

The Quill



May 2002

The quarterly newsletter of the Cobequid Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre

Volume 1, Issue 1

Premiere Issue of *The Quill*

Welcome to the first issue of "*The Quill*", the newsletter of the Cobequid Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre. We hope this will be an informative and entertaining publication that will keep you informed about the activities of our centre. We also hope it will help you learn more about Nova Scotia's wildlife and environment.

The Cobequid Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre was founded in 2001 by Helene Van Doninck, DVM, Barb Hildebrand, DVM, and Murdo Messer. We are a registered non-profit charitable organization dedicated to providing veterinary care and rehabilitation to injured, orphaned, and sick wildlife. Our ultimate goal is to release these animals back to suitable habitat in the wild. We also educate the public to care for, and be concerned about, wildlife and the environment.

We have permits from the Department of Natural Resources and the Canadian Wildlife Service to rehabilitate and temporarily house birds, small mammal, and reptiles. We do not receive government funding and rely entirely on donations and fund-raising efforts to support our activities. The centre is staffed by volunteers, and also has volunteer veterinary care. All animals that are brought to us receive a full examination by a veterinarian. If they can be rehabilitated, they are given medical care, diet, housing, and rehabilitation appropriate to that particular species.

Our facilities presently consist of a large flight cage suitable for most bird species (192 square feet, 24ft x 8ft) and several small temporary cages. We plan to add several new enclosures each year, each designed to meet species specific needs. Future plans include acquiring additional property to expand our capabilities, and the construction of a wildlife hospital and rehabilitation building.

We hope you will enjoy reading "*The Quill*" and we welcome all comments and suggestions. We also welcome articles by guest contributors. Thank you for joining our efforts to help wildlife.



This Bohemian Waxwing was successfully rehabilitated and released this winter.

Success Stories

Since opening, the CWRC provided care for approximately 80 wild birds and mammals; many of them had successful releases. In each issue of "*The Quill*" we hope to share some of the more memorable success stories with you.

Bohemian Waxwing - This winter we had a successful rehabilitation of a Bohemian Waxwing. These birds can be seen in Nova Scotia as winter visitors; they come up from the south in large flocks to feed on frozen berries and fruit. This particular bird was found lying on his back. An exam and an X-ray revealed a bird in good bodily condition but with a broken coracoid. The coracoid is a bone in the shoulder and when it becomes injured, flying can be impossible or difficult. This type of fracture can often heal with rest and limited movement. The bird was kept for five weeks in a small enclosure and then transferred to the new flight cage. He improved rapidly and, after three weeks of flight training, he was released.

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Mailing address:
RR#1 Brookfield
NS B0N 1C0

Phone (902)893-0253
(902)883-9463

Web Site www.cwrc.net

Email cwrc@cwrc.net

Established 2001

Organizational status:
Registered Non-Profit
Charitable Organization

Permits

Permitted to rehabilitate and temporarily house birds, small mammals and reptiles. Permits issued by the Department of Natural Resources and Canadian Wildlife Services.

Memberships

International Wildlife
Rehabilitation Council - Member
Nova Scotia Bird Society - Member

Founders

Helene Van Doninck, DVM
Barb Hildebrand, DVM
Murdo Messer

Executive

Chairman - Murdo Messer
Vice-Chair - Barb Hildebrand
Secretary/Treasurer - Helene Van
Doninck

Board of Directors

Murdo Messer
Helene Van Doninck
Barb Hildebrand
Michele Sheppard
David Kaulback
Patrick Clowater

Mission Statement - We are dedicated to providing veterinary care and rehabilitation to sick, injured and orphaned wildlife. Our goal is to release rehabilitated wildlife into suitable habitat, and through education, increase public awareness of wildlife and it's environment.

The Quill is a quarterly publication of the Cobequid Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre. We welcome any comments or suggestions.

Layout and design - Murdo Messer

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Atlantic Puffin - One night this winter we received a call from the New Glasgow area from someone who thought she had a puffin. We were a bit skeptical as puffins are seabirds who aren't often seen walking around in inland locations. We drove to get him, and sure enough, it was a puffin, likely born in the past year or two. He was given an exam and found to be in good shape. Puffins don't take off well from inland locations and we assume he got blown ashore by high winds, became disoriented and wouldn't take off. He seemed hungry and we were faced with finding him some live fish on a Friday afternoon. We placed a call to Jim Duston at the Nova Scotia Agricultural College and he generously offered to give us some small fish to help feed the hungry puffin. The fish were quickly consumed and, after a night of rest and relaxation at CWRC, he was driven to Conrad's beach for a successful release.

The CWRC Flight Cage

The primary focus of the CWRC last year was the construction of the primary flight cage. The majority of the heavy construction is now complete and only a few minor details need to be added. The flight cage provides a safe and secure environment where we can offer the best possible care to wild birds.

When planning the flight cage, we examined designs from other rehabilitation centers. We reviewed sources on the internet and sought the advice of others who have built similar structures. We then incorporated the best of these designs. A key component of our design was the ability to expand capacity as the center grows. This led to a modular design that is easier to expand upon and modify as needs change.

Our flight cage exceeds the minimum standards for rehabilitation (for certain bird species) as set by the Department of Natural Resources. Our design is 24'x 8'x 8'. This size allows a four-foot porch and a flight area that is 20 feet long. The porch features a double door airlock design that will prevent accidental release of patients. The porch also provides space for storage of materials and equipment. The wall that divides the flight area from the porch will feature a feeding hatch that will enable us to provide food for patients while decreasing our contact with them. This is important because the less wildlife are exposed to people, the better their chances are for survival upon release.

The entire flight cage is enclosed with 1/2 inch square galvanized steel wire mesh known as hardware cloth. This material serves two functions; first, it keeps the patients inside the cage and, secondly, keeps predators out. The wire

Feature Species



The Blue Jay
Cyanocitta cristata

The Blue Jay, the provincial bird of Prince Edward Island, belongs to the crow family, *Corvidae*, whose fossil remains have been identified as far back as 25 million years.

The Blue Jay is a little larger than a Robin and adds life to the woodlands all year round with its conspicuous, noisy voice. Its vivid blue feathers, for which it is named, are a bit of an illusion and are not truly blue. The structure of the feather scatters the wavelengths of white light to give the blue colour. The feathers are actually brown.



The primary flight cage as of May 2002

has a very small gauge and could cause cuts to the feet of birds, should they cling onto it, and they can damage their tail and flight feathers should they poke through the mesh. To avoid these problems, a wooden lattice is placed over the exposed areas of wire mesh. The wire on the floor is sunk about 8 inches below ground level and covered with coarse gravel for drainage. Half of the floor area has a layer of sod over the gravel to provide a more natural surface for birds, and to act as an exercise area and provides a more challenging foraging environment as the birds recuperate.

To see the flight cage you can visit our website at www.cwrc.net and click on facilities.

Spring Babies

Spring has arrived and many birds and mammals have already begun rearing young.

Frequently, people will come across baby birds or a young mammal which appears to be all alone. Are these animals injured or abandoned and do they need to be rescued? Many times the answer is no. Most people don't realize that the



mothers of baby animals, such as deer and hare, must leave the young alone for prolonged periods of time in order to forage for their own food. The young are used to this and generally safe. It is important not to disturb the young or move them so the mother can find them easily upon her return. Wild babies are always better off to be raised by their parents than by people.

If you find nestling birds (often featherless or with feather shafts) that have fallen out of a nest, it is best to try to put them back in the nest. **Birds, in general, have a poor sense of smell and parent birds will not reject their young because they were handled by humans.** If an entire nest has fallen or is blown out of a tree, the nest and young can be put back up into the tree. If the nest has been damaged, then the remaining nest can be put into a margarine tub and place securely in the tree. Be sure to punch holes in the bottom of the container for drainage and if the nest is gone, line the container with soft material. Even if it is not the exact same spot, the parent birds will find them and continue feeding. If you want to be certain the parents return, watch out of sight from a distance using binoculars. Staying too close may delay the return of the parents.

After baby songbirds leave the nest, they still cannot fly well and spend their time hopping around and trying to fly a little bit (fledglings are feathered and often still have baby tufts of feathers). These birds are not injured and do not need to be rescued. Parent birds continue to feed and look after these fledglings for up to two months. The parents teach them how to find food and recognize dangers, and it is important that they be left with their parents. Helping young animals that truly need it should be encouraged and can be very rewarding. Make sure, however, that the animal you are trying to help actually needs it. Some examples of situations where a baby should be brought in for help are: obvious injury, mouthed by a cat or dog, the parents are known to be dead, or the young have been alone for an extended period and are crying.

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The Latin name *Cyanocitta cristata* means a blue chattering bird with a crest. Its crest or crown feathers are raised when the bird is excited but lowered when it is resting quietly.

Blue Jays live in woodlands, cities and towns and have adapted well to people and will eagerly be present at bird feeders. They will eat fruits, suet, nuts (including acorns and peanuts), grains/seeds and sometimes the eggs of other birds.

They nest during the spring and summer and have four or five eggs that hatch in about 18 days. The young usually leave the nest when they are three weeks old but have been known to stay with their parents for several months, learning how to search for food.

The Blue Jay has been reported to live up to 10-15 years of age, and is easily one of the most recognizable and beautiful of birds.



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If you need to transport a bird to the CWRC, it is important to bring them in as soon as possible. Place them in a cardboard box with soft bedding and ventilation holes. Do not attempt to feed them and if they can't be brought in immediately, keep them in a warm, quiet place (away from people and other animals). Do not handle or look at them more than necessary. Avoid playing your radio in the car during transport. Stress can kill. If you have questions about a particular situation, please call us.

How Can I Help?

Monetary donations -The CWRC receives no government assistance and is funded entirely through donations and fund-raising efforts. We are a registered charity and all donations are tax deductible.

If you would like to make a donation, our mailing address is: Cobequid Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre RR#1 Brookfield NS B0N 1C0. Please make cheques payable to: **Cobequid Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre**. A tax receipt will be sent by mail.

Donation of needed items -The CWRC is always in need of items such as birdseed, pet food, pet carriers/cages, etc. Please see our wish list in this newsletter and on our web site for additional needed items. The value of the items is tax deductible. A tax receipt will be provided.

Volunteer - If you are interested in volunteering with the CWRC, please contact us to discuss how you can help. We are in need of many different types of volunteers, such as drivers to pick up and deliver animals to the CWRC, people to help with fund-raising, administration, education, and animal care.

Be wildlife-friendly everyday - Feed birds; plant trees and shrubs which offer shelter, food and nesting sites to animals; keep cats indoors; don't litter; and limit or eliminate the use of pesticides and chemicals in your home and garden.

Release sites - In most cases we attempt to release wildlife near where they were found, but occasionally we need safe and suitable release sites. If you are interested in having your property used as a release site, please contact us.

Wish List

Donations from the wish list are a great way to help the CWRC. All items are greatly appreciated and in most cases the value of the items is tax deductible.

Supplies

Wild birdseed	Chain link fencing
Blankets/Towels	Postage stamps
Pet Food	Laundry detergent
Building supplies	Aquariums (even cracked)
Medical supplies	Jars of baby food
Office supplies	(fruit, beef, chicken)
Paper towels	Astroturf (perch covering)
Food dishes (crockery, stainless steel)	Equipment
Fresh and frozen fruit and berries	Pet carriers/cages
Eggs	Bird cages
Ziploc bags	Fax machine
Hardware cloth (1/2"x1/2")	Photocopier
Gravel	Freezer
	Food processor

Thank you to our supporters!

The CWRC would like to acknowledge and thank the following individuals who helped us in many different ways: monetary support, volunteer help, donations of needed items, advice, animal care. We couldn't do it without your help!

Murdo Messer, David Kaulback, Michele Sheppard, Pat Clowater, Truro Veterinary Hospital, Acres Animal Hospital, Ruth Messer, Colchester SPCA, Howard S. Green, Erika Toby, Catherine Kinnaird, Janet Tremblay, Dennis Earle, Mary Fisher, Rondi Large, Mylene Desjardins, Bernie Van Doninck, Bev MacDonald, Nursing Staff - Cape Breton Regional Hospital Dialysis Unit, Cheryl Carrick, Kevin O'Flaherty, The Park Family, Veterinary Assistant Students - Maritime Business College, Barb Bourne, Jim Duston - NSAC Aquaculture Unit, Paul MacIsaac, Bruce Ramsay, Laurel MacIntosh, Mary Sangers, Joan Stiles, Mac Pitcher, Tamara Wilken, Chris Elwood, Hope Swinimer, Elaine and Mike Kew, Weste Animal Hospital, Ross Hall, Bert Vissers, Bill Bernasconi, Sharon and Ann McPherson, Bernie & Donna Van Doninck, Paulette Finley, Stephanie Benson and those donors who wish to remain anonymous.

