



A Tale of Two Geese

Canada Geese are one of the best known birds in North America. On powerful wings, they fly at top speeds of 60 miles an hour. Usually, they cruise along at 30 to 40 mph. Like any good pilot, they have a white chinstrap. It is believed that they migrate at night because they use the stars for navigation. How amazing! Recently, their migratory patterns have changed, partially due to the loss of wetlands in Canada. Some geese have shortened their migrations and some have become permanent residents of parks, golf courses, and suburbs.

Canada Geese have strong family bonds, mate for life and remain in flocks year-round except while nesting. They live an average of 15 to 20 years in the wild.



This is the story of the two Canada Geese that I had the privilege of rescuing this summer.

I was on volunteer phone duty on a hot Friday night in July after a long and uneventful week (volunteers answer Nature Center calls that come in after hours). There was a message from a resident named Sherri. The message said a Canada Goose had its right leg tangled in fish line last year. People, including Animal Control, had tried to capture it with a net, but were not successful. Sherri said, "It showed up again and now the leg is getting worse." □

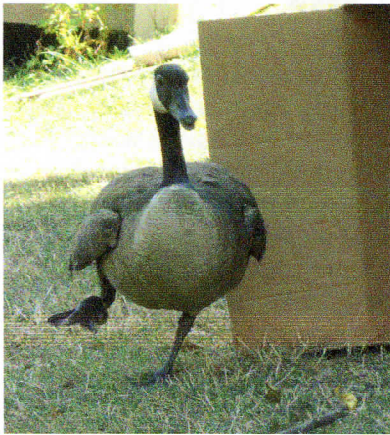
I called her back and we talked it over. Normally the public brings all of the animals in. We don't have enough volunteers to do the captures. Still, Canada Geese are my passion and having an extra person makes it a lot easier. Sherri and I decided to try and capture the goose together.

The line had been attached for so long it was grotesquely embedded in the skin, causing every step to be excruciatingly painful. Due in no small part to Sherry's kind and patient manner, the goose was safely captured and brought



(continued p.2)

to the Nature Center the next day. The suffering this animal endured is unimaginable. It was a miracle the foot still had circulation.



Surgery was required and performed under anesthesia by Dr. Dianne Barr, DVM. In only 7 days with antibiotics and supportive care, the bird was released back to the same pond. The leg still needed time to heal and lots of swim exercise. A month later, Sherri reported her friend is doing well.

“She’s travelling with the flock so I don’t see her very often. But I saw her a few days ago and the leg looks a lot better. She still has a limp but at least she can walk on it now.” □

About a week later, another call came in. The caller, Irene, said, “A goose is living in the McDonalds parking lot begging for French fries and has been there for three weeks.” I swung by for a look and found it going through the drive-through. No, really it was in the gravel parking lot behind the McDonalds. It was drooling and seemed to have trouble swallowing. Since it wasn’t nesting season (when they are often seen alone... the mate is sitting on the eggs hidden nearby) its solitude indicated something was just not quite right. So I decided to bring this one in too.

To my surprise when it was examined, it was a healthy goose just missing its tongue! With no sign of trauma, staff determined it had hatched that way and could be released.

After six days in the wildlife hospital at Lakeside, this bird was released at a new location: a beautiful lake. A payload of chopped corn and waterfowl feed was spread out to let him know this could be a good place to settle down. With the banquet and all, the new flock barely noticed the new guy. Later, he swam the length of the lake. He was last seen spinning somersaults in the water and preening, while the other geese dove beneath the surface of the water, feeding nearby.

I high-fived my new friends, a couple that watch out for the geese on that lake. What a great summer. This fall, when I hear the flocks honking in the moonlight, I’ll be thinking of these special friends.

—Dee Ann Gregory

Nature’s Window

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From the president....

Volunteering at Lakeside Nature Center is so interesting! We train volunteers to work there, because many injured animals come in daily that need treatment and care, plus the educational animals must be fed, cleaned, and monitored each day. Educating the public concerning environmental awareness is a #1 priority, and FOLNC volunteers support that mission along with rehabilitation of injured wildlife. It's a huge job, and we need constant help.

Injured animals admitted to the hospital require medications and special treatment. We see some very interesting cases: geese and owls with fishing line wrapped around their legs or necks, broken wings or legs, animals covered with ticks or even maggots, mange, diseases, infants separated from their parents and can't be returned for a variety of reasons. The list goes on and on. It's a huge undertaking.

Many animal injuries are due to man's negligence (like oil spills or plastic wrap and fishing line), but sometimes humans can be just downright cruel. Here is a turtle that someone painted red/white/blue (they must have been feeling patriotic that day) for whatever reason they thought that was cute.

The turtle was also underweight and will miss hibernation this year because of its poor care. Now it's dealing with paint on its shell. It can be removed with chemicals, but that is never a pleasant experience for a turtle.



It's quite disheartening to see animal patients come into the center in these kinds of conditions. What are people thinking? Fortunately caring individuals found the turtle and brought it to Lakeside for care. It will now have a chance for survival.

So, it's a balance of good/bad in human nature that also affects the animal world. We're glad to be able to help this innocent turtle.

-Sharon Goff



What would we do without our veterinarians who donate so much of their time and expertise to the medical treatment of the wildlife brought into Lakeside? Special thanks to Dr. Dan Hecker, Dr. Sandi Leonard, Dr. Brock Exline, and Dr. Dianne Barr.

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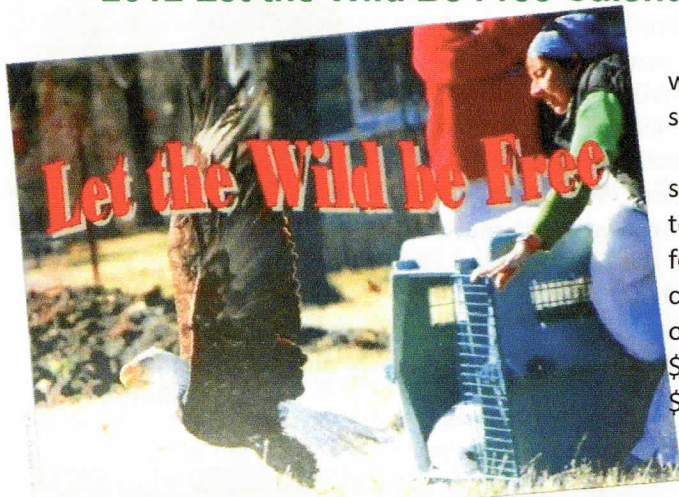
"Wilderness itself is the basis of all our civilization. I wonder if we have enough reverence for life to concede to wilderness the right to live on?" --Margaret E. Murie

"The moment one gives close attention to anything, even a blade of grass, it becomes a mysterious, awesome, indescribably magnificent world in itself." --Henry Miller

"Come forth into the light of things, Let Nature be your teacher." --William Wordsworth

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Photo of eagle release taken by Wesley Haut. This eagle was found in Cass County, MO, extremely ill with lead poisoning as a result of eating duck carcasses with lead buckshot in them. After 40 days of hospitalization and treatment at Lakeside, the eagle was successfully released where it was found. Another happy ending!

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Did You Know...?

The leaves of trees have veins that transport a watery sap. Because of this, unlike the rest of the tree, the leaves are unable to endure freezing temperatures. As the days grow shorter and cooler, these veins begin to close. A separation layer of cells forms at the base of the leaf stem which causes the leaf to separate from the branch. The tree seals off the leaves and sheds them for its own protection.

This happens in broadleaf trees with the exception of oaks. In oak trees, the separation layer of cells doesn't fully detach the dead leaves, so the leaves remain on the tree throughout the winter months, shedding when the new leaf buds begin to open in the spring.

Evergreen trees (such as pines and cedars) don't lose their leaves (needles) in winter. The needles of these trees are covered with a waxy coating, and the fluids inside the cells of the needles contain substances which resist freezing. The needles of evergreen trees can live for several years before they are replaced by new ones. -D. Clarke



MUDPUPPY'S POND

A famous old poem by a man named James Whitcomb Riley begins, "When the frost is on the punkin, and the fodder's in the shock...". It's a poem about Autumn, a wonderful time of year. One of the best things about Autumn is PUMPKINS! There is a lot more to pumpkins than turning them into Jack-o-lanterns, though.

Did you know that the pumpkin is a type of squash? Yes, just like zucchini and cucumbers, the pumpkin is a member of the Cucurbita family. It's also native to the Americas (although these days it is grown all over the world); the Native Americans called pumpkins "isquotm squash". They used to dry flattened strips of pumpkin shells to make into mats. Of course, they also ate pumpkins, usually roasting them or making them into soup. They also used the seeds for food and medicine.

When the European settlers came to this continent, the Native Americans showed them how to grow pumpkins and use them for food. Pumpkins are very good for you. They are full of vitamins and fiber. However, long ago, some people also thought they could cure freckles and snake bites!

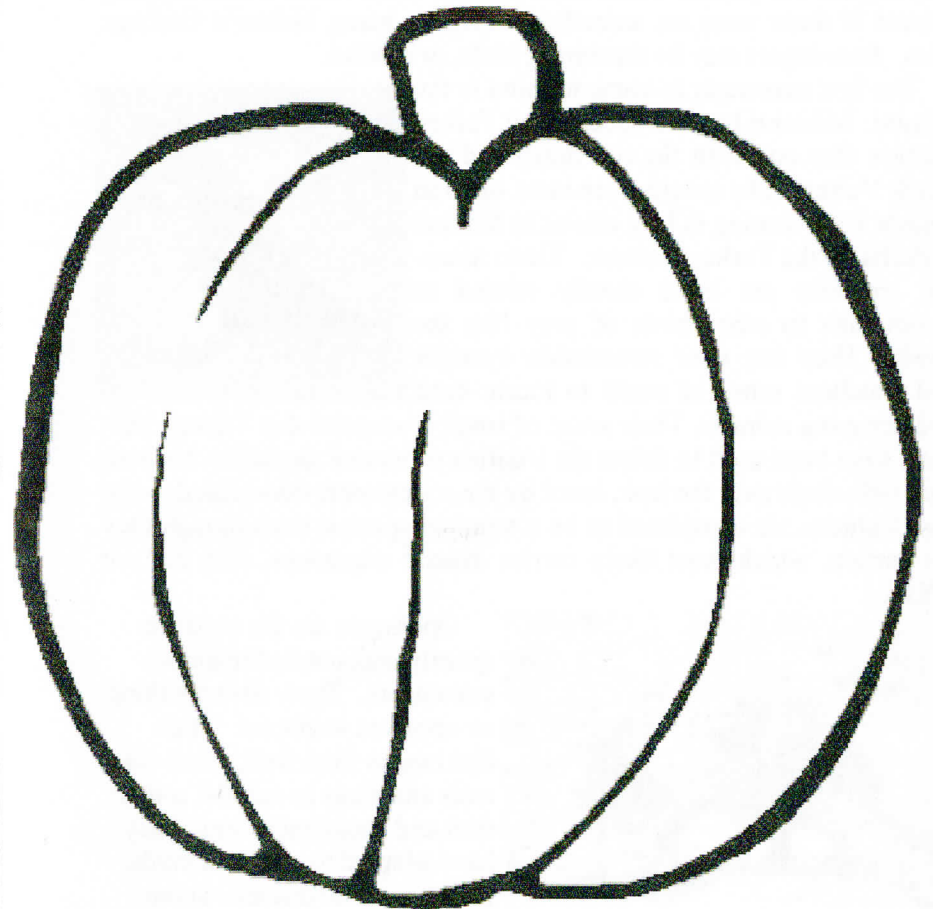
Not only does the inside of the pumpkin make for good eating, but so does its flower! Pumpkin flowers are very beautiful and quite tasty.

Pumpkins come in all colors and sizes these days. Some are white, some are red, some are orange, some are very small and some are enormous! The largest pumpkin ever grown weighed over 1,000 pounds!

The tradition of carving pumpkins into Jack-o-lanterns at Halloween began with the ancient Irish people called Celts. Only they weren't using pumpkins; instead, they carved turnips!

Here is a pumpkin for you to color. Draw a Jack-o-lantern face on it if you like. Don't make it too spooky, though! You might scare Mudpuppy!

-Diane Clark



(How do you mend a broken Jack-o-lantern? With a pumpkin patch!)

Scavengers

Biologists use the concept of food chains and food webs to describe the transfer of energy in a biological community or eco-system. Living organisms are divided into producers, consumers and decomposers. **Producers**, like most plants, absorb and convert energy from the sun into the nutrients needed to grow, flower and seed. Animals can not make their own food, so they eat plants or other animals; they are the *consumers*. Bacteria, earthworms and fungi feed on organic matter, returning it to the soil for plants to reuse; they are the *decomposers*. In addition, there are the members of the animal clean-up crew or *scavengers*.

Most people think of scavengers as icky, but they are vital to the workings of our planet. Think of how much ‘stuff’ there would be lying around if there were no animals devoted to being Nature’s Garbage Men. Scavengers may be mammals, birds, or reptiles.

The first scavenger to come to mind is the vulture. Missouri has two species, the Turkey Vulture (the one with the red head) and the Black Vulture. The species seen most often in Kansas City, soaring in lazy circles in thermal updrafts, is the Turkey Vulture. These amazing creatures are more closely related to storks than to other birds of prey like the hawks. They use their remarkable eyesight and excellent sense of smell to locate dead and decaying animals.



Their sense of smell is so good that Turkey Vultures have been used to detect the location of natural gas leaks, because they will circle over the leak, lured by the rotten-meat odor added to the gas. Vultures are considered to be a terminal species; even though they eat carrion, which most likely carries disease organisms, they are not affected.



Opossums are the most frequently encountered mammal scavengers. There isn’t anything an opossum won’t eat. Their diet ranges from fruit, small animals and slugs to carrion, rotten fruit and decaying acorns. They have adapted to our back yards, feasting on the discards in our

compost heaps and garbage pails. It seems as though nothing makes them sick and everything is delicious. Fossils prove that these fascinat-

tures (the only native marsupials in North America) have been around since dinosaurs walked the shores of the inland sea that was Missouri 70 million years ago. Opossums are harmless; they carry no diseases that affect humans and aren't destructive. You will see them every night as they go about their business, keeping the environment clean.

The Snapping Turtle is the pond scavenger par excellence. They are great swimmers and use their powerful webbed feet to propel themselves through the waters. While they are willing to eat most anything, snapping turtles prefer dead, but not rotting fish. They also eat algae and duckweed that bloom on the surface of ponds, helping to keep the surface clear and preventing loss of oxygen in the water.



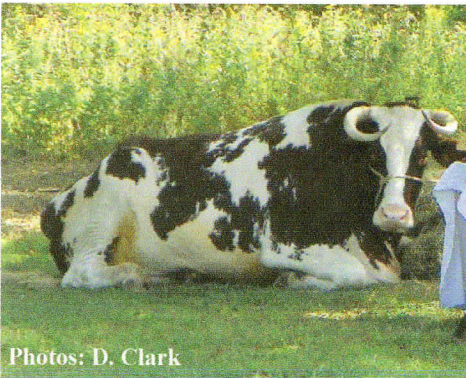
Look around your neighborhood this weekend and check to see if you see any of the common scavengers. Look up in the sky for the Turkey Vulture, stay up and watch for the Virginia Opossum and check out a pond for a Snapping Turtle. And rejoice that Nature's Garbage Men are on the job. *-Debby Barker*

Picnic on the Prairie

We had wonderful weather for our first Picnic on the Prairie, but had to contend with all kinds of competing events. *Grassy Ridge Oxen* brought a team and we all got to meet Samson and Levi. We



had storytellers, the stream table, spinners, crafts (including dirt painting), Celtic music by *Dog Tree*, animal presentations and historical talks. *-Debby Barker*



Photos: D. Clark

What's Good about Ragweed?



As one of the millions who suffer from seasonal allergies, I find myself asking that question a lot these days. It's right up there with, "What good are ticks?" It seems the spring allergy season no sooner ends than the late summer/fall one begins, leading one to regret never buying stock in the makers of Kleenex.

Sometimes it helps to study one's enemy.

The first surprising fact about Common Ragweed is that its scientific name contains the misleading word "ambrosia". The form of ragweed that we see the most in this area is the *Ambrosia artemisiifolia*. Isn't ambrosia supposed to be a good thing? Food of the gods? Confers immortality?

Reading on, I discover that ragweeds also are called bloodweeds and bitterweeds...names far more suitable. In Japan, where it's become an invasive species, it's called "pig grass". Better yet!

Next I learn that it's related to the sunflower! How can that be? Sunflowers are nice. They make me smile when I see them.

Ragweed grows in temperate regions of both Northern and Southern Hemispheres, preferring dry sandy soils, roadsides, vacant lots, and disturbed fields. There are forty-one species worldwide. It can be found in all states of the US except Alaska.

Growing to a height of three feet, ragweed is a *monoecious* plant: it produces separate male and female flower heads on the same plant. The numerous tiny male flowers are yellow-green and grow on a spike, while the greenish-white female flowers are almost hidden below the males in the leaf axils.

Each plant is able to produce about a billion grains of pollen over a season. This pollen is considered to be the worst allergen of all pollens and the prime cause of hay fever in North America. Wet years cause even more pollen to be produced, and it travels great distances on the wind. The seeds that the plant produces are viable for as long as five years.

However, as miserable as it may make some of us, there actually are good things about ragweed. Caterpillars of several types of moths eat the seeds and foliage; honeybees collect the pollen; birds (both songbirds and game birds), voles, and ground squirrels eat the oil-rich seeds. Unfortunately, they also help spread the seeds.

Those are the few good things I found about ragweed. Not exactly stellar credentials but everything has its purpose. Maybe even ticks.

—Diane Clark



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russet and brown,
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