

Welcome to

INSTINCTS



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"The newsletter helping you follow your Wild Instincts."

SPRING!

It looks like we are trading in our heavy winter jackets for sweatshirts, at least for the near future. Old Man Winter doesn't generally go out so quietly. There will probably be a snowstorm or two yet before we can call Spring official, but we will certainly enjoy this unseasonable March weather!

Judging from the geese flying overhead and the Tundra Swans on the river, the animals are enjoying this unseasonably warm weather also.

We just hung up from a call about a possible baby raccoon under someone's house. If it really is a baby raccoon, it would be about a month early. That will make for a long baby season!

One of the sure signs that spring is just around the corner is the arrival of our spring interns.

On March 6th, Megan and Katie began their spring internships with Wild Instincts.

Megan, who hails from Oregon, hadn't even officially started work when she got to tag along on a foster den possibility (see Cub Updates). She has experience in wildlife rehabilitation and will be staying with us for Summer and Fall sessions, too.

Katie is a Wausau native. While she her hometown is close by, she is worlds away now being immersed in her first wildlife rehabilitation setting.



Spring Interns Megan & Katie start training.

Welcome, Ladies. We're glad to have you on the Wild Instincts' Team!

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Cub Update

You may remember from last newsletter we admitted two very young bear cubs on Jan 24. There is a long FAQ section there about how they came to us, what they eat, and our plans for them.



Big brother often makes a pillow out of little sister.

Our first choice is always to try to place young cubs in dens with wild foster moms. This allows them to grow up Bear with the best teacher. We often work with a variety of bear researchers who would be going into bear dens as a general course of their study project. Researchers usually start going into the dens late February on into March. Commonly we have several opportunities to try to place cubs with a wild mom. As bear research projects have ended or are coming to the completion of their project life, we have less opportunities. Details and photos of this procedure can be found on our blog by clicking [HERE](#).

This year we made THREE attempts to foster the cubs into wild dens. In each case, the wild sow already had four cubs, making placing our cubs impossible. We even investigated a den not part of a research study. Click [HERE](#) to find out how we made sure we didn't have to needlessly disturb her or her cubs.

Going into three dens, in Lincoln, Oconto and Ashland Counties, and finding four cubs in each diminished hopes for being able to place our cubs in a wild den. The sudden warm up and arrival of "spring" pretty much took away any other possibilities. They will

remain with us until fall when they will be released.

They are now being weaned off a bottle as quickly as they are able. Getting them to drink out of a bowl as soon as possible reduces the chance of them imprinting onto people, which would essentially be a death sentence for them. The male is catching on slightly faster than his sister.

As we move onto their next phase of care, we will be reminded of how costly it is to raise infant cubs, having already spent over \$200 in formula alone in the last 49 days. By the time they are released this fall, costs to raise them will be around \$3000.00 EACH!



In Honor or Memory Of

~In Honor of Fabulous Aunt Trish Kirk
~In Memory of John "Jack" Monahan who loved birds and critters
~In Memory of my dear aunt, Jeanne Pennington
~In Honor of "Fortuna"
~In Memory of Dave Jackson of Birnamwood

Spring Cleaning Is For the Birds

We've been watching the avian migrants passing through and the harbingers of spring arriving the last week or so. The arrival of the red-winged blackbirds, robins, tree and fox sparrows is always a welcome signal of spring.

As these incredible miracle athletes of the sky make their way hundreds of miles, thousands for some of them, feeding stations can be important way stations to help them with their journeys.

It's important to remember to clean our bird feeders, especially this time of year. Many birds are putting on so many miles and are depleting their energy stores making them

more vulnerable to all sorts of calamities. Let's not make our feeders one of those! Mold, bacteria like Salmonella and pathogens can all thrive in and around feeders. It's important to clean all old seed, dirt and feces from all feeders. Take feeders down, take them apart as much as possible, using soap and water, scrub them with a toothbrush. As an alternative, you could run them through the hot cycle on your dishwasher.

After they are clean and sparkly, then soak them in a 10% bleach solution for 10 minutes. After all that, rinse, rinse, rinse! Let them dry and refill as usual.

It is also important to clean the areas around the feeders. Spent seed, feces, wet weather, etc. make for prolific breeding grounds for all sorts of pathogens; pathogens that can be harmful to many different animals and spread easily.

Because feeders offer you an up-close view of birds, and because birds seek out easy meals when their health is compromised, you may sometimes see a sick bird at your feeder. If you see a bird that appears to be sick or injured, call us or another wildlife rehabilitator. Do not try to care for the bird yourself. It is illegal for you to possess most wild birds unless you are under the direction of someone licensed for their care.

If a sick bird comes to your feeder, minimize the risk of infecting other birds by thoroughly cleaning your feeders as outlined above.

If you see several sick birds, take down all your feeders for at least a week to give the birds a chance to disperse. Remember that prevention is the key to avoiding the spread of disease.

Cleaning your feeders and the areas around them every couple weeks, even if there are no signs of disease, will help keep our feather friends healthy and spreading their joy and not spreading their disease.

Salmonellosis

Salmonellosis is a bacterial disease caused by a group of bacteria in the genus salmonella. All species of birds are susceptible to salmonella infection. Salmonellosis is a common cause of sickness and death in birds at birdfeeders. There are many different strains of salmonella. Many different types of animals can carry salmonella, including rodents. The bacteria live in the intestines and pass out with the feces. The organism can be spread from bird to bird through direct contact, or through ingestion of food or water contaminated with feces from an infected bird or mammal. Carriers of the organism may appear healthy but shed the organism periodically in their feces. There are no distinctive signs associated with salmonellosis in wild birds. Different species and ages may exhibit different signs even when infected with the same strain.



A Pine Siskin exhibiting some of the signs of Salmonellosis such as fluff/ruffled feathers, droopiness. Below shows same bird unsteadily perching on a dish.



Commonly reported signs include ruffled feathers, droopiness, diarrhea, and severe lethargy; chronically infected birds often appear severely emaciated. Sick birds may also be observed to seizure. Birds fly many miles, especially during migration periods. Remember, just because a bird shows up at your feeders with signs of the disease, doesn't mean it became infected at your feeding stations. Because the disease is spread through close contact with other birds and their feces, the USGS National Wildlife Health Center recommends taking down your feeders for at least a week (even two) to allow the birds to disperse and help stop the spread of the disease.

First Babies

While it's technically true that our first babies of 2016 were orphan bear cubs, we still keep track of when the "normal" baby season starts. This year a litter of four-five day old Eastern Gray Squirrels were admitted on March 12 after their nest was disturbed by some demolition work. Attempts were made to give mom a chance to return, but they were unsuccessful. It was too dangerous to the babies to wait any longer so they were admitted. Good thing, too, as one was in the early stages of hypothermia. With eyes closed, hairless neonates, things can become critical and life-threatening very quickly!



Two of the five-day old Eastern Gray Squirrels.

The March 12 admission date is about three weeks earlier than typical. If you've been watching the wild migrants and our wild neighbors shouldn't surprise you. The animals are ready for winter to be over as much as we are.



Another photo of two of the four continuing to develop.

Great Horned Owl

On December 15, 2016, a Great Horned Owl was admitted to Wild Instincts. She had flown down into someone's long and narrow garden, colliding with the perimeter fence. She severely injured her shoulder, which then made it impossible for her to get enough lift to get fly up over the fence to get out.

Her shoulder injury was severe enough, we weren't sure she would ever fly again. As always, we would do our best. The rest would be up to her.

It was a tentative day when she was finally deemed well enough to move outside to a restricted flight enclosure.

We all held our breath to see if she would manage to fly to the higher perches.

She didn't at first, but just like with any physical therapy, it takes more time.

When it became certain she would be able to fly again and could be released, we set about fixing something from her past- a dislocated toe.

This dislocation resulted in the talon of that toe pointing back in the direction of her foot, making perching and catching food cumbersome.

On Friday, March 18, Dr. Goodroad and staff of Northern Paws Animal Hospital volunteered their time and services to surgically remove the end of the digit with a laser, much like the declawing procedure for a cat.



Digit to be removed is isolated.



Making laser incision.



Anesthetized and ready to begin the procedure.



Starting to wake up minus one talon.

She's back inside until sutures dissolve and the incision heals. Then she'll be moved back outside for pre-release conditioning. We expect her to be released in approximately 4-6 weeks. Great horned owls have already nested and are currently raising their young. She missed this mating season, but will be able to fly free again soon.

Eagle Territories and Courtship

Some area bald eagles stay here all year around. Some of them migrate a short distance south. A popular spot is near Sauk City, WI where the hydroelectric dam keeps the river open and makes fishing easier. Wherever it is the migrants chose to winter, now is the time they head back. Eagles are setting up territories. With the very healthy population of eagles, that means territorial fights as they all compete for space and the best nesting spots. Males most commonly will fight amongst themselves for their territory, but females have also been known to get into fights with other females. We've even been called out on fights where the two eagles get locked together in air and won't let go. They crash to the ground still locked together. We admitted the loser of a less dramatic territorial fight near Minocqua on March 21st.



Bald eagle bloodied from a territorial dispute, but also has lead toxicity.

He is bloodied and tattered, like a person who recently lost a fight. However, because we test all our eagle admissions for lead, we know he also has extremely high blood lead levels. He wasn't presenting with any clinical signs of lead poisoning which is why his extremely high reading surprised us. He was immediately started on treatment for lead poisoning. This brings to mind an interesting question. Did he lose this fight because he has lead poisoning? Did that make him more vulnerable? Or is it because he is not mature or breeding so wasn't really setting up territory but was engaging in this behavior for practice for the future and is just inexperienced. Besides establishing territories, eagles are engaging in courtship behavior. Sometimes this can be very physically demanding and even dangerous. This whirling nuptial flight has the courting pair locking talons and whirling through the air, disengaging before they hit the ground. It's often referred to as cartwheeling or even the death spiral - with good reason. Sometimes things can go awry. On Saturday, March 19th, we were called out on that exact situation. Eye-witnesses saw the courtship flight along with the cartwheeling. Except something went wrong and there was an injured eagle on the ground. We went to the location to find wing marks and blood in the snow. We recovered a large female with a life-ending injury to her right wing.

Species	1/1-3/24/16	
American Robin		1
Bald Eagle		7
Barred Owl		1
Big Brown Bat		7
Black Bear		3
Black-capped Chickadee		2
Bobcat		1
Canada Goose		1
Common Grackle		1
Common Raven		2
Eastern Chipmunk		1
Eastern Gray Squirrel		5
Eastern Gray Tree Frog		1
Great Horned Owl		1
Little Brown Bat		2
Mourning Dove		1
Northern Saw-Whet Owl		1
Pileated Woodpecker		1
Pine Siskin		7
Porcupine		1
Raccoon		1
Rock Dove		2
Ruffed Grouse		1
Tree Sparrow		1
Western Painted Turtle		2
Total		54

SPECIAL RAFFLE

Have you ever seen an eagle from afar and wondered how big it was really? Have you ever wanted to feel the rush of the wind from their wings in your hair? You could get your chance. We are raffling the chance to release an eagle! There will only be 500 tickets sold so there's a 1 in 500 chance of winning! Drawing will be on the Wild for Wine & Cheese Cruise on September 17th. You need not be present to win, but you must be 18 or older. Tickets are 1 for \$10 or 3 for \$25. We will be selling tickets at lots of different events and of course at Wild Instincts. Tickets will be on sale from May 1st until September 17th or while supplies last. Watch for more details!

Upcoming Events

Wild for Wine & Cheese Cruise
 Saturday, Sept 17th 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.
 Wisconsin River Cruises, Rhinelander

Eagle Release Raffle Drawing
 Saturday, Sept 17th
 1:00 p.m. during the Wild for Wine & Cheese Cruise

