

Rehabilitation animals of the month: Baby raccoons and red foxes

FREDDY MOYANO
CORRESPONDENT

BROWN COUNTY - It's the busy spring season at the Bay Beach Wildlife Sanctuary.

Curator Lori Bankson said staff and volunteers have cared for more than 500 animals in May alone.

On average, the sanctuary takes in about 6,000 animals a year, so to have more than 500 in a two-week period, she said, is a bit overwhelming.

Bankson said this time of year, the sanctuary relies heavily on its many volunteers as baby mammals, new to the world, sometimes need a helping hand.

Raccoon kits

This month's first rescue encounter was a raccoon kit (or cub) who was found on the side of the road after its mom was hit by a car.

"This is very common right now," Bankson said. "Mom is trying to move her cubs someplace safe and fatal accidents can happen."

She said the kit, about four weeks old, was most likely nursing from mom when the unfortunate hit and run accident happened.

Bankson said the kit's soft paws enable their sensory touch, one of the most advanced amongst mammals.

Two other raccoons were in the room as well, a two-week-old sucking from the thumb of one of their volunteers and a three-week



This six-week-old brother and sister pair came to the Bay Beach Wildlife Sanctuary during the third week of April.

old, who was found in a fox-frequented territory with no adult raccoons around near Shawano.

Bankson said the fur displayed on all three raccoon kits is very clean.

"Their fur is not matted like squirrel fur which is easier to keep clean," she said.

Animal Keeper Amy Harris, who was giving each kit a bath one at a time, said kits typically stay with mom for at least six months.

"I have even heard of cases of cubs remaining with mom even over the winter season," Harris said.

Bankson said after six months or so, the raccoon cubs will be released back into the wild in accordance with the sanctuary's safe release criteria.

"We have a few specific places of land," she said. "We'd like to have at least an acre, if not up to ideally

five. It has to be wooded. It's nice if they have a small water area to access, but we have to be really careful because they will prey on waterfowl. So we are very specific in our releases."

The same release form that is available for cottontail bunnies (available on baybeachwildlife.com or at the Observation Building) is also available for raccoons.

Residents filling out this form, gives the sanctuary permission to release raccoons in their yard, if the criteria is met.

Red fox kits

As the rescued raccoons finished eating and went back inside their cages, two fox kits were brought into the observation room.

Bankson said the six-week-old brother and sister pair came to the sanctuary one day apart the third week of April.



This four-week-old raccoon kit was found on the side of the road after its mom was hit by a car.

Bankson said both kits were thin and malnourished when they were rescued.

"We did not know they would make it this far," she said. "So our staff jumped into action, with emergency care, emergency food and we are happy with how things turned out. We were in touch with the family who found them in case they could find mom, as they did not know where the den was, and if mom is around we would bring them back so they can be nurtured. But mom never showed up."

Bankson said they did find a noticeable cut mark on the male kit's furry tail. "We don't know what happened," she said. "He was injured when younger somehow, but it seems to have healed well."

Bankson said the kit pair was found near a farm in the Pulaski area.

She said when they were rescued, the pint-sized kits were so malnourished that they almost didn't put up any opposition to being rescued and no snare poles

or bait were needed.

Bankson said Wisconsin farmers don't mind foxes around as they take care of mice and other invasive rodents that are ever present in farm fields where crops grow.

As for their diet right

now, Harris said they eat both canned and dry dog food, as well as boiled eggs and apples.

"We are lucky these two came in together as they play a lot and this is how

See ANIMALS page 16



A raccoon kit's soft paws enable their sensory touch, one of the most advanced amongst mammals. Lori Bankson Photos

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CRUISE
from page 5

charge to participate in the ride, with an additional \$15 for passengers. Kennard said many bikers already have pledges lined up through local businesses and friends and family.

Pre-registration for the ride is appreciated, but not required.

Kennard said that because weather can be so unpredictable, they allow motorcyclists to register up until the ride takes off at 11:30 a.m.

A tailgate party will take place at the Vandervest Harley Davidson dealership on Cardinal Lane in Howard – complete with a silent auction, a live auction, bucket raffles and plenty of food and beverages.

Aside from cruise events in June, the Jerry Parins Foundation holds several fundraisers year-round where individuals can participate in and donate to the cause.

For more information, visit cruiseforcancer.org.

ANIMALS
from page 6

they learn how to hunt mice” Bankson, who added that the following week the kits would be upgraded into a play area from their current cage, said.

Bankson said the little foxes’ morning quietness in the observation room highly contrasted their evening behavior.

She said during some of their early care, the kits accompanied Harris home at night and she said they were barking constantly

between 9 p.m. and 1 a.m. while playing.

As for release times, Bankson said July or August will be the ideal time to bring this couple back to nature.

“We have worked with Oneida Nation in the past, and they usually let us release them in their land,” she said.

Bankson said Wisconsin is home to both red and gray foxes, but the sanctuary generally receives red foxes.

She said the sanctuary vaccinates raccoons and

foxes for their safety and the staff’s.

Bankson said distemper and arbovirus are the main two they apply.

Animal care line

Bankson said the sanctuary’s animal care line receives calls nearly every day.

She said if an animal in obvious need of help is found, residents should call the sanctuary’s animal care line at (920) 391-3685.

“Every animal deserves a chance and we are here to help,” Bankson said.

She said oftentimes, people can be an even bigger threat than they think.

“We have people calling us asking if they or their younger children can keep the animals they find,” Bankson said. “We caution them that they need to bring them in because they risk being fed the wrong kind of food.”

Barred owl update

Bankson said the barred owl is recovering very satisfactory and will be released by early June.

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