

# Protecting The Sea Turtles Of St. George Island, Florida

BY HAZEL M. FREEMAN



Hatchlings emerge from nest

It was 6 AM on an early May morning. I stood mesmerized amid the beauty of a deserted, pristine, sugar sand beach on St. George Island, in Franklin County, Florida. The nutrient rich waters of the Gulf unfurled themselves up onto the shore...one gentle wave after another. Delicate frothy edges trimmed each wave as it rolled up onto the seashell littered sand. The air was fresh, moist, and salty.

Shorebirds dashed here and there with the approach of each wave. A line of pelicans, beak to tail, flew so close to the water's surface, it looked as if their wing tips must surely dip into the salty brine with each flap. Soft, pink light bathed the beach, sky, and water. The horizon glowed with the imminent arrival of the life giving sun, readying itself to burst into a new day.

Along with myself, a few other early risers had gathered to take a turtle walk. Our morning walk was to take us down a stretch of this magnificent 28-mile long barrier island, in the North Florida Panhandle. St. George Island, nestled against the Gulf side of the panhandle, is

one of several friendly little towns including Apalachicola, Carrabelle, Alligator Point, and East Point. Not only do these lovely locales offer up large helpings of "Old Florida Charm," but you'll also find an abundant array of natural areas and some of the most beautiful beaches Florida has to offer.

People are not the only visitors drawn to the natural beauty of these sandy shores. In one of Nature's many amazing events, generations of female sea turtles have been returning to these very beaches for thousands of years. It is a return home to a sandy womb where they themselves once crawled as hatchlings, scrambled towards moonlit rays dancing across the Gulf water, and into the safety of the open sea.

From May first into August, along the beaches of St. George Island, Dog Island, and Alligator Point, endangered female loggerhead sea turtles, and an occasional leatherback, are driven by their natural instinct to return home again. Here they lay their cache of about 100 eggs and start the next generation. The male turtles also return to their home waters, remaining offshore to mate with the females.

It was here we met up with Bruce Drye, Volunteer Coordinator for the St. George Island Volunteer Turtlers. These dedicated volunteers walk the beaches to find, mark, monitor, and help protect sea turtle nests during the 6-month nesting season of May first to October thirty-first.

Bruce has been monitoring sea turtles on St. George Island for about 25 years. With his vast knowledge and experience



Large female loggerhead on shore

with sea turtles, he is one of only a few individuals around the state authorized as a Florida Marine Turtle Permit Holder. This permit allows Bruce to rescue, handle, and transport endangered and threatened sea turtles as needed.

Just as the sun breaks above the horizon, we begin our walk. Talking about sea turtles comes easy to Bruce. It's one of his passions. With his laid back Jimmy Buffet demeanor, he explains to his group of attentive first-time turtlers who are tagging along like a gaggle of school children, about nesting sea turtles. "St. George Island has the largest number of nesting turtles in the Florida Panhandle," says Bruce. "First light, as the sun rises, is the best time to locate turtle tracks in the sand. The morning sun casts shadows across the tracks the female turtle leaves as she crawls up onto the beach to excavate her nest."

When tracks are spotted, the Turtlers follow them to the nest location, mark

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the nest and then monitor them daily. Bruce walks an average of six miles a day during the turtle nesting/hatching season and is on call twenty-four hours a day as the baby turtles begin to hatch, as well as for other turtle emergencies year round.



Bruce holds young loggerheads

From mid-July, to the end of October, baby sea turtles, or hatchlings, struggle to break free of their eggshell and fight their way from beneath the sand, emerging into even more dangerous surroundings. Birds, crabs, ants, cats, and other predators wait eagerly to devour them as they scramble towards the water. And, what if they go in the wrong direction, away from the water...

According to Bruce, when baby turtles hatch at night, they instinctually crawl towards the light of the moon and stars reflecting on the water surface. Should the hatchlings get disoriented, and crawl away from the water and towards the artificial lights shining from beach homes, businesses, and streetlights, it will almost certainly be a crawl to their death rather than to what might be a long life in the ocean. Even a bonfire on the beach, or a flashlight without a red lens, can cause turtles to disorient.

Much of the hatchling's limited energy is expended during its mad dash to get to the safety of the waves as they wash ashore. Should they go in the wrong direction or get lost amid beach furniture, fall in large holes dug by beachgoers, or get tangled in toys left on the beach, they waste their precious energy reserves. Weak and exhausted, they may not make it to the water at all. If they do



Signs are placed on newly found nests

make it, they may not have the strength to swim to deeper water.

In 1998, in an effort to prevent turtle hatchlings from becoming disoriented by artificial lighting, Franklin County enacted the Marine Turtle Lighting Ordinance; prohibiting lighting that can be seen from the beach after dark. With the help of another local group, Sea Turtles At Risk (STAR), grant monies were received from the Florida's Sea Turtle License Plate grant fund.

STAR set up a program to help property owners with the cost of replacing their outside lights with turtle friendly lights. These wildlife friendly canister lights shine downward, providing directional lighting that doesn't light the entire area around them. "We're not trying to get everybody to turn out their lights altogether. We're trying to help them get their lights changed so they protect the wildlife as well as the people."

Bruce and his dedicated group of volunteers also give regular "Turtle Talks," throughout the tourist season to inform visitors of ways they can help protect the turtles. Money from Florida's Sea Turtle License Plates have also helped Bruce's group purchase informational material that's placed inside vacation rental properties.

Several property rental and realty companies provide information on their websites and in local offices for vacationers about protecting sea turtles. Visitors are asked to remove all personal articles and refuse from the beach at the end of the day, as well as fill in any holes that had been dug. Vacationers in beach-front properties are asked to close drapes on beach facing windows, dim interior lights, and to use outside lights only when absolutely necessary, after dark, and to make sure all outside lights are off

when they retire for the evening.

According to Bruce, not all property owners comply with the lighting ordinance and some rental properties don't have shades or drapes that can be closed on beach facing windows. If visitors in these units wanted to darken their windows to help protect the turtles they couldn't.

Even with these efforts, about 20% of the yearly hatchlings disorient towards artificial lighting and die. Although the previous 10 years had shown a continual decline in numbers of nesting turtles, the 2008 numbers showed a large increase in the number of nests with 168. "Maybe we're on an upswing. We're cautiously optimistic," said Bruce.

The numbers for 2009 weren't quite as good as last year but still better than in earlier years. With 122 nests located in 2009, 86 of those nests were evaluated for hatchling success. 6013 hatched eggs were counted; 3401 unhatched eggs.

Of those 122 nests, 55 were either washed away or washed over by high tide events. "Nests are often laid too close to the water when turtles are disturbed by lights or human activity. Then they get washed away or washed over,"



Loggerhead excavates nest near home.

says Bruce. Washed over nests have lower hatch numbers.

As more and more people discover the beauty of St. George Island, it means they must also learn to share these wonderful beaches with the endangered sea turtles and their fragile hatchlings, or risk losing them forever to extinction.

Franklin County faces a continuing challenge of increased tourism, while at the same time finding ways for humans and turtles to co-exist, so both can utilize these spectacular beaches and waters without endangering the fragile balance of nature the turtles depend on for survival. Bruce pretty well summed it up by saying, "Being able to walk on the beach is one of the greatest pleasures in life". I

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# ELEPHANT NATURE PARK

## A NATURAL HAVEN FOR A RESCUED HERD

BY JOSEPHINE BELLACCOMO



Jo's arrival at ENP

I volunteered at Elephant Nature Park in Chiang Mai, Thailand for a week and loved it so much that I spent the rest of my vacation there.

Except for a few of the babies, all of the 31 Asian elephants are rescued from abuse. They have performed in circuses or at elephant camps, painted, trekked with tourists on their backs, logged, or begged in the streets. Some are crippled from logging and traffic accidents, and 3 are blinded as punishment. You can read each elephant's story on the website <http://www.elephantnaturefoundation.org/go/elephants>.

In India, Thailand, Burma, Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos, all Asian elephants who work (perform, trek, log or beg) have undergone the traditional pajaang torture training ceremony, which has been performed for thousands of years.

The pajaang footage is hard to take, but important for tourists to know -- this is what happens to every elephant at an elephant camp. But Lek Chailert, ENP's founder, proves that elephants can be trained using only positive rein-

forcement. When PETA was working with Lek and released this video [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w1AR\\_Zife-c](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w1AR_Zife-c) the Thai government, which owns the elephant camps, denied the footage, and attacked Lek. They put a bounty on her and she had to go into hiding for a few years. But with international attention and support, she was able to resurface safely.

All of the babies except Aura (3) and Pupia (2) were sold to Lek and will never work a day in their lives. Lek leases Aura and Pupia and their mothers, paying their owners monthly to keep them at the park so that they can be elephants -- live safely in their family group, bathe in the river, play and eat when they want to.

But in 2-3 months, the owners will ask for Aura (Tong Jan's BFF) and Pupia back, and they will perform at elephant camps or trek tourists like their mothers. When they return to their owners, Aura and Pupia will inevitably go through the pajaang training, but Lek has taught them to squeak on command, bow, raise their trunk, kiss, spray water and other tricks, with the hope that their pajaang training will be as short as possible.

In the photos, you'll see some trees with an orange sash. In a Buddhist ceremony, the sashes were blessed and wrapped around the trees to protect the rainforests from poachers and fires (when I was there, one fire reached the Park's banana plantation). With deforestation and captivity, the Asian elephant population is in dire straights. There are only about 3,000 in Thailand, and only about 1,000 living in the wild.

There are lots of stories around these photos, I hope you enjoy them.

<http://www.elephantnaturepark.org/tour/index.htm>

<http://www.elephantnaturefoundation.org/go/park>

Exactly a year after I volunteered, dreaded bad news arrived. The owners of Aura and her mother, the eles whom Lek leased so that they could get vet

care and live in freedom like elephants, came to Elephant Nature Park to claim Aura and her mother - to put them to work. Though Lek had trained Aura, hoping Aura's pajaang torture training would be lessened, ENP got word that Aura was tortured for 3 days nevertheless.

A couple months later, Aura's owners contacted Lek to tell her Aura was very sick, having ingested some pesticides. Lek welcomed Aura back to the ENP to help her recover. But Aura had not been suffering from ingesting poison - it was the effects of the pajaang. The horrible scars and wounds are described in the newsletter, as well as how the other baby eles greeted her when she returned. Her BFF Tong Jan, who had



Babies playing in muddy water.

never been tortured, couldn't understand why Aura had changed, was a completely different ele after her spirit was broken. But her friend Faa Sai, who had also been tortured as a baby in the pajaang ceremony, touched all of Aura's wounds where she had been pierced and beaten. Here's the text from the newsletter:

### **Mae Boon and Aura - the Saga Continues**

<http://elephantnaturefoundation.org/nl/2009-07/newsletter.htm>

Making this journey to the ENP was one of the most rewarding experiences of my life, and I will definitely return.

**Josephine Bellacomo** is a consultant and coach in media communications. She is author of *Move the Message*, published by Lantern Books. [www.MovetheMessage.com](http://www.MovetheMessage.com)



Ele greeting Jo

# Who Was Taylor Mitchell? Her Mom Tells Us

As much as we love wildlife, how many of us would feel and express what the mother of Taylor Mitchell did only hours after her daughter's death.

Taylor Mitchell was a Canadian folk musician who loved nature even more than music. She was nominated for Young Performer of the Year honors by the Canadian Folk Music Awards. Taylor took every opportunity to be outside with nature and animals, and while she was between shows in Nova Scotia, she took a hike in the Cape Breton Highlands National Park. It was there that hikers reported seeing her killed by a pair of coyotes. This was a freak attack that had never happened before.

Taylor's mother wrote:

*"On behalf of my family, I want to express my deepest thanks for the outpouring of condolences and support from Taylor's friends and fans, near and far. My thanks to the hikers who called 911, the RCMP officer who first arrived on the scene and did his utmost to help her, as well as the incredible doctors and nurses at Queen Elizabeth II Hospital in Halifax who tried desperately to save her. I wish to also thank RCMP's Victims Services, and the Atlantica Hotel who've gone out of their way to support us during this difficult time.*

*There are no words to describe my grief. Taylor was my shining light, my baby, my confidante and best friend. My world is turned upside down and forever transformed without her. I don't know how to move forward from here but I know that she would want that for me and I will try to do that in her memory and celebrate her life in the way she lived it— with passion, commitment, and an unbridled loving heart.*

*I've noticed that the media have often mentioned that Taylor was hiking alone when the coyote attack occurred. I want people to know that **Taylor was a seasoned naturalist and well versed in wilderness camping. She loved the woods and had a deep affinity for their***



***beauty and serenity. Tragically it was her time to be taken from us so soon.***

***We take a calculated risk when spending time in nature's fold — it's the wildlife's terrain. When the decision had been made to kill the pack of coyotes, I clearly heard Taylor's voice say, "please don't, this is their space." She wouldn't have wanted their demise, especially as a result of her own. She was passionate about animals, was an environmentalist, and was also planning to volunteer at the Toronto Wildlife Centre in the coming months.***

*Her loss is an incomprehensible tragedy on so many levels— but everybody's messages of love and support and desire to keep her memory and music alive will help me to move forward and honour her short but full and vibrant life.*

*With love and deep appreciation,  
Emily Mitchell"*

Read more:

<http://network.nationalpost.com/np/blogs/p/osted/archive/2009/10/30/the-mother-of-coyote-victim-taylor-mitchell-speaks.aspx#ixzz0VvV57GL7>

To both hear her song and see a video of her music, please visit the website below.

<http://network.nationalpost.com/np/blogs/p/osted/archive/2009/10/28/344741.aspx>



***Do not stand at my grave and weep.  
I am not there, I do not sleep.  
I am a thousand winds that blow,  
I am the diamond glints on snow.  
I am the sunlight on ripened grain,  
I am the gentle autumn's rain.  
When you awaken in the morning's hush,  
I am the swift uplifting rush  
of quiet birds in circled flight.  
I am the stars that shine at night.  
Do not stand at my grave and cry,  
I am not there, I did not die...***

**- Anonymous**

NOTE from the site below: There is considerable conflict over the actual authorship of this poem. It is most commonly attributed to a Mary Frye (and believed to have been written around 1932); however, nothing is known of the author. Some even claim it originated as an anonymous Native American poem for bereavement. It is, however, believed to be one of the most requested (and reprinted) poems in the English language.

<http://www.sedona.com/html/grief-poems.aspx>

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We welcome letters/articles/photos for consideration.



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would definitely have to agree with that.

As I left for the airport at 4AM, a few days after my turtle walk on the beach, the full moon shone brightly in the early morning sky. Silver rays of moonlight shimmered and danced across the calm

water and lit a bright, watery path towards the horizon. It was then that I truly understood the nocturnal beacon Mother Nature had put in place for her tiny hatchlings to follow to the open sea. Stay safe, little turtles!

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*Hazel Freeman is a freelance writer from Ohio. With a life-long love of nature*

*and the out-of-doors her writing reflects her deep passion, respect, and concern for the natural world in which we live.*

For more information, and some great pictures of turtles visit:

[www.seaturtlesatrisk.org](http://www.seaturtlesatrisk.org),  
[www.ccurtle.org](http://www.ccurtle.org),  
[www.helpingseaturtles.org](http://www.helpingseaturtles.org).

## EYE ON THE NEWS

### POND RESTORATION A POSITIVE STEP

SYNOPSIS BY E.M. FAY

As the first nation to plunge headlong into the Industrial Revolution, Britain has sustained a large share of the concomitant damage to its natural resources and wildlife over the past 200 years. Pollution associated with industry and the over-development of land for both agriculture and burgeoning human habitation have taken a severe toll on the once verdant countryside, and animal populations from birds to mammals to amphibians have declined as a result.

Some enlightened Britons are now making an effort to restore a vital part of their formerly "green and pleasant land." The Million Ponds Project is meant to double

the number of ponds now existing in England and Wales. An attendant goal is to improve water quality in order to protect the many endangered species that used to thrive in the more pristine ponds of pre-industrial Britain.

The flagship project was a group of 40 ponds dug by Pond Conservation, a national charity, at Pinkhill, near Oxford, in the early 1990s. The ponds are widely varied in size and were fed by groundwater and rainwater rather than streams or rivers, which are usually polluted. Pond design is important, with such features as gently sloping banks and no added soil or sediment. The Pinkhill ponds have been a great



[http://www.cedarcreekconsulting.com/pond\\_brochure.htm](http://www.cedarcreekconsulting.com/pond_brochure.htm)

success, now rich in insects, crustaceans, amphibians, birds, and other animals. They form the model for the Million Ponds Project.

American scientific data have suggested that ponds worldwide absorb more carbon than even our oceans - no small feat considering the dangerous levels of carbon we are dealing with today.

If, as Darwin suggested, all life started in a "warm little pond," is it not fitting that we might save much of life on earth by restoring those ponds, not only in Britain, but here in the U.S., as well?

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Full story in the Guardian:  
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2009/jan/30/million-ponds-wildlife>

## FREDDY THE TURKEY

Please think of Freddy this Thanksgiving and...buy Tofurky at any health food store or another favorite turkey substitute ☺

Freddy was a beloved wild turkey who had no fear of people. He loved the main street of town and weaved in and out of traffic. He wasn't loved by all residents of Easton, MA, unfortunately. How in the world the police came to shoot Freddy is unknown, but they said that Freddy was a menace and was snarling traffic and endangering the public.

Many residents of the town were horrified. One restaurant thought



they were being respectful of Freddy to put a "Freddy" turkey sandwich on their menu. Wildlife Watch asks you to remember Freddy more appropriately by making your Thanksgiving turkey free. Here's a good site to help with your meatless Thanksgiving.

[http://www.ehow.com/how\\_4599009\\_turkey-substitute-vegan-thanksgiving-dinner.html](http://www.ehow.com/how_4599009_turkey-substitute-vegan-thanksgiving-dinner.html)

One day, a kinder way will be used to resolve perceived wildlife conflicts. Freddy deserved better. To see a video of Freddy, please visit:

<http://www.enterpriseneews.com/business/x728183524/Easton-s-Freddy-the-turkey-is-becoming-more-popular-in-death>

# R.O.C.K. - Rehabbers Offer Care and Kindness



## AMBER THE BEAUTIFUL, GENTLE COYOTE



Amber came to me [CeAnn Lambert founder of Indiana Coyote Rescue Center] in June of 2001. She was a pet. The owners



took her to a veterinarian in Northern Indiana to get her vaccinated. The veterinarian had them leave her. After they were gone, he called



Animal Control to come and get her. She was then taken to a rehabilitator, who then brought her to me.

I tried to find the original owner, because I could tell that she had been well taken care of and was well-socialized, and I knew that they were probably worried about her. No one would give me the information that I needed. She has adjusted well and has become good friends with my dog "Wrecker." I can take them on walks together on leashes. She will live with us for the rest of her life. In January of 2005, someone came here at 2 a.m. and

shot gentle Amber in the face. Fortunately, I was able to rush her to the veterinarian for immediate care. She ended up losing one of her eyes, but miraculously she recovered. She has a fear of

flashlights, but even in the past year I have seen her improve in her interactions with us here. She is very outgoing and loving to just about anyone who wants to greet her.

## THE ICRC PUPPIES

Socializing coyote puppies is a very intense and involved process, but one I wouldn't change for anything. They woke me up during all hours of the night either for food or attention, but they were so adorable it didn't even matter. It is a lot of hard work making sure they are fed, played with, get their calcium, and cleaning up their room multiple times a day; but it was worth it. They loved spending a few hours each day playing outside in the puppy pen that we use to get them acclimated to living outside for their future residence. They have grown so quickly in the past couple of years, and it is interesting to watch all the different behaviors they display while interacting with each other.

Living here as an intern has always been interesting and educational, but the arrival of puppies made my stay even more so. I learn something new every day



All photos from ICRC

with the observation of their behavior, and have gained a better understanding of how much work it takes to care for these amazing animals. Loki, Jane, and Alex now live permanently outside in their enclosure where they get along amazingly well. Loki is the alpha male at present along with his sister Jane being the alpha female. The males were given vasectomies as we do not buy, sell, breed, or release at Indiana Coyote Rescue Center. Sent by **Jami Hammer**, Volunteer, ICRC.

Please visit:

[www.coyoterescue.org](http://www.coyoterescue.org)

## WILDLIFE WATCH NEEDS YOU!

Wildlife Watch needs your help more than ever to continue providing this vital national service for helping injured and orphaned wildlife. In addition to our national hotline, Wildlife Watch lobbies for wildlife protection bills, does direct rescue locally, and contributes to the local rehabbers for their care of the babies we bring to them. Through our publication, the **Wildlife Watch Binocular**,

Wildlife Watch emphasizes the unique spirit of individual animals and promotes wildlife watching as a means of spiritually and ethically relating to other beings, and as an enhancement of our life enjoyment.

**Will you become a part of our team?**

**YES**



# PHOTO OF THE YEAR BY SCOTT LEVIN

## WILDLIFE WATCH HOTLINE BRINGS CALL FOR THESE BABIES

Wildlife Watch asks callers to follow up with us so that we can add new rehabbers to our lists, thus keeping them up-to-date. We also ask people to let us know the outcome of each situation and pray for successful ones.

Scott wrote: *Thanks for all your help today. I called all the contacts you gave me, and they led to someone who wasn't there at the time. Sonia, who rescued the squirrels, had found and contacted an animal rescue organization in Brooklyn, run by Sean Casey <http://scarnyc.org/>. We took them over and he said they were pretty banged up, but the next few days*



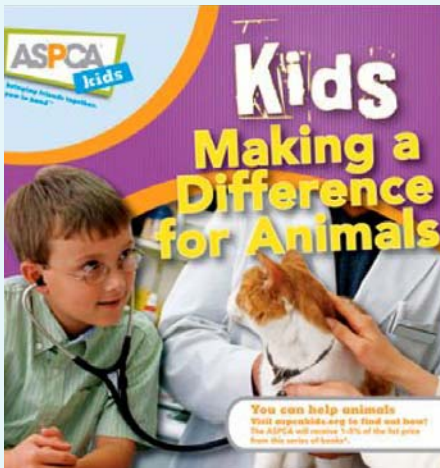
*would tell how they would be. He said they would be going to a rehabber in the area to be checked out, today. He suggested we check in a couple of weeks, if we wanted to see how they were doing. Thanks again and all the best, Scott*

Scott followed up and reported back that they sadly didn't make it. That is the nature of wildlife rehabilitation. The little squirrels had fallen hard from their high nest. The photo is startling because, without their fur, and not seeing their tails, they look so human. Their Mom had done a good job of nursing them. We are very sorry they were lost so young to never experience the joy of scampering up and down trees and stealing bird food. We never have and never will begrudge the squirrels for taking seed. It's a tough life out there.

## BOOK REVIEW:

### KIDS Making a Difference for Animals

Authors: Nancy Furstinger & Dr. Sheryl L. Pipe,  
Wiley Publishing, Inc.



This comprehensive book, written for and about kids (the human kind) both teaches and encourages them to become involved with a wide array of animal causes.

The areas covered are far ranging, from socializing pitbulls through love to helping wildlife in rainforests.

Each area of animal concern is illustrated with a young person's involvement in making things better for animals. To curb the overpopulation of dogs and cats in Texas, for example, one young girl there raised money by baking and selling cookies. She raised a whopping \$5,000 for

her local shelter.

Another illustration of children's involvement with animal protective causes involved a boy who cared for a rabbit with special needs. No, he never tired of providing the routine care this rabbit needed. The young boy had made a conscious commitment to his rabbit friend, and it was a forever commitment.

Alexa began to foster dogs when she realized they would otherwise be killed in shelters. She later grew to love senior dogs.

Then there was the story of two boys who rescued ducklings who had fallen into a sewer. Guess what, they did this on Mother's Day!

An added reward was that we discovered **Wildlife Watch** and the **Coalition to Prevent the Destruction of Canada Geese** on their long list of organizations that help animals.

**Kids Making a Difference for Animals** is informative not only for kids, but for anyone who wants to help animals. Perhaps the next book will be **Seniors Making a Difference for Animals** ☺

AM



If you need help  
for wildlife, call  
**1-877-WILDHELP**  
OR  
**1-877-945-3435**

Wildlife Watch maintains a Wildlife Help Hotline to help humane folks who have found an injured or orphaned wild animal. We maintain lists of wildlife rehabilitators throughout the country, and we will do our best to help you find the wildlife care professional closest to you. Our hotline helps us to help hundreds of people and animals annually.

For additional articles,  
photos, and items of  
interest, please visit our  
enhanced website at:  
[www.wildwatch.org](http://www.wildwatch.org)

# Official NY State Animal Cruelly Treated

By E.M. FAY

Adopted as the official state animal in 1975, the busy beaver has a long and illustrious history in New York State. Much exploited by trappers over the centuries, their sturdy pelts were the basis of many a commercial enterprise, which is the reason they appear on the official Seal of New York City. But their real and enduring value to New Yorkers and our environment is the vital role they play in maintaining irreplaceable wetlands, and the endangered plant and animal species who live there. Their work keeps eco-systems healthy, helps control floodwaters, and purifies water.

Long ago driven from urban areas and the suburban sprawls that surround them, the beavers' natural habitat has been steadily shrinking. Even in rural areas they are often wrongly perceived as a nuisance as their dams sometimes cause flooding on roadways. This minor problem can be easily circumvented by humane methods, but not many municipalities take the time to research this. Trapping and hunting goes on unabated. The trapping is particularly cruel, as it causes considerable suffering before death occurs. Thus, the beaver is being hounded out of and purposely killed off in all but a few wild regions.

When a lone male beaver was filmed swimming up the Bronx River recently, it was therefore a matter of some portent. The hardy rodent had not been seen in NYC waters for some 200 years. A twig-and-mud lodge was seen on the riverbank nearby. Named José, after U.S. Rep. José Serrano, who has



Photo from [www.beaversww.org](http://www.beaversww.org)

done much to encourage clean-up of the river, the beaver is being watched by Bronx Zoo officials and excited animal lovers alike.

Dietland Muller-Schwarze, a SUNY Syracuse beaver expert, predicts that more beavers will re-appear in urban areas as their natural habitats upstate

are being destroyed by human over-development, while their population is currently on the upswing. The prospect of increased human-beaver interaction does not bode well for our aquatic neighbors unless more of us become enlightened and hold them in the esteem they merit.

Considering the heartless exploitation of beavers by humans in the past, and the inhumane and unnecessary current-day actions taken against them, all New Yorkers need to ask themselves: Is this really what we want for our "State Animal," who also graces the official Seal of NYC? These intelligent, industrious creatures deserve better from us - to be respected and left alone to live their useful lives in a well-preserved natural habitat. Visit the **Beavers, Wetlands, and Wildlife** website. [www.Beaversww.org](http://www.Beaversww.org)

Beavers Wetlands, and Wildlife is an excellent organization, please consider supporting them and subscribing to their newsletter.

## IN MEMORY OF GRACE

Unknown birthdate - November 2, 2009

**Connie Young** wrote:

"Here is my wonderful dog, Grace, who passed away yesterday. Please think of her for a moment and help me remember her dear, sweet soul as she was when she shared my life and home with me and my feline friends. She was a favorite of all my cats.

Rest in peace, Grace.

Love

Connie

