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Hotline Volunteer Helps Baby Squirrel

By Sandy Dean

What would you do if you were outside and there was a baby squirrel following you around? Run inside until it goes away? Shoo it with a broom until it “gets the message”? Hopefully you would stop and think about the message the squirrel is trying to give to you! Dan Richardson was confronted with this very dilemma while out in his yard, and he turned to the DFW Wildlife Coalition hotline for assistance.

Beverly Guthrie answered the hotline call, and together she and Dan determined that the squirrel was indeed too young to be on its own, and it was clearly looking for help. Beverly got in touch with Ted Freeman, a Texas permitted wildlife rehabilitator who lived not too far from Dan. Ted knew that if a young squirrel was seeking help

from humans, then its mother was probably dead. Ted went to their home, and sure enough the mother squirrel was dead in the street. Ted also knew that squirrels generally have a litter of 2 to 5, so he climbed up the tree to the nest and rescued 2 other babies which were also very thin and dehydrated.

When I spoke to Beverly about the story, she was very quick to give the credit to others, but I won't let her minimize her role. I know it's very difficult to analyze the situation over the phone and make decisions on the right action to take. There are so many variables, and each caller, each animal, and each situation is different. It requires a huge amount of patience and expertise.

Beverly has been a

volunteer on the hotline for over 3 years. And when I asked her what she liked best about the hotline, she replied:

“What I like best about volunteering with DFWWC is that after my shift I can go to bed knowing that I have made a difference that day....I love to share my knowledge with others and if I can change an attitude or reassure someone that they have taken the best possible action, then my time has been well spent”.

In addition to volunteering for the coalition hotline, Beverly is heavily involved with the Dallas area Master Naturalist group.



Fox Squirrel

What Kind of Squirrel Is it?

The most common squirrel seen in the DFW area is the Fox Squirrel. They are the largest tree squirrel in North America, with adult weight often exceeding 1000 grams. They have brownish grey fur on top, and rust or orange colored fur underneath. Although they are primarily vegetarians,

eating nuts, bark, tree buds and mushrooms, they will occasionally eat insects as well. Even though they are plant eaters, they will very rarely do damage to trees or gardens. They are active only during the day, and they do not hibernate in the winter.

Fox squirrels can have two litters a year. Litter sizes are generally 2 to 5, and the mother raises the babies alone. Babies are born in the spring, from February through April, and again in the fall, from August through October. These are the times when you are likely to find babies in need of rescue.

Tips on Rescuing Young Squirrels

If you find an orphaned or injured squirrel, here is some information which might be helpful:



Never feed a baby squirrel food or water. Cow's milk will kill a squirrel

Photo courtesy of Lee McDonald



Mother squirrel moving her baby to a backup nest

Photo courtesy of Tom Chester

- Mother squirrels are extremely good mothers! They will nearly always take their babies back if it is safe for them to do so, and if the babies are healthy. So if you find a baby on the ground and it appears healthy, do the following:
 1. Carefully put the baby in a small box or basket with an old t-shirt for comfort and warmth.
 2. To keep the baby warm, make a "heating pad" by filling a small bottle with hot water. Or put a cup of raw rice in an old sock and heat in the microwave for 30-40 seconds. Put this "heating pad" near the baby, but not touching. A heat source is extremely important if the baby has no fur. They can chill quickly, even if the air does not seem cold to you.
 3. Put the basket or box in or near the tree, in a shady location, and wait for the mother to return. This could take several hours, so be patient, and keep pets away.
- Squirrels usually have backup nests, so if the nest is destroyed, the mother will move her babies to the backup location. Fashion a makeshift nest as described above, and then let the mother retrieve them. Even if there is no backup nest, she can build a new one from scratch in just a couple of hours, so be patient!
- If the mother is known to be dead or if the squirrel is injured, it must be taken to a rehabilitator. In this case, call the DFW Wildlife Coalition hotline (972.234.WILD). This hotline is operated from 7am to 10pm, 365 days a year, and the volunteer on the phone will be able to put you in touch with a permitted rehabilitator.

Become a Hotline Volunteer! By Kristi Ontiveros

Do you TRULY appreciate the sound of birds singing in the morning?

Then we need you!

Did you ever wonder why it's always YOU that finds the injured bunny, fledgling bird, or abandoned baby opossum?

Then we need you!

Do you find yourself feeling as though you are cemented into your block of suburbia, out of touch with NATURE and don't know where or what you can do about it?

Then we need you!

Do you work well under PRESSURE?

Then we most definitely need you!



Kristi Ontiveros has been a hotline volunteer since August 2005

What is the hotline?

The DFW Wildlife Coalition hotline is a terrific phone service that allows the public to call and speak to a live volunteer regarding everything from abandoned baby opossums to fledgling birds, bunnies and more. The hotline operates daily from 7:00 a.m. until 10:00 p.m. including all holidays.

Why volunteer?

We are looking for eager volunteers who are interested in learning more about our native wildlife, and educating the public about the humane co-existence between humans and our wild neighbors.

Some of the BEST reasons to become a hotline volunteer are:

- **It can be done right from home! No need to get dressed up-the animals won't care!**
- **It only requires a 2 hour per week commitment-how simple!**
- **You will receive special training on handling hotline calls-not to worry- we don't just let you "wing it"!**
- **You will be trained in "species specifics" regarding the wildlife calls we receive most.**
- **You will be invited to attend additional training classes to further your knowledge of wildlife.**
- **It's a great way to meet other people in the Metroplex who share your passion for wildlife.**

If you are a problem solver, don't mind a challenge or pressure of being in demand, are upbeat and possess the ability to deal with the public, then this might just be for you! So come volunteer with us-we promise an exciting adventure with every phone call!

To volunteer please visit us at info@dfwwildlife.org or contact pjhenger@comcast.net

Ice Cream Celebration

Sunday, June 25th was a special day for the DFW Wildlife Coalition. It was the day for celebrating the efforts of all the dedicated, caring individuals who donate their time to the Wildlife Hotline. Every week over 40 volunteers spend time answering wildlife questions, resolving wildlife conflicts, assisting in rescues, or reuniting wildlife babies with their parents. Collectively they answered over 3000 calls in 2005, and more are expected this year!

To show their appreciation, the board members presented candy gifts to all hotline volunteers, and special "lifesaver" bouquets to the 3-year veterans. The celebration took place at the Plano Outdoor Learning Center in Plano, Texas. Volunteers and their families

enjoyed Blue Bell ice cream and Peggy's homemade cookies while visiting with their hotline friends.

As a special treat, Jim Dunlap and Tammy Welch spoke about the Outdoor Learning Center, and invited everyone to tour the facilities. The center is home to a vast assortment of mammals, reptiles, and birds.



*"Lifesaver"
Carolyn Rozier
with her yummy
lifesaver bouquet!*



*Kristi Ontiveros learns
the proper technique for
holding an alligator!*



*Sheri Golden, Sandy
Cook and Richard
Peabody catch a
glimpse of a bobcat.*

Special Feature: Rookery Rescue

Bird Watching Excursion Turns into a Rescue Adventure

By Sandy Schriever

Some birding locations in the Dallas area, like the Red-Tailed Hawk nest at Richardson High School, are seasonal while others, like White Rock Lake offer more permanent birding opportunities at the Spillway and Fish Hatchery, where you're guaranteed to see all sorts of birds. One Saturday afternoon in May, I was on another "on-my-way home" birding stops where I was going to squeeze in a quick peek at the Rookery at the Southwestern Medical school campus near Harry Hines and Inwood. This is a special place between the months of March and September when the Rookery turns into a huge bird nursery for Great Egrets, Snowy Egrets, Cattle Egrets, Little Blue Herons, Black-crowned Night-Herons, White Ibises, and Anhingas.

The Rookery

When I go to the Rookery I stay from 20 minutes (in a pinch) to a couple of hours. That afternoon I intended to stay for a shorter visit because I already had another birding expedition near White Rock Lake to see Yellow-Crowned Night Herons lined up for early evening. To get a panoramic view of the Rookery activities, I take the elevator of the nearby parking garage to the top to see all the activities going on, including nest building and remodeling (even bird condos need maintenance from time to time), plumage preening and bill-bumping during breeding, and most important of all, baby-feeding. From the top of the garage looking east, you can see hundreds of birds in the tops of the Live Oak trees and scores more flying to and from the Trinity River on the other side of I-35 with regurgitated fish all ready to feed their young.

An Egret in Trouble

To truly satisfy my birding fix, I get a closer view by

walking near the Memorial Garden where there is a paved path that goes all around the Rookery. It seemed to me as I walked along the outskirts of the Rookery that the minority birds (and that's all birds but the Great Egrets who are in the vast majority) are on the outside edges of the sanctuary. The Great Egrets reside in the prime real estate area in the most protected interior area where the woods are at their thickest. As I was



Photographer: Lei Zhou

returning to my car, I saw a Cattle Egret in a most peculiar position – it was suspended in mid-air with one leg hanging straight down and the other clawing the air. At first I thought it was just a normal yoga bird posture, but then it became very obvious that it was caught in some sort of vine or string. At closer inspection, I could tell it was a fishing line that he was caught up in, and it was also clear that he was not going anywhere and could not escape. I cannot describe the feeling of helplessness that swept over me, but I knew something had to be done.

Calling for Assistance

So I called fellow Audubon/Master Naturalist friend Linda Ford to see if she would mind acting as a bird ambulance, and she did not disappoint. Linda brought ladders and pruning shears and other cutting instruments of different sizes along with gloves, goggles, and other equipment to boot. While I was waiting for Linda to wend her way from Lake Highlands to SWMC, I happened to see a University of Texas Police Department car coming down the road past the nearby tennis courts. I flagged him

down and explained the situation to him. Since the officer wanted to see the situation for himself, I led him to the trapped bird, and I could tell he was touched by the bird's predicament as well. I held down the fort and waited for Linda to arrive while Officer Montanez went to the Physical Plant department to look for various rescue paraphernalia.

The Rescue

Just after Officer Montanez returned and he and I were walking back to the Cattle Egret in trouble, Linda pulled up with all her rescue gear in tow. Our nature-friendly police officer climbed the ladder, cut down the slender branch the egret had gotten entangled in, handed me the pruning shears then the branch with the dangling bird. When Officer Montanez was safely back on the ground, we covered the egret's head with a towel to calm him down while we cut the line and untangled him. Linda quickly assessed the situation and said that there was no way the bird could make it on his own – the leg that had been caught up in the fishing line was immobile and dangling uselessly. I thought of Rogers Wildlife almost instantly – the place I've recommended to dozens of other concerned folks while answering calls for the DFW Wildlife Coalition Hotline. I called the wildlife rehabilitation center and was relieved to find that Kathy Rogers was there (it was now about 5:00 on a holiday weekend). She urged us to drive to Hutchins so she could take a look at the bird.

The Trip to Rogers Wildlife

The three of us walked back to our cars and we thanked Officer Montanez for all his help. Linda had a crate, so we laid the egret in it, and placed a towel on top of the crate, securing it with a seat belt for good measure. With no traffic, we made it to the bird hospital/rehab center in less than half an hour, just in time because the little Cattle Egret was getting restless and moving around a bit. Penny, one of the volunteers, looked at the egret, examined the leg, and quickly diagnosed that it had a mid-shaft fracture. Fortunately, he had not been hanging there too long and otherwise was in good

shape. She stroked it gently and commented how beautiful it was in its breeding color splendor. (There are some other Cattle Egrets at the facility and apparently in captivity they do not go into breeding plumage.)



Photographer: Rick McMullen

Sandy Schriever (right) and Linda Ford (center) help Penny examine the injured egret at the Rogers Wildlife Center

Reflecting on the Day's Events

It was enlightening going through the same experience as callers to the DFW Wildlife Coalition Hotline do when they come across an injured bird. And now I can tell people with confidence what a fantastic place Rogers Wildlife is. It's particularly encouraging to see volunteers such as Rich, Penny, and Kathy helping birds and other wildlife return to good health and if able, to their original nature home. Last but not least, Penny's prognosis for the little Cattle Egret was good. She estimated that it would take about a month for the him to heal and recuperate and then they would let him go in a nearby wetlands where he could find plenty of fish and hopefully no fishing line this time!

If you find yourself in a similar predicament, call the DFW Wildlife Coalition Hotline at 972-234-WILD (972-234-9453) or Rogers Wildlife Rehabilitation directly at 972-225-4000. Better yet, check out their website at <http://rogerswildlife.org/aboutus.htm>. Just last year, they treated and released nearly 5000 orphaned and injured birds. The average rehabilitation time for birds is less than three months, with some birds staying up to a year and of course, this all costs money. You may want to leave a donation in addition to any injured birds or wildlife to help Kathy cover her costs.

Help Us Save Wild Lives!

By Kristi Ontiveros



Donations are used in a variety of ways to help our native Texas wildlife.

Everyone knows the saying “it takes money to make money,” but it also takes money even for a non-profit organization like the DFW Wildlife Coalition. Although we have relatively low overhead since all of our volunteers work from home, (one of the best reasons we love being volunteers!), we still have operational costs that allow us to continue to do what

we do best, which is to help save wild lives in our own backyards and cities.

The DFW Wildlife Coalition is a 501(C) (3) tax-exempt organization. 100% of our donations are from the public and are tax deductible. These donations are greatly appreciated and are used in a variety of ways to help our native Texas wildlife.

How does my donation help the animals?

Some of the ways in which your donations help us to help the animals are:

- To operate and maintain our hotline and phone system which is answered by a volunteer from 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., seven days a week (holidays included). Currently the phone system handles approximately 3,000 wildlife related calls per year and is expected to approach 6000 calls in 2007!
- Donations are used for printed materials and rental of audio-visual equipment used for educational presentations which are given to non-profit groups, homeowners associations, and the general public at event booths throughout the year (fairs, home and garden shows etc.)
- Extensive training materials for all hotline volunteer initial training classes.
- Maintenance of our website domain and database so we can continue to provide yet another avenue for the public to have access to important wildlife information.
- To cover the production and development of our e-newsletter which is published and sent to a growing number of recipients

(Continued next page)



Heather Cannon and Bennett Scott help save wildlife by providing educational materials and information during an outreach event.

These are just a few of the most important ways that money is needed to help raise public awareness and support toward a respectful appreciation and enjoyment of our Texas native wildlife with which we share our urban air, water and land resources. It allows us to remain true to the DFW Wildlife Coalition mission statement:

To reduce, through public outreach and education, the number of incidents in the Metroplex that result in injured, orphaned or euthanized native wildlife.

We truly appreciate your generous donation, be it ten cents or ten thousand dollars, every bit is used in the most beneficial manner to continue our work. We applaud your dedication to the wildlife of the Metroplex. Thank You!

To donate please visit us at www.dfwwildlife.org and click on the “make a donation” link or you may mail a check to:

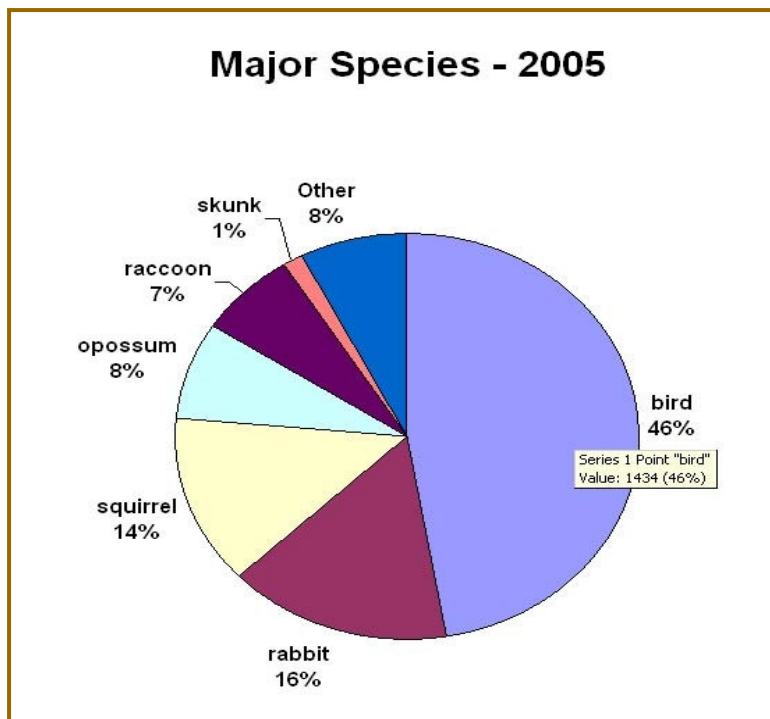
DFW Wildlife Coalition
P.O. Box 833523
Richardson, TX 75083

Donations of goods or gift certificates for services are also accepted for our November Silent Auction, which is our major annual fundraiser.

Note: all donations will receive a receipt

2005 Was a Busy Year!

Over 3000 calls were made to the Coalition hotline in 2005. Here’s how they ranked by species.



*Species chart
Courtesy of
Peggy Henger*



Our Newsletter Has a Name!

During the month of June, a “Name our Newsletter” contest was held among all the hotline volunteers. The volunteers were challenged to use their creativity to think of names for the newsletter. Nearly 50 names were submitted. The DFW Wildlife Coalition board members narrowed these names down to just three, and of these, the winning entry was chosen by popular vote of all hotline volunteers during the recent ice cream social. Congratulations goes to Pam Kallies. She won a VISA gift card for her winning entry, “Wildlife Tails”.

Wanted: Wildlife Reporter

If you love to write, and if you love wildlife, then perhaps you would enjoy being one of our wildlife reporters! Everyone has a story to share, and all of us would love to hear it! Maybe you had an unusual call on the hotline, or how about some useful tips on responding to wildlife questions? Did you attend one of our outreach events? If so, others would love to know about it. Remember...this is YOUR newsletter! Make this a forum for sharing ideas and information. To find out more, send me an email at sandy@dfwwildlife.org

Our Mission ...

Our mission is to reduce, through public outreach and education, the number of incidents in the Metroplex that result in injured, orphaned or euthanized native wildlife.

DFW Wildlife Coalition

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We're on the Web!

See us at:

www.dfwwildlife.org