

The Wild Life

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE WILDLIFE REHABILITATORS OF COLORADO

FALL 2007



From the President

Dear Friend of Wildlife,

Save The Date – February 9, 2008

As we all know, an inspiring and fulfilling 2-day education symposium takes a boat-load of work and effort and doesn't just happen over night. In fact, the event held in February 2007 took over 4 months of planning and preparation. To this end, we've decided to make a change in



Deirdre Butler

what we do. On Saturday, February 9, 2008 we will hold a one-day interactive workshop for wildlife rehabilitators in Colorado, including a keynote speaker and moderated roundtable discussions and ample opportunity for networking and learning from your fellow rehabbers. We'll also hold our Annual General Membership Meeting where we will have some important and frankly critical information to share with you. More details to follow shortly

and will also be posted on our web site www.ccwr-co.org

Please plan to attend and actively participate in this workshop. Make the time to invest in yourself to support your investment in Colorado's wildlife.

Call for Nominations – CCWR Board of Directors

When you are inspired by some great purpose, some extraordinary project, all your thoughts break their bonds; your mind transcends limitations, your consciousness expands in every direction, and you find yourself in a new, great and wonderful world. Dormant forces, faculties and talents become alive, and you discover yourself to be a greater person by far than you ever dreamed yourself to be.

—Patanjali (c. 1st to 3rd century BC)

We know you are inspired, already affect extraordinary

projects and are a wonderful person. Would you also be willing to serve on the CCWR Board of Directors? See inside for more details.

Call for Grant Applications

In recognition and support of the fine work conducted by our members, dedicated and committed wildlife rehabilitators in Colorado, CCWR is very pleased to announce a call for its 2008 Catherine Hurlbutt & Hurlbutt Match Grants. The Catherine Hurlbutt Grant is for rehabilitation of birds and The Hurlbutt Match, for rehabilitation of mammals, reptiles or amphibians.

Grants, up to a maximum of \$500, are available to current CCWR members (individuals or organizations). A grant committee consisting of CCWR members will award the grants based on need, merit of the request, and ability of person/organization to conduct the project. Members interested in applying for these grants should send a completed application and supporting information to CCWR Grant Committee, PO Box 68, Hygiene, CO 80533-0068. Visit our web site www.ccwr-co.org to download a copy of the Grant Application Form and associated instructions, which will be available by December 15, 2007.

Closing date for grant applications is January 15, 2008. We will announce the recipients of these grants at the upcoming CCWR Workshop, February 9, 2008..

If you have something to share please e-mail to ccwr_4_members@msn.com. You are also most welcome to contact me, Deirdre Butler, directly via deirdre@cogico.com or 303-823-8649.

Looking forward to seeing you in February!

Deirdre Butler
President, CCWR

TEACHING BABY SONGBIRDS TO SING

BY TINA MITCHELL

*The birds pour forth their souls in notes
Of rapture from a thousand throats.*
—William Wordsworth, *Devotional Incitements*

Bird songs are not just beautiful, entertaining, and up-lifting to the human ear. They also serve a vital function in one of the most basic avian drives: the process of reproduction among songbirds. As one branch of the order of Passerines (perching birds), these marvelous songsters are referred to as “oscines,” from the Latin for “a bird from whose note omens are taken.” Oscines have extraordinary brains that are hard-wired for learning and producing songs. Their double voice boxes—“syringes” in plural; “syrinx” in singular—are complex, with multiple pairs of tiny muscles controlling these dual membranes (Kroodsma, 2005). Think of any lovely bird song you might hear in the spring—some of our native sparrows, any warbler, a finch—and you’re thinking of an oscine.

The other major sub-order of Passerines are the “sub-oscines”—rather arrogantly meaning “beneath the songbirds,” implying that they are more primitive. Sub-oscines have much simpler songs, less elaborate syringes, and brains that lack the intricate neural controls needed for complex songs. The most common sub-oscines in Colorado are the phoebes, kingbirds, pewees, and flycatchers. All of this background information may seem like yet another boring Intro to Ornithology lesson. Yet it can be important. Oscines generally need to hear and practice their songs in order to develop normally while sub-oscines never need to hear even a peep from an adult to produce perfect adult songs. So to be able to sing appropriately as an adult, an American Robin needs to hear other robins singing. But if you’re dealing with a Western Kingbird, you needn’t worry about its song as an adult—the song, such as it is, is genetically pre-programmed. The kingbird will produce its

song just fine, without anything further from you. Pigeons and doves don’t need to hear adult song either. And although hummingbirds aren’t oscines, they also appear to require experience with adult songs when they are growing up.

It’s not like rehabilitators don’t have enough to do during baby bird season. Why should you also worry about songs for baby birds you are raising? Birds use songs to establish and defend territories and to attract mates. If baby songbirds don’t hear adult songs during the appropriate learning period, they tend to develop simpler songs with fewer frequencies than their parent-raised peers have. Since song complexity and richness attract females to singing males, males with less interesting songs are at a clear disadvantage in the mating game. Even though females of most species don’t sing, they too need exposure to adult



Baby Bullocks Orioles

Photo by Michael Arnold, Greenwood Wildlife Rehabilitation Sanctuary

songs as they mature or they may not recognize and respond to an appropriate male’s song. Research suggests that babies learn their songs best about 10 – 50 days after hatching. For babies that are raised by rehabbers, though, this prime learning period overlaps with the period that they’re in our care (Dolinsky, 2004). If the baby birds we raise don’t hear appropriate adult songs when they are with us, they may never be able to successfully compete and reproduce after they are released.

Babies don’t usually develop their adult songs until long after they have fledged. Instead, they pass through several stages as they mature. First is an early *sensory* stage, where they listen to the songs of adults of their species. They encode only a very specific set of songs, suggesting that they have some kind of a mental template. Next, in the *subsong* phase, they utter various sounds—much as a toddler babbles all sorts of noises that aren’t quite recognizable as human speech. During the *sensory motor* phase,

Continued on p. 3

they produce bits and pieces of their adult song—but it clearly sounds like a work in progress. Sometimes, in the fall, you might hear a bird song that seems just a bit off. (Was that really a chickadee? Did I just hear a robin—the tone was right, but the rhythm was off...) Those are this year’s kids, honing their songs to match their memories of the adult tutors they heard in their younger days. In the *mature* phase, they are off and running (well, singing) with a totally recognizable adult song.

Of course, hearing a live bird is the best situation, but youngsters can also learn from recordings (Dolinsky, 2004; Kroodsmas, 2005). Baby House Finches, American Robins, Red-winged Blackbirds—or whatever wild birds hang around your yard—will hear plenty of their own songs. But the other species need help to develop their vocal repertoires. Last year, several of us at Greenwood Wildlife Rehabilitation Center put together a CD of the songs of our common species—sort of a party mix for baby songbirds—and played it frequently throughout the baby bird season. We identified 39 species that had commonly been raised at Greenwood in past years:

Broad-tailed Hummingbird	Downy Woodpecker
Northern Flicker	Blue Jay
Western Scrub-Jay	Black-billed Magpie
American Crow	Common Raven
Horned Lark	Tree Swallow
Barn Swallow	Black-capped Chickadee
Rock Wren	White-breasted Nuthatch
House Wren	Canyon Wren
Western Bluebird	American Dipper
American Robin	Mountain Bluebird
Yellow Warbler	European Starling
Spotted Towhee	Yellow-rumped Warbler
Vesper Sparrow	Chipping Sparrow
Red-winged Blackbird	Song Sparrow
Yellow-headed Blackbird	Western Meadowlark
Common Grackle	Brewer’s Blackbird
House Finch	Bullock’s Oriole
Lesser Goldfinch	Pine Siskin
Evening Grosbeak	American Goldfinch
House Sparrow	

We set up a simple CD player with speakers in the baby bird room and the bird song tutorials began. But with all of the songs playing one after another, how does the baby figure out what to learn? It will store only its own songs because its brain filters out all but the relevant pieces. And if you think of nestlings in the wild, you can picture this for yourself. Surely a great many species of birds sing in various woodlands, fields, and marshes. Babies raised in these areas have no trouble homing in on the right songs

in the midst of those marvelous symphonies!

To help us in this effort to give baby birds their songs, the Macaulay Library at Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology (<http://www.birds.cornell.edu/MacaulayLibrary/>) has graciously agreed to work with us to create and duplicate a CD that contains the western songs of the common species listed above. You can be among the first to own this customized “best hits of Colorado song birds” CD—we will provide one copy of this CD *free* for each participant registered for the



Photo by Peter Butler

Baby Blue Jays

CCWR Workshop in February, 2008! All you’ll need is a player with speakers and you’ll be on your way. And although more exposure is good, even just an occasional playing will give the “kids” a leg up, song-wise. If you can’t attend the symposium, though, you will be able to order a CD directly from Macaulay Library, for a small fee. Watch for details and ordering information in the Spring newsletter—just in time for the 2008 baby bird season!

As rehabbers, we give our baby birds plenty of nutritious food, a clean, safe environment, and enrichment activities so that they can develop physically and mentally. I’d like to encourage you to also consider helping the nestlings learn their songs, so you send them back to the wild with the full complement of skills they’ll need to lead rich, productive adult lives. ❖

References

Dolinsky, Melissa B. (2004) Song development in songbirds—Are rehabilitators missing a crucial step? *International Wildlife Rehabilitation Council 27th Annual Conference Proceedings*, Portland, OR.

http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Animal_Behavior/Bird_Song.

Kroodsmas, Donald. (2005) *The singing life of birds: The art and science of listening to birdsong*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.



CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

CCWR 2008 Board of Directors Election

We are looking for five CCWR members to join the board of directors. Three positions are for 3-year terms and two positions are 2-year terms. These are working positions — each board member is expected to actively participate in the work of the board thereby “spreading the load” and preventing burn-out among your colleagues. The board meets 8 – 9 times a year, at varying locations along the Foothills.

Any CCWR member is eligible for being nominated to the Board of Directors. We welcome self-nominations.

Please submit a short biographical sketch highlighting the wildlife rehabilitation experience and/ or interest in rehabilitation efforts of the person you are nominating. Here is an example of a bio: *Candidate SoAndSo has been a rehabber in Beautiful Prairie*



Village for four years. SoAndSo has a state license for mammals, coyote size and down, and a federal bird permit.

SoAndSo is currently working as a vet assistant at a clinic in Beautiful Prairie Village and wants to become more involved with wildlife rehabilitation at State level.

If you are interested in applying, please review the document titled “Base Requirements of CCWR Board Members” posted on the CCWR web site, in the “About CCWR” section <http://www.ccwr-co.org/aboutCCWR.htm#Board>

Please **mail** your nominations to: CCWR Nominating Committee, PO Box 68, Hygiene, CO 80533-0068 by January 1, 2008. Nominations must be post marked no later than December 27, 2007 for eligibility.

Ballots will be **mailed** to members by January 8, 2008. Ballots must be either mailed to the address above by February 7, 2008, post marked no later than February 3, 2008 or hand-delivered at the 2008 CCWR Workshop, February 9, 2008.

Any questions? You can also call Deirdre at 303-823-8649.



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Thank You for Your Help!

The CCWR Board takes this opportunity, in advance, to thank you for your help at the upcoming interactive Workshop scheduled for Saturday, February 9, 2008 to be held at the Mature Adult Center in Westminster, our venue for the 2007 Education Symposium.

We much appreciate the offers of help received to-date and look forward to working with you.

What's the Plan?

Whether facing a minor storm or a major catastrophe, Having an emergency plan can make all the difference

BY RAEGAN MORGAN

With the recent wildfires in California still fresh in our minds, many families are reviewing — or establishing — emergency plans so each member of the family knows where to go, how to communicate, and what to take with them in the case of a natural disaster or terrorist strike.

Like any family, rehabilitators in Colorado have the potential to run up against unexpected emergencies, from catastrophic events like wildfires to inconvenient, but survivable power outages. By taking the time to develop your own emergency plan that is specific to what you do, you'll be ready to handle any situation that arises. Do it *now*, before you need it.

So let's start with the basics. You may not think it's a big deal if the power goes out. But what if it didn't come back on right away? Ask yourself these questions:

Do you have a 1-2 week supply of food and water for your wild patients (and for you, if you were snowed in or not allowed to leave)? If the power went out for an extended time, do you have a way to keep food or medication from spoiling? What about a supply of fresh water? If your water comes from a well, often times when the power is out, the pump won't pump water.

Do you have an ample amount of miscellaneous supplies such as newspaper, flashlights and batteries, disposable medical supplies, etc.?

Can you conduct business without a computer? If you keep all of your records, donor lists, contact numbers, etc. on a PC, do you have backups off-site? What if a power surge fries your hard drive?

If you live in a wooded area, is brush and debris cleared away from the house to prevent easy spread of fire?

Nobody wants to believe they may have to evacuate their rehabilitation center on short notice, but if that nightmare becomes a reality, it is imperative to the well-being of your animals to have a plan in place. Put it in writing, and



make it as detailed as possible. Be sure every member of your staff and key volunteers have a copy. Do a practice run-through to make sure everyone involved is on the same page and understands what their specific tasks are. By assigning tasks up front, confusion is eliminated and precious time isn't wasted.

Here are other things to consider when forming an evacuation plan:

Transportation. Think about the restraints, crates, or cages needed to evacuate all of your patients. How would you physically move them? Do you have the van or trailer capacity to do so? Where would you go? Do you have a designated location in place to accept your animals? Consider partnering with other rehabilitators in the state who have similar accommodations to yours, for emergency housing.

Communication. Do you have a single contact person who can act as the communication center for staff and volunteers? Be sure this person knows their duty and is far enough away that they are not affected by the call to evacuate. Radios need to be in working order (batteries!) and programmed to local stations broadcasting emergency information.

Files. Do you have copies of all your important documents off-site? If not, are they in a box that is easily taken with you in the event of an evacuation? Be sure to grab patient records, financial reports, checkbooks, etc. Unplug and bring your PC with you if it contains these important items.

Details. There are countless loose ends to deal with in a forced evacuation, and this is where having a written plan is especially handy. A few worth mentioning: Turn off propane tanks, gather needed tools, supplies, and spare keys. A wildlife center in California reportedly discarded all toys, bedding and other flammable items from the cages when faced with a wildfire evacuation.

It's a lot to think about, for sure. And it's a lot of time and effort to implement. Chances are you'll never need it. But what if...? ❖

Bob Nightwalker is the Director of Wildlife Services at WildKind, located in the Larimer County Humane Society. WildKind has been in existence for 19 years, and Bob has been rehabilitating there for 8 years. His desire to work with wildlife and exotic animals are what first brought him to the field of wildlife rehabilitation.

WildKind has a number of inside cages as well as outside caging. Normally they have 2 full time employees and one part time employee, in addition to about 20 or so volunteers. Annually, WildKind sees approximately 3,700 wild

animals per year. In addition, they are responsible for caring for the 350 or so exotic and barnyard animals received each year.

Member Spotlight

WildKind

WildKind rehabilitates all species of wildlife up to the size of a coyote, except for striped skunks, raptors, and starlings. If he had to chose a favorite species, Bob thinks it would be Pelicans.

One of the most memorable cases happened a few years ago. The center received an adult male raccoon that had been beaten over the head to unconsciousness with an axe handle. Thinking the raccoon was dead, the abuser flung the raccoon into a dumpster, where later that evening it

crawled out and into the engine of their vehicle. That morning the person called WildKind to assist in its removal. They did successfully remove the raccoon but also ticketed the person for animal cruelty. After months of rehabilitation, which included spoon feeding him for the first couple weeks upon arrival, WildKind was able to release the raccoon back to the wild.

Bob says the biggest lesson he's learned is never put all your faith in thinking your gloves will protect you from all bites. And he adds this bit of wisdom: When feeling discouraged, try to keep the big picture of life in mind.

WildKind is located at 6317 Kyle Ave. Fort Collins, 80527.



White Pelican Copyrighted © 1997 - 2007 by Laura L. Erickson

IMPORTANT DATES!

Board of Directors Election:

Nominations due by January 1, 2008

Members receive ballots by January 8, 2008

Mail-in ballots due by February 7, 2008

Hand-delivered ballots due by noon, February 9, 2008

CCWR Grants:

Grant Applications Available
December 15, 2007 at www.ccwr-co.org

Grant Applications Due January 15, 2008

2008 Annual Meeting and Workshop

February 9, 2008 Westminster, CO

The Wild Life is a quarterly newsletter for members of CCWR. We encourage you to share this newsletter with volunteers, staff, and colleagues. We hope you enjoy the publication.

We strive to publish well-researched information that is up-to-date, interesting and helpful. However, information in *The Wild Life* is provided only as a service to our members and is not intended to be directive, nor applicable in all circumstances. Members are always advised to seek counsel from their veterinarian and DOW officials on matters applicable to their locale.

Suggestions and contributions are welcome. To submit an article or other contribution for consideration, please send it to: CCWR_4_Members@msn.com

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The Wild Life:

Next issue submissions deadline:
January 2, 2008

Preble's Meadow Jumping Mouse

Zapus hudsonius preblei

Order RODENTIA – Family DIPODIDAE

The Preble's meadow jumping mouse (Preble's) has a body approximately three inches long, and a tail of about six inches long. This species has large hind feet, long hind legs, and gets its name from its impressive jumping abilities. To evade predators, Preble's can jump up to three feet. It can also swim. The mouse has a distinct dark, broad stripe on its back that runs from head to tail and is bordered on either side by gray to orange-brown fur. The underbelly has fine white-cream colored fur.

Preble's are primarily nocturnal or crepuscular (active during twilight), but also may be active during the day. It inhabits well-developed plains riparian vegetation, with relatively undisturbed grassland communities, including low undergrowth consisting of grasses, forbs, or both and a nearby water source. Foods include seeds, fruit, fungi, and insects.

The Preble's mouse generally has 2 – 3 litters of young per year, with an average litter size of five.

Preble's generally enter hibernation in late August/early September and reappear at the end of April. Over-winter survival in the first year is low particularly for young born later in the year with limited time to build up appropriate body weight for hibernation. Establishing feeding habitat and suitable hibernacula are critical for survival through the first winter after which, survival is quite high. Hibernation assists in avoiding predation, injury and illness.

Preble's is found only along the Colorado Front Range down to Colorado Springs and up into southern Wyoming. Meadow Jumping Mice (*Zapus hudsonius*) are found across the northern US and up into Alaska.

On November 1, 2007 the Preble's meadow jumping mouse was confirmed as a species in need of Endangered Species Act protection in Colorado. According to the Fish and Wildlife Service proposal, the Preble's mouse will, however, no longer be protected in Wyoming. More information can be found at <http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/species/mammals/preble/11012007NewsRelease.pdf>

CCWR would like to extend sincere thanks to Anne Ruggles, Bear Canyon Consulting LLC. <http://www.bear-canyon.com>

[bear-canyon.com](http://www.bear-canyon.com) for her generosity is sharing her expertise, research and photos of Preble's. In addition, many thanks to the Center for Native Ecosystems. ❖



© 2007 Bear Canyon Consulting LLC. <http://www.bear-canyon.com>

This 18g female was captured in early October 2003 along East Boulder Ditch just after it diverts from South Boulder Creek at Cherryvale and Baseline. This late in the season (adults begin to go into hibernation in late August), she was probably born in August 2003 and was still putting on hibernation weight. Preble's don't usually go into hibernation until they have reached 25g for a female and 27g for a male. In this photo you can see their long tail and large hind foot.

Warm Wishes to
All Our Members
This Holiday Season!