

Second Thoughts

SECOND CHANCE WILDLIFE CENTER NEWSLETTER

March 2017



A NEW HOME FOR SECOND CHANCE

Stepping Up to the Challenges of the Future

After 20 years of hard service, the structure that currently houses Second Chance Wildlife Center's operations is ready for retirement. Nearly 80,000 animals have gone through the facility, brought by a steady stream of concerned residents and animal control officers. Each year about 70 volunteers and interns join the small staff, putting in long hours caring for the animal patients. All of this intense work has taken a toll on the building, which was not in very good shape when Second Chance moved in.

The house was never designed to function as a clinic for distressed wild animals. Staff has struggled to make it work as best they can, but certain limitations simply cannot be surmounted. The animal care rooms cannot be isolated from general foot traffic, even though best practices dictate that noise and exposure to people in such rooms be kept to a bare minimum. The room for waterfowl and aquatic turtles does not have running water, so staff carry these patients down the hall to a bathroom, where they take turns enjoying a regular bathtub. Bats, which as "rabies vector species" must be kept under quarantine conditions, are housed in a walk-in closet.

But perhaps the worst problem is that, in the busy season, the center is constantly running out of room for incoming patients and has to improvise in order to accommodate all the animals people bring it.

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A STICKY SITUATION

In the rehabbers' world, there are few cases as difficult to treat and heartbreaking as animals who get stuck on glue traps. These pads, covered with a stubborn adhesive, are meant to grab any animal who steps on them and never let go. As the animal struggles to free itself, it invariably gets more hopelessly mired in the adhesive. Eventually, it dies on the pad.

That's bad enough for the intended victims of the traps — mice and rats — but the adhesive is not selective with its victims. Second Chance frequently gets birds, snakes, toads, and other unfortunate animals who encounter the traps. Most often, they are attracted by insects who get stuck on the pads and appear to offer an easy meal.

A young male Northern Cardinal was among the many glue trap victims we freed last year. A Potomac man placed the trap in his open garage, hoping to catch mice. Instead it caught the bird, then just a few weeks out of the nest.

The art and science of removing an animal from a glue trap is complicated and generally involves a series of different techniques, which should not be attempted without hours of training beforehand. Safe removal is nearly impossible without the use of an animal-safe, non-toxic, anti-sticky powder that rehabbers keep on hand

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Dear Friend of Wildlife and Second Chance,

We live, as landscape designer Claudia West reminds us, in a post-wild world. That should be clear to anyone in Maryland, one of the six states in the Union that have absolutely zero acres of designated wilderness. Only 7.6 percent of our state's land is publicly owned — New Jersey, by contrast, has 18.3 percent— and much of Maryland's public land is dedicated solely to some form of human use.

A few “natural areas” remain, but they are under constant assault, if not from developers, then from invasive plants, climate change, and other factors that are nearly impossible to control and relentlessly threaten the areas' value as “natural habitat” for wildlife.

And yet, we still have wildlife, even in our most urban areas. How is that possible? Dutch ecologist Menno Schilthuizen explains, “Combined with the ongoing loss of natural habitat and the attraction of easily accessible food sources in the city, the emergence of the unique urban ecosystem has driven species formerly living in shaded forests and wild rivers to call this novel habitat home.”

Our urban and suburban communities are not, however, easy places for wild animals to survive. Some cannot make it work. Others are making a last stand here for the simple reason that they have no choice.

Whether they succeed in surviving is largely up to us. Many of us are actively helping — with bird feeders, native plants, bird tape on our windows, no pesticides in our gardens, and a corner of our yard left to grow as it will (as was the practice at St. Francis's monastery).

Our yards are not wilderness, by a long shot. Still, when we're watching a butterfly emerge from its chrysalis or a hummingbird flit from one cardinal flower to another, we drink from the same clear spring of nature that so enthralled and enriched Rachel Carson and Henry David Thoreau.

But unlike the naturalists of generations past, if we want wild animals in our world, we're going to have to go to work for them, beginning in our own backyards.

Sincerely,



Jim Monsma
Executive Director

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for this purpose. That step is followed by a series of equally complicated special baths to remove the adhesive's residue. On numerous occasions, Second Chance has had to send glue-trap patients to Tri-State Bird Rescue and Research in Delaware for this stage. As trained oil-spill rescuers, the Tri-State rehabilitators have technical bathing skills that our staff does not.

Despite the best of intentions, would-be rescuers who decide to free the animal themselves, generally with the aid of vegetable oil, further hurt many of the victims of glue traps. By the time we get the bird, much needless damage has been done — torn skin, broken feathers, dislocated joints — in addition to that inflicted by the trap. Plus, the oil ruins feathers and sickens the birds, who absorb it through their skin.

If you should encounter an animal on a glue trap, cover any exposed adhesive with paper towels, so that the animal does not get stuck worse than it already is, and bring the trap to a rehabilitator.

As for the young cardinal, our rehabbers got him off the trap and then through the series of baths. Following that, he had to spend several weeks in our “quiet room” as he grew new feathers, a week in the outdoor aviary re-acclimating to the weather, and then he was on his way.

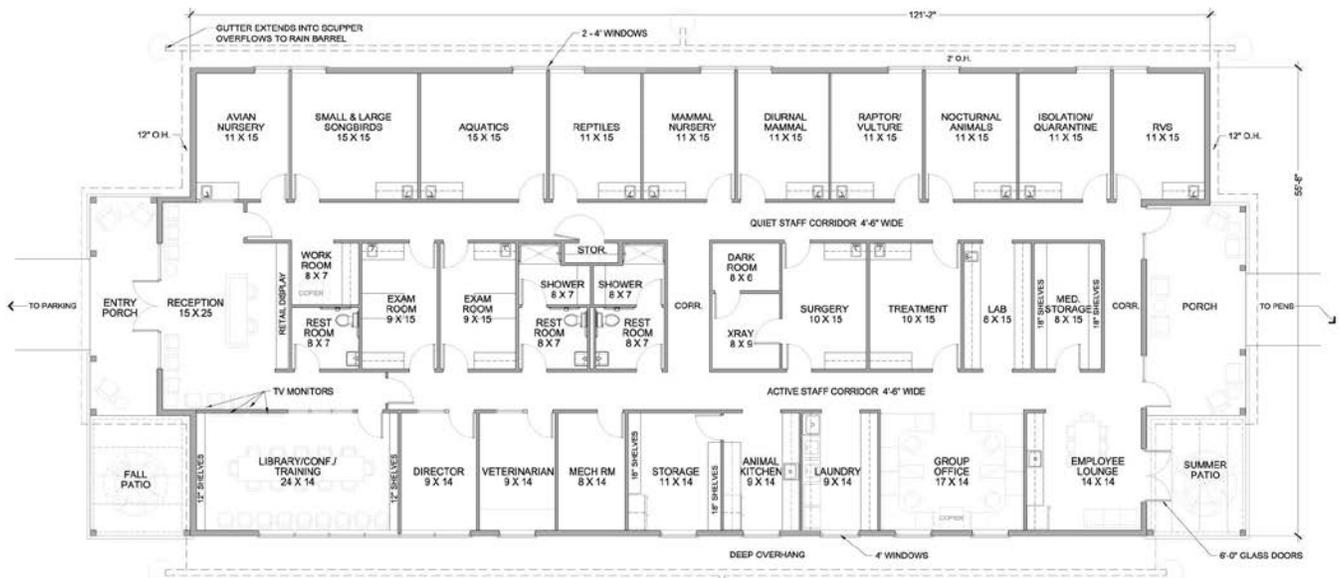
When people first learn of glue traps, they often ask us “Are those things legal?” Sadly they are. They shouldn't be. And though legal, for humane reasons, they certainly shouldn't be used to catch anything.

**Shop
Smile.Amazon.Com
and choose
Second Chance
Wildlife Center
as your charity.**

**Every purchase you make
will help injured and
orphaned wild animals!**



amazon smile
You shop. Amazon gives.



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Given the importance of its mission — and the high esteem in which the public holds this mission — it is clear that the time has come to find Second Chance a new home, one that works well for animals and is worthy of the public’s confidence and the staff and volunteers’ diligent efforts.

Second Chance’s Permanent, Pioneering Center

The task of designing a suitable facility is already well underway. Second Chance began by reviewing their 20 years of rehabilitation experience to compile a list of features and specifications that the new facility would have to incorporate. Armed with that information, architect Rick Donnally of DVA Architects came up with a design concept for a unique facility that enhances work efficiency and supports Second Chance’s wide diversity of wild animal species as they recover from illness and injuries.



One of the challenges DVA Architects grappled with is that animals of different species have widely divergent needs. Some need bright, full-spectrum lighting; others need dim lighting. Some spend almost all of their time in water. Most need lots of fresh air. Some need quiet, while others are constantly making noise. Animals of different species frequently need to be isolated from each other, and some must be strictly quarantined. Avoiding stress is a constant concern.

With that in mind, the new center’s design splits the facility into rooms arranged along a “quiet corridor” (for animal housing) and workspace along an “active corridor” (for noisier activities). Species have rooms designed for their individual needs: aquatic animals have constant access to filtered water; rooms for nocturnal animals are dimly lit; and noisier animals are kept far away from those who require quiet.

Treatment rooms — for initial examinations, ongoing medical procedures, x-rays, and surgeries — occupy a central and convenient space between the two corridors. Being all on one level, there can be no traffic jams on a stairway (as is currently the case), and the entire floor plan is laid out to promote efficiency.

Beyond that, the new facility accommodates the organization’s educational mission through exhibit, classroom, and meeting space. We envision holding classes on

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wildlife, trainings for center volunteers and future rehabilitators, and programs for young people interested in the natural world.

Being a pioneer in the field of sustainable design, Donnally has made the plans for Second Chance's new home maximally "green." Built to LEED platinum standards, the new center is to be a "net-zero" energy facility, harnessing the earth's natural heat sink and the sun's power to produce electricity, maintain a comfortable temperature, heat water, and provide daylighting throughout. Rainwater is retained and recycled for toilets and other non-potable uses.

The structure is to be constructed of rapidly renewable or recyclable materials and to have an extremely low carbon footprint. "Super-insulated" walls, roof, and floors save energy.

Making the Dream a Reality

While the design of the new building is nearly done and some preliminary fund raising trials are yielding promising results, one outstanding question remains: The future site has yet to be determined. Second Chance's board of directors has been holding high-level discussions with the Metropolitan-National Capital Parks and Planning Commission, our current landlord, about the possibility of erecting the new facility at the center's current location.

This possibility has some obvious advantages, but two major drawbacks would greatly increase the cost of building there. For one, to accommodate construction, a new entrance would likely need to be built from Fieldcrest Road. And for another, the property's designation as a "special protection area" — it shields the headwaters of Rock Creek — makes the question of a new septic system a sensitive one. Neither problem is insurmountable, but both add significant costs to the budget for the entire project.

Meanwhile, the board remains open to considerations of alternative sites in Montgomery County. The center needs a minimum of five acres, isolated from traffic and other human disturbances, in a neighborhood where a wildlife rehabilitation center would be welcome. Ideas for such a location can be shared with the center via telephone at 301-926-9453 or email at info@scwc.org.

Annual Baby Shower



Saturday, May 6

noon to 4:00

**Native plant sale • Children's activities •
Animal ambassadors • Refreshments**

See www.scwc.org for details



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