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**WILDLIFE
REHABILITATORS'
NETWORK**
Of British Columbia

Feral Cat Welfare Update

By Lani Sheldon, WRNBC, Wildlife Rescue Association of BC



At our 2009 AGM on Grouse Mountain, we welcomed Sherril Guthrie, who gave a comprehensive presentation on Calgary's cat licensing program and feral cat populations, as they relate to wildlife welfare and conservation groups. In this past year Guthrie and others have made significant developments that she would like to share with the WRNBC membership.

First, a documentary titled CAT CRAZE, based on Guthrie's research and directed by Maureen Palmer, is currently in pre-production, with filming to follow. Oscar nominee Cordell Baker has signed on to complete the animation for the documentary.

Second, in December 2009 the Urban Wildlands Group in Los Angeles, along with multiple conservation groups, won a court victory forcing the immediate halt of Trap-Neuter-Return of feral cats pending an environmental review (see <http://www.ammoland.com/2009/12/13/court-orders-stop-feral-cat-tnr/>). Recently, California's Department of Public Health recommended reducing feral cat populations due to public health concerns such as Toxoplasmosis. Locally, Vancouver Island had a recent outbreak of Toxoplasmosis within the municipal water system that was directly linked to feral cats.

Guthrie hopes these developments "set the stage for more responsible cat ownership throughout North America, which will hopefully move us towards a new reality where safer coexistence and great care of our wildlife is top-of-mind."

Oiled Wildlife Trust Update

By Coleen Doucette, Oiled Wildlife Society, WRNBC Vice President



During the 2010 AGM, Coleen Doucette gave a presentation concerning oiled wildlife response preparedness in BC. WRNBC is a member of the Oiled Wildlife Trust (OWT) in partnership with the BC SPCA, Oiled Wildlife Society of BC (OWS), Wildlife Rescue Association of BC, Vancouver Aquarium Marine Mammal Rescue Program and Focus Wildlife Canada. As a member of this energetic team, we are working towards developing proactive, collaborative relationships with regulatory agencies and industry representatives. We are currently working with BC Ministry of Environment to establish agreed upon guidelines and protocols to be followed when wildlife is affected by oil spills. We also hope to develop a community-training program that will grow to become province wide. WRNBC will be partnering with OWS to build this educational program, and we are looking for potential volunteer support to work on the training project. If you have an interest in getting involved with oiled wildlife response First Responder training, please contact Coleen at coleendoucette@me.com for further information on how you can help.



2010 WRNBC AGM – Greatness on Gabriola!

By Kimberly Reid, WRNBC, BC SPCA Wild ARC



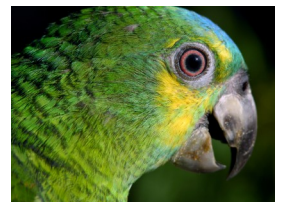
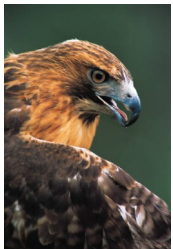
This year our Annual General Meeting was held at The Haven on Gabriola Island. Hosted by GROWLS, the Gabriola Rescue of Wildlife Society, it was a great weekend with oceanside dining, quaint cottages, a hot tub and wildlife! Members came from around the province, traveling as far as 1400 kilometres (congratulations Angelika and Peter Langen, recipient of the travel bursary), representing 12 different wildlife rehabilitation organizations. The social atmosphere at The Haven helped rehabbers and volunteers come together to share knowledge and experience, making connections that will save lives.

During the formalities of the meeting itself, we said goodbye to two longstanding and valued members of the Board, Jackie McQuillan, our president, and Sara Dubois. Both are starting new adventures, Jackie as a full-time mom, and Sara beginning her PhD. We thank them for their outstanding service and wish them good luck! Angelika Langen, our bear rehabber from Smithers, has graciously accepted the president's responsibilities, and is already working hard on your behalf. Finally, one new member was elected to the team (me!) which makes our Board complete! Next, we were happy to present Melanie Gordon with the education bursary. Melanie is soon to be a veterinary technician, and will use her new skills at Wild ARC this summer! After the more official dealings, we opened up the floor for each member in attendance to introduce themselves to the group. This was a great way to start the weekend, as names suddenly became faces, and strangers became friends.



Filling each day we had amazing speakers on a variety of topics. Liz Ciocea introduced GROWLS, and wildlife on Gabriola are truly lucky to have such well organized, trained and passionate volunteers ready at all times to rescue and transport wildlife in need. Any centre looking to develop such a program could definitely learn from their experience. Coleen Doucette introduced the Oiled Wildlife Trust and discussed BC's preparedness for oil spill emergencies. Ending her presentation, she put a call out for emergency response volunteers, which you can learn more about by contacting her directly!

Switching gears, Tracy Anderson spoke of her experience as a rehabber in Belize, and we were all amazed at the many welfare issues surrounding wildlife in this and in neighbouring countries. Marcy Potter spoke of her time at Bat World, Texas, and gave us helpful tips on identification, housing and feeding techniques, and Meghann Cant outlined her research and results on the growth and survival of rehabilitated bear cubs. Gill and Robyn Radcliffe showed us the applicability of falconry techniques in rehabilitation and discussed this as an alternative to flight pens. They also gave a very informative demonstration on feather imping, a technique many of us have read about, but not yet seen in action.



Finally, Kip Parker, with his presentation on Setting Limits and Saving Lives, really stole the show. Whether it be for ourselves or someone we know, it became clear the difficulty, yet importance, of setting our own limits. This opened up a room-wide roundtable discussion that could have lasted all day! To top off the weekend, GROWLS volunteers offered to take everyone on a nature walk! A great way to relax before the long drive home!

All in all, it was a very successful AGM. A big thank you goes out to each and every one of you who traveled far and wide to attend, and to GROWLS for being such a gracious host. With your feedback, we are already planning for 2011!

Like mother, like cubs?

By Meghann Cant, WRNBC, UBC Animal Welfare Program

Do “garbage” bears raise “garbage” cubs?

For many biologists and wildlife managers, the answer to this question is a resounding “yes.” They believe that associating humans with food, or food-conditioning, is an acquired behaviour, transferred from generation to generation.



There are two main theories on how this transmission occurs: (1) cubs inherit the behaviour from their parents or (2) mothers teach the behaviour to their cubs. Food-conditioning is thought to be the result of either or both of these processes.

According to these theories, food-conditioned bears should be genetically related. The reality, however, may not be so simple. Recent research has shown that neither genetic inheritance nor mother-offspring learning is the predominant force behind the transfer of food-conditioned behaviour.*

Researchers analyzed DNA samples from two black bear populations. Each population contained both food-conditioned and non-food-conditioned individuals. Within each population, they found that: (1) food-conditioned and non-food-conditioned bears were genetically similar and (2) cubs of food-conditioned mothers did not necessarily grow up to be food-conditioned themselves. Tracking the bears allowed the researchers to determine that, after the cubs left their mothers to live and forage on their own, the majority stayed away from human food sources.

This study has important implications. “Garbage” bears are often destroyed for the risk they pose to human safety. However, it appears that food-conditioned bears do not automatically raise food-conditioned cubs. Thus, other, more effective options may be available for dealing with food-conditioned females and their young. As the authors assert, “Management strategies that remove problem individuals to eliminate the transfer of behaviour between mother and cubs likely will have only limited effect.”

Clearly, further research is needed to understand exactly what factors play a role in the development of food-conditioning. In the meantime, experts agree that we should focus our attention on securing or eliminating human food attractants to avoid creating food-conditioned bears in the first place.



*Breck, S.W., C.L. Williams, J.P. Beckmann, S.M. Matthews, C.W. Lackey, and J.J. Beecham. 2008. Using genetic relatedness to investigate the development of conflict behavior in black bears. *Journal of Mammalogy* 89(2): 428-434.

Newsletter Content Coordinator: Lani Sheldon Newsletter Editing: Kimberly Reid
Newsletter Layout and Design: Meghann Cant

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Upcoming Courses

IWRC

Fluid Therapy

Online

On-demand



Wound Management

Online

On-demand

<http://www.iwrc-online.org/training/calendar.cfm>

Noah's Wish

In-Field Disaster Response Volunteer Training

Quesnel

June 5 – 6, 2010



<http://www.noahswish.info/VolunteerTraining/LocationsDates.html>

News Brief



Bear Aware Program Expands:

The provincial government recently announced that it will be providing \$357,000 over two years to bring the Bear Aware program to more communities around BC this summer. Bear Aware is an educational program of the British Columbia Conservation Foundation, and leads bear-proofing efforts at the community level. Bear Aware community coordinators work closely with the public, conservation officers and local officials to identify and resolve bear-related issues.

Visit http://www2.news.gov.bc.ca/news_releases_2009-2013/2010ENV0010-000303.htm for the full story.

What has your Board of Directors been up to?

- Working within the Oiled Wildlife Trust in recent meetings with stakeholders and regulators, developing wildlife response guidelines for BC
- Reviewing and updating our bylaws and guidelines for protocol of care
- Starting to plan the 2011 AGM!
- Updating our website – **check it out!**

Current WRNBC Board Members

Angelika Langen, President - angelika@wildlifeshelter.com
Coleen Doucette, Vice President - coleendoucette@me.com
Marcy Potter, Treasurer & Membership - marcy.potter@gmail.com
Lani Sheldon, Secretary - lanisheldon@shaw.ca
Meghann Cant, Director-at-Large - mbcant@yahoo.com
Kimberly Reid, Director-at-Large - kimberly78@shaw.ca

Help us save paper and reduce costs! If you would prefer to receive your newsletter by *email only*, please contact our Membership Secretary, Marcy Potter, at marcy.potter@gmail.com.