

## Preparing for Unnatural Disasters

### Rescue Groups Campaign for Greater Protection for Wildlife

By Yolanda Brooks

Communications Coordinator

**If a pipeline were to burst or a tanker leak in BC waters tomorrow, there would be no automatic rescue response to save wildlife caught in the spill. With few laws to protect them and limited infrastructure in place, sea birds and marine mammals could be left to flounder and die along polluted waterways and coastlines.**

While there are laws that mandate that the polluter pays for the environmental clean-up after an incident, there is no duty of care for the wildlife that inhabits that same environment. The situation is even worse with mystery spills. When no one takes responsibility, there is no central funding available for wildlife response.

The current state of affairs leaves wildlife in the province extremely vulnerable to environmental disasters and a coalition of animal protection and rescue organizations has stepped up the campaign calling for greater legal protection for wildlife.

The Oiled Wildlife Trust (OWT), an umbrella group of non-profit organizations including the WRA, BC SPCA, the Oiled Wildlife Society of BC (OWSBC) and the Wildlife Rehabilitators Network of BC, is involved in the hearings surrounding proposed pipeline



Photo: Erin Smith

**This oiled cormorant was the victim of a previous BC oil spill.**

projects in the province. “We are woefully unprepared,” says Jackie McQuillan, President of the Oiled Wildlife Society of BC. “Here in BC we don’t have the equipment, facilities or professionally trained personnel to deal with even minor oiled wildlife incidents.”

#### **In the pipeline**

As consultation continues for the proposed Northern Gateway Project, which would carry petroleum between central Alberta and Kitimat, and Kinder Morgan seeks approval for the expansion of its Trans Mountain pipeline in Burnaby, the need for government to create clear guidelines that include animal welfare and rescue as a part of any environmental clean-up plan is greater than ever.

Animals that have been caught in an oil spill require very specialized care in purpose-built facilities. While the WRA has rehabilitation staff who

are experienced with cleaning oiled animals, the Association, like all rescue organizations in the province, is often operating at maximum capacity and does not currently have the space or resources to deal with wildlife involved in a pollution incident.

“The issue of oil pipelines is high on the agenda right now and if more oil is

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# TO THE RESCUE

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**WRA** Wildlife Rescue Association of BC provides leadership in rehabilitating wildlife and in promoting the welfare of wild animals in the urban environment.

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## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

# The Numbers Game

By Glenn Boyle, Ph.D.  
WRA Executive Director

**This summer was one for the books. Monthly admissions of wild animals to the Care Centre soared above 600 in both June and July. By the end of August, we had taken in almost 600 animals more than at the same time last year – which had previously been our busiest year since 2002 – and we had already exceeded our 2010 total for the year.**

Although admissions at the WRA have climbed steadily in recent years, the extraordinary scale of this year's increase has taken us into new territory (see p.3).

In the spring, we were very disappointed to learn that federal grant funding for seasonal staff had been cut by 27% from the previous year, forcing the WRA to access emergency funds to provide enough staff in the Care Centre. Despite this and other challenges, the WRA's professional team of staff and volunteers dealt exceptionally well with the thousands of animals and phone calls that swamped our wildlife facility this summer.

The summer months were also exceptional for our education and



outreach programs, as more children than ever attended our fun day camps in July and August (see p.12). With the number of invited program presentations and event displays also increasing throughout the year, our growing presence in the community is making more people aware of how to help local wildlife. This is critical if we want to prevent unnecessary admissions and limit the harm that our day-to-day activities can cause.

Continued growth of our wildlife rehabilitation and public education work needs to be supported by more resources now and in the future. To this end, we have introduced some new fundraising activities this year (see pp.3 and 10), and we are now conducting a site feasibility planning project to assess how we can create capacity in the long term for continued growth and development. It will be interesting to see how the numbers add up and I hope you will stay with us on this important journey. 🐦

# info

If you would like to receive future copies of *To The Rescue* in electronic form direct to your inbox, please send an email to [info@wildliferescue.ca](mailto:info@wildliferescue.ca) or call the administration line at 604 526 2747. You can also keep up with WRA news via our Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/wildliferescue](http://www.facebook.com/wildliferescue) and on our blog at [wrabc.wordpress.com](http://wrabc.wordpress.com).

## A Record Year

It's been a record-breaking summer at the WRA Care Centre with 2,323 animals treated between the beginning of May and the end of August.

A marked increase in admissions has happened this year for a number of reasons. As well as the cold, rainy weather and the salmonella outbreak that affected large numbers of pine siskins earlier in the year, the closure of Monika's wildlife shelter late last year has meant that more animals are coming to WRA from the Surrey area.

"WRA has been inundated with animals this year and it looks like it will continue until year-end," says Glenn Boyle, Executive Director of the WRA. "We anticipate that our previous admissions record of around 3,500 animals will be smashed – at present, it looks like we may reach 4,000!"

As usual, there was a wide variety of species represented with some of the more unusual animals including a marbled murrelet (*Brachyramphus marmoratus*), pictured above, several



This endangered marbled murrelet was one of more than 2,300 animals treated at the WRA Care Centre during the summer season.

common nighthawks (*Chordeiles minor*), a yellow-headed blackbird (*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*) and a pied-billed grebe (*Podilymbus podiceps*).

"We'd like to thank the volunteers, interns and summer staff who helped the regular rehabilitation team cope with the huge increase in animals," says Glenn. "During the summer, the Care Centre is a place of long hours and non-stop activity and their hard

work, knowledge and organization ensured that the animals were able to receive the best treatment possible in a timely fashion despite some challenging circumstances."

The Care Centre also passed another notable milestone this summer with patient numbers hitting the 80,000 mark since the organization was founded in 1979. 🐦

By Yolanda Brooks Communications Coordinator

## When You Walk Wildlife Wins



There's still time to sign up and pledge for Walk 4 Wildlife, the WRA's first ever sponsored walk event. Dozens of volunteers, supporters, company teams and staff members have signed up for the 5km walk which takes place at Burnaby Lake Regional Park on September 30.

The most successful fundraising teams, families and individuals will be awarded prizes and all walkers will be

invited to a free, post-walk barbecue hosted by grill masters from the Burnaby Rotary Club.

"Even though this is our first Walk 4 Wildlife, we've set an ambitious target of raising \$20,000," says Anita Cymet, the WRA's Development Coordinator. "We know we have a lot of supporters out there who are willing and ready to support the work of the WRA."

"By giving up just a few hours of your time, you can really have a direct impact on the wildlife we care for," says Anita who was one of the first to sign up for the event.

As well as raising money for the WRA, five per cent of proceeds from the walk will go to the Burnaby Park Association whose members do so much to help preserve and protect an important wildlife haven.

Registration and pledge forms for participants are available to download at [www.wildliferescue.ca](http://www.wildliferescue.ca). Entry fees cost \$20 for adults, \$15 for seniors, \$10 for youth under 18, and \$60 for teams of 4 (with a \$10 fee for each additional member). Race day registration for adults costs \$25.

Walkers who prefer to register and gather their pledges online can sign up via the Running Room at [www.runningroom.com](http://www.runningroom.com). For further details, contact Anita Cymet, on 604 526 2747 or email her at [anita@wildliferescue.ca](mailto:anita@wildliferescue.ca) 🐦

**Walk 4 Wildlife, 9am-12pm  
Sunday, September 30  
Burnaby Lake Regional Park**

By Yolanda Brooks Communications Coordinator



Photos: Paul Steeves

**A tiny triumph** An orphaned rufous hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*) that was rescued from a barge travelling down the Sunshine Coast has been successfully released after a groundbreaking effort by WRA rehabilitation staff.

The female hummingbird was one of a pair brought into the WRA Care Centre in early July. The siblings, which were just a few days old, were huddled in a nest the size of a small mushroom cap. They weighed less than 3 grams, measured approximately 4cm and were

extremely weak and vulnerable.

The birds were put on a 10-minute feeding schedule between dawn and dusk, and while the weaker sibling died after a few days, the stronger nestling began to thrive.

The WRA has successfully treated dozens of adult rufous and Anna's hummingbirds over the years but this is the first time that rehabilitation staff have successfully raised a hummingbird nestling. They are rarely seen at wildlife rescue centres so there was little infor-

mation available to staff who had to create a treatment protocol from scratch.

As well as its tiny size, the surviving nestling presented a number of unique challenges for staff. It had to be kept at a much cooler temperature at night to trigger a state of torpor to slow its metabolism and reduce its need for food – something that occurs naturally in the wild. Creating an appropriate diet was also essential to ensure the bird would develop normally.

The female bird responded extremely well to treatment, and 12 days after arrival she began to fly. As she grew stronger, she was moved to an outdoor aviary where she was able to extract nectar from flowers from the WRA wildlife garden and drink from a hummingbird feeder as well as catch her own fruit flies.

After five weeks in care, her flight was so swift and agile that staff struggled to catch her for examination. The bird was banded and released at Widgeon Marsh in Port Coquitlam in early August by one of the WRA rehabilitation staff.

*By Yolanda Brooks Communications Coordinator*

**Mink overcomes obstacles**

This juvenile American mink (*Neovison vison*) has come a long way since it was found limping at the side of a road in south Surrey after being hit by a car in early August.

When it first arrived at the Care Centre, the prognosis for the male mink looked poor. The impact with the car left him with a fractured right scapula and an open wound where the bone punctured the skin. It also had an old injury on its left elbow.

Rehabilitation staff were able to stabilize the mink's condition and for the first few days in care, he was kept in a small cage to restrict



Photo: Paul Steeves

movement and give the broken bone time to heal. The wound was medicated and flushed daily to prevent infection and within a few days he began to show signs of improvement.

Throughout August and September, the mink made a slow and steady recovery, the wound closed, his fracture healed and his mobility improved daily.

To aid his recovery he was moved to a large enclosure with a pool and a number of obstacles.

Once the hair had grown back on the wound site on his shoulder, he was run through an obstacle course to check his mobility one last time before being released in mid-September at a park in Surrey.

*By Yolanda Brooks Communications Coordinator*



**From Rocky to Reifel** Last March, the WRA Wildlife Helpline started getting reports of an injured Canada goose (*Branta canadensis*) sighted at Rocky Point in Port Moody. The female goose had a severe injury to her lower jaw that left her tongue permanently exposed to the elements. On several occasions, WRA volunteers went out to look for the bird and members of the public tried to catch her but without success.

Despite its injuries, the goose appeared to be a healthy weight and was at one point seen raising a pair of goslings. With young in tow, attempts at a rescue were put on hold until the young birds could live independently.

In late July, the Holman family from Port Moody were enjoying a picnic when they en-



Photo: Linda Bakker

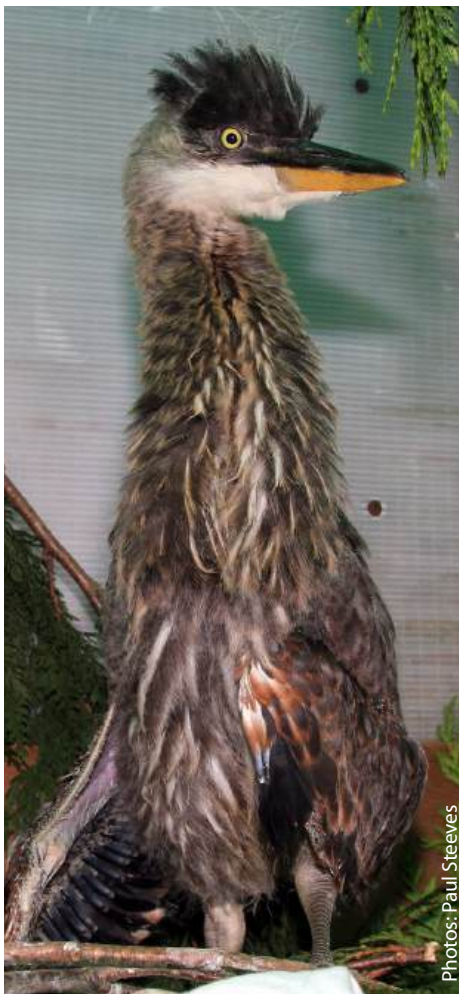
countered the goose which was now without any offspring. At first, the family tried to shoo her away as it begged for food. After going home, they had a change of heart and decided to return to Rocky Point to try and capture the bird. With advice from Crystal Simmons, the WRA's Care Centre Liaison, the family caught her and brought her to the WRA.

The goose had a deep cut in its lower jaw, possibly caused by a fishing hook, but it was alert, its body condition was reasonable and it was able to feed itself. Its tongue showed some signs of necrosis but the blood supply was intact - a good sign that she could make a full recovery. After a few days of observation, the goose underwent an hour-long surgery to repair the wound to its jaw.

Following the procedure, she had to be tube fed for a couple of weeks. As the swelling decreased, she was more active, began to eat independently and preen herself.

The Holman family followed her progress and released the goose at the Reifel Bird Sanctuary in Delta in mid-August.

By Yolanda Brooks Communications Coordinator



Photos: Paul Steeves

**All Grown Up** Adult great blue herons (*Ardea herodias*) are a common sight at the WRA Care Centre during the summer months but fledgling heron admissions are not often seen, that is until this summer when three unrelated birds arrived for care.

While two did not survive due to the severity of their injuries, one fledgling did pull through.

It was the first of the trio to arrive and it was rescued in June from Stanley Park in Vancouver after it fell out of a tree. It had minor cuts on its body but no serious injuries. It was too young to be returned to the wild as its flight feathers were not fully developed and it was unable to feed itself.

For the first few days in care, the heron had to be hand-fed but it was a quick learner and was soon eating without help. As the heron was in good health, it had minimal interaction with staff and was just given time and space to develop its hunting skills and grow its flight feathers.

After five weeks in care, the heron was able to



fly and catch its own food and was released back into the wild.

By Yolanda Brooks Communications Coordinator

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**Spring Clean-Up** A low-cost, low-tech solution introduced over the summer has made a big difference to the well-being of perching birds and waterfowl treated at the WRA Care Centre.

While outdoor enclosures are naturalized as much as possible with pebbles and greenery, the birds still spend a lot of time standing on hard surfaces. Birds such as great blue herons, gulls, mallards and cormorants, that spend a lot of time out of the water, run the highest risk of developing foot sores when in captivity for more than a few days.

In the past, rehabilitation staff have used towels to cover unforgiving surfaces. While it gave the birds more traction, it did not significantly reduce the problem of foot sores. It also created huge amounts of laundry and lots of extra work for the volunteers. Staff also considered Astroturf as an alternative, but with its high lead content, it posed a risk to the birds that would not just walk on it but root around in it.

Wildlife rehabilitator Wallis Moore Reid, who spent a season with International Bird Rescue last year, noticed that they used rubber tires that not only



Photos: Paul Steeves

relieved pressure on delicate feet but created an uneven surface with good traction – the perfect combination to prevent pressure sores.

She approached *Our Community Bikes* on Main Street in Vancouver who happily let her raid their storage area packed with old bike parts. She took as many mountain bike tires as she could, stripped them down, disinfected them and flattened them.

With help of weekend maintenance assistant Jeremy Wade, they screwed them onto the entry ramps and perching poles in several of the outdoor bird enclosures including the raptor pen, swan enclosure and duck pen.

With rubber instead of towels to collect and clean,



**Left: Wallis Moore Reid & Jeremy Wade make rubber ramps. Above: Mallards try out the new furniture.**

when it's time to clean the ramps, volunteers simply wheel out the ramps onto the cleaning pad and hose them off.

“We are preventing foot sores, it's a lot easier for the birds to get in and out of the pools and there is a lot less laundry to do,” says Wallis, who has been a regular member of the WRA summer staff for six years.

Following the success of the rubber ramps and perching poles, staff plan to rubberize the pool rims of the enclosures where many birds prefer to perch.

*By Yolanda Brooks Communications Coordinator*

## VOLUNTEER UPDATE

**Aces in their Places** The WRA receives nearly 600 volunteer applications each year, with nearly all of them offering to volunteer in the Care Centre working directly with the animals. While help within the Care Centre is certainly needed, there are not as many Animal Care Volunteer positions available as there are applicants.

Sometimes the WRA needs volunteer help in positions that work **for** the animals, rather than working directly **with** the animals, and there are many opportunities available for experienced professionals who wish to contribute their unique skills. For example, the WRA hosts several events throughout the year and always needs volunteers to join the event planning committees to assist with the planning and execution of these events.

Event planning volunteers can contribute their professional skills such as project management, marketing, canvassing, and volunteer management to help the WRA raise much-needed funds or to help educate the public about wildlife.

For example, long-time volunteer, Nel Aird. She did her time within the Care Centre, but soon realized her professional background as a project manager could also benefit wildlife.

Nel volunteered to help plan and organize the WRA's annual educational event, EarthFest, and is now heading up the committee to plan the inaugural Walk 4 Wildlife fundraising event at the end of September. Nel's contributions have been critical to the smooth running of these events.

Other professionals can contribute their skills in other areas including fundraising, grant-writing, communications and graphic design, the list goes on. We are always willing to create new opportunities for volunteers and we strive to put ‘aces in their places’ – to utilize the skills of volunteers and help them fulfil their greatest potential.

The many and varied opportunities all contribute towards the same goal, that is to make a difference for the animals in our care. If you're interested in volunteering, please visit our website at [www.wildliferescue.ca](http://www.wildliferescue.ca) and fill out an application form. To see where your skills would help out the most, or for other volunteer enquiries, please email [volunteer@wildliferescue.ca](mailto:volunteer@wildliferescue.ca).

*By Stefanie Broad Volunteer Coordinator*

## IN *Memory*

**Our donors remember those who have had special meaning in their lives with a special tribute.**

Erick Bjorkland  
Caitlin Mancer  
Gerda Nott  
Julie Patzwald  
Betty Varga

## *Faithful friends*

**Our donors say a fond farewell to the companion animals that have a special place in their hearts.**

Smudgee Jensen



## Carton Collection

The WRA makes regular donation requests on behalf of the Care Centre including greenery (keep it coming), berries, face cloths etc. But thanks to a busy season of outreach events, the WRA education team is in need of your help.

They need drinks cartons - lots of them! The team will be attending two events where they will be making bird feeders with kids and they anticipate that they will need to collect up to 1500, 1-4 litre milk or juice cartons between now and early December to ensure they have enough to meet the demand.

You can wash and bring your empty milk/juice/soy/rice/almond cartons to the back office in the WRA administration building where a cardboard collection box awaits your contribution.

## Donor

# Thanks

### **Burnaby Sanitation**

**Department:** Regular donation of garden greenery.

**Cintas:** Quarterly donation of towels.

**Cathy Easton:** A donation of berries & fish.

**Sara Luu on behalf of Left Coast Naturals:** Bulk supply of organic nuts.

### **Greater Vancouver**

**Foodbank:** Ongoing donations of household supplies.

**PODS Burnaby:** Free storage.

**Purwal Blueberry Farm:**

Bulk donation of blueberries.

### **Quest Food Exchange:**

Regular donations of salmon, grains & produce.

### **Riverview Hospital:**

Blankets.

**Pickering Safety:** Ongoing donation of oxygen tanks.

**Don Statcheruk:** Large delivery of greenery.

**Thrifty Foods:** Large donations of food for several WRA events.

**Walmart:** Ongoing donation of towels & \$50 gift certificate for Education Department supplies.

## WISH LIST

### Food Supplies

- Gift cards for local grocery stores
- Canadian Tire money
- Distilled water (jugs)
- Vitamin B1, B-complex tabs

### Outdoor Supplies

- Hose nozzles
- Greenery (evergreen, cedar is best)
- Soaker hoses
- 55-gallon water barrel (2)
- Tarps
- Floating pool thermometer
- Astroturf for perch covers

### Household items

- Plastic laundry baskets
- Chlorine bleach - 5 litre size (we use one 5L jug per day, on average)

- Unscented laundry soap

- Garbage bags (industrial size)
- Mop heads (large industrial size)

### Medical Supplies

- Endotracheal tubes without cuffs
- Hand-held blood chemistry analyzer
- Veterinary ultrasound machine
- Lactated Ringer's Solution (sterile, unopened)

### Miscellaneous

- Pen lights
- Digital precision scale
- Duct tape/Scotch tape/masking tape
- Gardening tools
- Calculators
- Cable ties (AKA zap straps or zip ties)
- Chainmail lined gloves



### Josh Bath

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**WRA Planned Giving Workshop  
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6450 Deer Lake Avenue, Burnaby**

## Smart Card



Sign up for the Thrifty Foods Smile Card program and you will help

the WRA raise funds for a baby bird annex.

The cards are available from the WRA administration building and can be used at any Thrifty Store in BC.

At the store you can use cash, debit or credit cards to load your Smile Card before you shop, at either the Customer Service desk or the checkout, before you pay.

Five per cent of the value of your Smile Card is automatically donated by Thrifty to the WRA. While Thrifty makes the donation, there is no extra cost to you.

This free fundraising campaign runs until May, 2013.

Please call the WRA administration line on 604 526 2747, or email [info@wildliferescue.ca](mailto:info@wildliferescue.ca) for information.

# How to Leave a Legacy

The WRA is hosting a free planned giving workshop featuring legal and financial experts who will give supporters and members of the community the information they need to help plan for the future.

The workshop will be held on Saturday, November 3 at the Shadbolt Centre for the Arts in Burnaby and will cover issues such as estate planning, will provision, legacies and taxation.

“Planning for life after death is something few of us like to dwell on, but when we write a will and plan our legacy we can keep control over our estates and save our heirs potential conflict, pain and unnecessary costs,” says Anita Cymet, the WRA’s Development Coordinator.

The four guest speakers, who are donating their time for free, are: Sean Jamieson of Investors Group, Calvin Fong, of Vancity Community Foundation, Michael Godin of Alternatives Funeral and Cremation Services and Jason Jakubec of Lawyers West.

“Anyone who has assets such as a home, pension and investments should have a will but planning ahead can seem like a daunting task and many put it off until it is too late. This seminar will provide information to our supporters and members of the community who need some guidance,” says Cymet.

“Our experts are not here to tell you what to do but to show you some of the choices and options that are available to you,” she says. “When you plan for your future you can avoid confusion and help those closest to you and support the causes you care about.”

The workshop is a first for the WRA and is open to members and non-members alike.

If you would like to find out more about the workshop, or would like to register, please contact Anita Cymet by November 2, at 604 526 2747 or email [anita@wildliferescue.ca](mailto:anita@wildliferescue.ca)

*By Yolanda Brooks Communications Coordinator*

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*Wildlife Rescue* 2013



*Other animals featured in the 2013 calendar include a beaver, snowy owl, and yellow warbler.*



## Picture Perfect Gift for the Holidays

Apologies for mentioning Christmas so early, but this is the last newsletter before the New Year and our only chance to get the word out about our stunning new calendar before the holidays.

The WRA 2013 wall calendar features 12 beautiful shots of local BC wildlife taken and donated for free by our resident volunteer photographer, Paul Steeves and Tracy Riddell, our former administrator and now professional photographer.

The new calendar will be available from the WRA administration office from the beginning of October. A sample copy will be available to view so please stop by and take a look. The calendar costs \$20 with all proceeds from the sale going directly to the WRA.

## Sign on for the Great Copper Collection

With the penny going out of circulation, the WRA has launched a penny drive to turn the unwanted coins into big bucks.

You can help us by collecting your spare piles of change and bringing them into the WRA administration building where teams of volunteers will roll and bag the money for the bank.

Alternatively, you could consider distributing a collection box on behalf of the WRA. We are looking for local business owners, who would be happy to display a counter-top collection box for a few months.

The collection box is just 20cm tall and 10cm wide so it won't take up too

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much space on store counters.

We've already raised more than \$200 from just a 20 boxes in a few weeks. The more boxes we have out in the community, the more money we will raise for wildlife rehabilitation.

If you have contacts in your neighbourhood and have time to make regular collections, please contact Development Coordinator, Anita Cymet on 604 526 2747 or [anita@wildliferescue.ca](mailto:anita@wildliferescue.ca)



**Diary date:** The WRA 2013 Earth-Fest Nature Festival takes place on Sunday, April 21.



cool facts and how they pledge to help wildlife with this new knowledge.”

Sessions for the new academic year include new themes such as *Creepy Creatures*, *Give a Hoot!*, *Spring has Sprung* and *Bringing up Babies*. The sessions are open to children ages 6-12 and will take place at our classroom in the administration building from 9 am – 3 pm.

Camps can be booked with a donation of \$25 or a \$20 donation plus a gift in kind. Please email [educate@wildliferescue.ca](mailto:educate@wildliferescue.ca), check out our website at [www.wildliferescue.ca](http://www.wildliferescue.ca) or call our administration line at 604 526 2747 for more information about individual camps.

By Krystal Brennan Education Coordinator

## Fresh Air Learning for Fall

Following the success of our summer 2012 day camps, the WRA is introducing a range of camps during professional development days and school holidays to meet increased demand.

The WRA has been running summer camps for four years and during July and August, the WRA education team hosted its largest summer program yet with 152 spots filled and a 15 per cent increase since the summer of 2011 in the number of children attending.

Led by Day Camp Leaders, Johanna

Thompson and Janelle VanderBeek, the children not only learned about wildlife through fun theme games and activities, they were also able to make and take home something useful such as a hummingbird feeder or mini bat garden.

“These programs successfully helped the WRA’s mission to not only treat distressed wildlife but to also educate people about our local wild animals,” says Education Assistant Johanna Thompson.

“Ask any camper who attended a summer session and they’ll tell you

### Camp Calendar Schedule

**Oct. 19:** Creepy Creatures

**Nov. 9:** Give a Hoot!

**Dec. 27, 28 & Jan. 2, 4:** Winter Wildlife

**Feb. 22:** Life in a Dead Tree

**Mar. 18, 20 & 22:** Spring Has Sprung!

**May 10:** Bringing up Babies

*Tuesday & Thursday summer day camps will return in July 2013.*

## Sticky Traps Cause Collateral Damage

If you have to get rid of unwanted rodents or insects in your home, please avoid using sticky traps. These inhumane traps made of cardboard and adhesive are indiscriminate and cause suffering to both targeted and unintended species. This summer, staff at the WRA Care Centre treated several animals (including the crow pictured right) that had been caught in one of these deadly traps.



Photos: Yolanda Brooks

# Create a Haven for Winter Wildlife

It may seem early to start thinking about the winter, but wild animals are already preparing for the months ahead. By adding a few simple plants and accessories, you can create a perfect habitat around your home, neighbourhood or school to support our furry and feathered friends throughout the winter.

Plants are an essential part of any wildlife garden, as they provide natural sources of food, water and shelter for native animals.

The easiest way to provide food during the winter months is to do nothing at all. Instead of dead-heading your plants to tidy up your garden, allow them to go to seed so that the birds can forage at a time when there are few fresh leaves and flowers available.

If you don't like the bedraggled look, wait until the seed heads form, cut the stems, bundle them up and hang in the garden where birds can find them.

Fruit-bearing shrubs are also a good option. Small plants provide excellent habitat. Western snowberry (*Symphoricarpos occidentalis*) has long-lasting berries that will be eaten by many local animals if their food supply runs out. Red-osier dogwood (*Cornus stolonifera*) is deciduous, though its berries and leaves last well into the winter. Evergreen ferns such as western sword fern (*Polystichum munitum*) and deer fern (*Blechnum spicant*) provide shelter for small rodents and amphibians. Salal (*Gaultheria shallon*) and Kinnikinnick (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*) are excellent ground covering evergreens as alternatives to invasive English ivy (*Hedera helix*).

You can add many features to a winter garden aside from plants to assist wildlife. Nest boxes for birds, squirrels, and mason bees can replace cavities of decaying wildlife trees and are much more practical in an urban setting.



Photos: Paul Steeves

Bird feeders are wonderful additions to a garden, so long as appropriate bird food is used in them such as suet, seed, and nectar. Never use bread or put peanut butter on a pine cone, as this can be very harmful. Seed feeders should be cleaned weekly and nectar feeders cleaned every other day with a 10% bleach solution.

Bird baths are another great feature for a winter garden, and you can purchase baths or create one using an old plate and adding an inch of water and a few stones. This should also be cleaned each week with a bleach solution and left to dry completely before refilling.

Evergreen trees such as Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) and pine (*Pinus sp.*) provide shelter in their branches from inclement weather. Cedars (*Thuja sp.*) are not self-pruning, their long bows form shelters at their bases.

Deciduous trees such as paper birch

(*Betula papyrifera*) and red alder (*Alnus rubra*) are also important cavity plants, as they decay faster than evergreens and are easily excavated by birds and small mammals for winter shelter.

Dead and dying trees can be hazardous around residential areas, but if you have a dying tree consider trimming it and leaving the remaining few metres of trunk for wildlife use. If the dead tree is a hazard and must be cut down completely, leave a metre or two of the trunk lying on the ground as shelter for salamanders and frogs.

By having a winter garden, you will know that you are directly helping wildlife survive the cooler winter months. For more information, nest box plans and any other questions about a winter garden, please visit the education section of our website at [www.wildliferescue.ca](http://www.wildliferescue.ca), call our administration line at 604 526 2747, or email [educate@wildliferescue.ca](mailto:educate@wildliferescue.ca).

# Unnatural Disasters

Continued from page 1

going to be transported in the province we can't just cross our fingers and hope for the best," says Glenn Boyle, the WRA's Executive Director. "History teaches us that spills happen and we need to have a coordinated response plan in place now to ensure that wildlife aren't left to suffer in a disaster."

As the consultation process for the pipelines continues, the OWT groups will continue to press for legally binding protection measures that would cover the full cost of oiled wildlife response. "I think the public is really in the dark about oiled wildlife response," says Jackie McQuillan. "In the past, people assumed that because environmental clean-up is regulated that we are prepared for wildlife response as part of that. That is not the case at all."

The OWT has already contributed a report entitled "*The Status of Oiled Wildlife Preparedness in British Columbia*" as part of the written evidence submitted by the Living Oceans Society to the Enbridge Northern Gateway Project Joint Review Panel.

This Fall, Coleen Doucette, Chair of the WRA's Animal Care Committee and VP of the OWSBC will be testifying at the Enbridge Northern Gateway hearings in Prince Rupert on behalf of the OWT.

"I think it is critically important that they consider the potential impact of this pipeline on wildlife," says Doucette. "We have some of the most unique wildlife and pristine coastline in the world and we have to consider how prepared we are to deal with wildlife should they fall victim to an oil spill incident."

If you want to find out more about the pipeline proposals and issues at stake, please go to:

[gatewaypanel.review-examen.gc.ca](http://gatewaypanel.review-examen.gc.ca)

[www.ecojustice.ca/files/ngp-living-oceans-society-written-evidence-dec-21-2011](http://www.ecojustice.ca/files/ngp-living-oceans-society-written-evidence-dec-21-2011)

<http://oiledwildlifesociety.com>

[www.wrncb.org](http://www.wrncb.org)

<http://pipeupagainstenbridge.ca/learn/pipeline>

[www.northerngateway.ca](http://www.northerngateway.ca)

[www.transmountain.com](http://www.transmountain.com)



Scene from a past oil spill in Burrard Inlet.



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Details of the Investors Group Charitable Giving Program, including eligible funds, current fees and expenses, and other requirements, are available upon request in the Program Guide. Donations under the Program are irrevocable and vest with the Strategic Charitable Giving Foundation - a registered charitable foundation which is responsible for making all investments and operates independently from Investors Group.  
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MP1345 (11/2007)

# Foster Me: Striped Skunk

## Skunk Trapped in Plastic Drinks Lid

By Yolanda Brooks

Communications Coordinator

When this skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*) was discovered over the August holiday weekend, it faced a slow lingering death. It was trapped in a domed plastic lid that left a deep flesh wound that ran around its neck, across its shoulder and under its left armpit.

The lid had been embedded for some time and the young female skunk was growing into the plastic and her physical condition slowly deteriorating as the plastic cut through her fur and skin and dug into her muscles.

She was underweight, dehydrated



Photo: Yolanda Brooks

and unsteady on her feet when she was first examined at the WRA Care Centre.

Because of the seriousness of the injury, she was given a general anaesthetic during a procedure to clean the wound and remove

necrotic tissue. It was a long and delicate process and rehabilitation staff spent three hours cleaning the wound which was clogged with debris and maggots.

The skunk began eating well within a day of surgery and her general body condition started to improve as the wound around the neck began to contract and heal quickly.

The armpit and chest lacerations took longer to heal but with regular cleaning and medication, staff avoided infection during the slow healing process.

By the time the skunk is released back to the wild, she will have spent almost two months in the capable care of WRA rehabilitation staff. 🐾

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- Black-headed grosbeak \$35
- Violet-green swallow \$35
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- Common merganser \$50
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