

Gray Matters

Fall 2004/Winter 2005

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Squirrel Sanctuary Inc

A 501 (c) 3-tax exempt organization, Squirrel Sanctuary Inc is an all volunteer collective of State licensed wildlife rehabilitators and assistants that devotes its efforts to the rehabilitation, protection and preservation of indigenous tree, ground and flying squirrels and other small mammals.

Visit us online
www.squirrelsanctuary.org

(516) 334-8023 #3

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Holiday Plea

Dear Friends
of Squirrel Sanctuary,

The year 2004 has been the busiest ever. We collectively have received and cared for more than 900 gray squirrels, woodchucks, chipmunks and flying squirrels in our metropolitan NY area.

The good news is that our success rate is high! Spring and summer were active seasons but fall presented a specific challenge. Mild weather conditions are prompting some female squirrels to bear a late litter, resulting in another cycle of late born baby squirrels to care for. We also discovered that a familiar local wildlife center is, by choice, not admitting any fall baby squirrels. Therefore we are receiving most if not all of the displaced



and orphaned. Because we are a small group we are now filled to capacity. These young mammals will undergo a complex process referred to as "wintering over", held until the spring when favorable weather conditions prevail. At this time the young eager squirrel

have been fully acclimated and with excellent diet and winterized housing have passed release criteria. With your continued support we can maintain and escort them to that point.

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The Edge of Reason

Nutty Squirrel Behavior Reasonable

by Steve Grant
of The Hartford Courant

Every motorist is familiar with this sad scenario: A squirrel dashes out into the road, stops, zigs, zags, and zigs again, right under one of the wheels.

The street, you say, is a fur-long of fur.

Given that most drivers are not aiming for squirrels, and given that squirrels often could delay eternal rest by running across the road without stopping, the question is: Are they as stupid as they seem?

Stephen Hawking they are not, but scientists are dis-

covering that squirrels are far craftier than we've given them credit for. Squirrels know which acorns are most perishable and eat those first, and they are capable of what may be consciously deceptive behavior to protect food they have cached.

Michael A. Steele, a professor of biology at Wilkes

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Nutty Behavior (*Edge of Reason*) - cont. from page 1

University in Wilkes-Barre, Pa., said his research indicates "they are, on a daily basis, making very careful behavioral decisions that are critical for winter survival."

Sylvia L. Halkin, a professor of biology at Central Connecticut State University, is studying deceptive behavior in squirrels, following up on a student's observation that squirrels sometimes buried an acorn then moved nearby and pretended to bury another acorn, behavior that might confuse another animal attempting to find the cache.

She and some of her students conducted an experiment in which they gave squirrels peanuts and then watched them bury them. Then the students dug up the peanuts.

Subsequently, they found that when they gave the squirrels peanuts, the



"What surprised the students was that they were expecting only one kind of deceptive behavior, but the squirrels demonstrated a whole bag of tricks..."

squirrels would bury a nut, then pretend to bury other nuts nearby. Or the squirrels would dig many holes before burying a single nut in one of them. Or they might try to bury the nut under a bush where the researchers could not see it.

What surprised the students was that they were expecting only one kind of deceptive behavior, but the squirrels demonstrated a whole bag of tricks to confuse creatures who might steal their stash.

"Deceptive behavior has been documented in a number of species of animals," Halkin said. But overall "it is rare. It

gives us a glimpse into the kinds of mental processes that may be going on in their heads."

Steele and Peter D. Smallwood of the University of Richmond determined that squirrels selectively bury those acorns that are least perishable, such as those from red oaks, ensuring a food supply during winter, while immediately consuming acorn species that are most perishable, such as those from white oaks.

When they do bury a white oak acorn, they first bite out the embryo, which prevents the acorn from sprouting. Experiments indicate that by doing so, the white oak acorn will remain edible for six months, Steele found. If they did not do that, the acorn would put out a taproot and become inedible.

NOTE: This article appeared in THE FLINT JOURNAL.
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Skwerl-pre-neur *noun*.

A person who has a fascination with skwerls (AKA squirrels), and assumes the risk of appearing a little NUTS to friends and family. This could be a foundation for a skwerl business venture, skwerl web site, skwerl LotteryCharms, skwerl songs, excuse to buy high tech computers and photography equipment to capture and view skwerl imagery. This could also include non-profit organizations that seek to rehabilitate injured skwerls or institutions that study and promote the understanding of skwerl stuff.

Squirrel Sanctuary Mission Statement 2005

To offer temporary rehabilitative care, rescue, and intervention to squirrels that are orphaned, ill, or injured, thus in need of specialized attention, with the objective of returning them to their natural environment with intact survival skills.

To offer the public prompt response through rescue efforts, rehabilitation and appropriate contacts for follow-up.

To promote the exchange of knowledge and resources among wildlife rehabili-



© Darlene Ward - Ward Photo Studio

tators, related government agencies, community organizations, veterinarians and the community-at-large.

To cultivate an understanding and respect for squirrels, wildlife, natural habitat and ecosystems.

To reduce human's negative impact on wildlife through education.

Raccoon Rabies Found in Nassau County

Terrestrial rabies in raccoons (raccoon strain) has been identified in Nassau County. Long Island had been fortunate up to that point to claim its status as terrestrial rabies-free until a rabid raccoon was identified this past summer in the Brookville area.

The New York State Department of Health and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) have completed distributing raccoon rabies vaccine by hand and by helicopter. The distribution was completed by September 14th. The State will evaluate the effectiveness of the vaccination effort in October.

To date, the New York State Department of Health has confirmed nine (9) raccoons with rabies in Nassau County. The last two were found in Brookville (9/17) and Roslyn Harbor (9/19). All nine raccoons were located within the vaccination area.

“At this point, we hope that the vaccine baiting will prevent the spread of raccoon rabies beyond the immediate area where rabid raccoons have been trapped or found,” said Dr. David M. Ackman, Commissioner of Health. “If rabies is not contained at this point, it will be difficult, if not impossible, to prevent the spread across the island.”

Rabies is a viral infection that affects the nervous system of raccoons and other mammals, including humans. The

disease is always fatal once clinical signs of infection occur. Vaccination will greatly decrease the chance of human and domestic animal contact with rabid raccoons. Rabies is transmitted by the bite of a rabid animal. However,

Cute but Deadly



Photo by Anne Wilzak

the virus may also be transmitted when the saliva of a rabid animal comes into contact with cut, open, or scratched skin lesions.

To protect yourself from exposure to possible rabies:

- Keep domestic animals (dogs, cats, and ferrets) on a leash and keep livestock confined in the evenings.
- Do not touch or have contact with any animal other than your own.
- Do not touch dying or dead animals. If you must move them, use a shovel, wear heavy rubber gloves and double bag the carcass.
- Advise your family against approaching any unknown animal -- wild or domestic -- especially those acting in an unusual way.

- Instruct your children to tell you immediately if they were bitten or scratched by any animal.
- If a bat is found in a room where adults or children were sleeping, or if an adult enters a room and finds a bat with a child, DO NOT RELEASE THE BAT, notify the county health department immediately.
- Do not feed unknown animals and discourage them from seeking food near your home
- Keep garbage cans tightly covered and avoid storing any food outside.
- Verify that your pets have current rabies vaccination, including dogs, cats, ferrets, livestock and horses.

Remember that New York State law requires all dogs, cats and domesticated ferrets to be vaccinated against rabies.

Individuals bitten or scratched by any animal should call the Nassau County Department of Health and immediately contact their physicians or seek medical help at a hospital emergency room.

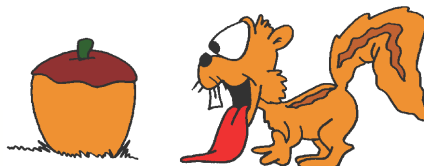
Individuals who see any mammal (other than a small rodent) that is ill, dead, or acting unusually should also report those to the Nassau County Department of Health to assist in rabies surveillance. Rabies surveillance is critical for the entire County, not just the area already affected, in order to determine how widespread the outbreak is and to control it.

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A Squirrely Tale

A Happy Ending to a Squirrely Tale
by Mike Argento - York Daily Record

When we last checked in with Nutkin, she was influencing the race for state Superior Court Justice. It was November 2003, and Schuylkill

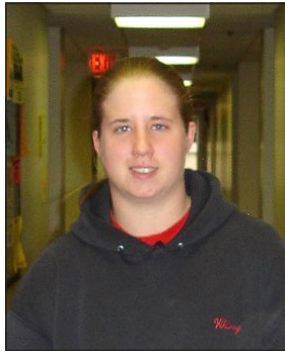


County Judge Cyrus Palmer Dolbin was running for state Superior Court. Long story short, Dolbin lost, in part,

because of Nutkin. And now, Nutkin is making legal history in Pennsylvania. She is the subject of a precedent-setting legal decision - well, sort of - from the

continued on page 5

Intern Article - by Whitney Friedl



Whitney Friedl is a 20 year old pre vet student

During the summer of 2003 I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to do an internship with Barbara Belens-Picon of Squirrel Sanctuary Inc. Over the 150 hours that I spent working with Barbara I greatly increased my knowledge of what it means to be a wildlife rehabilitator and how tiny creatures come to need human intervention. My first day was a somewhat intimidating. I arrived and was introduced to the many orphaned gray squirrels that Barbara was caring for. Most of them still had their eyes closed and could not hear. They were utterly defenseless.

The next thing I was to learn was how to feed the baby squirrels. This is not as simple as one would think. First I spent time watching, then working with a small syringe without a mouth attached! A great degree of care must be taken in mixing the formula, making sure it is the correct temperature and evenly dispenses. Baby squirrels can choke easily if fed too fast or with too large a syringe. I also learned that the babies were so dependent on their mothers that they even required assistance in relieving themselves. It was remarkable how completely dependent the infants were on their human caregivers.

The best part of my internship was being able to see the defenseless neonates develop into mischievous adolescents. I was able to create a bond with the maturing squirrels and witness the various stages of development. It is one thing to learn about human and animal behavior / development in a text book; it is quite another to witness it first hand. There was also much to be learned about an organization itself.

There are many people that are vital to the success of Squirrel Sanctuary. Volunteers are required to handle the numbers of orphaned or injured wildlife. Barbara has a class 2 NYS license that allows her to nominate wildlife assistants. Aside from being time consuming rehabilitating wildlife is financially demanding as well. There is no paid staff and all expenses come from out of pocket or through donations. There is much education involved in becoming a wildlife rehabilitator. It is not something that you can just wake up one morning and do. There are licensing requirements that must be met and various skills that should be acquired. Caring for wildlife is no small task. I admire all of those involved with Squirrel Sanctuary and other wildlife rehabilitation organizations across the country and am thankful to have had the opportunity to be involved in such a wonderful experience. Thanks Barbara, for allowing me this opportunity. It was an incredible learning experience and will be valuable in the future.

Whitney Friedl

Volunteer of the Year - Latifah Warren

In Recognition of Outstanding Service:

Volunteers are an integral part of so many organizations. Squirrel Sanctuary is pleased to announce the Volunteer of the Year Award. This award honors a volunteer who has provided extraordinary service to the organization. This year's award recognizes Ms. Latifah Warren of Westbury N.Y. She can be described as enthusiastic, mature, and hard working.

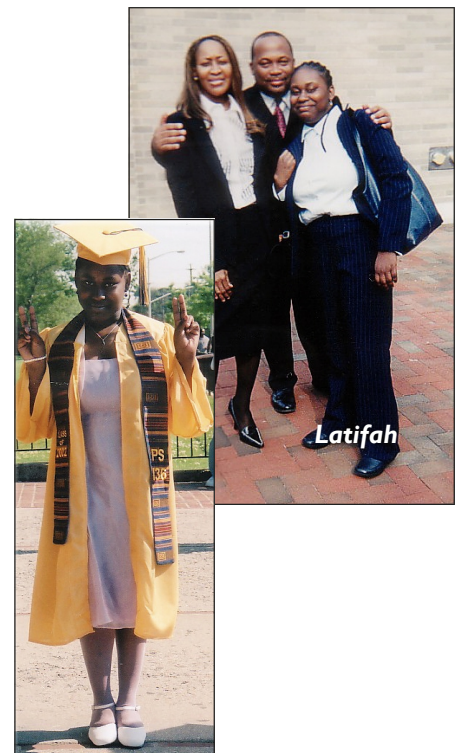
Latifah spent the summer of 2004 caring for the many orphaned squirrels at Squirrel Sanctuary. Although we care for injured squirrels throughout the year, our busiest time is "Baby Season", which usually begins in March and runs through to November. This is the period when we receive consider-

able numbers of orphaned and injured young wild squirrels. She worked under the direct supervision of Barbara B Picon. Her tasks included feeding, cleaning cages, food preparation, and learning squirrel natural history. Latifah is interested in becoming a veterinarian.

The squirrels of Squirrel Sanctuary thank you for all your help!!



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Latifah

Squirrely Tale - cont. from page 3

state Superior Court. As such, Nutkin has cemented her reputation as the most influential squirrel in the history of jurisprudence and has earned celebrity that belies her humble beginnings as a rodent with the brain the size of an almond whose life, until it became the province of lawyers, had been dedicated to gathering nuts.

Nutkin, for her part, is handling her fame well. She got a call from Leno's people, but turned it down, said Jean Gosselin, one of Nutkin's keepers. But we're getting ahead of ourselves. Nutkin's journey to becoming the most famous gray squirrel in America began in South Carolina, where, according to the Nov. 5 Superior Court opinion that granted her freedom, she "apparently had plenty of nuts to eat and trees to climb, and her male friends, while not particularly handsome, did have nice personalities. Life was good."

Nutkin fell out of a tree and was adopted by Jean and Barbara Gosselin, who lived in South Carolina at the time. The Gosselins moved to Pennsylvania - specifically to Orwigsburg, a town of about 3,100 in Schuylkill County - about 10 years ago and brought Nutkin with them.

In 2002, the Gosselins called the state Game Commission to complain about some illegal deer hunting near their property. A Game Commission officer spotted Nutkin in her enclosure and forgot all about the illicit dead deer. The officer offered to forget about citing them for keeping a squirrel - an apparent violation of state law - if the Gosselins gave up Nutkin. They refused. "Nutkin," wrote Judge Joseph Hudock, "would then learn the shocking truth that the cheery Pennsylvania slogan 'You've got a friend in Pennsylvania' did not apply to four-legged critters like Nutkin." The Game Commission cited Jean for illegally possessing

Nutkin. Then, the Game Commission withdrew that citation and filed charges against Barbara, prompting Barbara to speculate whether the state had conducted DNA testing on Nutkin to learn her true ancestry.

At this point, Nutkin was secreted away to an undisclosed location while the case wound its way through the courts.

The Gosselins were found guilty by a district justice and ordered to pay a \$100 fine and costs. They appealed the conviction to common pleas court, where Dolbin upheld the conviction and earned the enmity of squirrels and people who like squirrels. His delay in deciding the case, waiting until after

the election for state Superior Court, has been cited in his failed attempt to get himself elected to the court that would ultimately decide Nutkin's fate.

The case wound up before the Superior Court. The court didn't exactly make new law or issue the squirrel version of *Brown vs. The Board of Education*.

The court merely applied state law. While the state game code outlaws the possession of wild animals, it exempts beasts that were rendered captive in other states where such captivity is legal. In other words, since Nutkin was legal in South Carolina, she was legal in Pennsylvania.

Case dismissed. Nutkin was free to return home.

Since then, Nutkin has achieved fame. Fox News called. National Public Radio did a report. The case was the subject of an article in the November issue of the *American Bar Association Journal*, apparently to the dismay of the Gosselins' attorney, Dirk Berger, who will forever be known as the squirrel lawyer. A British magazine writer



headquartered in California called. Nutkin has her own Web site. And then, Monday, Leno's people called.

They offered to fly the Gosselins and Nutkin to Los Angeles to appear on the show. They declined. "It'd probably traumatize Nutkin," said Jean, a 73-year-old retired pilot.

"She's not one of those animals from the San Diego Zoo that climbs on Leno's head. She'd probably freak out."

It wasn't about fame. It was about justice. For a squirrel.

"I'm glad we fought it," Jean said, mentioning that it was an expensive fight. "Of course, I'm glad because we won."

Barbara, 67, said, "We're on top of the world." Nutkin, meanwhile, has been mum. Maybe she's holding out for Leterman.

Note: This article appeared in the *YORK DAILY RECORD* on November 18, 2004 and online at: www.ydr.com/story/mike/49637/



Nutkin impersonator
Photo by Sheila Tofflemire



Give thanks every day!

Photo supplied by
PJ Garner
www.cafepress.com/squirreltale

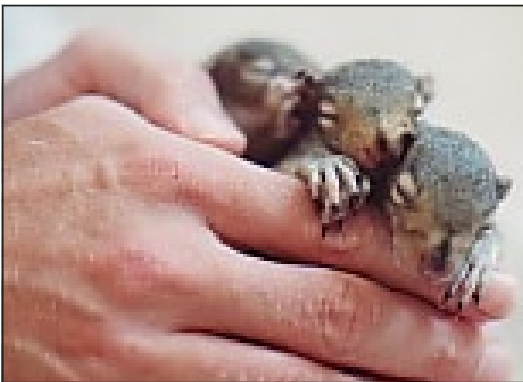
A Salute to Wildlife Rehabilitation - *The World's Oldest Profession*



Earlier this past year Squirrel Sanctuary was invited to present at the OWREN Conference - Ontario Wildlife Rehabilitation. The topic was gray squirrel rehabilitation.

Our program read: "Like a grand prix race, squirrel wildlife rehabilitation has its subtleties. This course will begin at the starting line with a prototype (neonates) and steer through many laps and checkpoints. The course will drive through 5 gearshifts - neonate, infant, juvenile and sub-adult ending at the finish line (release). Learning how to recognize and treat engine failure (disease and conditions), choice of fuel (formula and weaning diet), toolbox items (syringe, nipple selection), garage (caging), road test (pre release criteria) are just some of the pit stops we will make. Is your crankshaft straining in first gear? If you are suffering from empty garage syndrome this winter, refuel the tank so that your '4 on the floor' can run smoother!"

Very early on a blustery, snow filled Saturday morning the program began. The participants consisted of wildlife rehabilitators, veterinarians, veterinary technicians and others interested in the field. Although the weather outside was frightful, the crowd indoors was delightful! Ric Wallace and Sheila Tofflemire generously donated beautiful squirrel pins and photo magnets. The program flowed and upon conclusion questions



were answered. Afterward I went on to attend other programs.

OWREN is Ontario Canada's professional wildlife organization and does Canada proud! That evening at the banquet the keynote speaker Steve Patterson presented his ongoing Southern Flying Squirrel project. Mary Catherine Kuruziak gave a noteworthy presentation on the long history of wildlife rehabilitation. Here is her synopsis: Did you know that wildlife rehabilitation is the world's oldest profession?

King Asoka

King Asoka born 304 B.C. was the third monarch of the Indian Mauryan Dynasty and considered the "Father of rehabilitation." Issued many edicts: ex. the good of all living things shall be the duty of the state and the individual thus creating a partnership. Was the first to legislate care and study of elderly animals.

Wildlife conservation

Early wildlife conservation focused on specific conditions in individual species (example: Tularemia in rabbits, lead poisoning in waterfowl, trichomoniasis in doves).

Larger eco systems and die offs received most of the attention.

In the 1950's adverse effects of environmental deterioration

began to be observed in wild animals.

Now rehab begins as a science

Early days - rehab was done in homes by compassionate well meaning but untrained individuals.

More harm was done than good because of lack of information (example: Feeding squirrels with an eyedropper). Events like oil spills (Exxon Valdez)

brought public visibility to rehabilitators allowing them to educate governments, communities and industry.

Rehabilitation as a science

In the 1980's IWRC and NWRA Minimum standards for Wildlife rehabilitation guidelines to provide uniform care for both in-home and large centers, addresses caging, diet, medical and facility operations.



Promotes professionalism, encourages cooperation with government and rehabilitation/offers grants for behavioral, nutritional, toxicology, wildlife medicine and release studies.

What is Wildlife rehabilitation?

Has been defined as "the treatment and temporary care of injured, diseased or displaced indigenous wildlife and the subsequent return of healthy animals to appropriate habitat in the wild."

It is no longer good enough to simply *try to help*. We expect and demand more from ourselves and from the agencies we work with. Our goal is to provide the best possible care using the best possible **science** known.

From IWRC/NWRA Wildlife Rehabilitation Minimum Standards and Accreditation Program

CODE OF ETHICS

A wildlife rehabilitator should strive to achieve high standards of animal care through knowledge and an under-

continued on next page

Wildlife Rehab - *cont. from previous page*

standing of the field. Continuing efforts must be made to keep informed of current rehabilitation information, methods, and regulations.

A wildlife rehabilitator's attitude should be responsible, conscientious, dedicated, and should continuously work toward improving the quality of care given to wild animals undergoing rehabilitation.

A wildlife rehabilitator must abide by local, state, provincial and federal laws concerning wildlife, wildlife rehabilitation and associated activities.

A wildlife rehabilitator should establish safe work habits and conditions, abiding by current health and safety practices at all times.

A wildlife rehabilitator should acknowledge limitations and enlist the



assistance of a veterinarian or other trained professional when appropriate.

A wildlife rehabilitator should respect other rehabilitators and persons in re-

lated fields, sharing skills and knowledge in the spirit of cooperation for the welfare of animals.



A wildlife rehabilitator should place optimum animal care above personal gain.

A wildlife rehabilitator should strive to provide professional and humane care in all phases of wildlife rehabilitation, respecting the wildness and maintaining the dignity of each animal in life and in death. Releasable animals should be maintained in a wild condition and released as soon as appropriate. Non-releasable animals which are inappropriate for education, foster-parenting, or captive breeding have a right to euthanasia.

A wildlife rehabilitator should encourage community support and involvement through volunteer training and public edu-

cation. The common goal should be to promote a responsible concern for living beings and the welfare of the environment.

A wildlife rehabilitator should work on the basis of sound ecological principles, incorporating appropriate conservation ethics and an attitude of stewardship.

A wildlife rehabilitator should conduct all business and activities in a professional manner, with honesty, integrity, compassion, and commitment, realizing that an individual's conduct reflects on the entire field of wildlife rehabilitation.



Holiday Plea - *cont. from page 1*

If the beauty of nature offers you comfort and watching a gray squirrel in your yard puts a smile on your face, please remember these special "leftovers" whose journey back to freedom is still yet to come. Any contribution is used solely for food, medication, caging and veterinary care. All of us at

Squirrel Sanctuary Inc appreciate your support for the squirrels - without it we could not do the work we do, not only this season, but all year long.



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Tickled by a Prickle! An Unusual Guest

If you've ever tended a rose garden then you learn to appreciate its beauty. The fragrance alone is enticing however if you choose to pick the flower you risk getting "prickled" but if you are a wildlife rehabilitator caring for a porcupine, you risk getting "prickled" by 30,000 quills!!

This unusual guest was a single nursing orphan with an injured upper lip, whose mother was killed by a car in upstate New York. Dr. Uldis Roze discovered the orphan porcupette. He is considered one of our country's leading authorities on the North American porcupine. During the time that the orphan was under his care in Queens NY, Dr. Roze was unexpectedly called away to travel. Not knowing where the porcupette could stay and receive appropriate care, he was put in contact with Squirrel Sanctuary. We were delighted to be able to participate in her care. Similar in some ways to her distant cousin squirrel, Musa as she was called, would arrive complete with caging, food and her own unique way of making her pres-

ence known. Like an ever faithful perennial, with proper nurturing and very careful handling, we watched her blossom, flower and grow!

The porcupine (*Erethizon dorsatum*) is the second largest of all rodents in North America. Nocturnal, herbivorous, generally solitary and unhurried, they also are slow to reproduce, only bearing one single baby in the spring with a gestation period of @ 210 days...about 5 times longer than a tree squirrel and about 2 months short of *Homo sapiens*. Unlike tree squirrels, porcupines are born with eyes open.

The quills initially are soft and pliable but begin to harden within an hour. They nurse @ 120 days - 4 months. Only for the first 2 weeks is nursing

the sole food supply. After this, they supplement the diet with green vegetation. At birth and for about 2 weeks



Photos by Dr. Uldis Roze

afterwards arboreal skills are not refined (they can't climb trees where their mothers stay). So they are hidden under a root mass or brush pile close to her tree and are reunited at night.

continued on page 11

The Story of Robert E. Flea

by Susan Saliga

Since the kids were battling so much over who gets control of the riverboat, Momma had to figure out how to squelch all the brawling. So Momma, being the wise old squirrel she is, knew just the thing that would calm the young'uns down. She high tailed it over to the gnarly old shagbark that had been the site of the family den for generations. Carefully slept on for many years, under the powdered leaves and moldy acorn caps, was great great great great great great....(squirrel generation denominations can get rather lengthy) granddaddy's special hat.

Now that hat had seen a lot of fleas in granddaddy's hayday, but if hats could talk, it could tell you some riveting stories about life on the great river. Granddaddy was wearing that old hat when he gave rides to at least a hun-

dred of the squirrels that swam all the way across the Mississippi River during the infamous great mass migration. Many didn't make it, but thanks to granddaddy's boat, many were able to cross safely. He was a hero.

So, after sharing some old tales with the juvies, and having a history lesson to boot, Momma got the kids to view the old riverboat with different eyes and a bit of respect. The fighting has stopped at least for awhile. Squirrel kids have a short attention span, so they'll probably be up to their squabbling in no time. But at least for now, all is calm and that's a good thing for Momma. She's just about run out of tree tea oil for all those bites and scratches the little varmints were inflicting on each other. Christmas is coming fast, so you can bet they'll

have some new feeders again soon to keep the peace.

Here's a rather well preserved tintype of gr. gr. gr...great granddaddy squirrel.



Tintype by Susan Saliga

Who's Who?

Current Officers

Founder/Treasurer: Barbara B. Picon
 President: Susan J. Finlayson
 Vice President: Deborah Randzetti
 Secretary: Gail Rumsfeld
 GM Editor: Sheila Tofflemire
 Web Advisor: Ric Wallace
 Web Master: Barbara B. Picon

Vet advisors

Dr. Richard Seader, Dr. Linda Pesek,
 Dr. Jennifer Saver

Board members

Barbara Hausman NYSLWR, Judith Kirsch
 NYSLWR, Caryn Murray NYSLWR, Janine
 Norris NYSLWR

Honorary board members

Roderick Eyer NYSLRA, Bruce Schnittman
 NYSLRA, Rafael Picon NYSLRA



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GRAY MATTERS
 Is the seasonal news-
 letter of Squirrel Sanctuary
 Inc. Members receive sub-
 scriptions to Gray Matters,
 discounts on educational
 programs, workshops and
 gift items sold to benefit
 orphaned and injured
 squirrels.

EDITOR: Fr McAcorn

Letters to the editor
 can be sent to:
info@squirrelsanctuary.org



Susan J. Finlayson, President
 and
 Barbara B. Picon, Founder



Barbara B. Picon
 Founder/Treasurer,
 Web Master and Musician



"Spot"
 Inspiration for Ric & Sheila



Sheila Tofflemire, GM editor & "model"



Ric Wallace, web advisor
 & "friends"

A Pilgrimage to Mecca

In March of 2004 Squirrel Sanctuary packed its bags and like a flying squirrel “glided” down to Orlando Florida to attend the NWRA annual conference. Not only did we get a chance to finally meet the *King of all rodents* “Mickey” but networked with colleagues, attended presentations and enjoyed the unique field trips that were offered.

Mild temperatures greeted more than 400 participants. Five days of programming provided fantastic learning and sharing experiences on a variety of

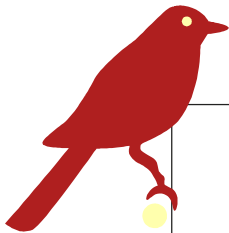
levels. Ninety-four paper presentations were offered, with topics ranging from parasites to disaster plans and post-release studies to emerging diseases. Sixteen workshops enabled hands-on experience mastering techniques like songbird splinting or reptile critical care.

Barbara Picon spoke on neonatal gray squirrel rehabilitation and was also a member of the small mammal panel. NWRA is one of our country’s professional wildlife rehabilitation organizations. They host an annual conference



Photo by Joyce DeGeorge

in different parts of the USA. The conference was a great opportunity to gain new skills and forge new friendships.

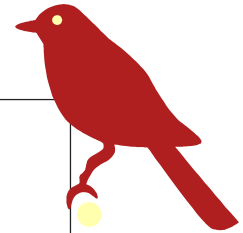


For the Birds

A happily married man had only one complaint; his wife was always nursing sick birds. One November evening, he came home to find a raven with a splint on its beak sitting in his favorite chair. On the dining room table there was a feverish eagle pecking at an aspirin while, in the kitchen, his wife was comforting a shivering little wren that she found in the snow. The furious spouse strode over to where his wife was tending down the cold little bird. "I can't take it any more! We've got to get rid of all of these darn..."

The wife held up her hand to cut him off in mid-course. "Please, Dear," she said, "Not in front of the chilled wren."

by Susan Saliga



Raccoon Rabies - cont. from page 3

For information regarding rabies call the Nassau County Department of Health at (516) 571-2500 or the New York State Department of Health at (518) 474-3186 weekdays from 9:00 AM – 4:45 PM.

Author's note: Any warm blooded mammal, including humans, can contract or harbor the rabies virus. Rodents and Lagamorpha (rabbits) are 2 species

not likely to harbor the rabies virus. To date, there has never been one single case of a rabid tree squirrel in New York State (Wadsworth Rabies Lab) whereas Raccoon, Bat and Skunk are considered rabies vector species.

Barbara Bellens-Picon



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An Unusual Guest - cont. from page 8

Just as a bushy tail is a tree squirrel’s signature, the 30,000 or so quills are the hallmark of porcupines. When a porcupine means business, the tail with abundant barbed quills is smacked against a predator and become painfully embedded. Similar to an agitated squirrel and also being a good sport—a porcupine may first chatter its teeth before striking, therefore giving fair warning. It also will give off a pungent odor which is unique to the porcupine and warns the experienced predator. However, a few carnivores, notably the Fisher, are proficient in attacking the porcupine’s face and the unquilled underside.



Photo by Dr. Uldis Roze

Because their diet consists primarily of plant material containing low sodium content, porcupines crave salt. This natural seasonal urge sometimes puts them in conflict with people. They are known to eat just about anything containing salt or traces of salt. On the menu are car tires (salt from roads in winter) wooden hot tubs, canoes, oars, just about anything where sodium could be obtained.

Porcupines are sometimes blamed for tree damage. In the Catskill Mountains of New York State, sugar maples are popular, as are beech, basswood, apple, and aspen. They will also eat young ash leaves, acorns, and beechnuts. Com-

pared to clear cutting of forests or dense stands, porcupines do little damage. At certain times of the year they consume the small terminal branches of particular trees in order to feed on tree leaves. Winter feeding is on bark, typically in upper branches. Bark-feeding may kill some of the branches. In doing so they serve an ecological function; thinning the top branches allows sunlight to reach the ground thus encouraging new vegetation to flourish!

Barbara Bellens-Picon

*to be continued next issue:
“Musings of Musa”*

NOTE: Author would like to thank Dr. Uldis Roze for reviewing the article for accuracy.

Photo Gallery

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