



The Wildlife Watch Binocular

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THE FRONT LENS: Information & Education

In Hurricanes, What About Animals?

By E.M. Fay

Between hurricanes in Vero, FL last year, Lucy was found. She was abandoned, cold, and wet, her matted fur was flea-ridden. **Frank and Laurie Losardo** of Sebastian, Florida—dedicated pet rescuers—found the elderly dog huddled by a post box and eating dirt.

She is one of thousands of domestic and wild animals trapped in evacuated homes, left to wander streets, or lay wounded in woods following a hurricane. Although trucks and trailers poured into the Gulf Coast region stocked with relief for people, animal lovers often could not get into affected areas for rescue efforts. Numerous evacuating families were told they had to leave behind their animal companions and family members. Although at last many groups have rescued pets, what about our brothers and sisters with wings, hooves, and scales? Who's caring for them?

Sometimes animals' instincts save them. During last year's tsunami, elephants, birds, and hoofed animals sensed the impending storm well ahead of the region's people and fled to higher planes. As Don Oldenburg wrote in *The Washington Post* last year, "Animals' sensory physiology" gives them an edge; being super-sensitive to sound, air/water temperature, and vibrations alerts them to a hurricane's pathway. Thus, they "head for the hills."

But some animals can't travel to higher ground. In Florida, for example, alligators have to stay near water where they're safer. Even those animals who can run and climb—rodents, ungulates, and so on—might have young or infirm family members that cannot make the trek quickly enough. Birds may have chicks in the nest. Their desire to protect counters their instinct to flee. Those animals lucky enough to secure a high spot can find it cut off by rising waters and thus they are cut off as well from their food sources.

Humans can help. **Florida Wildlife Hospital and Sanctuary** in Melbourne, Florida saves native species 365 days a year. After Hurricane Charley alone, they rescued 85 baby squirrels blown from their nests. **Hyta Mederer**, President of Florida Wildlife Hospital, rescued a baby grackle while in Cozumel during Hurricane Emily. Having fallen out of his tree, she kept him safe in a quiet, dark, warm box overnight, then placed him outside in the morning. His mother returned and found him.

Some organizations suggest leaving out food appropriate to the species: sunflower seeds for squirrels and birds, bales of hay for large mammals. Be careful, though: All wild animals have a "flight response" easily activated

when even kind-hearted humans come too close. If an animal taking refuge feels threatened, a person should back away quietly, or she might jump into the water to escape.

One organization states if a wild animal—even a "scary" one like a rat or a snake—takes refuge in your house, the animal likely is not there by choice, nor

hurricane's arrival, and their extensively detailed plan is essential to their effectiveness. The Center lines up hundreds of volunteers, stocks supplies, constantly monitors the weather, and keeps a generator on hand.

When the hurricane is imminent, workers come to the rescue. They bring recuperating animals living in natural outdoor habitats such as pelicans to hurricane-proof structures and gather songbirds from aviaries. Whenever possible, the center fosters out domestic animals such as rabbits to volunteers' homes.

Professional rehabilitators can offer aid to wildlife that the typical lay-person, despite good intentions, simply cannot.

As **Diane Watchinski**, Director of Ethical Compliance at W. C. C. warns, "People look like predators to wild animals." When they see our big eyes looming over them, they could be frightened literally to death.

While proper food, drink, and care is important, there's a wealth of information online that a caring person can access when rehabbers cannot be found. www.wildlifecare.org offers thorough, reliable information.

Whether making preparations beforehand or coping with calamity's aftermath, these rehabbers remind us that our fellow animals—be they domestic or wild—deserve as much

People look like predators to wild animals.

—Diane Watchinski, Wildlife Care Center

will he likely become a long-term house guest. The solution can be easy: **Make an escape route for the animal by opening windows or doors, and leave his or her line of sight.**

Hurricanes unfortunately often whip through an area around the time of year when young animals abound. These babes, as well as the millions of animals injured by wind-blown trees and floods, need more advanced aid. They need wildlife rehabilitators.

The **Wildlife Care Center** in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, has 36 years' experience rehabilitating wild animals. The largest wildlife hospital in the state, they rescue more than 15,000 animals per year. The Wildlife Care Center prepares their facility well in advance of a

Ivory-Billed Sighting Challenged

By Aimee J. Frank

As we were left breathless by the news that the long-thought extinct ivory-billed woodpecker is extant, so we held our breath when well-respected scientists led by Yale University ornithologist Richard Prum challenged the discovery.

Prum's critique rested on evidence, including a poor-quality videotape, released by ornithologists whose field work produced sightings of the ivory-billed woodpecker, *Campephilus principalis*, in a swampy woodland in East Arkansas known as the Big Woods. The discovery was announced on the Science Express Web site of the journal *Science* on April 28 by Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Nature Conservancy officials.

The skeptics, who believed scientists had misidentified a similarly marked common pileated woodpecker, *Dryocopus pileatus*, became believers when presented with audiotapes withheld during the initial press conference until they underwent further scientific analysis.

The audiotapes captured the "kent" call of the bird, described as the sound of a tin trumpet, and the double-rap drum by which the birds also communicate. Both characteristics are unique to the ivory-billed woodpecker. Though the tapes appear to have captured two birds drumming, only one bird at a time was sighted in Arkansas.

The road to extinction

Two traits distinguish the ivory-billed woodpecker: its larger size and its white stripe that extends below its eyes, down the sides of the neck and back, and along the wing bottoms toward the tip.

The third largest woodpecker in the world and the largest in North America, the bird measures 18 to 20 inches tall with a wingspan of 30 to 31 inches and a weight of 16 to 20 ounces. Males have a red crest; females a black. This woodpecker inhabits the South's swampy hardwood forests. In mature forests' standing dead trees, it nests and peels back bark to munch on beetle larvae.

Loggers' rapacious destruction of the old-growth Southern forest diminished the birds' habitat, and avid collectors anxious to possess the bird further reduced their numbers. The last verified sighting prior to the recent discovery occurred in 1944.

Chasing ghosts

Learning that Arkansas resident and outdoorsman Gene Sparling sighted an odd-looking woodpecker while kayaking in the swamp, *Living Bird* magazine editor, Tim Gallagher, and wildlife photographer and Oakwood College professor, Bobby Ray Harris, set off on a mission to prove the bird's existence. They spotted an ivory-billed woodpecker.

Their sighting led to full-scale

scientific field trips by Cornell and The Nature Conservancy researchers who descended on the bottomland forest near the Cache River National Wildlife Refuge with cameras, video recorders, and sound recording equipment.

Several researchers reported fleeting sightings documented only by one poor-quality videotape and the audio recordings that proved conclusive.

History's lessons learned

The ivory-billed woodpecker was found in the 550,000-acre Big Woods, a forested swamp area in the Mississippi Delta, which has been the focus of Arkansas Nature Conservancy conservation efforts since 1982, said conservancy spokesperson Jay Harrod.

The Big Woods houses 255 species of birds, eight of which are endangered, Harrod said. Following the ivory-billed woodpecker sighting, the Conservancy acquired an additional 18,500 acres.

"The ivory-billed woodpecker has been a bird that's long been revered by naturalists and, even before them, Native-Americans," said Harrod. "The rediscovery of the ivory-billed woodpecker in Arkansas validates decades of conservation work."

Following the discovery, U.S. Department of the Interior Secretary Gale A. Norton committed \$10 million to protect the bird and its habitat and announced the creation of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker Recovery Team charged with drafting a recovery plan for the bird.

Field work will resume in November when researchers will explore an area south of the original sighting believed to be a hospitable habitat for the ivory-billed woodpecker.

Conservation efforts could hasten the return of the ivory-billed woodpecker to the southern landscape much in the way they contributed to the increased presence of the bald eagle in the Hudson Valley. At the very least, the work will benefit other endangered species in the area, said Harrod.

"What this shows others, in not only the U.S. but around the world, is that if you are working to conserve or restore ecologically significant habitats you may not know at the time the significance of the work you're doing," Harrod said. "But there could be other ivory-billed-like species out there, or work such as this could prevent species from ever entering the endangered species list."

The story of the discovery, with documentation, is available at <http://nature.org/ivorybill> and <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/ivory>. Tim Gallagher's book on his discovery, *The Grail Bird: Hot on the Trail of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker*, was published this year by Houghton Mifflin.



Lucy was rescued by Laurie & Frank Losardo between hurricanes in Sebastian, FL last year

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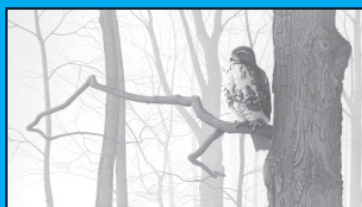
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Personal & Op-Ed

ON THE WATCH:
CONVERSATIONS WITH ACTIVISTS, WRITERS, ARTISTS, AND MUSICIANS WHO HELP US CONNECT WITH WILDLIFE

Opossum: Misunderstood Janitors

By Karen L. Kirsch

As I remove thirteen live baby opossums from the pouch of the dead mother lying in the middle of the road, my neighbor comments, "Why bother? It's just a worthless old 'possum." He's wrong on both charges.

North America's only marsupials are highly beneficial animals in addition to having intrinsic value. *Dilephidae marsupialia* have been around more than 70 million years placing them among the earth's oldest mammals, yet their average life span is only about a year.

While opossums (taken from the 17th-century Algonquin word *apasum* meaning "white animal") have many enemies, humans are their worst, most likely due to ignorance.

Ohio Division of Wildlife management Supervisor Dan Kramer says, "The biggest public misconception is that opossum are related to rats because of their hairless tails." They are actually closer to kangaroos and koala bears. Opossum have thumbs on their rear feet to aid climbing (usually to safety) and a strong prehensile tail which fuels the myth that they sleep hanging by their tails. While they might hang briefly, the tail is not strong enough to support them for long.

When confronted with danger, opossums hiss and bare fifty sharp teeth, urinate or defecate trying to look dangerous, but they're pretty defenseless. Given the opportunity, they lumber off as fast as possible, but they may fall into an involuntary coma-like state lasting up to four hours, hence the term "playing 'possum." Feigning death repels many predators. These solitary nomads prefer to just be left to their scavenging ways that help maintain a clean healthy environment for us humans.

Carrion is the diet mainstay of these omnivores, which explains why so many meet their demise on highways, but they also eat insects, snails, and slugs (cockroaches are a delicacy). They love over-ripe fruit and eggs, which make them unpopular with farmers, but opossums devour huge quantities of insects, rodents, and other undesirable. They're opportunists.

When opossums are senselessly killed or driven from an area, it creates an environmental opening for rodents, skunks, or raccoons. Opossums don't dig up gardens or destroy property, and they don't stink. They are intelligent and are highly resistant to rabies and other diseases



Photo credit the National Opossum Society. www.opossum.com

Humans are an opossum's worst enemy due to ignorance.

affecting both wildlife and domestic animals. Trapped for their fur, the victims of countless hit and run motorists are also pursued by other wildlife. Life is not easy for these misunderstood sanitary engineers.

Still, opossums survive. Their staying power is due to prolific reproduction. Thirteen days after mating, females birth as many as twenty young. Dad skips town. Not all of the bean-sized babies make their way along Mom's fur into the marsupium (pouch), but those who do will nurse and remain there for two to three months. Then they'll bum rides on Mom's back for another couple of months.

I take my orphans to **Operation Orphan, Inc.** where **Fran Kitchen** has been rehabilitating wildlife for forty years. They will be raised as wildlife, not as pets, and released back into their natural habitat to continue their unsung janitorial work. The National Opossum Society <http://www.opossum.org/> is a great information resource.

KAREN L. KIRSCH is a freelance writer residing in Ohio. A contributor to numerous publications, she recently helped rescue wildlife in Katrina's aftermath.

What About Animals?

Continued from Page WW-1

consideration and compassion as do humans.

If you'd like to help the non-profit **Wildlife Care Center** with rescuing and rehabilitating wildlife, donations are appreciated. They currently need a large new generator for times of power outage. During Hurricane Katrina, their phone lines were out for a week, and they could not receive the life-saving calls from people reporting injured wild animals. Contact them at Wildlife Care Center, 3200 SW 4th Ave. Ft. Lauderdale, Florida 33315. Phone# 954-524-4302. Website: www.wildcare.org.

There are many other groups doing similar work, such as **Florida Wildlife Hospital & Sanctuary**, in Melbourne, Florida. www.floridawildlifehospital.org.

E.M. FAY is a freelance writer whose work focuses upon environmental and animal-rights causes. Her work has appeared in publications such as Canada's *Natural Life*.

Strokes of Wild Beauty: The Art of Vincent Bihn

By Sharon Nichols

Few people in the US get to view wildlife such as black bear, deer, and hawks on a regular basis. For those of us with "nature deficit disorder," wildlife artists such as Vincent Bihn can open a whole new world. Applying acrylics with breathtaking realism, Bihn creates paintings that appear as if their subjects could fly off the canvas or duck into a den.

Born in the Hudson Valley in 1973, Bihn (pronounced "Bean") spent his early years exploring the over 200 acres of old farm land he called home as well as camping with his father in the Adirondack and Catskill Mountains. Early sightings of wildlife bloomed into grade school art. Though he excelled in art in junior high and high school, it wasn't until the mid-'90s that he picked up his brush again with a more mature vision. I spoke with him recently on the telephone to get a sense of this fine artist's background and sensibility toward wildlife.

Sharon Nichols: I understand you only paint animals whose surroundings you've actually visited. What was the first wildlife you ever painted?

Vincent Bihn: When I was a kid I used to paint and draw songbirds. As far as when I started becoming the wildlife artist I am now and taking it seriously, I think "Spotted Owl" was my first serious painting. I haven't been out to California, so I wouldn't paint a spotted owl now.

SN: Do you feel you've formed a deep spiritual connection to wildlife because of your art?

VB: I think so. Certainly being out there with them and watching them, photographing them, then putting them into a painting... they have personality, and once I paint an animal, that animal is never really the same to me again. We've bonded in some way. I always have so much more respect after I do a painting, whether it's a hawk, bear or bobcat. My job is to paint what I love, and I'm in the field a lot. How many people have a job where they're able to go out hiking and take pictures of wildlife in nature? It's fantastic.

SN: Do you support any wildlife organizations?

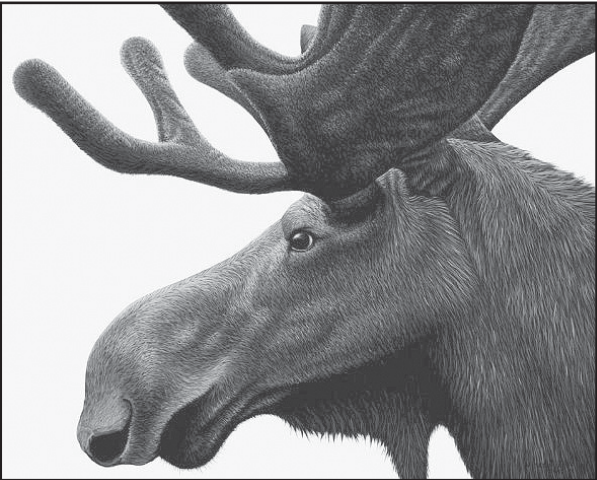
VB: I support different groups that are trying to help preserve wildlife and help animals that are endangered. I give to natural conservationists, things of that nature.

SN: How do you feel about hunting?

VB: I hunt with a paint brush and a camera.

SN: What pro-wildlife legislation would you like to see go into effect?

VB: In the Adirondacks they released lynx awhile back, then that program lost its funding. I'd like to see wolves put back up there, or animals endangered in any way.



"New Moose" by Vincent Bihn

I hunt with my paint brush and camera. --Vincent Bihn, wildlife artist



"Hunter in the Fog" by Vincent Bihn

SN: Do you think that people can learn to "re-see" and "respect" wildlife by viewing your paintings?

VB: Some people who collect my art are already into wildlife, but there are those who just like the picture or my work. I really hope that by seeing the animals I portray, they'll have a newfound respect for animals that they didn't have before. I meet a lot of people who don't really have that kind of respect for animals in nature. And if I can help in any way to change that for them, that's a great thing. One of the benefits of being a wildlife artist is that I get to talk about the animals, and people learn

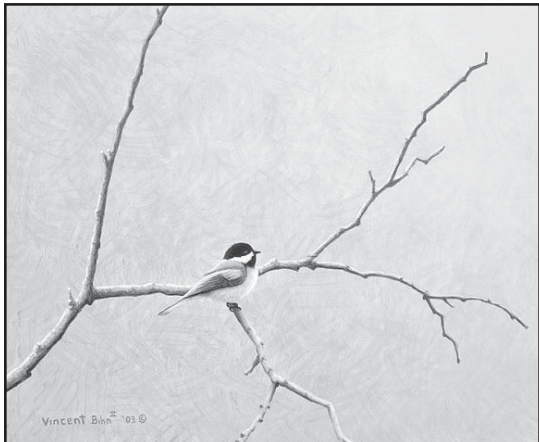
SHARON NICHOLS is a freelance writer residing in the Catskills. Her work appears in *Chronogram* and other publications.



"Ruby in the Light" by Vincent Bihn

NEXT MONTH: In each issue of *Wildlife Watch Binocular*, ON THE WATCH will offer you interviews with some of the most innovative artists, musicians, and writers whose works help awaken our spirit to our kinship with wildlife. Next month, publisher Anne Muller interviews Will Tuttle, a musician, teacher, and author who lives with his artist wife in a solar-paneled RV. Together, they travel the world with the mission to connect themselves and others more deeply with our natural connection to nature and the wild.

See Page WW-4 for a review of Will Tuttle's book *World Peace Diet*.



"Chick" by Vincent Bihn

R.O.C.K. - REHABBERS OFFER CARE AND KINDNESS

Wildlife Rehabilitator Profile: Marion Levitz

By Anne Muller
Marion Levitz got her wildlife rehabilitation license just three years ago! Since then, she has never said “no.” When the calls come in, no matter what time of day or night, Marion is there to receive the animals and begin treatment.



When I visited Marion, it was at the end of baby season, but nevertheless she still was caring for young ones born late in August, perhaps from second litters. I wanted to meet the woman who was always there for wildlife and never said “no” to a request to take a bird, squirrel, or bunny (about 80% of our calls this time of year), because her dedication is rare. Marion lives in a beautiful area of Rockland County near a lake. Her entire dining room has been turned over to the wildlife. Her cases are on tables and there are needy wild animals in each enclosure on the five or so tables along the walls and in the room’s center. The bunnies were eating on their own, but still weeks from being released, and the baby squirrels were still being nursed.

Marion asked if I would like to see the release of a squirrel who had been raised by Marion. Of course I did. I did not anticipate that it would affect me the way it did. She had turned part of her deck into an outdoor nursery and there was one tree that pressed against the deck and gave shade to the hutch. It also served as an excellent release for squirrels. The baby who had been nursed from a young age inside the hutch came to the open door and looked down. He immediately started to climb the hutch door and climbed to the roof of the hutch where he ran along the top and then quickly darted back into the hutch. In moments he was out again, running along the railing of the deck. He then stretched vertically upward for his first contact with a living tree. When he had a firm footing, he



Marion encourages him out...



It's a big jump...



This is fun...



Whats' up there?



Whats' over here?...

climbed higher and higher and then later ran down to the trunk to the bottom of the tree. We watched him feel his way along a narrower branch that had less traction than the trunk and then decide to return to the trunk where he clearly felt more secure. In just minutes though he had made his way along a narrow limb and then scurried back to the trunk which was becoming his security blanket. The trunk was his homebase as he explored its limbs. He still didn't jump. Unfortunately, Marion's appointment with a doctor kept me from seeing him take his first leap to a branch. When I left he was still stretching from one branch to another, unlike the squirrels at my feeders who take flying leaps. I realized that this is something that has to be practiced. Imagine that this little guy had never been out before. How amazing he was! Marion left the door of the hutch open for him and said she would do that until she needs it for new squirrels. She said that it's not unusual to find a squirrel whom she has released go back at night to sleep. She called it a “soft release.” We are very grateful to Marion and to all of the people who dedicate their lives to helping individual wild animals have a life once again. We wish them all a long and happy life in the great outdoors.

ANNE MULLER is WWB's tireless publisher and hotline helper. Call 845-256-1400 for more info.

Brian Shapiro, Ulster County Legislator, feeds a squirrel he helped to rehab.



Photo by brian Shapiro

An Eye on The News

Protecting Wild Horses from Slaughter:

The U.S. Senate will be considering the Ensign-Byrd amendment this week, which prohibits tax dollars from being used to inspect horsemeat for foreign export. The U.S. House has taken steps this year to ban horse slaughter by passing two appropriations amendments. Wild horses had enjoyed protection from slaughter since 1971 but in 2004, a rider slipped into the omnibus appropriations bill gutted that law. Last year, more than 90,000 American horses were either killed at one of three U.S. slaughterhouses for export or shipped to Canada or Mexico for slaughter. Wild horses lost protection from slaughter by a rider to an appropriations bill in 2004. Two bills, S. 576 and H.R. 297, will reinstate that protection.



Photo by Hope Ryden

“Blue Mare” was the name given to this magnificent wild horse by **Hope Ryden**. Hope studied Mustangs and wrote **Mustangs – A Return to the Wild**. It was published in 1972 by Viking Press. Hope had been commissioned by National Geographic Magazine to do an article that was the foundation of her book. Hope wrote: “Perhaps it is because the horse has for so long been cast in the role of man’s servant that free horses appear so poignantly beautiful. No sight so thrills me as the silhouette of an arrogant stallion poised atop a ridge...Though words cannot adequately describe either my feelings or the wild horses, Frank Dobie came close when he said that the wild horse was “the most beautiful, the most spirited, and the most inspiring creature ever to print foot on the grasses of America.” If you would like to see Hope’s books reprinted, please let us know!

BBC News Report Monday, 12 September 2005
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/4232174.stm>
Declaration Signed On Great Apes
More than 20 nations have signed an agreement aimed at saving the world’s great apes from extinction. The Kinshasa Declaration acknowledges that the root cause of poaching and deforestation is poverty, and pledges to support local communities. Numbers of gorilla, chimpanzee, bonobo and orangutan have fallen sharply, and experts warn that some wild populations could disappear within a generation.
<http://ippl.org/>
<http://www.janegoodall.org/>
Photo below is from the Great Ape Project
<http://www.greatapeproject.org/news.html>



WILDLIFE WATCH HOTLINE

Tip: Wildlife Watch maintains a “hotline” in two phone directories, and every spring, we receive numerous panicky calls about fawns. The advice we give is to leave fawns where they are, provided they’re in a safe location. Although fawns may appear to be abandoned, the mom will come about twice a day to nurse, usually when no one is around and usually when

it’s dark. If the fawn seems comfortable and healthy, chances are s/he’s getting her nourishment. Try to locate a fawn rehabber near you for those rare times when the mother has been killed. For first aid tips, please see the link at our website – www.wildwatch.org “Feeding Orphaned and Injured Wildlife.” Never give a fawn cow’s milk, as it can cause severe diarrhea.

New Toll Free # 877 – WILD HELP

Please call if:

- YOU NEED HELP
- YOU ARE A WILDLIFE REHABILITATOR. We'll post your information, related events, or presentations plus we may do a story about you. Email photos and stories.
- YOU NEED TO CONTACT A REHABBER IN THE NY LOWER OR MID HUDSON VALLEY AREA.
- YOU WILL VOLUNTEER TO TRANSPORT INJURED OR ORPHANED WILDLIFE TO REHABILITATORS.

BOOKS **MUSIC** **ART**

We hope you enjoy this special issue devoted to "overlooked wildlife." -**Jeff Davis**, info@centertopage.com

HAPPY WATCHING.

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Anne Muller — *Publisher*

Yes, use my name! ☒ **No, do not use my name** ☐