

HOW WE COPE WITH SEVERE WEATHER

Some of you may have wondered how we manage to care for our wild patients during severe weather . The answer is simple; we listen to the weather forecasts and, when heavy snows like our last back-to-back storms are predicted, we simply bunk in. The following is a short journal regarding our most recent 30"+ snows.

Fri., 2/5, 1st Day: Polly and I prepared to "bunk in." We get along well and didn't mind a new adventure. We thought we had plenty of food and clean clothes. After closing at 5 PM, we settled in on our cots and put in a video tape of our favorite movies. (We do not get TV reception, our radio could pick up only a couple of stations and the internet was out.) Good dinner, Shrimp Scampi. Thank goodness for the microwave. At midnight, we lost power. Unlike normal people who would simply call it a day and go to sleep, we chose to light a couple of candles and chat. Power came back on at 3 AM.

Sat., 2/6, 2nd Day: Morning arrived and we surveyed the scene through the window. The snow was heavy and Polly's car was mostly buried. Mine, a Jeep, fared better. At this point, no one could get in or out of the center. We decided we were getting too old to stay up until 3 AM. We managed to get all the animals cleaned and fed, kept up with the laundry and straightened the center to be ready for tomorrow. We answered the phones, regardless of the time, and tried to advise people on what they could do with injured animals until they could get to a rehabber. We ate dinner, watched video tapes and watched the icicles grow.

Sun., 2/7, 3rd Day: The scene out the window was beautiful. We felt like we were a million miles from civilization. Any moment, a dog sled team could have gone mushing through and we would not have been surprised. All the animals were cleaned and fed but we were beginning to worry about the accumulation of trash that we could not get to the dumpster. We continued answering the phone and thought about the animals that were sitting in people's bathrooms across the state waiting for help. We kept up with the laundry, stashed the trash on a side porch and straightened up the center. Ate something and watched video tapes and the ever growing icicles.

Mon., 2/8, 4th Day: Miracle of miracles, the drive was plowed, kind of, by a Park & Planning truck. Our cars were still pretty buried. Our Office Manager, Beverle, and her husband, Clancy, managed to get to us and kindly dug my car out and shoveled a path from the drive to the front door. Our incarceration might be coming to an end. We managed to get all the animals cleaned and fed but were running out of steam and ready to go home. A bat was admitted at 5:30 PM. We decided we really had to bathe ourselves so evicted the snapping turtle from the bathtub, scrubbed it out and washed as best we could. We, also, managed to do our personal laundry so we would have clean clothes in the morning. Some thawing had taken place which caused the icicles (we'd become rather fond of them) to start slanting toward the house as if they were trying to get in. Perhaps we've been here too long. Grabbed something to eat and watched the video of Life of Birds.

Tues., 2/9, 5th Day: Morning looked good. Office Manager Beverle and Clinic Supervisor Kathleen arrived along with two great volunteers, Eve and Lee. We admitted a Great Horned Owl from Montgomery County Humane. Polly and I decided there were enough people here that we could pretty much take the day off. We managed to get out for a couple of hours to go to the bank and grocery store to restock. Although we could have gone home, the new weather forecast did not sound good. We decided we'd better stick it out for one more night. We ate some dinner, watched the icicles melt and watched the Life of Birds. Great day! Didn't have to answer a single phone call or clean one cage!

Wed., 2/10, 6th Day: The gods must be very angry! More snow with a strong, gusty wind. We gave the indoor animals food and water but simply couldn't manage to clean every cage unless it was really dirty. The trash was still piling up. The outdoor raccoons and squirrels would simply have to do what all wildlife does; hunker down and wait for a break in the weather. We could not get to their cages. Laundry piling up, no more energy. I think we must have eaten something. Put on another video tape and fell into an exhausted sleep.

Thurs., 2/11, 7th Day: The morning scene was absolutely surreal. Could have been in the Antarctic. Park & Planning re-plowed the drive and, later, S & S Snow Removal arrived to clear things enough so there was a little room to park. Polly managed to tromp down a path to the squirrel cages but, despite her best efforts (heroic, in fact), could not get to the raccoons. The drifts were simply too deep and half-way there, I was compelled to call her back in for her own safety. Fortunately, our animals are fed better than we are and it shouldn't hurt them to miss dinner, again. Still, we worried. The inside animals were fed and watered and cages were cleaned on an "As Needed" basis. Laundry and trash getting a bit deep. No energy. Then, no heat! Our building is heated by a propane boiler. The propane truck had not been able to get down the drive and, if it could, they would not be able to get to the tank. We dragged out all our space heaters and placed them in strategic positions. If the water pipes burst, we would really be in trouble. At least, we had electricity as long as the heaters didn't trip any circuit breakers. Have to worry about that in the morning. Can't remember if we ate. We put on another video tape, watched the icicles melt and re-freeze and went to sleep.

Fri., 2/12, 8th Day: The drive is negotiable with a little parking available. Animals that had been in bathrooms started arriving. A gift from heaven, Face Book fans, Jeff and Jonelle arrived with snow shovels and strong backs. They cleared a path to the front door, shoveled in front of my car and, then, shoveled out to the propane tank and the raccoon cages. Propane was scheduled for delivery and arrived by 5 PM. All's well with the world! Polly and I finally made it home that night and our own beds have never felt better.

By Sat., all staff and volunteers were able to arrive and Polly and I were able to take a real day off. I must offer my profound thanks to all the people who helped us out during this historic snow event. I might add that, when we finally reached the raccoons and squirrels with fresh food and water, not a single one expressed the slightest amount of gratitude! Par for the course.