



Photo: Paul Steeves

The wound has healed but this skunk still carries the scars of the plastic lid that was trapped around its neck for months

No More Bubble Trouble

Team effort saves West End skunk from lethal garbage

By Yolanda Brooks

Communications Coordinator

After a four-month skunk hunt, news headlines from Vancouver to Montreal, and a 45-day rehabilitation, the skunk known as “Bubbles” was finally released into a quiet neighbourhood square in Vancouver’s West End in late December.

The female skunk was originally spotted back in August by local resident Drina Read who noticed that the animal had what looked like a bubble-tea lid wedged

around its neck. It was making high-pitched squealing noises and rubbing against low tree branches and shrubbery to try to remove the lid. “We felt sick and shocked, but we did not know what to do,” recalls Drina. “We hoped that the lid would crack and fall off, but when we saw her again in October, we realized that we had to take action to help her or else she would choke to death as the lid was tightening around her neck.”

After making many phone calls, Drina called the WRA wildlife helpline for advice and put up posters around the neighbourhood to alert locals to the

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on page 14*

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TO THE RESCUE

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EDITOR Yolanda Brooks

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE Glenn Boyle, Sheila Gardiner, Mike Maddison and Elaine Pope

DESIGN CONSULTANT Norisa Anderson

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WRA Wildlife Rescue Association of BC provides leadership in rehabilitating wildlife and in promoting the welfare of wild animals in the urban environment.

Wildlife Rescue Association of BC

5216 Glencarin Drive, Burnaby, BC V5B 3C1

ADMINISTRATION 604 526 2747

CARE CENTRE 604 526 7275

EMAIL info@wildliferescue.ca

REGISTERED CHARITY #131373490RR0001

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Finding Power in Numbers

By Glenn Boyle, Ph.D.

WRA Executive Director

Each year in the increasingly urbanized environment of the Lower Mainland, thousands of wild animals experience negative interactions with human development and activities. Only some of them are lucky enough to be found and brought to the WRA, where they receive the professional treatment and care they need.

In 2011, a total of 3,312 animals came to the WRA. This represented an increase of around 7% on the previous year and the highest annual intake of wildlife since 2002. An increasing trend in admissions over the last five years suggests we may see close to record figures in 2012 - more than 3,500 animals.

One of my jobs as Executive Director is to plan ahead to anticipate changes and I spend a lot of time crunching numbers to determine how we can continue to treat more animals with better facilities in the future. It's a demanding but worthwhile challenge that drives me forward in search of solutions. During this process, and in the face of an increasing demand for our rehabilitation services, I am



heartened to see the corresponding power in numbers – over 3,000 contributions – representing the community's steadfast support for Wildlife Rescue in 2011, many examples of which we recognize in this edition of *To The Rescue*.

As I begin my fifth year as ED, I thank you for sustaining us throughout last year and I ask you to join me again to help the WRA continue its wildlife mission in 2012. This year, we will introduce some changes in how we recognize donors and communicate with our supporters and we will be developing additional funding to underpin the long-term improvements to the quality and quantity of care that we can provide. Keep an eye on our website, Facebook page and e-newsletters for news and updates. WRA members will also have a chance to learn more at our AGM in June (see below). 🐦

info WRA Annual General Meeting

WRA Members, please join us on:
Saturday, June 16, 2012 at 3pm at
Burnaby Lake Rowing Pavilion,
6871 Roberts Street, Burnaby



This American robin, which was hand-raised by a member of the public, showed no fear of humans when examined in the Care Centre last summer

When to Call for Help People often visit one of WRA's outreach booths and will excitedly tell us about a time when they "rescued" a wild animal because it was injured or orphaned and they nursed it back to health. WRA's Care Centre receives many such animals, especially the young, which have been treated by members of the public over several days or weeks.

These well-intentioned people most likely caused unintended harm to these wild animals through imprinting, improper diet and inappropriate caging, among many other factors.

It is also important to note that some of these creatures may have been perfectly healthy and should have been left alone.

In the summer of 2010, rehabilitation staff took care of a skunk that had been raised by a teen in her bedroom. It took many weeks before the animal was fit to live in the wild.

Other animals that have been admitted after failed attempts at hand-rearing include squirrels, an American robin and even a raven.

A common problem is that people often think a bird that is hopping on the ground is orphaned or injured and needs help. In reality, this is often a young bird learning how to fly and self-feed after leaving its nest, and its parents are nearby to assist in this developmental stage.

It is important to realize that wild animals need the expert care given by our well-educated and experienced staff. If you discover a wild animal with a clear injury, call our hotline at 604-526-7275 and our staff will be able to give you the best advice, including safely capturing a small bird to be brought to our care, and who to contact if another animal is in distress.

By Krystal Brennan Education Coordinator

CARE CENTRE NEWS

Setting the Bar At the WRA, we are constantly upgrading our protocols, treatment methods and facilities to provide the best care for the animals we treat.

Among the recent upgrades to the WRA Care Centre is the diving bird area. We now have two indoor pools in place, an outdoor pool and specific protocols to care for diving birds.

Diving birds require very specialized care in order to make a full recovery. Their bodies are not designed to spend any time on dry land so complications quickly emerge when kept in captivity. It is important to keep them on water as much as possible. Waterproofed feathers



Photo: Linda Bakker

An American wigeon recuperates in a diving bird pool at the Care Centre

are therefore vital, but at intake this has likely been affected due to their injury or condition.

There are lots of diving birds along the coast and on lakes in the Lower Mainland but our

patients also arrive from other parts of BC and even Alberta. In November and December of 2011, we received birds from Vancouver Island, Kamloops and Calgary. The rehabilitation centres responsible for their rescue gave them supportive care but were not able to fully prepare them for release.

In some cases, the birds needed more time on the water. With the birds transported from Alberta, they often miss their migration and are stuck in an area where lakes have frozen over. Different migratory species overwinter along the west coast and can be released here.

By Linda Bakker WRA Team Supervisor



Photo: Yolanda Brooks

Mystery Solved When this young skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*) was brought in from New Westminster in mid-September, it was lethargic and had lost the use of its front right leg but rehabilitation staff could find no fractured bones or any signs of obvious damage to its leg or spine.

Close examination of the skunk revealed a deep puncture wound hidden in its neck. The wound was infected and necrotic, and rehabilitation

staff completed surgery to place a catheter into the wound so the site could be cleaned and flushed regularly preventing further infection.

The morning after the surgery, the skunk was stomping with both feet. The puncture, infection and associated inflammation had been putting pressure on the leg nerves, thus preventing use.

After a week, the catheter was removed and the wound site was kept clean by daily flushes with iodine.

The tissue started to heal and showed no signs of infection. But in addition to dealing with the injury, the skunk was struggling from a parasite infestation, and treatment was started to ensure that its immune system was able to cope.

A month after its arrival, the skunk was moved outdoors, and after another month of recuperation, it was released in New Westminster at the beginning of November.

It was definitely a pleasure to be able to treat and release such a beautiful animal. When I opened the kennel, the skunk came out very quickly, turned around, stomped those cute little paws and ran away. Mission accomplished!

By Ana Mendes Wildlife Rehabilitator

Found by a Hound With the help of his pet dog, a Good Samaritan saved the life of this sora (*Porzana carolina*) that was likely hit by a car in North Burnaby.

The shorebird was discovered during a late night walk in September, when the dog noticed the sora which was sitting in the middle of the road in distress. To save it from further harm, the dog owner scooped the bird up, took it home and placed it in a box, in a dark, quiet room before contacting the WRA the next day.

When examined at the Care Centre, the sora showed signs of neurological damage consistent with concussion. WRA rehabilitation staff provided medications to help reduce the swelling in the brain along with a vitamin injection, and supportive care.

Soras are rare visitors to the WRA Care Centre and this bird was one of only two admitted during 2011. It responded extremely well to treatment and after being in care for only six days, it was fully recovered and ready for release.

By Crystal Simmons Care Centre Liaison



Photo: Yolanda Brooks

Soras are usually found in freshwater marsh habitats with good vegetation cover. They move by walking or running through and over wetland vegetation and debris. At first glance, soras look like weak and reluctant fliers, but they are migratory birds and fly hundreds of kilometers each spring and fall between breeding and wintering wetlands. Soras feed primarily on seeds and aquatic invertebrates.

Before and After During the fall, Northern saw-whet owls (*Aegolius acadicus*) begin a short migration from higher to lower elevations. At this time of year, the setting sun often causes glaring reflections off city glass, making manoeuvring safely past windows and glass buildings in the dense urban environment particularly challenging for these birds.

In mid-October, a Northern saw-whet owl arrived at the WRA showing signs of CNS (Central Nervous System) trauma, most likely the result of a head-on collision with a window. Staff noted that the owl had no pupil response, was uncoordinated and was tilting its head to the right. Medication was administered to relieve these symptoms, and a tail wrap was applied to protect the owl's tail feathers as damage to these feathers can affect flight.

When it first arrived, the owl was unable to eat on its own and staff had to hand-feed it twice a day. But within a week, it had developed a large appetite and was eating without any intervention.

As the head-tilt began to correct itself, the owl's coordination improved and it was flight tested before being moved to a larger outdoor aviary. Navigating proved to be a little tricky for the owl at first but

soon it was flying with great piloting technique.

The owl's appetite and flight skills steadily improved while in the outdoor aviary and staff deemed it fit for release in early November. It was released in a

wooded area in the UBC Endowment Lands.

By Karen Becker Wildlife Rehabilitator



Photos: Paul Steeves & Ana Mendes

These before and after shots show the severity of the head tilt before the owl received treatment



Photo: Paul Steeves

Sky to Sea This long-tailed duck (*Clangula hyemalis*) was originally picked up at Goose Spit in Comox on Vancouver Island. It was treated for a couple of weeks at the Mountaineer Avian Rescue Society in Courtenay but due to lingering waterproofing issues it was transferred via helicopter to the WRA.

With several indoor and outdoor pools, the WRA is able to accommodate the specialized needs of waterfowl that must have access to water during longer-term care. The duck's feathers were soiled and soon after arrival it was given an oil-spill bath.

Over the next few weeks, the bird was put on an alternating regime of warm-water swims followed by sessions under a hair dryer. As the days went by, the water got cooler, the sessions under the dryer shorter and the condition of her feathers greatly improved.

Despite her progress, on some days a few feathers remained wet. Eventually, staff caught her trying to steal fish from the common goldeneye on the other side of the divider in the pool. During these illicit fish raids, her feathers rubbed against the divider leading to short-term problems with waterproofing.

Once the problem was solved, the duck was released at a beach in White Rock after almost a month in care.

By Yolanda Brooks Communications Coordinator

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OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEADERSHIP

Wildlife Rescue has always had a fantastic group of volunteers who carry out a variety of roles within the organization. Animal care volunteers make up 35-40% of our volunteer core, and in 2011, they contributed 12,250 documented hours to help rehabilitate injured, pollution-damaged, or orphaned animals.

The majority of our animal care volunteers work alongside our staff performing the basic tasks of wildlife rehabilitation such as feeding, cleaning, and meal preparation. Because of the sheer number of new animal care volunteers starting weekly shifts each month, some volunteers have opted to step into leadership roles and assist in mentoring new volunteers on their first few shifts.

These Volunteer Mentors have played a crucial part in the volunteer program's success. However, the program continues to expand and to help spread the workload, a new leadership role is being introduced this year - the Volunteer Representative.

The Volunteer Representative will take on an even greater responsibility and assist the Volunteer Coordinator and Volunteer Program Assistant with tasks such as hosting training sessions for new volunteers, assisting with information sessions, and hosting mentoring workshops. By assigning Volunteer Representatives these duties, we will be better able to increase the number of volunteers being trained in animal care and volunteer mentoring, which is critical to our program's success in the busy spring and summer months.

It will also help to improve the volunteer screening processes by freeing up time for staff to complete thorough interviews of each applicant. With nearly 600 applications being received each year, this is a task that would normally be insurmountable without help.



In 2011 Animal Care volunteers contributed 12,250 hours to wildlife rehabilitation

By introducing this role, we hope to bridge the gap between behind-the-scenes staff functions and the volunteer roles by having representatives acting as liaisons between staff and volunteers.

This alone will help increase communication and feedback channels within the volunteer program and give new arrivals a role model to aspire to by allowing them to learn "right from the horse's mouth" (so to speak).

The volunteers who have, and will be, recruited for this new leadership role have demonstrated knowledge, experience, and reliability in their previous roles, and have also demonstrated key leadership qualities such as presentation skills, patience, and diplomacy. They are long-standing volunteers and are well respected by their Wildlife Rescue peers.

Introducing a leadership role into a volunteer program is a very exciting development for any non-profit organization – it creates a means of

sharing the workload, a stepping-stone from volunteering to potential employment, and most importantly, confidence and motivation amongst top-notch, long-term volunteers.

We are very fortunate to have such a group of dedicated volunteers at the WRA who are very worthy and willing to take on this new role.

We hope that this initiative creates a mutually beneficial relationship between them and the volunteer program staff members, and continues to drive the already successful volunteer program to become one of the most comprehensive amongst other volunteer programs of its kind within the province.

For more information about our volunteer opportunities, please visit www.wildliferescue.ca

By Stefanie Broad Volunteer Program Assistant

CIRCLE OF FRIENDS



We would like to extend our thanks to all members of WRA's Circle of Friends. Their thoughtful contributions will help to improve the lives of thousands of animals in 2012.

Ruby Arnold	Denise Mara
Ken & Susan Boucher	Inge McGarry
Richard Bradner	Frances McGrath
Mary Bruneau	Merle Mills
Rita Butterfield	Alec Mitchell
Valerie Campbell	Daniel Moncada
Robert & Joan Carne	Gary & Nedra Morrison
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Honey Fong	Harley Rothstein & Eleanor Boyle
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Anne Houseman	Albert & Lies Steer
Kathryn Jamieson	The King of Floors Ltd.
Nettie Klimec	Sidney & Michele Wain
Elizabeth Kwan	Marilyn Willman
Anne Linburg	Dr. & Mrs. K. Williams
Joyce Luptak	Richard Wozny
Carol & Donald Lyster	Junko Yamano

Our Circle of Friends members made a one-time donation of \$250 or more during 2011. We would also like to thank all of the donors who contributed to Circle of Friends but who did not give permission for their names to be published.



Our donors remember those who have had special meaning in their lives with a special tribute.

Ralph Beatch
Hella Cartledge
Stanley Eric Cryan
Doris Douglas
Audrey Gibson
Phyllis Raeside
Robert R. Rourke



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Club Ilia
Jamieson Laboratories
TELUS
Vancouver Condominium Services

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The HYDRECS Fund
United Way of the Lower Mainland

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Burnaby Firefighters

Charitable Society

Burnaby Rhododendron & Gardens Society
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City of Vancouver
Eden Conservation Trust
The Gosling Foundation
Human Resources & Skills Development Canada
Joan Milne Stewart Fund
Imperial Oil Foundation
RBC Foundation
Vancouver Foundation
Victoria Foundation

(All donations \$500+)



Animal Emergency Clinic in Kitsilano: Donated surgical lights.

José Morais on behalf of Riverview Hospital,

Coquitlam: Ongoing donations of equipment and furniture.

Lisa Crowe on behalf of the Hop and Vine Pub in Burnaby: Regular coin collections.

PODS (Burnaby office)

Donated the use of a storage container for two years.

Ray Mattinson on behalf of the New Westminster branch of Thrifty Foods:

Donating free food and drink to all WRA events in 2011 and 2012.

Stephanie Lamarre on behalf of R. Nicholls Distributors of Quebec:

Donated five pairs of heavy-duty gloves for use when handling raptors.

QLT Inc of Vancouver: Four boxes of surgical gloves.

WISH LIST

Food Supplies

- Berries (frozen or fresh)
- Gift cards for local grocery stores
- Canadian Tire money
- Distilled water (jugs)
- Vitamin B1, B-complex tabs

Outdoor Supplies

- Hose nozzles
- Greenery (evergreen, cedar is best)

- Perennial plants & live trees

- Soaker hoses
- 55-gallon water barrel (2)
- Tarps
- Floating pool thermometer

- Astroturf perch covers

Household items

- Chlorine bleach - 5 litre size (we use one 5L jug per day, on average)



A TIME *to celebrate*

Without your financial support, we would not be able to fulfil our rehabilitation and education mission. The WRA would like to say a heartfelt thank you to the donors who remembered us this past holiday season by donating to our Celebrate campaign.

Annie Anderson
Judith Anderson
Carol Ashdown
Bruce Baird
Barbara Baker
John Bannister
Joan Baxter
Elizabeth Beck
Vivian Bevis
Elizabeth Black
Irene Bodor
A. R. Bower
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Valerie Bradwell
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Elizabeth Tait
Glynis Tidy
Brigitte Tulp
Shirley Turnbull
Simone Vermette
Dr. Eva Voigt
Maxine Walters
Joe Warnock
Patricia Williscroft
Frances Wood
Mr. & Mrs. D.R. Wright
Benny Yeasting
Sheila Zurlinden

Artists for Animals

In December, the Wildlife Rescue Association of BC hosted Wild Visions - an art show featuring some of BC's most celebrated artists. During the evening, donated paintings, prints and original photographs from established and emerging artists were available for sale.

The event, held at Club Ilia Eatery & Lounge on SFU's Burnaby Mountain campus, featured work from BC artists including Roy Henry Vickers, Robert Bateman, Audrey Capel Doray and Jack Wise. Prints from internationally-renowned wildlife artist Alan Hunt and wildlife photographer Thomas D. Mangelsen were also included in the Wild Visions collection.

"We are always looking for new ways to raise funds to support our rehabilitation and education work but the Wild Visions exhibition was also a great way to bring in new supporters and meet new members of the community," said Anita Cymet, Development Coordinator for the WRA.

*WRA supporters
Linda and Leon
LeBrun view the
artwork at the Wild
Visions exhibition*



"Putting on an art show was definitely a challenge but during the evening, we made contact with many people who have a real passion for wildlife who are eager to work with us in the future."

The WRA would like to thank supporters and art lovers who attended the evening and helped us to raise just

over \$1,000. We would also like to thank Club Ilia owners Fred Soofi and Edgar Rahal who allowed us to host the event and supplied the food free of charge, and all of the artists who created and donated works of art to the WRA.

By Yolanda Brooks Communications Coordinator

Cintas Keep Care Centre High and Dry



Staying warm, dry and clean is an important part of the rehabilitation process, so it's no surprise that the Care Centre uses thousands of towels each year.

Now, thanks to Langley-based company Cintas, WRA staff won't have to worry about dwindling supplies.

Cintas supplies towels to local businesses including bars, dental offices and gyms, and when the WRA approached Margaret Johnson, who runs the shipping and receiving department at the company, she was happy to help. After checking availability, Margaret offered to provide 350-500 towels, every three months.

"We use towels for bedding, covering cages, swaddling the animals during examinations, and mopping up poop and spills, so we can get through them very, very quickly," explains Anita Cymet, the WRA's Development Coordinator. "We were always running low and making appeals for emergency supplies. Now with a regular donation of towels from Cintas, our staff can focus on taking care of the animals that need our help."

If you would like to donate much-needed items to the WRA, have a look at our wish list which is printed on **page 8**.

By Yolanda Brooks Communications Coordinator

New Donor Levels Unveiled

Here at the WRA, we are frequently touched by the kindness of our supporters. Over the years, your generosity has allowed us to rescue and rehabilitate thousands of wild birds and mammals. As we begin a new year, we would like to unveil our new Donor Giving Levels and invite you to be among the first supporters to become a part of this exciting new program!

Eagles (\$2,500+) Eagles are universally seen as symbols of strength, swiftness and majesty. The presence of eagles often symbolizes the health of the natural world. As a WRA Eagle, your donation will strengthen the organization and ensure its long-term financial health.

Ravens (\$1,000-2,499) Considered to be the creator of all things great, the raven is a creature that takes care of, and nurtures the clan. As a WRA Raven, your donation will ensure that our rehabilitation and education programs

have the resources they need.

Robins (\$500-999) Red-breasted or red-feathered birds have often been looked upon as passionate, inspiring and lucky. As a WRA Robin, your passion for wildlife will ensure we have the day-to-day resources to help support a continuing high standard of care for all of our patients.

Beavers (\$250-499) According to native legend, the Beaver is considered the "sacred centre" of the land because this species creates rich habitats for other animals to thrive. As a WRA Beaver, you will be the foundation of the organization that allows us to provide essential services for 365 days a year.

Whatever your level of giving, the WRA is lucky to count you as a supporter and we are grateful for your continued support. To find out more about our Donor Giving program, please contact Anita Cymet, our Development Coordinator on 604 526 2747.

Jamieson Jackpot

With the help of hundreds of dedicated supporters, the WRA racked up more than 8,000 votes and \$17,610 from the Jamieson Call For The Wild! Campaign.

The online campaign which ran from mid-August to mid-September last year, invited Canadians to vote for one of five Canadian wildlife rehabilitation and protection charities.

Jamieson Laboratories, the company behind the campaign, donated \$100,000 in total between the charities. Because it was a people's choice donation program, the amount of money each organization received was determined by the percentage of the total vote.

With more than \$17,000 raised, Call For The Wild! was our most profitable fundraising event of 2011. "We'd like to thank everyone who took the time to vote for us. That show of support provided us with a major funding boost," says Glenn Boyle, Executive Director of the WRA. "We would also like to thank Jamieson who have made a significant contribution to the welfare of wildlife across Canada."



Photo: Yolanda Brooks

Burnaby fire fighters have provided assistance to the WRA during several animal rescues, but their most recent support came in the form of a cheque. In October, the Burnaby Firefighters Charitable Society donated \$2,621 to pay for the cost of a restraint equipment and an air scrubber for the Care Centre. The restraint device will make it easier to treat boisterous mammals, and the air scrubber will help maintain air quality for staff, volunteers and animals alike. "We would like to thank Local 323 for their longstanding support of local charitable organizations and for what they do every day to keep the community safe and out of harm's way," says Glenn Boyle, Executive Director of the WRA.

A Silver Lining

Mike Currie, President of Kerr Wood Leidal Associates Ltd., a Burnaby company that provides consulting engineering services in infrastructure and resource management, has created an inventive way to raise money for the WRA.

Through the employee donation program, "Where's Your Cell Phone?", employees who lose, break or misplace a cell phone or other office equipment, have to donate the cost of replacement to the WRA.

In the first two months of the program, we have received \$500 from Kerr Wood's Leidal employees, with the first donation coming from Mike himself!

We are grateful for the donation and the way you care about wildlife and your community and look forward to partnering with you in the future.

Wildlife Rescue

presents:

EarthFest

FAMILY NATURE FESTIVAL

Sunday, April 22, 2012

11:00 am – 3:00 pm

Burnaby Lake Rowing Pavilion
6871 Roberts Street, Burnaby

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Wildlife Champion Inspires Change

From over-wintering an opossum on her back porch, to setting up the volunteer program, Liz Thunstrom has seen and done it all during her 30-year association with the WRA.

Liz, a resident of Coquitlam, first came into contact with the organization back in 1981 when she found a robin that needed help. At the time, the WRA was based at the Nature House, and only open during the summer. Asked to take the bird to a WRA volunteer who was rehabbing animals out of her home, the animal physiology graduate and former UBC research assistant thought: "If she can do that, so can I". And so began her Wildlife Rescue career.

Blazing a trail

With little in the way of wildlife rehabilitation expertise in the province, Liz was one of the WRA pioneers learning on the job. Before the Care Centre opened, she over-wintered numerous animals including the aforementioned opossum, young raccoons, juvenile coyotes and beavers.

"Most of the first years there was nobody to teach us," she recalls. "We took animals to whatever vet would see them and often they didn't know much more than we did." She took an international rehabilitation skills course in California and in 1985 was employed as an animal care assistant alongside a full-time rehabilitation staff member.

As well as day-to-day rehab, Liz worked through two oil-spill incidents, helped to relocate a North Vancouver colony of yellow-bellied marmots to Hope, earned a federal banding permit, and saved the lives of a healthy litter of fur farm foxes which were going to be euthanized.

The animals were Arctic-silver fox crosses with nowhere to go. Liz not only persuaded the Ministry to let the WRA release the animals on condition that they were neutered and spayed, she found a pulp company that owned an island in the Fraser River near Chilliwack to provide them with a home.

Like many members of the WRA at the time, Liz had to be a jack of all trades



Left: Liz Thunstrom receives recognition from WRA Executive Director, Glenn Boyle

Below: Liz in action in the early 1990s



as money and resources were extremely limited. As well as hands-on animal care, she began to do more outreach work in schools and often doubled-up as our media spokesperson.

One of her most important legacies is the creation of the WRA volunteer program in 1989. She was the WRA's first Volunteer Coordinator and until Liz took charge, there were no formalized procedures for volunteers and training was scarce.

Positions of influence

Liz officially retired in 2000, but the WRA still needed her and she offered her services as and when needed at the Care Centre. Between 2004 to 2007, she was on the Board of Directors and from 2005 to September 2011, she was the Chair of the Animal Care Committee. Despite the difficulties of volunteering/working for a fledgling charity, Liz has nothing but fond memories. "My time at the WRA was the most wonderful experience of my life and I learned so much and met so many wonderful people."

As well as saving the lives of countless animals, Liz says the growing influence of the WRA has given her the most satisfaction. "Because we have been able to build on our experiences, we are always improving and changing," she says. "And the thing I'm most proud of is the knowledgeable and skilled people

who have left the WRA and gone to other parts of the world to share their rehabilitation knowledge."

While Liz dedicated many thousands of hours to the WRA, she has also been a transport volunteer for the SPCA, President of the Wildlife Rehabilitators Network of BC, a member of the board of the Colony Farm Park Association and a board member of the Como Watershed Society.

"The WRA has been supported by many special people in its history," says WRA Executive Director Glenn Boyle. "I have been impressed with how many talented and dedicated people have helped the organization survive, grow and develop over the years, but Liz tops the long list of WRA luminaries because she has made so many contributions over such a long period of time."

"Her passion for wildlife rehabilitation and promoting environmental awareness has consistently driven the organization to meet new challenges. Wildlife Rescue – and the wildlife community as a whole – has been exceptionally lucky to benefit from her selfless guidance and stewardship." 🐾

By Yolanda Brooks Communications Coordinator

Bubble trouble

Continued from page 1

animal's plight.

Citizen trackers

In November, Drina teamed up with concerned neighbours, people from as far afield as Surrey and New Westminster, and volunteers from Vancouver Orphaned Kitten Rescue Association (VOKRA) who were looking for a kitten seen wandering around in the area. Using VOKRA's expertise, they tracked the skunk, learned about her habits, the location of denning areas, and after several sightings and close calls, the group finally caught her in a hidden live trap covered with garbage and brought her to the WRA Care Centre on November 14.

In safe hands

After letting her rest up overnight, rehabilitation staff performed a two-hour procedure to remove dirt and debris, and clean and stitch the open wound that ringed the skunk's neck.

Despite the fact that the skunk scratched open some of her stitches, the injury began to heal, her appetite was good and she was extremely feisty in the exam room.

With two weeks spent inside, the skunk was moved to an outdoor enclosure where she thrived and gained lots of weight. After 45 days on a healthy diet that included berries, fish, mice and eggs, the wound had completely healed and by late December, she was fit and well enough to survive on her own in the wild.

On a rainy night just before New Year's Eve, Drina Read and VOKRA volunteers



Photo: Linda Bakker

WRA rehabilitation staff clean out and close up the wound caused by a drink's lid

watched quietly as the skunk made one final appearance for the cameras and shuffled off into the undergrowth to get re-acquainted with her old urban hunting ground.

"We hope that the story of Bubbles the skunk has been an inspiration to people to take action when they find wildlife in trouble. It is definitely worth the effort," says Drina.

Throw-away problem

Animals entangled in garbage is sadly a recurring problem. Skunks are at increased risk because their pointy snouts make it easy for them to get their heads into small holes but hard for them to pull them back out.

"We hope that the story has taught

humans to stop using these deadly plastic chokers, as well as to dispose of litter properly," says Drina. "We hope that everyone will refuse to take the lid when they purchase a beverage that will be consumed in a matter of minutes and, we want them to demand that the cafes and stores stop producing these domed plastic lids altogether."

Since the night of the release, "Bubbles" has been spotted in the company of other neighbourhood skunks and appears to be healthy and staying out of trouble.

To see video footage of the release, go to www.facebook.com/wildliferescue and click on the link to the CBC story posted on December 29. 🐾



Photo: Paul Steeves

Festival of Fun Celebrates Earth Day

WRA staff and volunteers will be celebrating international Earth Day on April 22 by hosting EarthFest, our annual family nature festival.

Free activities at EarthFest 2012 include the ever popular bird box and bee house building sessions, canoe rides, nature trails, face painting and family crafts. Environmental community groups will also be attending offering green living tips and information on local environmental initiatives.

As well as live music, radio station JRFM will be dropping by and several

vendors will be giving out free samples.

"Education outreach is a central part of the WRA's mission and EarthFest is a wonderful way for us to connect with the local community and share our knowledge and love of wildlife," says Krystal Brennan, Education Coordinator for the WRA.

EarthFest takes place on Sunday, April 22, from 11am to 3pm, at Burnaby Lake Rowing Pavilion, 6871 Roberts Street, Burnaby. For full details on activities and vendors, visit www.wildliferescue.ca/events.

Foster Me: Virginia Opossum

Marsupial survives recycling depot

By Yolanda Brooks

Communications Coordinator

WRA rehabilitation staff see few Virginia opossums at the Care Centre, and when they do, they are often suffering from the effects of frostbite.

However, when this opossum arrived in late January, it was suffering from life-threatening cuts and abrasions well as frostbite.

The young, male marsupial was found bleeding at a construction recycling yard in Richmond.

Staff at the depot believe it was dumped out of a container on the back of a delivery truck and onto a wood pile on the site.

It escaped further injury when it walked between wheels of a pick-up



This Virginia opossum sustained injuries to its tail, face, hands and feet

truck before hiding behind a wall.

The depot staff saw that it was hurt and managed to coax it into a box and cover it with blankets before calling the WRA.

It was picked up by a transport volunteer and when examined at the

Care Centre, numerous injuries were discovered on its body.

It had exposed bone and frostbite on its tail, lacerations on all of its paws and compound fractures on its digits on its front paws. It also suffered cuts on its nose.

After being rested overnight, staff operated the next day. They amputated the tip of its tail and removed a digit that was partially severed from its right paw.

In the early days following surgery, the opossum's wounds were healing well but it is expected to be in care for several weeks.



Read about our latest patients, check out new photos and keep up with the latest WRA news at www.facebook.com/WildlifeRescue

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