

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

Wildlife Rehabilitators are aware of the many perils facing individual wild animals in their daily existence. Some can be avoided by personal steps that we can take - others need to be dealt with through education or lobbying efforts.

Wildlife rehabilitators are **licensed by state game agencies, yet they are given no other support**, and

they are **not allowed to charge for their "services."** Sadly, animals often come to the attention of rehabbers when they are found by people who either don't want them near their house or don't know how to help them. When the DEC's, DNR's or police are called, they normally recommend killing or letting the animals die; and most veterinarians cannot take time from their busy schedules.

WINGS OF HOPE A Private Domestic Waterfowl Sanctuary Marydel, DE

BY ANNE MULLER

So, what is the connection between the domestic geese at the **State University of New York (SUNY) at New Paltz, Wings of Hope in Delaware, Sunnyskies Bird and Animal Sanctuary** in Middletown, NY, and **Wildlife Watch**?

It's what's called TEAMWORK!

When Wildlife Watch first heard a rumor that there was a possibility of Canada geese being killed at the SUNY Campus, we wished to become involved in trying to prevent that from happening. Fortunately, **Mike Malloy**, Director of Environmental Health and Safety at SUNY also wanted to ensure that not a feather on anyone's head was ruffled. That included the students' feathers as well.

Wildlife Watch had a meeting with Mike who said he was planning to get a border collie to herd the geese off the grounds of the campus. He added that he needed to remove the domestic geese so that they would not be harassed by the new border collie.

Wildlife Watch's assignment was to facilitate the removal and placement of the domestic geese to a sanctuary or sanctuaries. Our primary concern was not breaking up bonded groups of geese. We never anticipated being able to place all 25 geese in one location.

After outreach to our various contacts, we received a welcome e-mail from **Nancy Pikulik** who has a privately owned sanctuary for waterfowl in Marydel, Delaware called Wings of



The geese playing follow the leader in one of SUNY's creeks in October.

Hope. Nancy was willing to take ALL of the geese who needed to be removed! We were thrilled that they would not have to be separated from each other, as it would have been difficult to determine their attachments to one another. So that we would feel confident in her ability to handle all of the geese, Nancy told us her amazing background:

I have taken the Cornell University Ornithology course, taken numerous courses put on by the International & National Wildlife Rehabilitators Association, studied homeopathy for wildlife and have worked as a volunteer with Tri-State Wild Bird Rescue for 12+ years. I have a Bachelors in Nursing and have been working with birds for over 15 years. This gives me the skills to handle most issues before they turn critical.

I did have one goose who developed subcutaneous emphysema this past summer and I'm happy to say it resolved with my every other day taping of the subcutaneous air pockets. In order to make this diagnosis, I took many photos and got an x-ray of his neck and emailed them to Erica Miller, the main vet at Tri-State who was heading the Gulf oil spill clean-up at the time. Apparently, many of the rescued pelicans were demonstrating similar symptoms and she gave her recommendations on what to do for him. He's just fine now and frequent-

ly comes over to show his appreciation. I address each and every animal on my property at least twice a day and study their daily routines - this close observation allows me to pick up on small changes in behavior which might be a precursor of a more serious problem.

I feel like I'm interviewing for the 'job of a lifetime' but I just want to relieve you all of any concerns that you may have that your geese will be taken for granted or left to fend for themselves. My critters probably eat better than we do and they certainly have their needs met before I worry about myself.

Now that we had found the absolute best place for the guys, our next step was to find transportation for 25 large geese down to Delaware from upstate NY in the middle of a freezing cold, icy January. To accomplish that no mean feat, we called our friends at Sunnyskies Bird and Animal Sanctuary as we knew they had trailers and other vehicles for large animal transportation. Sure enough, they had just bought the perfect vehicle whose floor they covered with lots of cozy hay.

Bill Swearer of Sunnyskies <http://www.sunnyskiesbirdsanctuary.org/> did a miraculous repair on his new horse trailer the day before the trip so



Bill and Mike about to discharge their charges.

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it would be up and running flawlessly for the long journey to Marydel.

Yes, we had an amazingly sensitive team of people who only wanted the geese to be safe and happy in their new home. Yet, you can still imagine their fear, perhaps their sense of loss at losing the environment and home that had sustained them and their ancestors for generations.

After their arrival at Marydel, we waited with bated breath to hear about the initial meeting between the newcomers and the established flock. Fortunately both the sound and the video were recorded. Their greetings were deafening; the Delaware geese welcomed the NY geese with open arms that translated into outstretched wings and necks.

Please visit www.wildwatch.org to see the meeting of what happened when the NY geese met the Delaware geese for the first time.

Nancy reported that although they still choose to sleep in separate areas of the barn, they are beginning to mingle with each other during the day, no doubt



Here they are shortly after their arrival to MaryDel. The whites are the NY geese and the greys are the Delaware geese.

sharing war stories of how they each arrived at Marydel, and praising their new home. They may by now understand that what happened is a blessing.

If you would like to contribute to the construction of a larger pond for the geese in Marydel, please let us know. Your contributions can be dedicated to a



Nancy's Delaware geese taken months before the arrival of the NY geese.

"Pond for the NY SUNY Geese Please visit our website at www.wildwatch.org to see their new home and to witness their exciting arrival meeting.

Anne Muller is president of Wildlif Watch.