

# HAWK TALK

University of Illinois  
Wildlife Medical Clinic Newsletter  
Fall 2007



## WELCOME!

Welcome to this edition of Hawk Talk 2007! This year has been a busy and exciting time for us in the Wildlife Medical Clinic with the election of our new executive board, an abundance of orphans and interesting new cases, and a successful Doodle for Wildlife fund raising event.

In this issue, please read about our two new residents Suzie, a Harris Hawk, and Noelle, a Northern Saw-Whet Owl. These two amazing birds will become ambassadors to the public to aid our environmental education programs to schools, scout troops and local organizations.

Orphan season arrived in April in Central Illinois. WMC incubators were full of infant and juvenile rabbits, raccoons, squirrels, opossums, and birds. The WMC students and staff worked hard to provide them medical care, proper nutrition and comfort before arranging for their transport to a licensed wildlife rehabilitator. Along with the care and treatment of the orphans, we answered many calls from local residents concerned about orphans found on their property. As supporters of the WMC and our wildlife you can help increase public awareness by knowing a few common facts about "orphaned" wildlife.

According to the Audubon Society, as many as 75% of young animals brought to wildlife rehabilitators are not orphans. Young wildlife spend a considerable amount of time alone and are still well cared for by their parents. Often mothers will leave the nest to hunt or feed and return for only short amounts of time at certain times of day, or when no humans or other threats are present.

A common myth we often hear is that a mother will abandon her babies if she smells a human's scent. This misconception is due to the fact that the mother will not return with humans present. Believing the animals will be abandoned, many well-meaning individuals will remove the animals and attempt to care for them. Unfortunately, these animals are far less likely to survive and thrive once removed from their natural environment.

If an infant or juvenile animal is found outside of a nest, observe it from a distance for any signs of injury or pain such as bleeding, limping, or dragging a limb. Unless the animal is sick or injured, place it back in the nest or in a safe place (i.e. shrubs or ground-cover), leave the area and monitor the site from a distance for the mother's return.

In most cases, wild animals should be left alone; a young animal's best chance of survival is to be raised by its natural parents. If it is necessary to intervene, wildlife must be cared for at licensed facilities. Possession of these animals is regulated by state and federal laws and it is illegal for individuals to raise and treat them. Also, handling, housing and dietary needs of each animal varies tremendously with species, age and health status. Improper diet can lead to growth and development abnormalities, and improper handling can cause injury to both the animal and handler. Hand-raised animals can also imprint on human handlers preventing their release into the wild.

Following these few suggestions will increase the chance for survival of our beloved wildlife. For more information on what to do if injured or orphaned wildlife are found, please visit [www.cvm.uiuc.edu/wmc](http://www.cvm.uiuc.edu/wmc).

We also want to thank our supporters and donors for their generosity, making our Doodle for Wildlife fundraiser a great success. We hope that everyone in attendance enjoyed the evening of food, entertainment and fun. The money we raised will help the WMC continue to provide outstanding support to our local wildlife—we couldn't do it without you.

Stefanie Simon, Allison Shobe  
WMC chairs

### Medical Directors

Dr. Julia Whittington

Dr. Mark Mitchell

### Co-Managers

Stacy Burdick

Johanna Neil

### Resident Care / PR Head

Rose Ann Meccoli

### Co-Chairs

Stefanie Simon

Allison Shobe

### Secretary

Heather Brown

### Treasurer

Brittany Heggem

### Resident Coordinator

Johanna Neil

### Public Relations

Samantha Haskins

Vanessa Diemer

### Fundraising

Liz Wolf

Amy Ruggiero

### Conservation Chair

Vaishali Joshi

### Webmaster

Stephen Etter

Thank you to our newsletter sponsor:



## HAWK TALK

### A REALLY WILD GOOSE CHASE

Early this June, I received a call from my friend Sherri. She had been keeping track of a particular Canada Goose at Crystal Lake Park in Urbana. Limping and nibbling repeatedly at her legs, she was struggling on both land and water. The problem was fishing line or twine that had become entangled around both legs, forming a tight hobble.

This is a recurring problem at Crystal Lake Park and all fishing areas. Abandoned fishing line and hooks are carelessly left lying about only to wind up wrapped around the legs of waterfowl, impaled through their feet, or worse. Every year the Wildlife Medical Clinic receives turtles and waterfowl that have swallowed fishhooks. The lucky ones are found, brought to us and have their fishing line or fishhooks removed. The unlucky ones may face a long, slow death from starvation, infection or even leg amputation.

Knowing this, we knew we had to capture Sherri's goose, since, after a couple of weeks of entanglement, it was already showing signs of weakness. Plus, she noticed that it had its own little family, a loyal mate and four fuzzy goslings. They stayed with her constantly, though she could not keep up with the main flock.

Sherri and a few friends had tried to capture this goose, but it was very alert, and she could still fly. More manpower was needed if we were going to catch this goose.

Now friends, let me say that if you have ever tried to catch a goose that didn't want to be caught, you are in for a humbling experience. After a couple of hours of fruitless effort, you will know that geese are much faster, more agile, and way more fit than you are. And as smart as you think you are, they are smarter.

So one weekend afternoon, seven or eight of us gathered at the park. We were armed with toss nets, fishing nets, a big blanket, bags of tempting food for the goose, and a big box to carry her in once caught. Lots of people, well-equipped, we would surely get this done in short order, yes sir, no problem.



Well, three or four hours later, our rescuers, once so energized, so confident, so fresh and clean, were now sun-burnt, sweat-drenched, itchy, exhausted and ready for the showers and a cold beverage or three. No goose this time, but it was only our first effort. We were smarter now, we thought. Silly humans. Silly mere humans.

So the rescue efforts continued, day after day. We tried mid-day rescues, late afternoon rescues, early morning rescues, rescues on land, rescues on water, chasing her with paddleboats, rescues IN the water, leaping into the lake after her. All unsuccessful, but it sure kept the geese and several onlookers entertained.

It was a frustrating couple of weeks compounded by our deep concern for this animal whose condition was worsening.

Then it happened. I was slumped into my sofa at home thinking glumly of the unsuccessful attempts earlier that morning, when my phone rang. "Another sales pitch for a vacation in Florida," I thought, but no, it was Johanna, one of our student managers at the Wildlife Medical Clinic.

"I think we might have your goose."

"What?! Oh, my God!!" (Given the circumstances, I thought God would forgive my liberty with His name.)

Johanna filled in some of the details and I quickly called the others who had tried so long and hard to catch this goose. We made a plan to meet later that evening at the Wildlife Clinic to have a look at this goose to see if we could identify her as our own elusive goose.

We met. We examined the goose, its leg wounds, the removed twine, asked lots of questions and finally thought that yes, maybe she could be ours. We were still a little hesitant, however. We decided to continue trying to locate our tangled little goose within the park. If she wasn't there, I was another positive sign that it could be our goose.

The goose in the Wildlife Clinic would be kept there for a few days to treat her leg wounds from the cuts caused by the line and also to feed her since she was thin.

During her stay at the Wildlife Clinic, we found no sign of our disabled goose at the park. We were now fairly confident that this was our goose, but the biggest treat was yet to come.

Within three days, she was ready to return to her home at the park and to her little family. Her rescuers gathered at the park to witness this momentous occasion. Johanna brought our recovered goose out in a carrier.

The carrier door was opened and our goose stepped out, made a bee-line for the watching nearby geese and the welcome water of the lake. Previously, in her disabled state, the other geese had harassed her and driven her away from food sources. We were worried that they would not accept her re-entry to their group, but all was going well and they mingled around her in welcome. However she was not looking at them, but for her mate and goslings.

Across the pond, away from all the other geese, floated a lone Canada goose and three goslings. (Sadly, one of the original four goslings had died a couple of days before her return to the park). Ignoring all the other geese, she began swimming quickly toward him. The solitary goose and goslings stretched their necks up as high as possible to watch her approach, clearly very interested. She honked a greeting and instantly they knew it was her. They all began swimming as fast as possible to each other, honking all the way. Their meeting was jubilant, stroking each others necks and nibbling bills together in a flurry of little goose kisses.

If anyone ever doubted that animals can feel joy or love of family, they had only to watch this reunion. All of us who had worried and prayed over this animal got their reward this day, which I know we'll never forget. A whole community had gotten together to try to help this animal: Sherri, Nancy, Rebecca, Nick, Tammy, Chelsea, Johanna, neighborhood people, people from Caring Hands Animal Hospital, from the Wildlife Medical Clinic, Urbana Animal Control, and just plain interested onlookers who wanted to help.

Were any of us the ones who had finally caught her? No, but that's O.K. It's the end result that mattered.

So how was she finally caught? Here's where our story takes one of those quirky twists. She was caught on Nevada Street in Urbana, not in Crystal Lake Park, her home; and not by any of us who had been trying for so long, but by a University of Illinois police officer. Oh, and the officer's name is Jon Whittington, who just happens to be the husband of Dr. Julie Whittington, the medical director of our Wildlife Medical Clinic. What a wild ending for our really wild goose chase.

UPDATE: Since our goose's release back to Crystal Lake Park, she continues to be seen paddling around the lake with her little family, and is doing well.

During this time, however, yet another Canada goose from Crystal Lake Park was found with fishing line wrapped around its leg. This one, happily, was caught by Sherri, had the line cut off by Johanna, and was returned to the park.

R.A. Meccoli, 7-1-2007

## PLEASE WELCOME OUR NEWEST RESIDENTS!!

### “Noelle” the Saw-whet Owl

Noelle, a Saw-whet owl, presented to the Wildlife Medical Clinic on December 5, 2006, with no feeling or function in her left wing. Radiographs did not indicate any fracture or dislocation, so Noelle was treated with anti-inflammatory drugs to reduce soft-tissue swelling and her wing was banded for support. After several weeks of treatment Noelle failed to regain use of the wing and it was concluded that she had suffered irreparable nerve damage. In order to release birds to their natural habitat, they must be fully flighted. Due to Noelle’s extensive wing injury, it was not an option to return her

to the wild. Fortunately, Noelle displayed a calm disposition that made her very easy to handle, and the clinic decided she would be a welcomed addition to the resident raptor program. Saw-whet owls are among the smallest native to North America. They are rarely seen in the wild because they are strictly nocturnal and nest low to the ground in brush. The clinic is currently home to six raptors that participate in presentations for education and public relations. Noelle made her official debut at the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Doodle for Wildlife on April 21, 2007.



### “Susie” the Harris Hawk



Late in 2006, the Wildlife Medical Clinic was fortunate to welcome a new member to our public relations team. She is a saucy beauty with glossy chestnut, black and white coloring, and a throaty, husky voice. Her name is “Susie” and she is a Harris’ hawk, also known as a Bay-Winged Hawk.

As are all of our educational raptors, Susie is also non-releasable. She is a human-imprinted bird which means that she identifies humans, rather than other hawks, as her family members and co-species.

Her original owner obtained her as a mere chick to raise and train for falconry. Traditionally, imprinting is purposely done by falconers in order to form a tight human-bird bond and working relationship.

Susie was used as a falconry bird for about seven years, but began to develop behavioral problems which led to self-destructive feather-picking. Her owner decided to retire her from falconry and donated her to Dr. Mark Mitchell for use as an educational bird. When Dr. Mitchell joined the University of Illinois and our Wildlife Medical Clinic this year, he brought Susie to us and asked us to continue using her for our own educational programs.

This was a wonderful chance to work with a unique hawk. Harris’ hawks are mainly found in the southwestern United States and Texas. They are fairly docile hawks and form strong family units, often with three adults per family, all cooperating to raise their chicks. Harris’ hawks are also very unusual in the raptor world in that they hunt in packs, as do wolves.

As Susie gets used to us, and we to her, expect to see her more and more often at our public engagements where you can meet all six of our terrific wildlife ambassadors: Nokomis, Odin, Penelope, Pistol, Noelle, and now Susie.



## 6th Annual Doodle for Wildlife

Congratulations to Krystal Fitzpatrick who was honored, along with her late husband Tim, as the recipients of the first annual Wildlife for Life award. As friends of wildlife, they have a long tradition of exceptional generosity in support of the Wildlife Medical Clinic's mission of medical care and conservation of wildlife, veterinary training, and public education.

Thank you to our sponsors-  
We could not have done it without you!!



Action Auction and Bill Bland

Framer's Market and Rob DeLong

Martin Graphics and Printing Services, Inc.

Sun Singer Wine and Spirits, Mark and Jackie Yarbrough

A special thanks to the Edison Middle School Jazz Band and

Patricia Hrubby Powell, our storyteller

Our sincere thanks goes out to the numerous individuals and businesses that donated items to be auctioned during our event.

Raising over \$20,000 will allow us to purchase much needed medical supplies and food for our wildlife patients. Your generous support has allowed us to:

Provide care to nearly 1000 wild animals this year

Purchase a critical care incubator with the ability to provide oxygen support to patients in shock

Purchase 2 fluid pumps and 2 syringe pumps to administer life-saving fluids to wildlife patients

Help train over 100 veterinary students as they volunteer hundreds of hours while caring for native wildlife on their path to becoming veterinarians

Thank you to all of our guests who attended the auction and helped make it a great success. Your gracious donations and tremendous support for our wildlife will help us provide them with the best care and treatment possible.



Wildlife Medical Clinic  
University of Illinois  
College of Veterinary Medicine  
1008 West Hazelwood Drive  
Urbana, Illinois 61801

Phone: 217.244.1195

Nonprofit Org.  
US Postage  
PAID  
Permit No. 75  
Champaign, IL

## Help Illinois' Wildlife – Support the Wildlife Medical Clinic!

### Adopt A Resident Program

I'd like to adopt the following WMC resident animal(s):

Odin, Red-Tailed Hawk: \$65/year

Pistol, American Kestrel: \$50/year

Penelope, Eastern Screech Owl: \$50/year

Nokomis, Great Horned Owl: \$75/year

For the student rate of \$25/resident/year (please show proof of student membership)

Adoption package includes a color photo, an information sheet on your resident, and a certificate of adoption.

**Credit Card** (check one):

Visa

Mastercard

Discover

Am. Express

### Donations

I'd like to make a tax-deductible donation to the WMC for \$ \_\_\_\_\_

For Adopt a Resident gifts or donations on behalf of someone else:

Beneficiary's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Please send this form with your payment to:

(checks payable to University of Illinois Foundation)

Wildlife Medical Clinic  
University of Illinois  
College of Veterinary Medicine  
2001 South Lincoln Avenue  
Urbana, IL 61801

Your Information:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Street: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_