



Chihuahuan Desert Wildlife Rescue Inc.

Newsletter
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Nurturing Nature

*S. Derrickson Moore
Las Cruces Sun-News*

Geri Tillett has been helping her fine feathered friends in her Las Cruces home and backyard aviary for more than 15 years. In the height of the summer season - prime time for nest falls and other birdy disasters - she has a full house, with critters inside, in incubators and padded cages. Outdoors, the birds recover and try their wings in aviary "halfway houses" - spacious cages with special doors and openings so the birds can decide for themselves when their rehabilitation is complete and fly back into the wild.

"This is a dove that college students just brought to me. They rescued it from someone who was kicking it as hard as he could," said Tillett, as she soothed the bird. "So far he seems OK, but he could be bleeding from internal injuries."

She has cared for as many as 600 birds a year.

"About 50 percent make it. That may not sound like much, but when you consider they're all in trouble when they come here, it's a pretty good record," she said.

She has cared for everything from sparrows and robins to a pelican, eagles and owls. She has also nursed back to health such diverse critters as baby ground squirrels, foxes and skunks in the cozy Las Cruces home and spacious yard she shares with her husband Rob and their pets, which include zebra finches, cockatiels and three dogs, Chili, Chandler and three-legged Jo-Jo.

She currently has no representatives of public bird enemy No. 1. "I love cats, but they are the number one cause of bird injuries. People need to keep their cats indoors. Next to habitat loss, domestic and feral cats are the cause of our declining songbird population," said Tillett. "Cats kept indoors also lead longer, healthier lives themselves. I kept my last three cats indoors and they lived from 17 to 20 years."

After the former teacher and her husband Rob, a retired NASA engineer, had raised their own two chil-

dren, they found their nest was not empty for long.

"I was president of the board of the Humane Society here. People brought in birds, and I started to bring them home," she said.

With the help of her mentor, regional wildlife rescue dispatcher and rehabilitator, Helen Bigelow of Anthony, Tillett soon established a reputation for her compassionate care of critters.

"In June, July and August, I work about 14 hours a day. By the end of May, I can have 40 or 50 birds here," she said.

An article she wrote for The Eagle, the newsletter of Chihuahuan Desert Wildlife Rescue Inc., chronicles a day that began at 5:30 a.m. with custom food and feeding techniques for different birds and emergency trips to secure such staples as earthworms and special berries.

During the day, she accepted several cat victims, including a sparrow, a robin fledgling and a nestling mockingbird. She lectured cat owners about keeping their pets indoors. She dispensed suggestions for care to callers, arranged transport for critters in need and arranged for a veterinarian to care for a severely wounded bird. Upon requests from New Mexico Department of Fish and Game officers, she agreed to provide emergency care for a Red-tailed Hawk and a fox pup.

She transported cages out to her backyard and accepted more critters: a nest of four nestlings from a tree pruner, a bat captured at New Mexico State University's Pan American Center and a Western Grebe disabled in a storm. She stocked her bathtub with live fish and the grebe settled in to dine before a successful release the next day.

Repeat feedings continued throughout the day, along with lots of cage transport.

(continued on page 2)

Nurturing *(continued from front)*

At 8 p.m., she was still on the go answering phone calls, updating records and preparing for another day.

Tillett is up before the birds and is busy long after they've settled in for the night.

"I wouldn't do this if I didn't love it. I really enjoy what I'm doing. It gives me a reason to get up in the morning," said Tillett, who must pay for state and federal permits authorizing her wildlife rehabilitation work.

She stressed that she has the help of volunteers, including people who transport birds and other wildlife to care and release sites.

"And Wilma Burch comes in to help me on a daily basis. She's wonderful," Tillett said.

Burch recounts stories of the imaginative methods they devise to save birds, including a surrogate parent program.

When the Tilletts found a pigeon nesting in their property, Geri "made an exchange with a infertile egg when the bird left the nest to feed. All Geri needs is more birds!" Burch quipped. "One day, Geri received a tiny baby pigeon and immediately had an ingenious idea. With some treats, we lured the bird from the nest, and Geri quickly exchanged the egg for the baby."

The foster mom, "Mrs. Pidge" and her mate "Mr. Pidge" adopted and raised the orphaned baby and the "Pidges" have become a friendly backyard fixture.

For bird emergencies or advice in Las Cruces, call Tillett at 522-4966. To support rehabilitation efforts, join Chihuahuan Desert Wildlife Rescue Inc., P.O. Box 96, Canutillo, Texas, 79835 or e-mail www.whc.net/dwr. Dues are \$10 individual or \$15 for families and include a quarterly newsletter subscription.

If a Baby Bird is Dumped From the Nest

1. Determine if the baby is in danger or abandoned before you "rescue" it. Often the parents are nearby and will feed and teach a feathered baby to fly.
2. Replace baby to its nest if possible, make a nest with a berry basket or clean butter or cottage cheese tub and tie it onto a limb in the tree from which you think the baby fell. It isn't true that the parents will reject the baby if you touch it. Confine cats and dogs for a few days.
3. If Nos. 1 and 2 do not work, remove baby to a small box or brown paper bag with tissue or soft cloth in the bottom.
4. Keep baby a) warm: set the box on a heating pad on "low" setting; and b) dark: to prevent shock and hyperactivity; and c) quiet: people noises naturally scare wildlife.
5. Call a rehabilitator nearest you. See directory on page 3.
6. Do not give baby birds liquids of any kind. They are quickly drowned by well-meaning people.

7. Do not feed anything to baby birds. They have very specific dietary needs.

8. Have patience: It's better to do little to a shocked or hurt baby than to do the wrong things.

Strange (?) Bedfellows

I received a call from a lady in Deming who happened to be the wife of the Pancho Villa State Park Director in Columbus, New Mexico. He had found an injured hawk and another bird that morning when he arrived at work. The young hawk had come down from its nest the day before, but this morning it was discovered that a pack of dogs had invaded the park the night before and had drug the hawk to the other side of the park, and since the hawk was just laying there, they assumed it was injured.

He asked his wife to call Game & Fish, but since it was the July 4th holiday weekend, no one answered the phones. The wife got on the internet and found CDWR and the closest rehabber was me. They called me and asked if they could bring the two birds to me that day.

They arrived a couple of hours later and inside the large box and laying on its side, was a young Swainson's Hawk and curled up beside it was a baby White Wing Dove! I couldn't help myself--I exclaimed, "You put that baby dove in with that hawk???" The



Juvenile Swainson's Hawk

lady said, "But they were curled up together and I didn't want to separate them".

I immediately remembered the story in Isaiah which tells of the lion laying down with the lamb. Such is the innocence of young creatures.

- Geri Tillett

Editor's Note: The hawk went to another rehabber and Geri kept the dove. The hawk was able to stand up two days later.

When we no longer know what to do we have come to our real work, and when we no longer know which way to go, we have begun our real journey. The mind that is not baffled is not employed. The impeded stream is the one that sings.

- Wendell Barry

*** CDWR DIRECTORY ***
www.whc.net/cdwr

Whom can you call in the El Paso/Las Cruces area when you find an injured/orphaned wild bird/animal?

EL PASO AREA

CDWR CHIEF DISPATCHERS

Helen Bigelow505-882-2910
 Debbie Lofton915-772-6011

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

Gloria Villaverde 577-9505

REHABILITATORS

Central/East

Bill Howe (turtles/snakes/lizards/small exotics)..... 772-0695
 Debbie Lofton (birds/water birds/sm raptors/sm mammals).. 772-6011
 Gloria Villaverde (reptiles)..... 577-9505

Northeast -

Charles/Carrol Bella (raptors/reptiles/mammals) 751-4711
 Holly Sanchez (small birds) 822-2162
 Deacon Foote (turtles & iguanas)..... 757-9330

West -

Helen Bigelow (raptors).....505-882-2910
 Carol Miller (birds, water birds) 584-7088
 Josie Karam (small mammals/birds/turtles)..... 920-7867

COOPERATING VETERINARIANS

Central -

El Paso Veterinary Hospital, 4101 Montana 566-7387
 Montana Animal Clinic, 1015 Chelsea 778-9588
 El Paso Animal Emergency Center, 2101 Texas 545-1148

East -

Johnsen Animal Hospital, 1851 N. Lee Trevino..... 592-6200
 Desert East Animal Hospital, 11635 Pelicano 855-4100
 Eastwood Animal Clinic, 9509 Montana..... 593-0713
 Americas Animal Clinic, 630 Americas Ave. 858-1971
 Animal Clinic, 7184 Alameda 778-5355

Northeast -

Skyline Veterinary Hospital, 4424 Titanic 755-7647
 Northeast Veterinary Clinic, 9405 Dyer 755-2231
 Fairbanks Animal Hospital, 5320-C Fairbanks..... 757-8387
 Harwood Veterinary Clinic, 4404-A Edgar Park..... 755-5653

West -

Crossroads Animal Hospital, 4910 Crossroads..... 584-3459
 Country Club Animal Clinic, 5470 Doniphan 833-0645
 Anthony Animal Clinic, 901 Franklin, Anthony TX..... 886-4558

TRANSPORTERS/TROUBLESHOOTERS

Northeast -

Joe/Inga Groff 755-2957
 Charlene Ruddock..... 755-5575
 Nancy Bain 822-9228

West -

Susie Jensen 877-4036

East -

Linn Anderson 859-5413
 Alan Phelps 598-2103

Chaparral, NM -

Jochen Lange 824-3090

LAS CRUCES AREA

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

Gerri Tillett..... 522-4966

REHABILITATORS

Gerri Tillett (birds)..... 522-4966
 Shirley Crain (rabbits & squirrels) 382-4530
 Las Cruces Reptile Rescue 373-1486

SILVER CITY

Margaret Cejka (birds, excluding raptors).....505-537-6624

COOPERATING VETERINARIANS

Calista Animal Hospital, 162 Wyatt Drive 525-1000
 Jornada Vet Clinic, 2399 Saturn Circle 382-1710
 East Lohman Vet. Clinic, 1700 E. Lohman 523-5654

TRANSPORTERS/TROUBLESHOOTERS

David/Sherri Byrd (raptors)..... 524-2314
 Abe Mendoza 382-1732
 Jack Diven Family 527-2661

In Sincere Appreciation

A huge thank you to our cooperating Veterinarians. They are so essential to our work. Please show your appreciation by supporting them.

Gerri Tillett would like to say: A warm thank you Wilma Burch for her third year of coming faithfully every day this summer to help. Also, to a new arrival from Boston, Roz Post, who discovered CDWR, and has been volunteering with me for several weeks now on her days off from her job at the new hospital in Las Cruces. A thank you to the City and County Animal Control for picking up birds from the public and delivering them to my door for rehab. And our faithful transporters, Abe Mendoza and the Jack Diven family. Thank you also, Kathy Tester, who brings us the newsprint (minus the ink) for the cage liners, drove her pickup and we took the three skunks I raised to her property ten miles north of Hatch. It is one of the most remote areas in this county so they were released close to the river and we left a pile of pecans, dog food, ears of fresh corn and water at the release site. When we left them they were trying to decide which to eat first--the pecans or the corn!

Thank you Westside Petsmart for your donation of three carts full of birdseed, mammal food, rat, food, etc.

Bird Brains Get Some New Names, And New Respect

By Rick Weiss
Washington Post Staff Writer

Their plumage can be beautiful, and many warble or sing. A few even seem kind of clever, in their way. But for all that is impressive about birds, most people would agree: "Brainy" they are not.

Now science is about to set the record straight. And the truth may be jarring for all those big-brained mammals for whom the very word for avian gray matter has come to mean "dummy." Today an international group of experts is publishing a call for scientists around the world to switch to a new set of words to describe the various parts of the avian brain -- a wholesale revision of terms that is rarely seen in science and the first total makeover of bird brain anatomy in more than a century.

The new system, which draws upon many of the words used to describe the human brain and has broad support among scientists, acknowledges the now overwhelming evidence that avian and mammalian brains are remarkably similar -- a fact that explains why many kinds of birds are not just twitchily resourceful but able to design and manufacture tools, solve mathematical problems and, in many cases, use language in ways that even chimpanzees and other primates cannot.

In particular, it reflects a new recognition that the bulk of a bird's brain is not, as scientists once thought, mere "basal ganglia" — the part of the brain that simply coordinates instincts. Rather, fully 75 percent of a bird's brain is an intricately wired mass that processes information in much the same way as the vaunted human cerebral cortex.

Accordingly, under the new system, no longer will a part of that avian cortex-like region be referred to as the "archistriatum," with its Latin root that implies primitive. As of today it is the "arcopallium," which means, in effect, "arched structure in a cognitively sophisticated area."

"It's the opposite of sticks and stones -- names do matter when it comes to how scientists and other people think about things," said Duke University neuroscientist Erich Jarvis, a leader of the Avian Brain Nomenclature Consortium, whose manifesto appears in the February issue of the journal *Nature Reviews Neuroscience*.

The old system, Jarvis said, stunted scientists' imaginations when it came to appreciating birds' brainpower. The new system revamps about 95 percent of the 1,000 or so terms that scientists use to describe avian brain structure.

"It's long overdue," said Evan Balaban, a behavioral neuroscientist at McGill University in Montreal. "Changing a name by itself may not seem earth-shattering, but it reflects an important change in knowledge."

The problem goes back to the 19th century, when German naturalist Ludwig Edinger did the first careful studies of avian neuroanatomy and labeled the myriad parts of the bird brain. He had a good eye for detail, Jarvis said. But he was trapped in the political and religious thinking of his day, which presumed that evolution is a process that goes from simplest to more complicated and from dumber to smarter, all culminating in the appearance of humans, who were seen as closest to God.

In keeping with that view, Edinger's naming system relied heavily (*continued on page 5*)

*** CDWR ***

El Paso / Las Cruces

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The Purpose of CDWR

Wildlife rehabilitation is the care of injured or orphaned wildlife for return, where possible, to the wild. Successful rehabilitation takes a lot of time, a lot of effort and no small amount of money.

It is challenging work, done by special people. Chihuahuan Desert Wildlife Rescue is a nonprofit organization which exists to help the rehabilitators in the El Paso/Las Cruces area. Our purposes are to:

- ♦ provide a volunteer network to assist active rehabilitators in their work
- ♦ support wildlife rehabilitation programs financially
- ♦ provide education and instruction in wildlife rehabilitation
- ♦ educate the public about wildlife conservation problems
- ♦ work for the reduction of pressures on native wildlife from domestic animals and humans

Bird Brains (cont. from page 4)

on prefixes such as "paleo" and "archi" to indicate the primordial nature of the bird's brain. Similar structures can be found near the core of "higher" animals' brains -- leftovers, it was believed, from evolutionary history. But they were covered by what were believed to be newer layers of smarter material such as the human "neocortex."

Edinger was unaware that the first birds did not appear on Earth until 50 million to 100 million years after the earliest, supposedly "neo" mammals. He also got fooled by the fact that the large portion of bird brain devoted to higher processing of visual and auditory information -- the part equivalent to the human cerebral cortex -- has a neural architecture that makes it look, at first, like the simpler regions that deal with instinctive behaviors.

Like many people today, Edinger had little reason to question the conclusion that birds had meager intellects, said Tony Reiner, a University of Tennessee neuroscientist and a member of the consortium.

"Pigeons bob their heads while they walk, which makes them look like morons, and so people assumed birds only have the moron part of the brain," Reiner said. "People thought they were stuck with just the instinct part."

In recent decades, however, several avenues of evidence have proved otherwise. Studies of brain chemicals, neural connections and genetic controls over embryonic brain development have shown that the vast bulk of a bird's admittedly small brain is not "primitive" at all but rather constitutes a robust "pallium," or higher-processing center.

And behavioral studies in recent years have proved that many birds have more pallium power than your average mammal.

Even seemingly moronic pigeons can categorize objects as "human-made" vs. "natural"; discriminate between cubistic and impressionistic styles of painting; and communicate using visual symbols on computers, according to evidence compiled by the consortium, which spent seven years on the project with input from scientists around the world.

Some birds can play games in which they intentionally tell lies. New Caledonian crows design and make tools. Scrub jays can recall events from specific times or places -- a trait once thought unique to humans. And perhaps most impressive, parrots, hummingbirds and thou-

sands of other species of songbirds are able to teach and learn vocal communication -- the basic skill that makes human language possible. That's a variant of social intelligence not found in any mammal other than people, bats, and cetaceans such as dolphins and whales.

In recognition of such sophistication, the group deleted all prefixes, suffixes and other linguistic features that implied evolutionary precedence, superiority or inferiority. In their place the group offers value-free words that tell, for example, where a structure lies or how it is connected to other brain parts.

Irene Pepperberg, a comparative psychologist at Harvard's Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Studies whose experiments with a grey parrot named Alex have shown that some birds are capable of extremely complex thinking -- even grasping something akin to the sophisticated concept of "zero" -- said she was gratified to see scientific language catching up with reality.

"The argument has been that birds don't have a cerebral cortex so they can't do these things," she said. "Now we can appreciate that the bird does have a brain area that we can imagine doing these things. It makes all this not so incredibly surprising."

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West Nile Virus: Mosquito-to-Mosquito Transmission while Feeding

Toronto - In a finding that challenges dogma about West Nile transmission, researchers have shown that infected mosquitoes can pass the virus to their non-infected, blood-sucking siblings as they feed on the same animal.

Scientists know that female mosquitoes become infected with West Nile while feeding on birds with high levels of the virus in their blood. The birds get West Nile after being bitten by infected mosquitoes, but it takes several days for the virus to build up in the blood.

Until now, most animals were considered dead-end hosts that did not pass along West Nile to new swarms of mosquitoes.

But researchers at the University of Texas Medical Branch found that when infected and non-infected mosquitoes fed simultaneously on a healthy mouse, the virus-free insects picked up West Nile within an hour - even though the blood of the lab animal showed no evidence of the virus.

(continued on back)

**Chihuahuan Desert Wildlife Rescue, Inc.,
P.O. Box 96, Canutillo, Texas 79835**

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

I hereby apply for membership in the
Chihuahuan Desert Wildlife Rescue as a/an:

INDIVIDUAL: \$10.00 _____
FAMILY: \$15.00 _____
CONTRIBUTOR: \$25.00 _____

Enclosed is my contribution for \$ _____
in addition to my membership

Membership gives you the opportunity to help
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forts of the CDWR volunteer rehabilitators. Mem-
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(4 issues) of the newsletter.

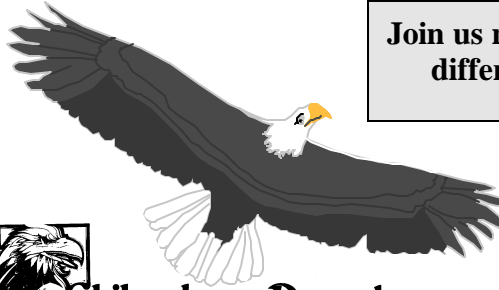
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West Nile (continued from page 5)

"We were surprised. We didn't expect to see any of these recipient mosquitoes infected," principal investigator Stephen Higgs said Monday from Galveston. "We don't know how it's getting from one mosquito to another."

In five separate experiments, the scientists exposed anesthetized lab mice to scores of infected (donor) mosquitoes, then to about an equal number of non-infected (recipient) mosquitoes. Between 2 and 6 percent of the recipient insects which fed on the animals' blood were found to be infected after only an hour.

Dr. Higgs, whose study is published in this week's Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, called the findings "scary." "Animals that we have never considered as relevant in West Nile transmission may now be implicated," he said. "We know that thousands of horses are being bitten by infected mosquitoes because thousands have died. But nobody has considered that they have actually been a source of infecting more mosquitoes."

While people can take precautions to avoid being bitten, animals have no such defenses and can be attacked by hundreds of the pesky bugs per hour, said Dr. Higgs. That means not just birds are possible hosts for the disease, but all kinds of animals - everything from elk and moose to raccoons and field mice to cats and dogs. "What this new method of transmission does is it accelerates the time, because you don't need that period of the animal becoming sick or viremic (having high blood virus levels)," he said. "Mosquitoes can be basically infected instantaneously."

The team plans to study other mosquito-borne diseases, such as dengue fever, which strikes up to 100 million people around the world each year and kills thousands.

"Maybe if this is happening with West Nile, maybe it's happening with other viruses," Dr. Higgs said. "We don't know."

Stephen Higgs, B.Sc., Ph.D., F.R.E.S., Associate Professor, Department of Pathology
The University of Texas Medical Branch, 301 University Boulevard, Galveston, TX 77555-0609