



The Wildlife Watch Binocular

PO Box 562, New Paltz, NY 12561

Summer 2007

© 2007 by Wildlife Watch, Inc. All rights reserved.

Excerpt from "Trickster Ghost Returning"

I reflect upon whether mainstream Americans can have as intimate a relationship with the Earth as traditional native cultures

BY MELANIE J. MARTIN

Though I had never been to New Mexico before, my entire journey had been spent returning—coming back to the stories that resonate in the core of every one of us; the fundamental stories that tell us from where we come. They may lie dormant, but they are in us, like a second world folded into the one that we see. In every free-standing monument in the desert, I could feel the presence of the ancients.

I felt the sense of returning, or attempting to return, as I walked toward the edge of the towering Ponderosa pines in the Santa Fe forest. As I walked, I kept a lookout for rattlesnakes hiding in the tall grass. I knew they don't seek out humans as prey, being naturally shy and reclusive, but I did not want to scare one of them into attacking. In embarrassment, both for myself and for the culture I came from, I thought about how appallingly we had subjugated these creatures. While wandering the streets of Albuquerque's Old Town neighborhood two days previously, where chilies hang drying from rooftop verandas and elderly Native women serve fry bread with honey, I came upon a sign with the words "Rattlesnake Museum—Enter If You Dare" hanging on the front of one of the low, pueblo-style buildings. I dared. I paid my three dollars out of sheer curiosity, mainly because of the oddity of a place filled with living animals calling itself a museum.

I slipped into the dimly lit room, and an albino serpent rose, arching its head in defense mode mere inches from me. Was I supposed to feel



Photo by Melanie J. Martin

fear? The glass between us looked all too permanent. The room was lined with cages and cages of snakes and the occasional turtle or Gila monster. They were entrapped in the walls like museum pieces, artifacts from the distant past.

With only a few small square feet of space, the cages were reminiscent of the "Little Ease" torture chambers of medieval England in which a prisoner could neither stand nor lie down. The snakes could neither uncoil nor recoil from human contact.

I gazed at the various prisoners, unable to help attributing certain emotions to them: wistfulness, pensiveness, resignation. Who's to say they weren't experiencing something we humans cannot experience, like a color we cannot see? Perhaps what they were experiencing was beyond my grasp. I could imagine, however, what it would feel like to not be able to stretch out my body; to not be allowed to exercise my limbs and muscles.

Far beneath the surface of the Earth, beneath our sprawling metropolises and freeways and amusement parks and struggles over resources, the snakes have a realm of their own, according to some of the Native peoples who know the natural world so intimately. None of us will ever go there, and yet it exists just the same. Hidden passageways, small corridors connecting spaces to spaces, appear and then disappear. The beings that inhabit it live in silence, but not in stillness. Their world remains constantly in motion, constantly changing. Continually, they recreate passageways that they have already forged, with no longing for the tools and permanency of human civilizations. They ponder our existence, or they pay no mind to the two-legged ones that walk above. The world of the serpents, or Snake Village, as Hopis call it, exists between where our feet press on the earth and where the world of the gods begins.

Native people might call them guardian-protectors. Certainly they call them friends. Many even think of them as brothers and sisters, believing that among the snakes live human kindred who possess the ability to move between shapes. The Sioux know that hidden in the earth near Soldier's Creek, South Dakota, lies the den of a giant rattlesnake. It stretches to a full twelve feet, and has a powerful odor that smells of the place where gods are born. People bring him offerings of tobacco and the choicest red meat, and in turn he gives them a powerful medicine that

continued on page 2

The Red-Wings of Rosendale

BY ANNE MULLER

Every spring, Wildlife Watch fields calls from across the country that are primarily about injured or orphaned deer, rabbits, hawks, or robins. As we maintain lists of wildlife rehabilitators in 49 states, our goal is to ensure that the animal gets to the closest qualified wildlife rehabilitator. Occasionally, when we are nearby, and when it's needed, we will lend a helping hand by offering to pick up and transport the animal to a busy "rehabber."

One quiet morning, an unusual call came in on our hotline number. The caller was clearly distraught, and to make matters worse, the call was breaking up. All I could hear was: "They're mowing down nests." I suggested that if the person couldn't stop the mowing, she should quickly remove the nests to an adjacent area. "Do you know how many there are?" she responded. Not fully understanding her, I asked where it was happening and thought I heard her say, "Behind the firehouse in Rosendale."

After placing a call to the Supervisor's office, and another to the Highway Department, I was told by the latter that the area was scheduled to be mowed and that it was too late to stop it. Miraculously, it occurred to me to call a well-known environmentalist, who fortunately is in her first term on the Rosendale Town Council.

I thought surely she would have the clout to get the mowing stopped until we could find out if there were still active nests. Yes, indeed, with her diplomacy, we were able to get a quick stay of action until after the Memorial Day weekend. Whew!

Prior to hearing the good news about the temporary reprieve, I drove up from New Paltz but was unable to find the area in question. Instead, with a few clues from the Highway Department, I went on a search for the anonymous caller. Believe it or not, I found her, and she led me to the cattail marsh in town across from the Rosendale library.

How had I missed this? It struck me as a phenomenon of great beauty. There were about 20 red-winged blackbirds flying above the cattails and occasionally landing on them. Red-wings were also chattering in the tall trees surrounding the marsh from where they could view what was left of their domain. The anonymous caller told me that the evening before there were hundreds. She recounted how her grandsons stayed for hours enjoying their



This photo of nest with young was taken from an unknown website

sounds and antics, watching them dip into the cattails. What was left were the remnants of a vibrant community.

A sign, put up by the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), at the gated entrance to this natural wonder, stated that it was a "flood control land." As the sign clearly stated that no motorized vehicles were to enter the property without permission, I've no doubt that the Highway Department had DEC permission to mow.

As the Highway Superinten-



Photo by Peter Muller

dent explained it, his department was ordered by the DEC to mow down the cattails, which they did every year at about the same time.

Later that day, I returned with my husband to get photos of the magnificent area before it was totally destroyed. I'd like to share some of the beauty and the effect of the mowing.

When we arrived, two fifths of

the cattails had been mowed, but there were still thousands intact, and still some red-wings flying overhead to defend their turf. The ground was mostly dry, so it was relatively easy to walk without sinking, and, of course, easy to mow as well.

I didn't find a nest that day, having searched only along the perimeter of the marsh. So, the following morning, I went back with Rachel Lagodka, who cares about everything living on the planet. She came along with her famous dog, Andrew. Once again, the search was on for red-wing nests, which of course would have been cause to stop the mowing, at least until the nesting season was over.

In the mowed area, we discovered deep gouges in the earth caused by the equipments' tires. These deep trenches held water and might have served as drinking holes for some critters in need during the blistering heat, but an



oil slick floated on the surface. The water had a surreal blue hue, and it was poisoned for drinking. In fact, we had to stop Andrew from quenching his thirst. I worried that a wild animal would drink from them in desperation.

Searching through cattails for nests is a bit like looking for a needle in a haystack. It's almost impossible! Rachel disappeared several times from view, and I had to call out and shake the reeds for her to find her way to the mown area.

Rachel and I searched in different locations, and I tried to tune in to the frantic air display of the red-wings as we waded through different locations.

continued on page 2



Photo by Peter Muller of Anne at periphery of cattails

Red-Wings

continued from page 1

There were far fewer birds than the day before, but clearly there was a nest nearby as several circled overhead calling out frantically to shoo us away.

Then Rachel yelled out, "Here's one!!!!" She had found a nest with one broken shell. We now know what to look for next year.

Our questions are: Why is there an effort to mow cattails out of existence? How are cattails interfering with flood control? Are they not of intrinsic value? Are they not the home of the Rosendale Red-wings? When will we be more cognizant that we share this world with other creatures who have lives to live that are as important to them as ours are to us? Will we be able to do better for them next year?

Peter Westover, former Conservation Director of Amherst, Mass., writing about wildlife friendly land management, has stated that even if stands of sedge or cattails are dry enough to mow in summer, "it is important to protect them from cutting" for the sake of nesting birds. This would certainly apply to the welfare of our local blackbirds.

Googling "red-winged black-



birds," using many search criteria, we realize that they are fascinating beings, and cattail management is complex. This area requires more extensive research, and interviews that our deadline didn't allow for. So, I promise a more technical follow-up and welcome any information you can share. Please send to our website below.

What I know now with confidence is that where there had been extreme joy and activity, there is now silence. Where there was beautiful, swaying wetland vegetation, there is now a degraded landscape. Yes, perhaps other birds will eventually fill the void, but I believe in the value of the individual that



was displaced or crushed in the equipment. Some folks did their "job," and in so doing they destroyed a home and hope of our wild feathered friends. We should all be sorry for that.

Rosendale's cattail meadow is a prime wildlife watching area. Perhaps the Town Council can be convinced to protect the area for photographers, birders, and general nature enthusiasts. I suspect that folks would bring their binoculars, cameras, video cameras, and audio enhancers and recorders to hear the sounds and see the flight and bickering of the red-wings living and enjoying their favorite habitat, the protective, graceful cattails!

A delightful website of the sounds and "translation" of red-wing "speak," is: <http://www.learner.org/jnorth/tm/spring/Red-wingDictionary.html>

Anne Muller is president of Wildlife Watch, a not-for-profit Wildlife Protection organization and publisher of the Wildlife Watch Binocular. Wildlife Watch operates a national wildlife help hotline 1-888-WILDHELP and finds rehabilitators for wildlife in distress. The organization helps hundreds of wild animals annually. www.wildwatch.org, e-mail: wildwatch@verizon.net

Photos by Anne Muller except where stated.

Trickster Ghost

continued from page 1

fortifies them against harm. He and his brothers were once bitter and angry about being changed into serpents. Now they feel thankful, for they have the power to provide for their human brothers and sisters, and the power to remain unseen. Unlike their brothers and sisters, they cannot be conquered, exploited, or entrapped on reservations.

To many Native people, the turtle is another reptile with an especially powerful significance, for it holds the world upon its back. In this "museum" of living creatures, a young woman chided a turtle as one would a small child as she fought to scrub inside his shell with a toothbrush. With disgust at myself, even I couldn't help thinking it

was "cute." Then I thought of the quiet, steady dignity of the wild turtle, and felt sadness for those who missed it. No wonder the Hopi have ceased to allow non-Native people to observe their snake dance ceremony, as outsiders tend to see it as mere exhibitionism when to the Hopi, as Native American scholar and activist Vine Deloria says, the animals are fully participating in the ceremony.

Looking at the people who so cheerfully kept these animals confined—folks living a world apart from the Native people, despite their proximity—I felt the guilt of my people filling a well inside of my soul, a well that had been forged to help bear the burden of shame: shame for what we do, but also shame for what we don't mind losing. I received my Certificate of Bravery from the museum with a

humorless sneer at the supreme joke we had played on the ratters—we, the trickster ghosts, as some Native people had perceived us when we first appeared on this continent. Like the trickster characters of legend, we continually wrought havoc upon our world. Like phantoms, we appeared to be pale shells of human beings, both on the surface and beneath, strange creatures who had long ago forgotten how to live in harmony with the world.

In the Santa Fe Forest, I felt this loss most strongly after nearly stepping in what looked like a giant cow patty and realizing that it must not have been from a cow, since cows would have no reason for being in the forest. No need, that is. We have done everything in our power to take that need away from them. No, I realized, it couldn't be a cow. What place have they, in this world of beauty and freedom?

I pondered about what animal might have been here, having noticed an imposing hoof print inlaid in the droppings. Into the forest I walked, climbing the steep, dusty path in hopes of seeing an elk through the giant pines and cedars, or perhaps over the vista above. Along the way, I scanned through the trees for one of the tall, regal beasts, which might at that moment be watching and wondering what sort of creature was trampling through its woods....

Melanie J. Martin is a graduate student studying environmental literature. She is also a freelance editor and writes about wildlife and environmental issues.

POOR TURTLE

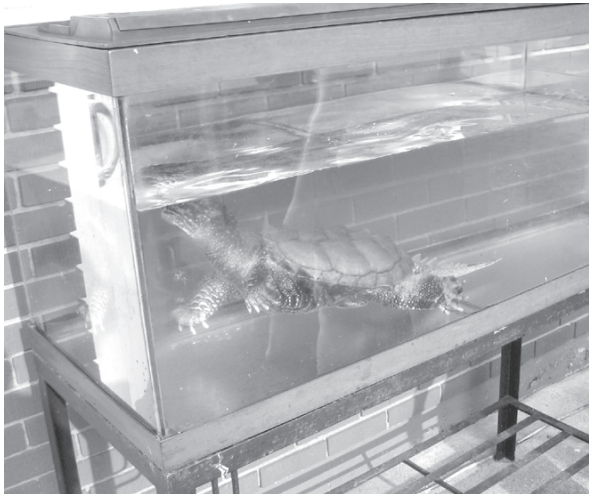


Photo by **Alison Evans-Fragale** It shows a large snapper who was raised in a tank from the time he was little. Alison said, "**I feel so bad for him ..He couldn't do anything . He was trying so hard to climb out.**"

Wildlife Watch urges you not to take wild animals as pets. Alison can be reached at: alionhudson@yahoo.com.

Long Live Squirrels!

BY CONSTANCE YOUNG

As I sit at my breakfast counter watching out the window as squirrels try to outwit my latest "squirrel proof" birdfeeder I think, "This is just as much fun as bird watching, or maybe even whale watching." That's not far fetched, because squirrels and whales have a lot in common.

Most squirrels and whales are gray, both can swim, both make clicking and grunting noises, and both can leap majestically into the air. I mention this largely to counter some misconceptions many people have about squirrels. While people generally consider whales to be majestic and wonderful creatures, they write off squirrels as nuisances — "bushy-tailed rats."

What squirrels are and what they are not

Squirrels are not bushy-tailed rats (although I have nothing against rats personally, unless they are in my house or barn). Members of the squirrel family differ from other small rodents in a number of ways.

First, unlike most other rodents, they are active during the day, and consequently their sense of sight is more developed. You might have noticed also that a squirrel's eyes are much larger than that of many

other animals, and they do not face forward. This means that squirrels don't have binocular vision. Therefore, they might mistake your finger for a peanut should you try to feed them nuts by putting the nuts right in front of their faces. As do human ears, squirrel ears face to the sides (mouse and rat's ears face forward).

There are over 365 different species of squirrel-like mammals throughout the world. In our area, we are most familiar with tree squirrels, rather than the so-called ground squirrels or "flying" squirrels. There are ten species of tree squirrels, but we see mostly the Eastern gray or the smaller red varieties. These squirrels do their high wire antics in the trees much like small primates (lemurs), and they build their nests high in the trees from twigs and leaves, lining the interior with fur, feathers or other soft materials. Squirrels usually live in hardwood or mixed hardwood and pine forests and favor oaks, hazel and beech trees.

The average life span of a squirrel is about six years although they are known to live twenty years in captivity (squirrels don't make good pets). Unfortunately most squirrels

continued on page 4

YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE FOLLOWING REHABILITATION CENTERS. PLEASE VISIT THEIR WEBSITES AND TRY TO SUPPORT THEIR EXCELLENT WORK FINANCIALLY.

Tammy Quist, The Wildcat Sanctuary
www.wildcatsanctuary.org
- They have the Catskill Game Farm Cats

Marc Johnson and Karen Windsor, Parrot Rescue
www.parrotrescue.org
- They have many animals from the Catskill Game Farm

Carol and Jim Eiswald, The Tusk and Bristle
www.tuskandbristle.org
- They have animals from the Catskill Game Farm

Sharon and Owen Brown, Beavers, Wetland and Wildlife,
www.beaversww.org

Bonnie Folsbee, Adirondack Foothills Wildlife Care
www.afwcowls.com
See Bonnie's article in the Spring 2007 Wildlife Watch Binocular at www.wildwatch.org and link to Binocular.

North Country Wild Care, Molly Gallagher
www.northcountrywildcare.org

The Ginny Fund, Philip Gonzales,
www.Ginnyfanclub.com
Desperately needs help now.

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. We will do our best to help you find the wildlife care professional closest to you. We have also helped over 200 people across the county since our Spring Newsletter.

The Wildlife Watch Binocular is published quarterly by Wildlife Watch Inc., a 501 (c) 3 Not-for-Profit Corporation. Contributions are tax-deductible. P.O. Box 562, New Paltz, NY 12561. Phone: 845-256-1400; Fax: 845-818-3622; e-mail: wildwatch@verizon.net; Website: www.wildwatch.org

Anne Muller – Editor. Letters, article submissions and photos are welcome for consideration.

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

Our Featured Wildlife Rehabilitation Facility This Summer is: Wildlife Fawn Rescue

WILDLIFE FAWN RESCUE takes in about 100 Fawns a season and places them back into the wild on property that is not hunted.

The founder and inspiration of this California center is **Marjorie Davis**. Ms. Davis is 86 Years old and has been doing fawn rescue for much of her life. We are grateful to our member, **George Nagle**, for letting us know about Ms. Davis and her lovely, hopeful article:

From Care to Release with their friends



photo by Janet Prince



photo by Marjorie Davis.

Eye on the News
TURTLES AND CHINA'S
INSATIABLE HUNGER

Turtle populations are threatened worldwide due to a variety of factors, including pollution, disease, and poaching, but the problem is especially serious in Texas, where, shamefully, there is no legal limit on the taking of unprotected species. A mere \$50 buys a permit to grab as many turtles as a dealer likes, with an average of over 94,000 animals taken per year.

Some of the abducted turtles end up in other countries as a misguided choice of "pet." However, far greater numbers of turtles are now being snatched and exported than ever before, thanks to the Chinese predilection for turtle meat. US Fish and Wildlife has admitted to nearly 300,000 turtles having been shipped to Hong Kong just between 2002 and 2005, and the practice goes on unabated.

Texas and possibly neighboring states will soon be devoid of this peaceful, venerable animal.

To learn more about the perilous state of turtles, visit the following sites:
<http://uk.reuters.com/article/scienceNews/idUKN1021710120070722>.
<http://www.turtlesurvivalorg/news.htm>

KUDZU-EATING GOATS
SAVING THE SOUTH

The seemingly intractable problem of kudzu - the foot-a-day-growing vine that has threatened to smother the Southern U. S. and is heading north - may be on its way to a simple resolution, thanks to our friend, the goat.

Introduced from its native Asia in 1876, kudzu began to take serious root during the Depression, when the government paid farmers to plant it as an erosion-control method, not knowing how completely and quickly it would take over everywhere it sprouted, covering buildings, farms and forest acreage faster than man or machine could cut it back.



Persuaded by their City Forestry Inspector, Jerry Jeansonne, to try using goats to clear kudzu from the mouth of a tunnel, The Public Works Department of Chattanooga, TN, has found the munching animals to be an effective deterrent, particularly useful in hard-to-work ridge areas.

Other municipalities and some private landowners have caught on to this environmentally-friendly technique. Meanwhile, in Chattanooga, the goats are now unofficial city mascots.

LIFE INSURANCE ADVANTAGE
FOR VEGETARIANS!

An English insurance company is leading the way with an enlightened policy towards their vegetarian and fish-consuming clients.

Animal Friends Insurance, a not-for-profit insurer, is offering a 6% discount on premiums to non-meat-eaters.



This forward-thinking innovation is not simply a be-kind-to-animals tactic. There is fiscal logic at work here, too. Vegetarians typically suffer from less forms of cancer, heart disease, and other chronic illnesses. Similar to the way other insurance companies give breaks to non-smokers, AFI recognizes the benefits of this lifestyle choice, as well.

Elaine Fairfax, Managing Director of AFI, says it is unfair for life insurance companies not to "acknowledge the fact that being a vegetarian can have a very positive impact on life expectancy."

To top it off, net profits from AFI policies are donated to animal charities worldwide. Read more about this idea at:

http://money.guardian.co.uk/insurance_/lifeandhealth/story/0,,2138578,00.html

Marjorie wrote a touching story about a fawn who mourned her mother's death and later allowed many new friends into her life.

Normally, fawns are silent creatures. Great fear will cause them to give out a sharp, piercing cry of terror. This unusual cry, not often heard, is extremely disturbing and enervating to hear. But, as unsettling as this cry can be, the sound of a newborn, calling for the doe that cannot come, is the saddest sound of all.

A newborn fawn was found along side the highway, curled against the side of her dead



Photo by Marjorie Davis

mother. I brought her back to Fawn Rescue, examined her injuries, then, not knowing how long she had lain waiting for help, I offered her a bottle of warm formula mix. Even though the nipple was strange, she could smell the milk and made a feeble attempt to suck the much needed nourishment from the bottle. After several weak starts, she did surprisingly well and drank her fill.

The extreme emotional shock of being removed from her mother, the unfamiliar sur-

rounds and sounds, the transport, the unaccustomed human contact, all combined to weaken her in both body and spirit. At times, a tiny fawn will shut down at this point and die of stress. It was important for this orphaned fawn to join others of her own species as quickly as possible. She needed an incentive to live.

I carried her down to the small fawn pen, closed the gate behind us and set her on the ground. Three young fawns, near her age, came running to greet her. This traumatized little doe completely ignored them all and staggered weakly toward the fence where she could see down into the deep woods. A deer trail wound up the hill to the pen where it turned to follow the fence line. Occasionally, wild deer walk by to touch the enclosed fawns through the fence. This newly born fawn put her tiny head against the fence and began to call in a soft, murmuring voice that could scarcely be heard. Just a whisper, a small plaintive sigh, calling, calling. I walked to her side and sat beside her. I dared not touch her. Never glancing in my direction, she continued to give out this low, grieving, heartbroken plea for a mother who could not respond. A doe that could not come. This call was the saddest sound I have ever heard. A sound of longing, grief and yearning. A lamentation. A call of mourning. The fawn finally lay down close against the fence and drifted into an exhausted sleep. I did not disturb her until feeding time for the others. She looked up as they ran for the bottle, then turned to call again.



Photo by Marjorie Davis

For three days she stood, forlorn and wistful, gazing down into the forest, softly calling at intervals. I went to her, fed her, then let her be, as she rejected my nurturing attempts and struggled to be free of the human touch. The other fawns nudged, dashed by, ate and behaved as fawns will do. Slowly she began to accept her new companions and her new home. Gradually she adjusted to her new way of life.

Wildlife Fawn Rescue

Marjorie Davis, Director
P.O.Box 5
Kenwood, CA 95452
(707) 833-6727
(707) 833-6377 (FAX)
www.fawnrescue.org



Marjorie Davis Photo by Janet Prince

Have You Found A Nest Of Bunnies?

By MARILYN LEYBRA

The perfect place for a mother rabbit to put her ground nest (which is simply a shallow depression lightly covered with loose grass) is in a field, so when the babies emerge they have the weedy grass to eat. In suburbia, the closest thing to this is most often a lawn waiting to be mowed. The nest is usually discovered by the homeowner when cutting the grass or by the homeowner's dog when he's let into the yard and finds something wonderfully new and interesting. Unfortunately, the mother rabbit doesn't anticipate these scenarios when she puts the nest there.

The mother rabbit does realize that putting the nest in the center of the lawn is safer than putting it at the edge under shrubbery, because that is where the nighttime predators seek their camouflage while prowling for food. She also eschews attending the nest and babies during daylight, so as not to alert the overhead daytime predators, such as vigilant hawks or crows. So she forages for herself during daylight and comes to nurse the babies off and on after dark. For this reason, when they don't see the mother, many a homeowner concludes that the babies have been abandoned.

There are some cases, when the mother has been killed or the nest has been so disrupted that out of fear she will abandon it, but initially

this should not be assumed. Rather, one can fashion something like two strings laid in a perfect X on top of the replaced loose grass covering. If she comes to nurse during the night, these would obviously be disturbed, allowing the homeowner to know she is still around.

If the string on the nest looks undisturbed, check the babies to make sure they're still vibrant and not cold to the touch and lethargic. If they are OK, rearrange the markers on the surface to see if the mother returns the second night. If not, they must **immediately** be taken and provided warmth first then nourishment.

Only, I repeat, **only** if it's definitely determined the mother isn't coming back, should the babies be taken. If taken, they should be put in a box, in a soft cloth nest, such as an undershirt, and given some source of heat, for example a heating pad under the box or a large soda bottle filled with hot water and wrapped in cloth, placed within the box. **One should then pursue finding a rehabilitator who has been successful with baby rabbits before, as they require some lactic flora added to the formula.** However,

to keep them from dehydrating in the meantime, one can get "Esbilac" formula from the pet shop along with a small syringe and feed each one the warmed formula. Or, one can go directly to a health food store and get some powdered goat milk, re-

constitute it and add a little plain yogurt or very little acidophilus powder which comes in capsules. Also you can add a couple drops of Karo syrup. Give a warm syringe or full dropper every 2-3 hours. After they've eaten, stimulate the genital area with a clean, soft cloth to get them to excrete waste and urine.

Depending on the age, if their eyes are open and they're beginning to go from an elongated shape to a more "little bunny" shape, some mixed Gerber baby food vegetables can also be added to the formula. This same mixture can also be placed in a jar cap for them to start licking. They will then graduate quickly to tiny pieces of apple, banana, blueberries, wheat germ, chopped kale, and a variety of outdoor weeds including clover and dandelion. Rabbits are very precocious and begin eating on their own fairly quickly, so even if they're very young, the nursing/stimulating intensive care period is a relatively short period. And if you're forced into keeping these babies alive and are successful, you should immediately pursue getting your rehabilitator's license, for you are much needed.

Marilyn Leybra is a wildlife rehabilitator extraordinaire in Rockland County. She has been rehabilitating and rescuing all wildlife for over 30 years. No one can run faster or jump higher than Marilyn (except for a Jack Russell)!

Long Live Squirrels

continued from page 2

in urban areas do not reach their first birthday because they are run over by cars.

The female squirrel will give birth to a litter of three or four babies in the early spring and possibly again in the fall. Baby squirrels are furless, blind, and weigh only one or two ounces. Young squirrels mature rather slowly for a rodent and are on their own in about 2-1/2 months.

Animals that get high off the ground are safer from predators and can therefore be noisier than ground-hugging animals. The extreme forms of this are birds and their elaborate songs. Squirrels don't sing, but they chatter instead, and are noisier than other rodents.

The squirrel's bushy tale serves several purposes. Its primary function is for balance, enabling the squirrel to maneuver quickly without falling. The tail is also used as a parachute should the squirrel fall, and as a blanket in the winter. Squirrels use their tails also to communicate with others of their species.

FOOD SOURCES

Squirrels are vegetarian and usually eat nuts, seeds and berries, but when desperate they may resort to birds' eggs and insects. They especially like hazelnuts in shells, brazil nuts, sweet chestnuts and acorns. Summertime is the hungriest time of year for squirrels, and although the landscape may appear to be green and lush, since they cannot eat grass and leaves as other grazing animals do, squirrels must scrounge for whatever they can find. A squirrel's territory usually runs from about one to seven acres in size.

Outwitting squirrels

Hundreds of people have tried to build squirrel-proof birdfeeders. A Google search for "squirrel-proof birdfeeders" uncovered 1,570 hits. Some feeders work better and longer than others, but eventually most squirrels will figure out how to break in. Perhaps the best approach is to build a better birdfeeder yourself.

A common principle involved in squirrel-proof birdfeeders is using a domed top as a baffle over the feeder, but the usual domed feeders will in time succumb to squirrel chicanery. Squirrels soon learn that when they climb onto the feeder from the suspension line or pole and encounter the dome it prevents them from getting to the feeder. However, they also discover that although the baffle may dump the squirrel onto the ground, usually some seeds fall out too, which provides a small meal. Some squirrels are able to figure this out and are able to compute the spillage angle so completely that they simply launch themselves at the dome, bounce off and harvest the spillage on the ground.

JOIN THEM

As the saying goes, "if you can't beat 'em, join 'em." If squirrels have outwitted your most sophisticated bird feeders, try giving the squirrels their own feeder. As I am sure you have already learned, squirrels like sunflower seeds and peanuts. However peanuts are not native to North America (they are not even nuts, but are beans), and are not natural squirrel food. Moreover, their flimsy shells don't make for good hoarding. Raw peanuts are even dangerous, so give the squirrels only roasted peanuts if you must.

RESOURCES

If you have found an orphaned squirrel or a squirrel has gotten into your attic and you want to know how to remove the animal, call Wildlife Watch at 845-256-1400 for advice. They will put you in touch with a local wildlife rehabilitator or otherwise tell you what you can do. You can also write them at **Wildlife Watch**, P.O. Box 562, New Paltz, NY 12561: fax at 845-818-3622 or e-mail them at wildwatch@verizon.net. Another source for information is at <http://www.squirrel-rehab.org/>

Constance Young is a long time animal advocate and writer (primarily in the medical field) who moved over a decade ago from New York City to a rural Dutchess County town to be closer to nature. She adores the local wildlife and spends happy hours communing with the squirrels, birds and others who visit her backyard.

Sport Hunting For Butterflies

By Stu Chaifetz

My son and I were at a park this morning. As we were walking toward a small bridge, I saw another man and his son, both of whom had nets and were attempting to catch butterflies. I viewed the situation uncomfortably and hoped that they wouldn't catch any.

The other father must have dropped his net, for I saw him grabbing wildly at the air as he chased after a small white butterfly. I thought he had caught the little guy, but I was wrong; not only did the butterfly escape, but he flew to me and landed right on my foot.

Now I have no idea how this little creature would know that I wouldn't try to capture or kill him (certainly that's what was his last and most immediate experience with a human was like) but he just planted himself on my sneaker and seemed to feel very safe.

It reminded me very much of playing tag as a child, where there was one safe zone where you couldn't be made "it," and you raced to when things got tough. Somehow this little insect knew where his safe zone was.

I started to walk away (with the butterfly on my foot) and then I got him onto my hand where he settled in nicely. I wanted to get him far enough away from the others so that he wouldn't be captured, but when I did, he didn't want to leave. I could see that one of his wings was damaged but other than that he seemed okay (I'm not a butterfly expert, so I'm hoping he was okay). Eventually I scooted him off my hand and got him into a bush with some cover where I figured he would be safe.

When we were leaving, I spoke to the other father about how difficult it's been for butterflies and that I hoped he would let any butterfly he caught go. He assured me that he would and that he would never kill one, so it ended as best it could.

Stu Chaifetz is Director, **Animal Protection PAC** www.hnva.net



A Wildlife Watch Award for a Humane, Ingenious Solution to Goose Doo

Youth, brains, and compassion have tackled a problem that sadly some politicians couldn't.


What better solution than a super goose pooper scooper? "Get rid of the poop, not the geese" was their rallying cry, and the motivation behind this ingenious device.

Hooray for sixth-graders Arielle, Cassandra, Grace, and Nicolette for their determination and intelligence. Wildlife Watch and no doubt the geese wish them the very best in winning the Christopher Columbus Fellowship Foundation award.

These humane students have made another great discovery since the one in 1492. Just as Columbus proved the world is round and not flat, they have proven that it's the poop and not the geese that need to be removed. Their innovation will lead to a new thinking.—It's clear that belief in themselves and their goals came from great heart.

Although our budget is small, we so highly value what they have done that Wildlife Watch will be awarding Brian Mulcahy, their excellent instructor, with \$300; and each of the above children with \$250.





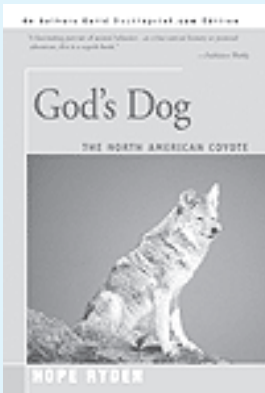
WILDLIFE WATCH CATALOG

GOD'S DOG

We were happy to learn from Hope Ryden that her amazing book, *God's Dog*, is available once again. We encourage you to read it and give it to others to read. Ask libraries to order it, and give it to friends for holidays and birthdays. It will be a gift that will last a lifetime, for it will change the readers' perspective of coyotes forever.

"Full of charm and tenacious inquisitiveness as the appealing animal she pleads is allowed to live."—*The Washington Post*.

\$24.95 or \$20.95 members.




God's Dog : A Celebration of the North American Coyote by Hope Ryden

Wildlife Watchers Should Know About :

CAW OF THE WILD: Observations from the Secret World of Crows by Barb Kirpluk order by calling 1-800-Authors (1-800-288-4677) www.iuniverse.com published in 2005.

Kirpluk is masterful at describing her observations and interactions with these intelligent animals. She broadens our understanding of the species by deepening our connection with the individuals who comprise the species. CAW OF THE WILD is a MUST READ!

This book was sent to us by **Rita Sarnicola of CROW** (Citizens Respectful of Wildlife) in Auburn, NY. Please contact Rita and Joe Sarnicola for a professionally produced DVD of crow ecotourism in Auburn: jsarn@adelphia.net



WILD WATCH CATALOG ORDER BLANK

DESCRIPTION	QTY	\$ EACH	\$ TOTAL

Subtotal: _____

Shipping and Handling: **\$5.00**

For \$25 Join WW and take your deduction NOW: _____

NYS residents *must* add appropriate sales tax: _____

Additional contribution to help Wild Watch carry on its work: _____

Total: _____

Your Name: _____

Street: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Day Phone: _____

Eve Phone: _____

Fax: _____

E-Mail: _____

Date: _____

Special Instructions: _____

Ship to address below (if different from above):

Please make checks payable to: **Wildlife Watch, Inc.**
P.O. Box 562, New Paltz, NY 12561 • 845-256-1400 • wildwatch@verizon.net