

THE VALUE OF VULTURES

BY E.M. FAY

Why do people decide they don't like, or even fear, a certain species of animal? Of course, it's common to have likes and dislikes, personal preferences - we all might love bunnies, but some also like snakes, and others loathe them - but in many cases, a *seemingly* inborn reaction to certain animals may have been unwittingly instilled in us as children, via books or movies, even cartoons. If, at a young age, we heard a parent say something negative about a particular animal, or saw them act afraid of something in nature, it's a good bet that we "caught" that antipathy ourselves; and unless the feeling was later dispelled by learning favorable facts about the animal, we probably kept that prejudice well into adult life.

One of the most maligned species, certainly amongst birds, is the vulture. Large members of the Falconiformes order, vultures are varied. All twenty species possess distinct bare heads and large crops (a pouch near the throat).



Beaks are quite strong, for tearing tough food. Like many birds, their eyesight is acute; in the turkey vulture, the sense of smell is particularly keen.

VULTURES

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NO SWAN SONG FOR THE MUTES... FOR NOW

BY E.M. FAY

ALL PHOTOS BY SUE MILLER

Of the many bird species that captivate and delight the human imagination, one of the most beloved is surely the swan. Stately and graceful, imposing in size, and monogamous by nature, these regal birds enchant us as they glide serenely on lakes and ponds in the five continents wherein they reside.

As majestic as they look when swimming, their appearance in flight is also impressive, necks outstretched and broad wings beating slowly. When migrating, they fly in a V-formation or diagonally, and very high. Though somewhat ungainly on land, they are the fastest of waterfowl both on water and in the air.

Swans eat a variety of aquatic plants. They will also eat tadpoles, insects, and small mollusks, depending on what is available where they live. Males and females - respectively called cobs and pens - look alike. Sociable except during the breeding season, they mate for life, like many birds. Similar to their closest relatives, geese, the male stands guard nearby when the female is on the nest. In some swan species, the cob helps with the brooding. Their cygnets have a short neck at first, and are able to run and swim within a few hours after hatching. However, they are carefully watched over by their parents for several months, some cygnets even riding on their mother's back. They mature fully in three to four years and can live as long as 20 years in the wild.

Internationally, swans have long been symbols of love and beauty.



(C) SUE MILLER

They were sacred birds to Venus, Roman Goddess of Love. In the ancient Greek tradition, they were also sacred to the god Apollo and associated with music. To the Celts, they were symbolic of the soul. To many Native Americans the swan totem represents grace and the rhythm of the universe. Swans were often featured prominently in fairy tales, such as Hans Christian Andersen's *The Wild Swans*, and his much-loved allegory, *The Ugly Duckling*. The composer Saint-Saens immortalized them in his evocative piece, *The Swan*, and of course, there is the perennially popular and poignant ballet, *Swan Lake*.

In spite of these charming allusions, and even though swans appear to be admired almost universally, thousands of swans are being killed in states across the country, with the executioners using specious, unscientific arguments; and sometimes at the

MUTE SWANS

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MUTE SWANS

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behest of people who have purchased lakeside property and simply don't like having to share the waterfront with wildlife. The cruelty inherent in swan elimination is appalling. Just as with the frequent Wildlife Services attacks on Canada geese, swans are rounded up brutally, squashed into crates, and taken to facilities to be gassed to death. Frequently, their delicate necks are wrung on the spot. Shooting is another method of killing. Reports from witnesses in Michigan say that killings are often at night, using silenced guns, wounding the swans in the body and then clubbing them to death. It is beyond barbaric to treat these sentient beings like this, yet it goes on, unabated, because most of the public is not aware of it or does not know what to do.

Near-Extinction History

The largest swan, with a wingspan that can extend ten feet, Trumpeter Swans were nearly made extinct in the U.S. By 1935, less than one hundred were left alive. Before European settlement, the Trumpeters were found across the continent. But from Colonial days onward, they were hunted for their commercial value, as well as for "sport," and their wetlands habitat was destroyed by "development." By the beginning of the last century they were barely clinging to survival in the relative safety of Yellowstone. When the Migratory Bird Treaty Act passed in 1918, they received official protection outside of the park, as well.

Another refuge was established in 1935 in Red Rocks Park, farther west, where they were fed grain during the winter months. In these havens, their numbers increased, and from there, they were reintroduced to the rest of the country.

Three swan species currently live in New York State. The Trumpeter Swan and the Tundra Swan are generally considered native to North America. The Mute Swan is thought to have been introduced to the U.S. from Europe, and certainly some Mutes were brought here in the 19th century; but there is evidence that there were Mute Swans living in Virginia in the



16th Century, so the matter of their heritage is a moot point.

The Mute Swans' ancestry has in recent years become a matter of great import – indeed, of life and death. The common belief that they are a "non-native, invasive" species has been used as part of a rationale by wildlife management agencies in several states to decimate or even entirely wipe out their mute swans. Maryland, Michigan, and New York are among the states that have declared war on the mutes, alleging the species is a nuisance, harmful to the environment and other species.

Departments of Natural Resources, and, in NYS, the Department of Environmental Conservation, predicate their case for mass slaughter on the assertion that mutes are not native American swans. Even if we discount the fact that a painting was made of what appears to be a Mute Swan in 1585 by John White, who accompanied settlers to the Roanoke Colony in Virginia, i.e., even *if* the Mutes are not native, there can be no disputing that they are naturalized. Therefore, Wildlife Watch believes they deserve the same protection as naturalized human citizens.

The DNRs and DEC claim that they eat too much vegetation, crowding out other waterfowl. Yet observations by seasoned wildlife watchers indicate no serious threat from Mutes. They have been seen co-habiting peacefully with ducks and geese. All birds are territorial to some extent, but the Mutes are no more aggressive than native swans.

A third excuse offered by the wildlife agencies is that Mutes pollute the waters they use. This argument is so spurious as to be laughable. Nothing that comes from a Mute Swan is worse than what comes from geese and ducks. And swan "pollution" is completely benign compared to the toxic chemical muck that humans ruin our waterways with, everything from

motor oil leaking from boats to life-destroying fertilizer runoff from farms.

Contrary to what wildlife management would have the public believe, Mute Swans, like other species, are a useful part of the ecosystems where they live. Their consumption of vegetation helps humans who wish to use the waterways for their own recreation by removing aquatic plants in congested areas.

The NYS DEC, in their proposal to eradicate all Mute Swans from the state, further claims the bird is dangerously aggressive. Any waterfowl whose nest is threatened may charge at a trespassing human, but the worst damage a Mute Swan might inflict is a bruise if they manage to connect with the interloper. Swans are far more fragile and vulnerable than the average human being, so it is absurd to see them as a serious threat.

A tentative reprieve may be in the offing for NYS Mute Swans, but it is far from certain: When the swan killing proposal was publicized early this year, enough people expressed their outrage at the imminent mass slaughter of a beloved icon that the DEC says they will "revise" their plan. The DEC is well known for brutally mismanaging many animal populations, resulting in the deaths of countless individuals, so we cannot take for granted that they will not continue to persecute the Mute Swans, if not by outright killing, then by other cruel measures, such as setting dogs on swans.

If we are to protect the lives of these innocent birds, we must regularly inform our elected officials that we are strongly against any "management" that involves harm to them; and urge legislatures of any state that kills swans to pass laws forbidding their wildlife agencies to carry out such plans.

If you are a NYS resident, we urge you to support Senator Tony Avella's bill S6589.

Please go to the following petition site; Click on the photo.



(C) SUE MILLER

VULTURES

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The vulture's flight is quite graceful. They can ride air currents and stay aloft for hours with their broad, long wings. Whether they communicate a "find" to each other, or perhaps for another reason, when one comes across a dead animal, many others will appear on site, often flying in from miles away.

Body size and strength of beak determine the pecking order. But if hyenas, jackals, or other large mammals come on the scene, vultures will get out of their way. Vultures do not exclusively eat carrion. They also will eat garbage, and on rare occasions, may prey on small, vulnerable live animals.

One reason some people revile the vulture may be a distaste for anything to do with death or decomposition. Vultures dining on carcasses repulses the more squeamish among us. Yet, ironically, this is one of the very reasons we should appreciate and be grateful to vultures!

Speaking at a TED talk in Nairobi in 2012, Munir Virani explained this fact of life. Virani is a renowned raptor biologist, wildlife photographer, and Director of The Peregrine Fund Africa Program, a non-profit dedicated to preserving birds of prey.

Virani called vultures "natural garbage collectors," vital to a healthy eco-system. Unfortunately for them and for us, ignorance, greed, and over-development have put many vulture species in danger of extinction. Virani stated the case that we must pay more attention to these "unique and misunderstood creatures," change our misperception of the wrongly reviled birds, and save them now before it is too late.

Answering the question as to why vultures are not sufficiently valued, Virani says at least part of the problem was caused by Darwin. When he encountered turkey vultures on his travels, he initially deemed them "disgusting." In cartoon imagery, they're shown as goofy-looking or stupid. Writers and filmmakers usually represent them in a sinister light. And when Virani added that they are reminiscent of some politicians, his audience laughed knowingly. However, he continued, politicians do not clean the envi-

ronment or halt the spread of contagious diseases - vultures do!

When vultures clean flesh from carcasses, they are also killing bacteria that would otherwise spread to living animals, including humans. One of the most deadly of these, anthrax, is absorbed by the noble vulture. Countless other animals could die if that were left unchecked. Without the presence of vultures, carcasses take up to four times longer to decompose, increasing the chance of spreading diseases around the vicinity.

Another serious health risk vultures keep in check is rabies. In areas devoid of vulture activity, masses of feral dogs turn up at carcass dump sites. Virani called that a veritable "time bomb of rabies." In parts of India there has been a huge increase in rabies cases because of this.

Ignorance of vultures' very real, practical value has contributed to their destruction. Agricultural considerations are another problem. In Kenya, farmers are poisoning them collaterally when they poison predators they see as a threat to livestock. In South Asia, an anti-fever drug given to livestock, diclofenac, has been responsible for killing millions of vultures. India finally banned it in 2006, but not before four vulture species were pushed to the brink of extinction, with as much as 99 and 97 percent of two populations lost. (Telegraph, UK)

In West Africa, a horrific trade in dead vultures thrives for the purposes of witchcraft and fetishists. This could be discouraged through education and legislation.

Kenya is now building an enormous wind turbine farm. Wind turbines routinely slice birds in half - another constant peril. Given some thought, wind turbines might be redesigned so they stop killing all kinds of birds.

In Ancient Egypt, vultures were associated with motherhood and protection. With the cobra, they symbolized the unity of Upper and Lower Egypt. And in Hindu mythology, a Vulture God risked his life to save the Earth Goddess Sita. Munir Virani suggests that we adjust our outlook on vultures, recognizing the many services they perform for us.

In Tibet, where hard, rocky land makes subterranean burial difficult, vul-



tures' activity is part of a "sky burial." In Tibet and Mongolia, Vajrayana Buddhists see the body as an empty vessel, so no need to preserve it. They prefer to place the corpse on a mountaintop, leaving it to nature, where it is eaten, and called "alms for the birds."

The critically endangered California Condor is a vulture.

Conservation efforts, only partially successful, have been made to save them from the brink. Eurasia and Africa boast 16 species of vulture, but 11 of those are frighteningly close to extinction right now.

Practical Steps to Save Vultures:

Besides getting rid of our own mistaken notions about vultures, we can educate children about the very real benefits they provide. We can inform our elected representatives that we want official protection for the birds.

The Peregrine Fund for Africa is conducting vital research, and putting transmitters on a small number of vultures to see where they go and how to help them. Virani advises: "Become active, make noise, write to your government, volunteer your time to spread the word."

Although the vulture has long been a misunderstood bird, in truth, they are graceful creatures. As Munir noted, even Darwin changed his opinion when he watched them fly "effortlessly and without energy."

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder. If more people knew the value of vultures, perhaps they'd see the beauty, too. Wildlife Watch agrees with Munir Virani that our world would be poorer indeed without vultures.

To support Munir's work with vultures, please donate to The Peregrine Fund: <http://tinyurl.com/knvbbcg>

TED talk:

http://www.ted.com/talks/munir_virani_why_i_love_vultures

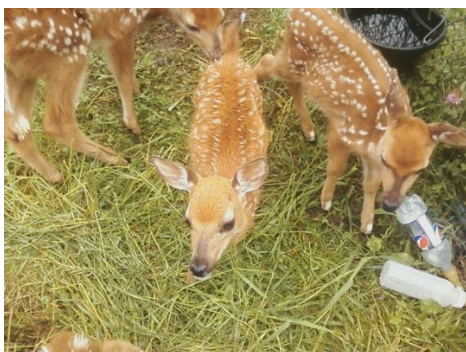
R.O.C.K. - Rehabbers Offer Care and Kindness

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 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.

FRIENDS OF THE FEATHERED AND FURRY WILDLIFE CENTER Hunter, NY



Neither Wildlife Watch nor the animals have ever been let down by Missy Runyan who is the president and founder of Friends of the Feathered and Furry Wildlife Center. If you go to her website and look through the photos, you will be amazed at the variety and number of wild animals Missy has rescued and cared for over the years.



These Red Fox kits came to the Center after they were orphaned. The little girl (left) was found next to her mother, who was hit by a car. The little boy (right) was found laying in the road with no apparent injuries. They became foster siblings and grew up together at FFF.



All contributions go to help wild animals who need rehabilitation.

FFF does awesome work, and we encourage you to make a donation to this excellent center.

Please visit: <http://www.fffwildlifecenter.com/>

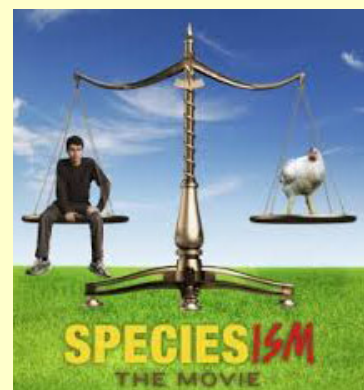
Speciesism

This movie exposes the horrific secret that is endemic in modern farming: most of the animals raised for food in the U.S. are hidden away in ghastly, gigantic factories, not on the land in any real sense.

Filmmaker Mark Devries investigated and made a documentary that is "sometimes funny, sometimes frightening, crawling through the bushes that hide these factories, flying in airplanes above their toxic 'manure lagoons,' and coming face-to-face with their owners."

As the website says, "You'll never look at animals the same way again. Especially humans."

<http://speciesismthemovie.com/>



ENVIRONMENTAL DISASTERS: Bad for humans, worse for wildlife

By E.M. FAY

For decades, chemicals and waste from the coal industry have tainted hundreds of waterways and ground-water supplies, spoiling wells and rendering streams virtually lifeless.

When 10,000 gallons of 4-methylcyclohexane methanol (MCHM), an industrial chemical used to process coal, leaked from a ruptured tank into the Elk River, in West Virginia, the drinking water for 300,000 people was contaminated. Wildlife was also seriously affected.

Residents were told not to drink, bathe, or cook with the water. A state of emergency was declared and bottled water was distributed to humans – but what of the animals?

The spill occurred on January 9th, causing considerable panic. **Concern is based on there being little knowledge available about MCHM's effects on living organisms. That is a because it is a proprietary substance. Astonishingly, a comprehensive determination of its effects is unavailable, even to government regulators, because no human health studies exist.**

MCHM-contaminated water smells sweet and licorice-like. Poison control officials warn that ingesting MCHM may cause vomiting, dizziness, headaches, diarrhea, burning skin or eyes, rashes, and difficulty breathing. But due to lax government oversight of the chemical industry, authoritative data is non-existent.

Bryan Walsh wrote, in Time magazine (Jan. 14, 2014), "That is a direct result of America's lackluster chemical safety system." **Industrial chemicals are basically deemed safe until the EPA can prove they are dangerous.**

Hundreds of West Virginians have been taken ill; 1600 called the poison center to report symptoms. This takes only humans into account. What of the non-human animals who live in, on, and near the contaminated waterways? They don't have access to bottled water or hospitals. How have they been harmed?

Dennis Lemly, Research Professor at Wake University and a U.S. Forest Service biologist with decades of experience studying deformities caused in fish by coal mining pollution, said, **"I've made a career of body counts of dead fish and wildlife made that way from coal. How many years and how many cases does it take before somebody will step up to the plate and say, 'Wait a minute, we need to change this.'"**

The EPA says 50-60% of all toxic pollution in the nation's waters is from coal-fired power plants. The president of Clean Water Action stated, "For too long, the power plant industry has used our nation's rivers, streams, lakes, and bays.....as open sewers to dump their toxic-laden wastewater." He told the EPA to require power plants to stop discharging their toxic pollution into our waterways.

More Ecological Damage

On February 11th, over 100,000 gallons of coal slurry slopped into Fields Creek, blackening the waters. WV DEP Secretary Randy Huffman said, "When this much coal slurry goes into the stream, it wipes the stream out."

In NC, a Duke Energy waste pipe failure on February 2nd poured massive amounts of arsenic-laced coal into the Dan River, poisoning the river bed for at least 70 miles. All aquatic life in this deadly corridor is endangered. Turtles were seen crawling from the toxic water only to die on the river bank. Although Duke was ordered to

"eliminate this unauthorized discharge immediately," as of February 19th the leaks in a second pipe were still spewing ash, suffocating an unknown number of animals whose habitat is the Dan. And with every heavy rainfall, the



Dan River Dead Turtle from Greenpeace site.
Photo courtesy of Greenpeace Morris Lawson

pollutants travel farther downstream.

Some endangered species live in the Dan River. But regardless of federal status, all wildlife living in this ruined watercourse are in danger of being buried in the ash, and have also lost their food resources.

<http://tinyurl.com/nez5ud5>

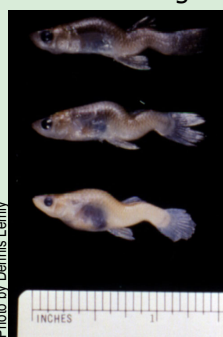
Avoidable Tragedies

These catastrophic spills could have been prevented if energy companies had used safer methods of waste disposal. In a scholarly paper written for the Environmental Science and Technology journal, Dennis Lemly and Joseph Skorupa (of the US Fish and Wildlife Service) give a detailed analysis of environmental damage over 45 years by irresponsible methods of coal combustion waste (CCW) disposal. Discharging CCW into water "has caused major fish and wildlife losses." The "EPA's Regulatory Impact Analysis.....fails to include damage to fish and wildlife." From 1967 onwards, the authors found numerous instances of serious adverse effects on "biota ranging from amphibians and fish to birds and reptiles, and causing impacts ranging from physiological, developmental, and behavioral toxicity to major population and community-level changes."

Sadly for wildlife, their lives were not considered in the EPA's

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Fish with deformed spines from coal-ash poisoning

GOOD NEWS FOR ARCTIC ANIMALS

The Arctic has been under attack by numerous nations seeking to claim whatever oil they can find in that formerly forbidding region. Newer technology is rendering virtually no place on earth safe from the environmental destruction caused by drilling for fossil fuels.



Baby Elk

But oil drilling isn't the only threat to the near-pristine lands in the North. A road supposedly intended to connect some remote communities on this part of the Alaskan Peninsula was proposed and pushed for years, even though its value was highly dubious and it would

have cut through the heart of the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge.

Any such construction would definitely have had ill effects on the wildlife in the area, particularly the bird populations. **A habitat of global significance, Izembek helps safeguard millions of birds during their annual migrations. The critically important wetlands support a variety of species, including 70 percent of the threatened Steller's Eiders, 98 percent of the world's Pacific Black Brant population, Golden Plovers, and Godwits, among others. Caribou, bears, and foxes would also have been adversely affected by the disruption.**

Fortunately, after a three-year study, the US FWS decided the road

would cause harm, and in December, Interior Secretary Sally Jewell signed the order to affirm that decision.

A lot of concerned citizens wrote to urge dropping the road project, which should encourage our readers always to contact public officials on matters of animal welfare. We recommend visiting the League of Humane Voters at www.lohv.org

Read more at:
<http://tinyurl.com/p8jbzp2>



Steller's Eider

BUMBLEBEES INFECTED WITH HONEYBEE DISEASES



Honeybee

Honeybees have been under attack all over the world for many years now. A combination of human-caused problems is to blame; and now, bumblebees are under threat, as well.

In the case of honeybees, both a virus that causes deformed wings and a deadly fungal parasite have contributed to "Colony Collapse Disorder." These two illnesses have now been found to be transmittable to wild bumblebees, too. Electromagnetic waves emitted by our nearly ubiquitous mobile telephone towers and cell phones themselves are another culprit. Destruction of bee habitats, especially wildflower meadows, is responsible for large losses of bees. Finally, and per-

haps most deadly, the widespread use of neo-nicotinoid pesticides is sickening and killing bees on a large scale.

An article in the journal of the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* suggests that bees' immune systems are damaged by the pesticide, which leaves them open to fatal harm from various pathogens.

Whatever the balance of culpability is of these several factors, bee populations have been hard hit, with some bumblebee species already extinct.

The European Union banned neonicotinoids because of the danger to bees, but both the British and U.S. governments opposed the ban. And manufacturers of the toxic chemical are seeking to overturn even the E. U. ban. Such obviously profit-driven actions should not be allowed to subvert public policy. Our governments should be more concerned with protecting the life and health of bees, and ultimately our food supply, than the bottom line of the very corporations that are causing such ecological disasters as the worldwide decline in bees.

Bees, butterflies, and bats are all dying off in record numbers due to human actions. As disastrous to agricultural interests and food sources for humans as the loss of these pollinators is, the real tragedy here is the suffering and extinction of peaceful, benign, hard-working little beings who deserved better.

Read more at:
<http://tinyurl.com/kk3srtd>
And:
<http://tinyurl.com/lqje4rn>



Bumblebee

ENVIRONMENTAL

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analysis of national regulations to control CCW disposal. As animals are indisputably a part of our natural world, leaving them out of the equation is unconscionable.

Lemly and Skorupa conclude that water disposal of CCW "is inappropriate with respect to fish and wildlife health." Using landfills is a safer alternative, which they recommend, even though electric utilities contend the cost is "unduly burdensome."

"Our commentary is a voice for fish and wildlife in the debate. We maintain that ignoring the past 45 years of wildlife poisoning and allowing it to continue is even more 'unduly burdensome' to the environment and also unethical."

Politicians Complicit

WV politicians have long supported the coal and chemical industries, despite years of evidence that production has severely damaged the state's environment. **North Carolina's Governor McCrory is being investigated by the US Attorney because of his ties to Duke Energy.** He was employed there for 28 years, and owns stock in the company. Public records show that Duke invested heavily in McCrory's campaign and other NC politicians.

Government agencies have failed to regulate dangerous substances and responded inadequately when spills occur. This has been true for decades, as with Exxon Valdez, the BP disaster, and other crimes against wildlife.

Wildlife Watch urges readers to demand that state and federal regulators stop turning a blind eye to the appalling wildlife devastation caused by avoidable tragedies, and in future, rely on strictly science-based reasoning when fashioning new regulations. **For the good of wildlife and humans alike, the profit motive of corporations should not be allowed to influence official decision-making.**

Visit www.LOHV.ORG

Let's Go Wildlife Watching CHERRY SPRINGS NATURE AREA Pocatello, Idaho



Green-tailed towhee

Trails wind through dense riparian vegetation bordered by mountainous sagebrush-grassland and juniper habitats.

There are 180 acres, three self-guided trails, over 50 interpretive signs, two learning centers, and an amphitheater.

The trail guide provides wildlife, botanical, and geological information, asking questions that encourage active observation.

There are over 100 documented bird species, including whip-poor-will, hermit and Swainson's thrushes, Virginia and black-throated gray warblers, green-tailed and spotted

towhees, and dusky, gray, and Hammond's flycatchers. During the fall and winter, look for ruby-crowned kinglet, Bohemian and cedar waxwings, solitary and warbling vireos, dark-eyed junco, and golden eagle.

There are thirty mammal and several reptile and amphibian species. Tracks or other signs may be the best way to "see" them. Mammals include least chipmunk, red squirrel, white-tailed jackrabbit, western spotted skunk, coyote, and red fox. The sagebrush lizard, western skink, gopher and garter snakes, and western rattlesnake are often seen.

Birding is good along Mink Creek East, West, and South Forks, plus Kinney Creek. Get guides and wildlife checklists at the information shelter.

Enjoy!

<http://publiclands.org/explore/site.php?id=7831>

USFS (208) 236-7500

Photo

<http://tinyurl.com/pyczm68>

When you're in Pocatello, visit Shooter (see next page).

WILDLIFE WATCH NEEDS YOU!

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

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

Will you become a part of our team?

YES

<http://wildwatch.org/join/join.htm>

The Wildlife Watch Binocular

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Wildlife Watch maintains current lists of wildlife rehabilitators around the country. Our hotline helps us to help hundreds of people and animals annually.

Please help us by becoming a Wildlife Watch member for \$25 annually and please make an additional contribution for the R.O.C.K. Project that will be put into a fund and used to help a rehabber help wild animals. R.O.C.K. Project funds will be distributed at our discretion up to the amount available.

You can contribute by PayPal by clicking here

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562, New Paltz, NY 12561

EYE ON THE NEWS

COMPASSIONATE IDAHO ELK RESCUES MARMOT

An enlightening scene greeted the Pocatello (Idaho) zookeepers recently. One of their larger residents, a four-year-old, 10' elk named Shooter, was behaving oddly. He was standing by his water trough, first trying to put his hooves in the water, and then trying to get his whole head in – even though his gigantic antlers made that impossible.

Luckily, one of the staff had a camera and recorded the following moments.



All onlookers were astonished when Shooter's head emerged from the water with a marmot suspended from his mouth! Somehow, Shooter had managed to maneuver the drowning animal into a part of the trough where he could retrieve it without his antlers getting in the way.

As Zookeeper Dr. Joy Fox said, "We think Shooter sensed that the animal was in distress and decided to help. He spent quite a bit of time planning how to grab it."

After carefully depositing the soggy marmot (largest of North American ground squirrels) on the dry ground, Shooter proceeded to nudge him with his hoof, evidently concerned for his state of health. Happily, the marmot came to and dashed away into nearby bushes.



At Wildlife Watch, we have seen and heard many touching stories of animals of different species showing cooperation and compassion, from seals and whales saving drowning dogs and humans to a firm friendship developing between a tortoise and a hippopotamus. **Shooter's kindly action now joins the annals of inter-species empathy.**

The zoo plans to auction off Shooter's incredible antlers when they are naturally shed later in the year. Shooter lives with two other males and 3 females.

The Pocatello Zoo only takes native animals who are not able to survive on their own.

<http://zoo.pocatello.us>