr. Tseng mentioned that while they could find absolutely nothing wrong with him, he had not shown any more improvement than he had with us. They had restored his water-proofing, but were unable to get him to feed himself. Their plan was to send him to Sun Coast Sea Bird Sanctuary in Florida. That Centre had a larger outdoor pool where he could spend time with other seabirds. Maybe the competition for food would help motivate "Alby" to self-feed, and certainly the company would help! He would also be moving closer to the Southern Hemisphere.

Everywhere he goes, "Alby" gains more supporters and friends. Hopefully this support will carry him back home. There have been other vagrant albatrosses found and cared for in North America, even one that was seen nesting years after its release. We will never know why he wound up near death in Ontario. Our patients cannot tell us their stories. We piece together what we can, and give them the treatment we feel most appropriate. From there, they either thrive or fail. Whatever his story, there is no doubt that "Alby" is a survivor with a destiny. I hope that this time next year, I will see a picture of Alby with his nest of offspring. Then I will know that our hard work paid off and his destiny was fulfilled. □

Why Did the Porcupine Cross the Road?



A porcupine shows off its formidable quills

“How it was that Porcy and I came face to face on the road at the same instant will forever remain a mystery.”

Janet Foster

There are times in my life when I think that fate, luck, or indeed a higher power must be pulling the strings. How else to explain the strange set of circumstances that placed me in the right place, at the right time, to save a porcupine?

It all began late last fall when a young porcupine showed up in our field close to the cabin. Porcupines are not fast movers at the best of times, but this one was moving about with difficulty. Because the animal was coming daily and eating well, we just let matters be.

By mid-October, “Porcy” had moved onto some nearby apple trees to gorge on the fallen fruit, clearly a favourite. By now his shuffling gait was truly laboured. Every time I tried to approach, he awkwardly retreated into the tall grasses and, not wanting to cause stress, I backed off. With binoculars I could see that on his back legs were what looked like huge growths, solid masses of grayish stuff that resembled gobs of cream cheese. No wonder Porcy could hardly

walk! He had lost much of the fur on his face too. This was a very sick porcupine.

I contacted Sue Meech at SPWC to describe the horrible growths. “No”, she answered, “not growths. That’s mange, the only form of its kind in the animal world”. Mange is a contagious skin disease caused by parasitic mites. Unable to climb, Porcy would be doomed to a slow and lingering death. The good news was that this type of mange was treatable, providing the animal was brought in as soon as possible. “No problem”, I assured Sue. “We’ll catch him when he arrives tomorrow”. But the next day, there was no sign of Porcy. For two weeks we searched the fields. He had vanished. We kept looking but feared that mange had claimed him.

All too soon it was early November and that’s when luck, or that higher power, stepped in to direct the flow of events. At 8:30 am one morning our farm vehicle was due in Madoc for repairs, but the interior light had accidentally been left on all night and the battery was drained. So instead of going to the garage, I headed instead to my dental appointment in Tweed. Ten minutes

later I was in the Volvo driving east. And on the highway - right in the middle of MY lane - was a familiar dark shape! How it was that Porcy and I came face to face on the road at the same instant will forever remain a mystery. Now all I had to do was catch him.

How do you catch a porcupine? The standard technique was used of approaching the animal from downwind (porcupines have poor eyesight, but good noses) with a large plastic garbage pail, then drop it over the animal; place the lid on the ground and slide upturned pail over it; slowly turn the garbage pail right side up and – presto! – you have captured a porcupine. Our Porcy, in no condition to run anyway, was easily caught. We gently “emptied” him from the garbage pail into a large plywood box and he was ready for travel.

Having arrived at Sandy Pines, I wondered how Sue was going to handle him given all those sharp quills. Expertly and with bare hands, she simply placed a plastic apron around him and lifted Porcy into a makeshift hammock to be weighed. He cried like a baby but more in fear than in pain. Seen up close, the mounds

of gray “cream cheese” clinging to his legs looked dreadful, but Sue assured us they would gradually slough off like dead leaves as the medication took effect. Sue held Porcy firmly wrapped in the plastic apron and placed a plastic syringe down his throat for the first dose of meds.

Porcy would remain in a small enclosure for six weeks so that he could be weighed regularly, have medication administered, and his progress monitored. If all went well, he would eventually be moved to a larger natural habitat. And things did go well! The day after he arrived, Porcy was eating up a storm. Five days later, he was 150 g heavier. He loved apples and corn, as well as the teaspoon of sugar that was added to the nasty tasting meds. By late November the awful clumps were falling from his legs. In terms of weight gain, Porcy was progressing beautifully but his facial fur and lost quills were not yet growing back, so it was decided he should overwinter at Sandy Pines.

Twice in the months that followed, we drove to Napanee to visit, but both times Porcy was high up in his leafy tree at the back of the aviary and hard to see. If he was not revealing his gratitude to us, he was at least demonstrating his ability to climb once again, a sure sign of progress.

By spring, Porcy was ready for release. Thanks to Sue and her helpers, it was a far healthier and better-looking porcupine being loaded back into our plywood box on March 24th. All

signs of mange were gone. There was new fur on his face, small quills growing in on his back and tail, and he was fully mobile. And, we believed, anxious to regain his freedom.

There are fields at the back of our farm surrounded by deep woods. Thinking that Porcy’s first instinct would be to climb, we placed the box at the base of a tall maple, opened the door and stood by with cameras to record the big event. But he stayed well inside, exiting only when we tipped the box. Never have we seen a porcupine move so fast; not up the tree as expected, but far along the fences. If ever confirmation was needed

“The day after he arrived at SPWC, Porcy was eating up a storm. Five days later, he was 150 g heavier.”

of a full recovery, this was it!

We saw Porcy for the last time a month later. He was halfway up an old apple tree, the picture of good health nestled into the base of a thick branch, bathed in late afternoon sunlight and with his eyes closed, a picture of contentment. Remembering all the strange circumstances and human effort that had gone into his rescue,

I believed Porcy had much for which to be thankful. The moment he heard my voice he took off, scrambling up the apple tree, clearly determined to put as much distance between us as he could. Given the ordeal he had been through, I guess Porcy’s gratitude is something we will just have to take for granted. □



Porcy the Porcupine during his rescue, being handled by SPWC rehabilitators

Full Circle: An Owl Success Story



The rescued owl recovers in SPWC's aviary

“He was so beautiful and looked so much better than that day on the side of the road where he had been struck..”

Diane Moore

One day last February I was on my way home from school (I teach grade one at H.H. Langford P.S. in Napa-nee), when suddenly a large bird flew in front of an on-coming van and was hit. It was an owl! I thought he was dead, but to be sure I gave him a little nudge and a wing flapped for just a second. He was still alive. After I brought him to the Sandy Pines Wildlife Centre, Sue (the Director) told me he had a head injury and was also underweight. She gave him some pain medication and re-hydrated him. It wasn't certain whether he would make it through the night. I called the next morning anxiously to check. He was still alive but would

need some time to recover. Sue had noticed that his eyes did not seem quite right and thought he might have some vision problems, which would need special care. I volunteered to transport the owl to the Owl Foundation for assessment and further treatment. He was at the Foundation for quite a while being treated by a vet for his vision. He did have some permanent vision loss, but could see well enough to be releasable. The Foundation assured us that he could maneuver around trees and hunt independently.

He passed all tests in August and I got the call to fetch him. After arriving at the release site, the box holding him was opened, but he didn't want to exit. He was so beautiful and looked so much better than that day on the side of the road where he had been struck. When he did finally take off, it was one of the most beautiful sights I have ever seen. He landed in a nearby tree and looked at me. He

flew up to a higher tree, I guess to see where he was - back home. He had come full circle. He stayed there for a long time but eventually it was time for us to go. I said “good-bye” and wished him the best.

Every day I think about him, hoping he finds a mate, hoping he will be ok, hoping he will live a long life, but that at least he was given a chance. This was a great learning opportunity for my grade one class as we followed the his journey together. We learned some facts about owls, drew pictures and wrote some stories. They will be glad to hear he is back home and doing well.

Thanks to Sue for taking such good care of him and to the Owl Foundation for helping him to re-learn the skills he needed to survive. Thank you to everyone at the Sandy Pines Wildlife Centre, and to those who help wildlife every day. □

**Diane and her husband Greg have since become volunteers at the Wildlife Centre. A chance encounter with an owl on a stormy day led to new adventures in their lives.*



Interested in knowing more?

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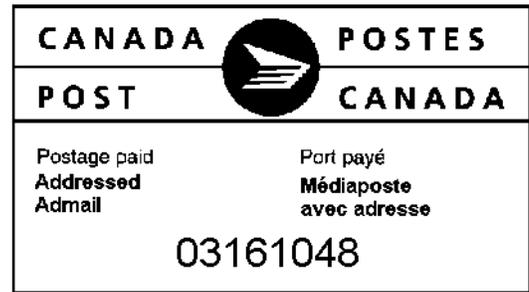
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