**DEP official assists in broad-winged hawk release**

In year 2001, we released dozens of hawks and owls back into the wild. Given the labor and space intensive nature of raptor rehab, this represents a high number. Each raptor required hand feeding, at least initially, and a large area to stretch their wings and learn to fly. (We constructed a special flight cage this year for that purpose). Raptors released included cooper’s hawks, broad-winged hawks and red-tailed hawks. We also rehabbed a full complement of owls, including two great horned, as well as long eared, barred, snow-white and screech owls.

Our busiest year

It seems that every year is our busiest, but the statistics don’t lie, and last year we actually broke records. We cared for over two thousand birds, mammals and reptiles over the course of the year. The majority of these animals were released in the fall, some summer young need overwintering. The releases are always bittersweet. We mourn for all the animals that died and those we had to make the hard decision to euthanize due to injuries that precluded eventual release.

We continue to see growing demand for our services, and no other public or viable private entities to fill the need. Ongoing residential and commercial development in the area has ensured that the volume of injured and orphaned wild animals will grow exponentially.

We have tried to meet demand by increasing our capacity with a new flight cage, and through the addition of several new mammal cages. We are also revamping our animal room with new heating systems and a larger sink.

Despite these advancements, we were bursting at the seams for much of the summer. By mid-July, our animal clinic was a cacophony of hunger and orphaned wild animals will grow exponentially.

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**WIC Land Trust buys adjacent five acres to serve as a buffer**

In our last newsletter, the lead headline read “Wildlife in Crisis threatened by development.” This was a reference to a subdivision slated for the land directly behind our facility. With McMansions destined to be built a few yards from our hawk and owl cages, it seemed likely that our wildlife rescue and rehabilitation efforts would have to be drastically curtailed, or even eliminated.

Fortunately, this story has a happy ending. After extensive negotiation with the landowner, conducted by WIC attorney Dick Saxl, an agreement was reached for purchase of one 2.8 acre lot, with the landowner agreeing to donate a second 2.2 acre lot. We began fund-raising efforts immediately, and raised enough to cover the appraisal and associated costs.

Success! Wildlife in Crisis has received a state grant that will allow us to purchase five acres of open space adjacent to our facility. The land had been slated for sub-division and the placement of on the lots would have seriously compromised our ability to continue our work. Private fund-raising helped raise the initial deposit and administrative fees, and the state of Connecticut came through with a $287,500 grant for the balance. The end result is the preservation of five acres of open space now preserved in perpetuity. This land will serve as a buffer between the facility and an impending development. The purchase of this open space was crucial, given the proximity of the land to our pre-release cages and flight cage. (see full story at right).
New flight cage built at WIC

This past year we had an unusual number of migratory birds under our care. The emphasis on bird species is a new one for Wildlife in Crisis, which has traditionally specialized on mammal rehabilitation. We still rehabilitate ever-growing numbers of mammals, but now have a much improved capability to handle bird species.

This new capability includes a 100-foot by 50-foot flight cage. We built it in early summer, initially to accommodate an imprinted adult great horned owl. Volunteer John Fahey did the initial framing work for us, with subsequent assistance from several other volunteer carpenters.

The flight cage was designed to be divided into three primary compartments. This past year the largest compartment was devoted to the rehabilitation of our two great horned owls.

The center compartment accommodated a cooper's hawk, two broad-winged hawks and a red-tailed hawk (we segregated the much larger red-tail using a temporary screened partition). The third and final compartment was devoted to songbirds.

These included three pods of chimney swifts dislodged by chimney sweeps; a group of hummingbirds felled by an early frost and nine (!) batches of bluebirds. That, in addition to myriads sparrows, finches, wrens, warblers and other songbirds.

The construction of the flight cage has truly made Wildlife in Crisis an "equal opportunity" rehab center.

Open space...

...continues from page 1.

cover the balance, we applied for a grant under the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection's Open Space program in early 2001.

In our grant proposal, we pointed out that the property has an ideal mix of hardwood forest, coniferous hemlock forest, wetland and ledge. This habitat has supported a flock of wild turkeys (particularly fond of the hemlocks for night-time roosting), numerous small mammals and amphibians.

A seasonal watercourse also winds its way through the property, feeding numerous vernal pools and ending in a large marsh. Over the years, this wetland has hosted healthy spring populations of poppies and salamanders.

Prior to the encroachment of the subdivision, this area also hosted a rare gray fox den. When informed that a gray fox was denning in the area, the developer promptly named the road "Gray Fox Lane." Unfortunately, however, the gray fox departed as soon as the bulldozers arrived, and hasn't been seen since.

We're delighted that this important natural area will now be preserved from development. The open space acquired will be retained as a passive buffer zone. The land is contiguous to our facility and to the 2,000-acre Nature Conservancy Devil's Den Preserve, and will serve as a key "green belt" for diverse species moving through the area.

Our next campaign will focus on preservation of an adjacent parcel, this one a 75-acre piece that contains the headwaters of the Saugatuck River. We're working to put together a preservation coalition that includes WIC, the Conservancy, the town of Weston and the Connecticut DEP.

Attorney general visits Wildlife in Crisis

Connecticut Attorney General Richard Blumenthal visited Wildlife in Crisis over the summer during his visit, we discussed a number of issues, including preservation of open space and the potential for the eradication of rabies in Connecticut.

The attorney general promised to look into the possibility of using oral rabies vaccine in Connecticut.

Oral rabies has proven effective in Europe at reducing the spread of rabies among wildlife populations. In this country, the U.S. Department of Agriculture is currently supporting oral rabies but test programs in many Eastern states, including neighboring Massachusetts and New York. The intent of the current USDA program is to create a "rabies-free" barrier zone to prevent the spread of rabies from the Northeast to the Midwest and West.

Wildlife in Crisis is working to convince the state government that the time is right for Connecticut to participate in this effort to eradicate rabies. This would benefit wild populations and contain a public health threat.

Our new educational mission...

...continues on page 3.

We will also be able to hold larger and more frequent on-site environmental education classes for area youth. We plan to design the interior space to allow room for slide shows and wildlife displays.

The sooner we can raise the money, the sooner we can begin to bring area youth closer to their native wildlife.

To raise the needed money, we are approaching grant sources and private donors. We’ve had some success, but we’re still approximately fifty thousand dollars short of our goal.

Any help that you can provide would be most appreciated. Our wish list for the educational center includes a terarium, folding chairs, and a TV/VCR combination unit.

If you are interested in helping us with this expansion, please send contributions to: Wildlife in Crisis Educational Fund P.O. Box 1249 Weston, Connecticut 06883

For more information, you can direct questions to director Dara Reid via e-mail at wildlifeincriais@net.net.
Animal Success Stories from 2001; rescues and rehabs

ABOVE: A caller from Bridgeport insisted she had a small fawn curled up outside her front door for days. Even though it was very late in the season for fawns, we responded only to find an emaciated pit bull puppy who now resides with his rescuer, WIC volunteer Gail Hubbard. His name is “Buddy”.

BELOW: The mallard ducklings pictured were victims of an oil spill in the Norwalk River where thousands of gallons of home heating flowed from an overturned tanker truck at the height of baby “season”. WIC volunteers rescued many birds and mammals that were covered in home heating oil immediately after the spill occurred. It is important to capture animals soon after they have contact with the oil to prevent hypothermia and ingestion of oil. We were able to clean them up with a local gas station to properly dispose of the dirty wastewater after the animals were bathed with grease cutting Dawn dishwashing liquid. In addition to external washing we made sure that all victims were given a hefty dose of Pepto Bismol to coat their digestive tracts from any oil already ingested. Waterbirds are especially vulnerable due to their strong instinct to preen and therefore ingest oil on their feathers. We’re happy to report these ducklings made a full recovery and were released at the end of the summer.

ABOVE: This odd couple has something in common—they were both mauled by house cats. The majority of baby birds received by WIC each summer are a result of free roaming domestic cats. This baby robin and baby prairie warbler were eventually placed in our large outdoor flight cage with others of their own species to frolic with before their release at WIC. Josie, our very content indoor cat is welcome to watch these birds and countless others from one of many windows.

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ABOVE: This young fawn was brought to WIC by DEP conservation officer Robert Monday. This fawn was found in the middle of a busy road in Oxford after her mother was hit by a car. She was placed with many other fawns and was set free in September weighing over 100 pounds! Officer Monday is one of the many dedicated conservation officers who transport fawns and other wildlife from throughout the state to WIC for specialized care.

ABOVE: This baby flying squirrel came to WIC in the early spring with 3 siblings after their tree was cut down. This is an all too familiar story for nesting baby animals during spring and summer months. After months of rehabilitation this family was released in the fall at WIC where precious trees are preserved in perpetuity. The deciduous and hemlock forest that surrounds WIC is perfect habitat for a wide array of native wildlife, providing them with essential food and shelter.

ABOVE: This baby opossum was found by a passing motorist with several siblings in his mother’s pouch on the side of the road after their mother had been hit by another car. This is a common occurrence during the spring and summer, these nursing baby marsupials spend their first few months inside their mother’s pouch. This baby and several of her siblings were released at WIC in September where they will be fed supplementaly throughout the winter months.

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LEFT: This young broad wing hawk was found in the side of a road in New Milford. Concerned citizens brought him to WIC where we discovered he had been shot. We removed the pellets and naturally his wing hoping he would regain full use of it. Thankfully, after months of rehabilitation in our flight cage with other hawks he did. Check out his release on page one of this newsletter.

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**Saving wildlife in a team effort, and we thank everyone on our team!**

**Lyn**, an author of children’s books, has been with WIC since the very beginning. She lives on the border in New York now, but continues to come to WIC every month to help with everything from spring cleaning to baby bird rescue.

**John and Libbe of New Canaan** put in another year of selfless service to Wildlife in Crisis. John framed out our flight cage, painted the interior of the animal room and built a prototype bottle rack. Libbe helped with grocery shopping, cage cleaning, fundraising and animal care.

**Phyllis of Ridgefield** did dedicated service every week, all summer long, cleaning the animal clinic’s cages and helping nurse baby mammals and fledgling birds. The animal clinic has never looked better. Phyllis is WIC’s #1 foster parent!

**Dick and Jessie of Fairfield**. Dick, an attorney, helped us in negotiation with the neighboring land owner to purchase the buffer strip. Jessie helped with myriad logistical tasks and bought some high-tech incubators for next year’s batch of fledgling birds.

**Everyone can lend a hand to wildlife in the winter—here are a few suggestions:**

**Fresh Water**—Provide fresh water daily for birds and other wildlife. Use an electric de-icer for bird baths and rubber bands on ground for duck, squirrels, turkeys, etc. If you have a pond on your property, insert a bubble under water to keep it unfrozen. Waterfowl will be especially appreciative.

**Feeders**—In case to place feeders for birds and other wildlife at least 50 feet away from your house. This will help to prevent birds from flying into your windows on the way to your feeders (back alumni template made from black contact paper can be affixed to large plate glass windows to prevent this from happening—call Wildlife in Crisis for details). If feeders are closer than 50 feet, residents attracted by the free food are more likely to seek entry into your house.

**Plant trees and bushes** that provide natural sources of food and shelter for native wildlife. High-bush and low-bush blueberries, holly bushes, viburnums, elderberry, black raspberry, grapevine, trees, honeysuckle, white pine, cedar and dogwood are a few examples of the many natural enhancements to your yard that are of benefit to wildlife. Always use native plantings in your yard; they will last longer and need less care than exotic species. Use hardy grasses and your lawn will fair well for years, and part of your lawn remains a natural field with native grasses. There are many books available on the subject of gardening for wildlife. The Connecticut DEP offers such a book specifically designed for Connecticut’s wildlife. Call (860)675-8130 to order “Backyard Wildlife.”

**Feeding** black oil sunflower is a good universal seed for songbirds and cracked corn is an adequate supplemental food for turkeys, deer, squirrels and waterfowl. Small birds and mammals will benefit as well during cold winter months (but use shrub or wood nest boxes, not mesh bags which many birds, squirrels and chipmunks get entangled in). If you do opt to feed the birds, please realize that they will become dependent on the food source. They will use valuable energy coming to the feeders each day so it is important to feed without interruption.

Instead of using rock salt (sodium chloride) to melt ice use potassium chloride (one brand name is “safe step”). Safer anti-freeze and de-icing salts are not only better for the environment and wildlife, but using these products could save the lives of children and pets.

**Helping Wildlife Year Round**

Use non-motorized garden maintenance equipment year-round. Motorized mowers, chainsaws and leaf blowers (my personal pet peeve) cause great disturbance to wildlife, as well as contributing significantly to the noise and air pollution which effects us all.

Use environmentally friendly alternatives to anti-freeze: Thousands of pets and wild animals die each year from ingesting the sweet-tasting green antifreeze that sometimes leaks from our automobiles. Conventional anti-freeze contains ethylene glycol, a highly toxic compound that attacks the kidneys once ingested. A simple solution is to use the environmentally friendly propylene glycol (brand name “Sierra”). Considered to be less hazardous to animals and humans. Sierra anti-freeze coolant is available at auto supply and hardware stores. For further information about this product call (800)289-7234.

Don’t cut down dead trees unless absolutely necessary. Dead trees provide a valuable nesting space for mammals and nesting space for birds. Unless a dead tree already threatens a residential structure it’s helpful to wildlife to leave the tree in place. In some cases, dead limbs can be pruned, leaving the hollow trunk in place.

A successful release makes it all worthwhile!

**Hey, where’d he go!** The woodchuck in the foreground is former WIC resident, brought to us after being attacked by dogs. He was released at the Porter Farm in Fairfield, CT, a haven for rescued domestic and wild animals, operated by Dr. Joan Poster, DVM. We thought our woodchuck would enjoy living in a nice grassy two-acre paddock, with rescued pot-belly pigs and feral burros for company. Once the cage door was open, he was off and running, while his new friends observed his departure with some curiosity. He has proven an unobtrusive guest in the paddock, grazing comfortably beside his new pig friends.
Bluebirds are finding more nesting spots in suburban Fairfield County, thanks to all the bluebird boxes people are putting up. We had three batches of bluebird chicks this season. Here’s one family of youngsters, looking for all the world like a group of earnest young blue-helmeted flight cadets.

A tiny killdeer, one of several rehabilitated by WIC this year. Its ground nest was disturbed by a dog, and he was brought to WIC to be raised. (ABOVE, LEFT) Baby skunks are great favorites at WIC. They rarely spray and are adorable, very unobtrusive guests.

Blue Jays are the most raucous native bird, and this behavior starts early. We had a dozen Jays pass through the center this past season, adding immeasurably to the decibel level in the bird room.
A hectic past year, with numerous successful animal rescues/rehabs

These precious young chimney swifts were brought to WIC after their nest was unwittingly dislodged from someone’s chimney flue. At WIC we raised sixteen chimney swifts this past summer. All were released to the fall for a long and hopefully safe migration to South America. These swifts and many other migratory birds will return to the northeast in the spring to nest and raise their young.

A motorist found this female canvassback duck in the middle of the road in downtown Greenwich on a freezing cold winter night last winter. She was covered with ice, was extremely hypothermic and was the victim of a gunshot wound. She was treated for her conditions and kept at WIC all winter. Once pleasantly plump and healed from her wounds we released her in the spring. She was a very sweet bird, we miss her.

Land Trust Formed

We have started our own land trust as a complement to our wildlife rescue operations, because we believe that the preservation of open space provides a wonderful service to wildlife and future generations of people. Land donated to Wildlife in Crisis will remain as open space in perpetuity, providing crucial habitat for native wildlife. Landowners receive tax credits for all land donated to Wildlife in Crisis, which is a non-profit, tax-exempt organization.

Overdevelopment negatively affects water quality and overall quality of life for people and animals. We have come to believe that wildlife rescue and rehabilitation, while worthy pursuits, only serve as band-aids to this larger problem. The only long term solution is to work harder to preserve our ever-diminishing natural habitats. Please do all you can to support open space preservation in your town! For more information on a land trust near you, contact WIC land trust at 203-544-9913, or e-mail to wildlifeincrisis@snet.net.

Make a Financial Statement!

Support Wildlife in Crisis! Every purchase generates royalties that go directly to Wildlife in Crisis, Inc., a non-profit organization founded in 1989 that is dedicated to wildlife preservation and land conservation.

Wildlife in Crisis Checks and Return Address Labels

To order, write Wildlife in Crisis, 74 Tonya Drive, Fairfield, CT 06824.

Wildlife in Crisis Mousepads

To order, write Wildlife in Crisis, 74 Tonya Drive, Fairfield, CT 06824.

Wildlife in Crisis Cotton Checkbook Covers

To order, write Wildlife in Crisis, 74 Tonya Drive, Fairfield, CT 06824.

A Right: This little hummingbird was brought to WIC after he flew into someone’s window. After lots of tender loving care he was released. WIC sells hawk silhouettes, which can be placed on windows to prevent small birds from flying into them. Please call WIC to order your silhouette today.

This little 1/3 of a cup bunny was brought to WIC after her nest was torn apart by a dog. After several months of rehabilitation this little bunny and several of his step-siblings were released to greener pastures. WIC receives hundreds of calls each year about orphaned baby bunnies, many of which involve unsupervised dogs or deadly free roaming domestic cats.

This 1/3 little chimney swift was brought to WIC after their nest was unwittingly dislodged from someone’s chimney flue. At WIC we raised sixteen chimney swifts this past summer. All were released to the fall for a long and hopefully safe migration to South America. These swifts and many other migratory birds will return to the northeast in the spring to nest and raise their young.

ABOVE: These cuties were found under a tool shed after their mother was trapped by a homeowner. The family would have departed on their own in only a few weeks. Tolerance and patience are strong virtues!