



Urban Wildlife Issues
Wildlife Rescue column by Nicky Fried
as appearing in the **Burnaby NOW**

Living in agreement with nature

The goal of life is living in agreement with nature.
Zeno, from *Diogenes Laertius, Lives of Eminent Philosophers*
Greek philosopher (335 BC - 264 BC)

On Saturday night my son and I had a special dinner to celebrate his eleventh birthday. On our walk home he spotted a raccoon and we watched as it quietly slipped into a suburban garden. He noted that it must be looking for food and wondered if it was hungry because food is scarce right now. He mused that perhaps this particular raccoon would find a mate soon.

My son has been fortunate to be part of the learning and discovery I, as writer of this column, have been involved in over the past four years.

When I began this particular journey with you, my readers of the Burnaby Now, I had no idea of how long it would last. In my second year I wondered if I would ever run out of material to write about. Now in my fourth year I realize how silly that thought was. The natural world around is so rich and exciting – there is always something new to learn about and explore.

In this, my final submission, I would like to remember some of the critters I have written about – particularly those that deepened my understanding of how to live in agreement with nature.

We have more similarities than differences

One of my earliest columns was about the hard work birds have to put in to raise their young. I remember the first time I watched a baby bird being fed with an eye dropper at the Wildlife Rescue Association (WRA) care centre. It seemed impossible that a thing so small and helpless could be cared for and raised by humans. As a parent this was something I could truly relate to and respect. Apparently we have as much in common with animals, as we do differences.



Knowledge is understanding

On one of our trips to the interior, we had a major thrill when we encountered a young bear at the side of a road. The children were absolutely delighted. As a result of that encounter we did some reading and discovered that bears too have social mores and that watching a bear eat is considered very rude in bear society and can land you in a lot of trouble. A little understanding and knowledge goes a long way in building positive relationships among humans and animals.

Keep a respectful distance

One of the issues that all wildlife rehabilitation centres work hard at is ensuring that birds and mammals do not become too familiar with humans. If they do they will become a nuisance and likely not survive.

We had one such case a number of years ago. It was a gull, who was given the name Hector. Hector was kept by humans during his critical developmental stages. By the time he was brought to WRA it was too late. Hector was too comfortable and at ease with humans. When we released him, his lack of fear made him a real pest. On several occasions we tried to return him to even remoter locations - but he kept coming back. Sadly it did not end well for Hector. Young animals must be kept with similar species youngsters and not raised with a lot of human exposure to prevent this type of habituation.

In many other instances WRA was more successful. For example with the Killdeer brought to us in the egg. We hatched it, raised it, and released the young bird back into the wild. We kept our distance and housed it with like birds to give it a sense of community and hands-on training.

When you do succeed it is a marvel to release the animal back into the wild. To watch a bird find its wings again after weeks of captivity, and soar away into the sky, is a rare treat. Every time I see this happening I feel like I'm a little closer to being at one with nature - but from a respectful distance.

I'm not very good at caring for sick birds and animals, so I write about them instead, and that has been a most enriching experience. It has been an honour to write about our wonderful wild world, and a significant pleasure to learn so much about the amazing birds and animals with whom we share our planet.

It has also been a great honour to write for the readers of the Burnaby Now and to have you take me into your homes. Thank you. I wish you all agreement with nature.

Nicky Fried has written for the Wildlife Rescue Association of BC (WRA) for the past four years. WRA is located at 5216 Glencarin Drive on Burnaby Lake. The Wildlife Rescue Association cares for injured, orphaned and pollution damaged wildlife. If you have an animal in distress call the WRA at 604.526.7275.