



# TattleTails & Tidbits



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## Staying Connected In Times Of Turmoil

There is no doubt that these are trying times. It is easy to get caught in the pain and suffering in the world in our desire to make it better. Animals teach us how to live moment by moment while staying present and grounded. They teach us tolerance and how to live without judgment. They teach us to love unconditionally and they show us this by loving us unconditionally.

It is in the times of greatest uncertainty that the gift of hope is more important than ever. By connecting with your own heart, you can be a source of light to others who need to find their way out of darkness. The animals show us how to reach out to another in love and light.

Your light is needed more than ever. The human heart is looking to find hope. You can be that hope to another by sharing your own light. We share the stories in this issue to help you stay grounded in the healing power of hope.

**To learn more about Spring Farm CARES, to donate to our mission, to sign up for our email list, and to download a copy of any of our publications, go to [www.springfarmcares.org](http://www.springfarmcares.org)**

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# Life Is About Being In The Moment

by Dawn E. Hayman

In my workshops I talk a lot about “being present” and in the moment. Animals teach us a lot about how to be present as this is their most natural state of being. We humans tend to get lost in our minds and intellect. We become entrapped within the confines of time. It is not that animals do not have a concept of time because obviously they do. However, they understand the power of being in the moment. They remain present in each moment they experience. We humans however often operate on auto-pilot as our bodies carry out various tasks and our minds wander off to ponder other things. We drive our cars while we think about the grocery list or worry about what the neighbor did that irritated us, and we go on rants inside our head of what we’d like to say to the co-worker who irritated us, or worry for how we will pay for our children’s college or the rent. We are always off somewhere else but rarely completely focused in the moment.

The truth is that the power of creating what we want and need in life exists within each single moment. That which we focus on, we create for ourselves. The question is to realize what we are focused on in any given moment. It is a matter of shifting our focus from the confines of our minds to the wide open expanse of our hearts. To communicate with animals, and even our own inner selves, we need to shift our focus to the quietness of the heart. That is where our imagination/intuition runs free. It is a landscape rich in information for us. It is a place where time is suspended and we focus completely in the present moment. And that space is unlimited in its depth and expanse. The more we can practice being present, the better we get at it and the more that space opens up for us to explore. It is like a muscle. The more we use it, the stronger it gets.



I want to share an experience I just had that illustrates this perfectly. I was driving home on a very cold and blustery February day. What I am about to describe happened in a matter of seconds and even milliseconds in physical reality. Yet, as you will see, it defied all confines of time.

I was driving about 55mph when out of the corner of my eye I saw a deer at a dead run heading straight for me on my left. It was as if she were fleeing for her life and it was clear that our paths were seconds away from tragically colliding. There was nothing I could do. But in that very instant, I strongly and instantly connected with the deer. I was totally focused in my heart and in the present moment. It was as if all time stopped. The moment became a freeze-

frame.

We were both suspended in time. I felt her fear and her heart both at the same time. “I don’t want to die today,” she said to me.

“I don’t want to either,” I replied.

With such clarity I was aware of every movement of my body. I felt my foot come off the accelerator and prepare to slam on the brakes. Again, it was in frame by frame motion. But as I made that move, I saw in an instant that if I did that, the deer would fly right through my windshield. We were in a trajectory for a direct hit. “I don’t want to die today,” she repeated. “Life is beautiful. There is so much more to do.”

We were meeting in a most incredible connection. I savored that moment which seemed so expansive. I can still feel it as I write this now. In this space we shared, there was plenty of time and I intuitively knew that truth. She and I could work this out together. We were both in motion already and our paths were going to cross without any doubt. We couldn't change the path we were on, but we could change how it is that we would meet. In that clarity, I saw the answer. I felt my foot hovering above the brake pedal move suddenly and reach for the accelerator. The image immediately changed before me and I saw that I could just sneak by her if I did that. But I also saw that she would hit the back of my car. I realized that I had to angle the car so that she could breeze past me. I looked ahead and no other traffic was coming. This could work.

"Ok," I told her, "I understand it! Let's go!" and before I even knew what I was doing, my foot slammed the accelerator to the floor and my car lunged forward as I also simultaneously turned my steering wheel so that my front end crossed the center line, putting my car at a slight angle just for that split second as she ran by.

Then "real time" kicked in. I saw her coming at a dead run. Only, it wasn't going to be a dead run, this was a life changing run, for both of us. She clearly was headed for the back of my car just as I turned the wheel and we narrowly missed one another. I then put on the brakes and looked in my rearview mirror as she came to a screeching halt, momentarily dropping to one knee as she stood right where my car had been just seconds before. I saw her turn just as she got out of the road and stopped and looked towards me. "Thank you," she said. "Thank you for doing this with me." And without missing a beat, she ran off through the field.

My heart was pounding. My mind was blown. But my heart was filled with gratitude and appreciation and love for this deer, for the earth, for the sun, for the chance to be alive. And I am oh so grateful for the lesson. The power of being in the moment cannot be understated.

Instinct would have led me to slam on the brakes. Intuition took me to a place which there is no way I could have seen with my eyes. An entire world opened in those few seconds for two beings to chart the course of what they each wanted to create in that moment. And create we did. Our paths crossed in that moment for divine reasons for each of us. And each of us gave one another a shared moment that will last a lifetime. Of that, I am sure.

## **Practicing Being Present**

by Dawn Hayman

Learning to be present in any given moment is actually an easy exercise. The hard part is remembering to do it when we are in our most distracted times. The key to making it happen is practice. There are so many times throughout the day that you can practice being present. The more you practice the stronger you become at doing it and the easier it is to call upon it when needed. There is no greater gift than being fully present in the moment with another. Animals give us that gift all of the time. I'm sure you have experienced that with your own animals.

Here is a simple exercise to help you get present and grounded in the moment. You can do this anytime and anywhere during your day. Don't let the simplicity fool you. It is a very powerful exercise.

- Take a few nice breaths and breathe from your heart center. Imagine the breaths coming in and out of your heart.
- Imagine being with one of your animals or in your favorite place in nature - anything that makes you feel safe and loved unconditionally. Our animals are generally an easy source for this. Feel what it feels like to be with that animal or in that special place and continue to breathe from there.
- Continue to breathe from this centered place. Be aware of how it feels to be present in the moment. Allow the feeling of calmness and peace to fill you.

While this exercise is incredibly simple, the hard part is to take even just 5 minutes a few times a day to do it. You will start to feel a difference. And if you do this exercise around your animals, they may join you as well - especially your cats!



# What I Learned From Max

by Christine Schneider, DVM, cVMA



I first met Max about a year before I started working for Spring Farm; he was on the schedule at my clinic for an evaluation of urinary issues. I was met with one of the most gorgeous cats I've ever seen – a large tiger cat with gigantic green eyes, enormous polydactyl feet and no tail. Max had a turbulent history; he had been hit by a car and required a tail amputation. Due to the extent of his injuries, he sustained neurologic damage and was unable to urinate and defecate on his own. His owners surrendered him to Spring Farm due to the intense nature required with his care. He had been maintained with medications and staff had been able to manually express his bladder multiple times a day. Until they couldn't. Something had changed, he was extremely resistant to the previously easy process, and no matter how hard they tried, there was nothing they could do to express him.

I approached the case as I would with any other cat experiencing a urinary blockage - we sedated him and passed a urinary catheter to relieve the pressure to give us time to figure out what needed to happen for his long-term care. Except, Max's situation turned out to be extremely complicated. Normal blood work, urine samples, radiographs, ultrasounds. Different trials of medications had no effect. Repeated urinary catheterizations led to repeat urinary tract infections. Consultations with other veterinarians and specialists usually had the same result - a discussion about quality of life, the recommendation of euthanasia, and the suggestions that the sanctuary's resources could be better spent elsewhere.

But, there was something different about this case, something nagging in the back of my mind that it

wasn't time to give up. You see, the thing with Max was...he wasn't always easy. He tended to express his displeasure with anything he didn't like. I would often hear that Max was acting aggressive and would go on hunger strikes. But, I didn't see that with Max. Every time I saw him, whether it was opening his carrier at the clinic to those bright eyes or when I did on-site visits to the farm, Max was bright and happy and thrilled to see me, any food I put in front of him was devoured. I would later realize this was Max's way of expressing his affinity to me because he knew I'd find a way to fix him. And so, I did.

After researching endlessly, I found reports of dogs and cats having permanent cystostomy ports placed. In the simplest terms, this means a port that would allow repeated drainage of his urine would be placed through the wall of his abdomen and into his bladder. There were risks associated with it, of course, but when I presented Dawn with the idea, she agreed and so the process began. With the help of some brilliant surgeons (Dr. Marcus Hetzner and Dr. Paul Bookbinder), the port was placed and Max's life changed forever. Max thrived after this procedure. Of course, there were some hiccups, we still had to treat him occasionally for urinary tract infections and he had this knack for eating things he shouldn't have, but Max never looked back.

Max suddenly and unexpectedly left this Earth a few weeks ago. We suspect it was an underlying cardiac issue none of us ever knew about. There were no symptoms of illness, we just suddenly found him gone. And through the sadness of losing my beloved office cat, I've come to realize what a gift Max was to my professional life as a veterinarian. Max was my first introduction to the magic that is Spring Farm CARES.

The tenacity he had, his ability to take everything in stride, and the uniqueness of his condition and his ultimate cure. But overall, the importance of realizing that veterinary medicine doesn't always follow the rules and the innovation required to help some of your patients. The lesson that there are some terminal cases that require humane euthanasia, but that you must be willing to explore other avenues for those pets who aren't ready to quit. And, despite the way my brain scientifically and logically wants to approach sick patients, realizing that miracles can happen. Because Max was a miracle cat and his effect on myself, Spring Farm, and the staff will last a long time.

# Blessed Are The Caretakers

by Bonnie Jones Reynolds

**S**tories of animals warning, saving, working with, and protecting humans are myriad, heartwarming, and rife throughout history. ("What's the matter Lassie?" "Why's she barking?" "Something must have happened to Timmy! Quick, let's follow her!") But at Spring Farm we have also repeatedly witnessed the readiness of animals to protect and care for fellow creatures in need...demonstrating that Love for others is an unrecognized component in the juices circulating through all of Life.

Petite mallard duck Mama, and Pekin duck Fa, are current examples of such caring. We took Mama in several years ago, along with her mate and a duckling daughter. We suspect that Mama is a wild mallard who somehow moved in and mated with a domestic mallard. Sadly, both Mama's mate and her daughter died last year. Mama was left living with two male mallards who are twice her size, and, well, oversexed. When turned out during the day, being an excellent flyer, Mama was able to keep a good distance from the boys. But in the barn at night, and now being kept in during the cold of winter, the boys' pestering can get intense.

Last summer, however, we took in a young Pekin. He was only about six months old—a pet who was no longer wanted. We had Pekins named Do, Re, and Me, so he became Fa. The poor little guy didn't know what to do with himself. He had never been with other ducks and didn't know how to be one. The other ducks ignored him, and he didn't know how to shine up to them...so he just wandered around alone, quacking pathetically.



**Mama Duck**

But as he grew he saw his niche—his reason for being, for having come to Spring Farm. He saw Mama's predicament. Gallantly, he took his place at her side and has never deserted her. The mallard boys can't get near her. They try, oh how they try, launching surprise attacks, trying to drive him away. But Fa is now fully grown, and larger than they. With grim determination, he feints and parries, keeping himself always between Mama and the marauders. And whenever it is time for a nap, he escorts her to a corner and bids her lie down. Then he settles down in front of her, shielding her with his big white self. And peacefully they snooze.

Looking through our new book, *Stories From THE MAGIC YEARS*, I see many other caretakers. For instance, we had a little mixed herd—sheep, goats, and llamas. As they aged, one of the sheep, Magdalen, lost virtually all of her coat and spent most of her time in a corner trying to keep warm. The other sheep, Mary, stayed right with her, spread out in front of her and leaning against her to keep her warm. Then one day Mary suddenly died. When next we looked, there was one of our llamas, Gulliver, taking Mary's place, cushioned down in front of Magdalen in her corner and leaning against her to keep her warm. And he remained faithful to the task.



**Buckwheat & Kazinka**

Two elderly horses, Buckwheat and Kazinka, had been pasture mates for eight years when Buckwheat began to fail. Over a period of several months, he spent a lot of time lying down, comfy on a bed of hay and with pillows and blankets. Kazinka would not leave his side—whether he was standing or lying down, she was right there beside him. The day that he died, Kazinka insisted upon watching the process of

burial. He was carried by a backhoe to a grave prepared in their paddock, just about twenty-five feet from the door of their communal stall. Kazinka stood in that doorway watching the process. Several months later, she literally dropped dead. She did so right in that doorway. As she fell, she managed to fall five or six feet out into the paddock. "I've put myself where you only need to drag me a few feet to bury me beside Buck," she told Dawn. "I refuse to be carried around by some backhoe. So undignified!"

Milky was a chicken, a cross between a Bantam and a Polish Top Hat. She was nearly dead when brought to us. She had been a pet since chick-hood, but she was terribly malnourished. It was months before she regained her health. At which point two new-born chicks, hatched in a school experiment, were brought in. We didn't dare let Milky near them. She had never seen another chicken. She might harm them. So they went into a cage next to hers. Where they began oh-so-pitifully to cheep. And Milky began to scream. The chicks rushed toward the screams, trying desperately to get through the bars of their cage and into hers. Milky's screams increased. She wanted those chicks! Gingerly, we put the chicks in with her, ready to snatch them if need be. But chicks who had never seen a mother and a hen who had never seen another chicken knew just what to do. The chicks rushed to her and burrowed beneath her wings as Milky lifted them and used them to pull the chicks farther beneath herself. For months she was a model mother to Butter and Cream. Until they grew too big and began to act like roosters around their mama. They went to live in the barn and Milky moved into a room to wander with a duck, an African Grey parrot, and several cats. One cat, Natalie, had kidney stones and was often in pain. Milky immediately attached herself to Natalie, following her everywhere, clucking solicitously, sleeping beside her and doing a really good imitation of, well...a mother hen.



Max

In Dawn and Margot's living room there was a potted Norfolk pine named Argus. Beside Argus was the cage of a cockatoo named Max. Margot noticed that Argus had a scraggly, partially withered branch. She asked Dawn to ask Argus if it was okay to cut it off. Argus said okay. Margot's back was to Max when she took out her jack knife and prepared to cut. But as the knife touched the branch, Max let out a blood-curdling scream...as though he himself was to be cut. Margot explained to him that Argus had said that it could be trimmed. Again she prepared to cut. Max screamed again, as though in terrible pain, crest up, wings spread, fluffed for battle. The branch stayed.

This last reminds me of data I have read to the effect that scientists now believe that the trees in a forest are in communication with one another through their root systems. The well-being of the forest is always being monitored by the forest itself! And if something happens to one tree, or threatens it, its message is passed from tree to tree, allowing them to take any preparations that they can take to protect themselves.

We are born to Love and to care for one another. The Universe smiles each time that a Caretaker steps forward.



# Injured Hawk Flies Once More

by Matt Perry

There is probably no other raptor more notorious to backyard birders than the Cooper's Hawk. The Cooper's Hawk, along with its smaller look-alike cousin, the Sharp-shinned Hawk, are considered by some to be birdfeeder terrors. They are the raptors that suddenly dart into people's yards and cause havoc among peacefully feeding songbirds. They tail-chase prey and grab them in flight. They come down to the ground with their quarry and pluck them before dashing back into the cover of the woods. Of course, Cooper's Hawks hunt in suburban yards not without risk. Many fall victim to window strikes. When this happens, they often kill themselves outright or break a wing. Wildlife Rehabilitators can depend on these hawks being brought to their facilities due to impacts against picture windows and sliding glass doors.



In the last several years, working with wildlife rehabilitators, we have released many rehabilitated raptors. Typically, this involved bringing a raptor in a carrier to an appropriate piece of habitat at the Nature Sanctuary, opening the cage door, and letting them fly out. We would then monitor the bird for a day or more to see how it was getting on. In a few cases the raptor would need to be recaptured and returned to the rehabber. In 2020 we installed a permanent release cage in one of our reforestation fields. Done under the auspices of a licensed rehabilitator, we would take in a raptor intended for release and let it first spend a few days in the cage. The idea is to allow the bird a chance to become accustomed to the sights and sounds of an otherwise unknown habitat before it gets released. Our hope was to eliminate some of the stress a raptor experiences during a typical "cold" release.

Last year, on February 7th, an immature Cooper's Hawk was rescued in Downtown Utica. This unfortunate individual was found hanging by its head outside an auto shop. Somehow it had gotten its head stuck between a couple of pipes. The bird had some blood in its mouth and a broken wing. After diagnosis and treatment, the hawk convalesced at Falcon Heart Rescue (run by raptor rehabilitator, Deb Saltis) for two weeks. Deb then brought him to our release cage to allow him to transition to independence. Almost immediately, upon his first day at the Sanctuary, we could see there was a problem. Although the break in his right wing had healed, he never seemed to fold it completely flush against his body. However, his flying inside the cage looked good. As well as being able to fly laterally from perch to perch, he had no difficulty flying from the cage floor up to the highest perches. Regardless, we were concerned about his wing dexterity and flight maneuverability. Would he regain the full range of motion necessary to successfully hunt? Cooper's Hawks need to fly through a tree canopy obstacle course when pursuing their highly maneuverable songbird prey. They need to be able to accelerate and overtake prey. We would have to wait to see if his wing dexterity improved. Rehabbers are not mandated to keep damaged hawks indefinitely. If he couldn't be released, he would either need to become an educational bird or he would need to be put down. The problem being that no one seems to want Cooper's Hawks as educational birds. Reputedly, they are notoriously ill-behaved in captivity.

The first day the Cooper's Hawk (now named Che) was with us, we realized his temperament was different from most of his tribe. He was calm and well-behaved. He was good about taking his food even when there was a person in the cage with him. All early indications were that he was eminently trainable – an important attribute if he were to become an educational bird. Che was quite predictable too; he would usually do the same thing



each day during feeding time. When I first entered the cage, he would quickly dart around from perch to perch – not trying to escape, just excitedly anticipating his meal. He would then quickly calm down and take his food. If I lingered in the cage, he would come within a few feet of me to retrieve it. Based on that we thought he would be a good candidate for working from a glove; something he would have to do if drafted for education work. Of course, becoming an educational bird was the back-up plan, to be resorted to only if he was incapable of being free. At the start of March, we could see that the look of his right wing hadn't improved. However, he was showing good wing dexterity during short flights inside the cage. The decision was made to try and release him. If his flying was dismal, we hoped to net him and return him to the cage. One morning in late March, we opened the cage door, backed up and waited for him to fly out. We waited and waited, but he didn't even come near the cage door. He was letting us know that he wasn't yet ready and so the decision was made to stop the release. As we observed him in the cage in

subsequent days, we concluded that his stiff upper wing was likely an insurmountable handicap. Deb thought we should put him on track to be an educational bird, but at the same time, keep monitoring his wing and his flight ability to see if there was any improvement. In other words, he still might be able to become a free bird, if he met certain goals.

Deb left a special pair of gloves at the cage. They were thick and long and seemed like they'd be perfect to wear if we ever needed to weld something metal to the cage. Somehow, Che would have to learn to perch on these. We were instructed to hold his food on the back part of the glove's hand and allow the raptor to land on it to take his food. He was already used to coming in close, so getting him to do the glove trick should be child's play, right? The answer was a resounding, No! Che despised the gloves, and he wouldn't come anywhere near them. Whatever the reason, he considered the gloves to be a mortal enemy. As soon as the gloves went on, the hawk became highly agitated. One unanticipated effect of the gloves was to cause him to fly more. He would dash around the cage from one side to another, skimming just over my head and showing excellent control over his wings. He made pinpoint landing after pinpoint landing on all available perches. Maybe he could be a free bird after all.

In mid-April, Che went back to Deb's facility. There, she got to see him fly in a larger aviary. She also prey tested him to gauge his hunting ability. Even though when at rest his wing still didn't lay flush against his body, his flying and hunting abilities seemed adequate for him to be able to go free. For release, he was brought back to the Sanctuary and back to the same cage. After a few days of re-acclimation to the cage and to the sights and sounds of the habitat, we were ready to let him go. With two of us standing by, the cage door was opened. Ten minutes went by. He was still in there, seemingly not noticing the path to freedom. He was staying in the back of the cage on one of his favorite perches. But I noticed that he was slightly wagging his tail – not in the way a dog does. It's more of a jerky motion that a loose pendulum on a clock might make. I've noticed this same behavior in wild Cooper's Hawks. They often do it when they are anxious, or after they've been found out by their potential prey. Why Che was doing it, we were not sure. Perhaps he had some trepidation when it came to the unknown. He started making some short flights inside the cage – back and forth between the perches. And then finally, fifteen minutes after we had opened the door, he shot out, whizzed by us, and made a smooth ascent, one hundred yards to the treetops. He disappeared for about a minute and then he dashed by again, this time going the opposite direction. He was flying above the tree canopy and was in perfect form; his wings alternating between rapid flaps and quick glides. He looked like a bird with absolutely no wing problem at all.

Since his May 1st release, I've scrutinized every immature Cooper's Hawk I've seen on the property and I have yet to positively identify him. Of course, I would have to see the bird perched to recognize him since when in flight, he looks completely normal. It's most likely that he was a winter migrant – originally coming from the Adirondacks or the forests of Canada. If so, there was a good chance that he tried to make his way back there to find his own territory. If he stayed local, we may just encounter him someday.