When the COVID-19 pandemic kept Second Chance volunteers, interns, and some staff at home for months, these three amazing ladies (Left to right: Clinic Director Kathleen Handley and Clinic Technicians Drew Hoover and Hannah Wilson) heroically cared for the animals at our Center seven days a week with long, staggered shifts. And, they did so during one of our most intense times of year - the start of “Baby Season.”

As I write this, we are still operating with far fewer people than in the past, baby animals fill the Center, and adult animals arrive frequently. But, thanks to these wonderful people, returning staff, a few rehabber friends, and our wonderful volunteer veterinarian (Dr. Patrice Klein), we continue to provide critical care services during the most challenging and stressful situations we have faced as an organization. I am so proud to work with these wildlife heroes, and I know that you join me in thanking them for their dedication.

- Maureen Smith, President of Second Chance Wildlife Center

Due to the pandemic, it is more important than ever that you call before bringing an animal to Second Chance to ensure that we have capacity for more animals that day and to adhere to our new admissions process. 301-926-9453

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

• Saving a squirrel enveloped in hardened insulation foam.
• Will this injured Cardinal ever see or fly again?
• Caring for baby birds is more complex than you might think. Go behind the scenes.

And more!
As you read this, we are entering into the phase of “Baby Season” in which our most frequent admissions are injured or orphaned baby birds. Birds are delicate creatures with a very fast metabolism. As a result, their health can deteriorate quickly if the correct actions are not taken immediately.

If you notice a bird (or any wild animal) that you believe needs help, the best thing you can do is call our experts for advice (301-926-9453) or visit the “Rescue Guidelines” section of our website (www.SCWC.org). Better yet, review those online guidelines now – before you need them.

First thing each morning, after we check every patient, we prepare breakfast for the animals. This includes “Bird Trays” – serving trays with nutrient-rich foods customized to meet the needs of each specific bird species that we are caring for that day, plus the syringes, tweezers, and bowls with which we feed them. The food we prepare can include mealworms soaked in vitamin-infused water, two different types of freshly handmade bird formula, defrosted crickets, and/or chopped fruit. Because baby bird foods and formulas lose some nutritional value with every passing hour after preparation, new bird trays must be made frequently throughout the day.

Next, it’s time to start the first of many feedings. Due to their high metabolisms, hatchling and nestling birds must be fed every 30-60 minutes. Fledgling birds are fed at least 6 times each day depending on how much they are eating and if they begin eating on their own.

As with baby squirrels, feeding birds without causing them to die from inhaling liquid or food into their lungs takes a well-trained and skilled hand. This is one of the reasons why we advise the public never to give food or liquid to an animal that they find.

Upon admission, baby birds are identified (they often look nothing like they will when they are older), then weighed and housed in a unit with a colored tag that indicates which diet they should be receiving and how often they should be fed. Nestlings and hatchlings are placed into temperature and humidity-controlled incubators because they do not have feathers - or mom - to keep them warm. Fledglings are placed into one of our indoor units or in an outdoor enclosure. Deciding on the best enclosure is one of many steps in wild bird care that requires complete knowledge of each species’ lifestyle. More aggressive species must be housed alone. Cavity nesters need a cage with a hanging bird hut. Birds such as woodpeckers need the entirety of the cage lined in sheets of bark so that they do not break their beaks when pecking. Nuthatches and woodpeckers prefer taller cages because they are vertical climbers. The list goes on.

Staff, volunteers, and interns must feed, clean, and medicate the baby birds, often several times a day. At least once a day staff reviews each bird’s progress to determine if they are developing as they should be, if they are ready to upgrade to a different enclosure, and if there are any developing or continuing health issues that need to be addressed.

continues on page 3
Caring for Baby Birds, continued from page 2

To fully understand baby bird season, imagine a room so full of chirping baby birds you can’t even hear the person talking to you from 5 feet away. Then imagine having to feed as many as 60 birds every 60 minutes and having to care for other patients, too! It is a very daunting task, and we thank everyone involved with the daily care that keeps us going, as well as all of you, our donors, who enable us to continue to provide the top notch food and equipment needed to give these babies the best chance of survival and release.

A Happy Ending to a Horrible Situation

In April, Animal Services brought us a squirrel covered in sticky and hardened insulation foam. From information we gathered, it is likely that someone was sealing their home to keep squirrels out and this one got stuck in it. He also had a abrasion on his right eye, was dehydrated and thin, and had fleas. His mouth was almost completely sealed shut.

Our Clinic Director, Kathleen Handley, sedated the squirrel and then painstakingly and expertly removed the foam - section by section -sometimes having to shave off areas of fur. Needless to say, this process over an hour to complete, with special care around the mouth, nose and eyes.

Due to his sore mouth, our team fed him formula with a syringe for the first week, but he was very fearful of humans and behaved aggressively. So, we began providing him with bowls of soft “mush” (a special squirrel formula) and he began to eat on his own quite well. In May, he was eating an adult squirrel diet of nuts and produces, and were were able to put him with two other squirrels his age for companionship.

On June 14th, having grown back much of his fur, we moved him and his companions to one of our outdoor enclosures, and they were released on June 28th. Another Second Chance Success Story!
In March, our clinic director, Kathleen Handley, brought in a northern cardinal that she found sitting in the middle of a busy road unable to move, presumably due to a vehicle impact. The female cardinal had bruises up and down the left side of her body, an open laceration, and trauma to the left eye. Fortunately, we did not find any fractured bones. We treated her wounds and her eye, gave her fluids, and administered medicines to help with swelling. After all of that we let her get some rest. It had been a long day for her.

In the following days, we continued to give her medication and apply ointment to her injured eye. Fortunately, the accident had not affected her appetite, as she heartily ate the food she was offered. She initially had some trouble standing up but soon she was standing and perching without issue. We had to wrap her wing to her body to prevent the wound on her side from re-opening.

By mid-April, the swelling in her eye had gone down and her wound had healed. We were finally able to remove her stitches and take her wing wrap off, and we gave her some space to exercise her wing. Just like in humans, a limb that is restrained for an extended period can lose muscle tone, and we needed to make sure the cardinal regained the strength needed to fly. Soon after, we moved her to our outdoor songbird cage, where she could practice flying and acclimate to the outdoors. In May, we were able to release her back into the wild.

Thank you for providing us with the resources needed to properly care for animals like this cardinal. We could not do what we do without the help of wonderful friends like you!