

TattleTails & Tidbits



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Contributors:

- Bonnie Reynolds, SFC Pres/Cofounder
- Dawn Hayman, SFC VP/Cofounder
- Matthew Perry, Naturalist/ Director of SFC Nature Sanctuary

CONNECT WITH US: 3364 State Route 12, Clinton, NY 13323 (315) 737-9339 office@springfarmcares.org

Visit our Website and Blog: www.springfarmcares.org

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Miracles, Magic, & Wonder

t is that magical time of the year when our town and countryside transform with twinkling holiday lights and celebrations and festivals draw people together in unity. Our village transforms into a scene from It's A Wonderful Life and nostalgia fills the air. Even if the holidays are not your thing and you want to just say "bah humbug" to it all, it is hard to escape the true wonder if you look beneath the commercialism.

The onset of winter and the wonder of children excitedly awaiting the holidays creates an excitement of its own. It is an energy that permeates the air. The animals feel it and take on that magic and joy and that energy fills the farm. They truly look for the decorations to come out, and excited visitors arriving to pay them a visit. The animals love the magic and wonder if it all.

Last year, one of our horses, Brandy, asked Dawn, "Why can't we just keep it this way all year long? It is the one time humans seem to flow with joy and kindness and let the other negative things go."

Brandy has a good point. We wish all of you the best of the holidays and the best of the human heart. Maybe we can all stand to immerse ourselves in the innocent delight and joy of a child when seeing those first colored lights and decorations. Maybe, we truly can embrace the concept of peace on earth and goodwill toward all living things. And maybe we will be blessed with miracles, magic, and the wonder of it all.

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The Miracles Of Lucy

by Bonnie Reynolds



Lucy and Bonnie

ere at Spring Farm Cares we believe in miracles. That is because we see them, large or small, on an almost daily basis.

Lucy Goose continues to deliver the large sort of miracle.

The fact that Lucy is still alive is Miracle #1. She was born in 1997, making her 26 years old – beyond what is considered "old" for the average goose.

For Miracle #2, some readers might remember when, over a year ago, we thought that we were losing Lucy. She suddenly curled up, head tucked under a wing, and remained that way for about a week, refusing to eat or drink or even to move. Bonnie, who feeds Lucy her beloved canned corn each morning and evening, kept offering the

delicacy, but Lucy was never interested. We were all convinced that she was dying.

Then one morning, upon being offered her breakfast, Lucy suddenly lifted her head, said, "Oh! Corn!" and began to gobble. "Lucy is eating her corn!" Bonnie shouted into her walkie-talkie, to amazed responding cries from members of the staff. Lucy then got up and went on living as though nothing untoward had ever happened.

Until one day close to a month ago, when Lucy took a stroll around our arena, walking, the staff told us, "a whole lot more than usual." And that night she remained huddled on her bed of hay, her feet tucked beneath herself as she ate her dinner of canned corn and shredded lettuce.

And she didn't get up again. Day after day she remained huddled on her bed. She ate her corn and lettuce with the usual appreciation, but, as the days passed, it became obvious to us that this was going to be it. Her legs had given out. She would not rise again.

Yet our faithful staff stayed with her. Bonnie delivered Lucy's meals as usual, which meals Lucy relished. And each morning others in the staff prepared a warm bath in Lucy's tub and put her in so that she could duck her head, splash around for a while and preen herself. They then lifted her out, drying her off with towels and cleaning her off, and returned her to a fresh, cushy bed of hay.

This went on day after day. We thought that we were just keeping her comfortable. At some point, we all thought, the time would come.

But that time was not what we expected. About a week ago when Bonnie walked into Lucy's enclosure with the evening canned corn she let out a scream into the walkie-talkie. "Lucy's standing up!!!!"

Day by day the amazing Lucy grew stronger. She is now back to normal. Miracle #3.

What further miracles Lucy's future holds, only the Great Goose in the sky might know.

The Healing Heart Of The Horse by Dawn Hayman



Brandy

y life has forever been changed and enriched beyond measure by the horses who I've been blessed to know. I don't ride horses and hardly have ever done so. I never was comfortable up in a saddle and, interestingly, the horses were not comfortable with me upon their backs. They made that clear to me.

"We want you down here walking next to us," said one mare named Deeteza. "We will go far together this way on a journey you will never forget." And boy was that an understatement.

Horses have picked me up, dusted me off, and set me straight on the path ahead. They have gifted me with their hearts and bared their souls to me. They have shared the most amazing and intense messages and gifts with me. I cannot even imagine life without them. They saved me from myself. They found me when I was most lost. They comforted me when I thought I'd lost

everything. They've made me laugh and made me cry. They've taken me on dreams where we flew across the sky. Horses put me back together in ways that I never even knew I was broken. Within their hearts I found a home that was unshakable.

Chops, a Quarter Horse mare, was minutes from being euthanized after a tumor was blocking her wind pipe. She had been with us for years. I had rescued her from being euthanized for no reason twenty years prior. This was her final message to me: "When I leave, I am leaving you with the contents of my heart. That is what we do with you. You are the keeper of the heart of the horse." Never have I received a more humbling gift.

Recently, we started working with a local group assisting Veteran's with PTSD and suicidal tendencies. We are watching pure magic happen in our barn as they interact with the horses. Our horses Brandy and Freddy in particular have signed on to help. Horses are mirrors to our deepest innermost light. They hold us in their hearts and reflect back what they see and feel. To put your arms around a horse is to know how deeply connected to the Earth you are. You can literally feel yourself ground deeply as if you've suddenly grown deep roots. This is their gift and their magic.



Chops

Horses cut right through to the heart of who we are and hold us in their hearts without judgement. They say to us, "I am here with you. Just be still within me and rest." Trauma starts to recede. Peace starts to seep in through the cracks. And this thousand pound animal that is sharing space with you makes you feel as if you do matter and that your soul is safe within their heart. You start to see your own light within theirs. And healing starts to grow in the human heart. You may not be able to find words to express what is happening. But what you do feel is peace. Love. Gratitude. And you and that horse will always share that connection even after you walk out the door. It's as if they walk with you, and indeed they do. You no longer feel alone inside yourself.

This is the gift these horses give every single day. We may be a sanctuary for them, but they are the ones giving sanctuary to the human heart. And this is why the horses will remain at the very heart of this farm - forever.

Calling The Animals - Could These Angels Help Humanity Again? by Bonnie Reynolds



In October of 1988 the attention of the entire world became fixed on three grey whales, two adults and a youngster, who had stayed too long in their feeding grounds and were trapped in the ice in a bay off of Barrow, Alaska ... thick ice, which covered all, and made it impossible for the whales to surface and to breathe. The native Intuits, oil drillers, and an ever-growing number of government and non-profit animal organizations worked frantically night and day, chopping breathing holes into the ice, inviting the whales to surface and to breathe

But the whales kept frustrating their would-be rescuers. They kept moving away from the air holes, causing the rescuers to follow them, constantly chopping new holes.

Keeping tabs on the situation each morning over breakfast, Bonnie asked Dawn to talk to the whales, tell them to stay close to the air holes, that their rescuers were working to keep them alive.

Dawn did contact the whales. We were shocked by their answer.

"We are not here to be saved. We have not become trapped unwillingly. We three have been chosen to teach human beings a very important lesson." Dawn explained that if they did not use the breathing holes they would die. "We will have to die to teach the lesson. We are not sad. We are honored to be the ones chosen for this task."

Indeed, one morning when she checked in with the whales, Dawn was told that the youngest whale had died. And, the two survivors told Dawn, they were going to move on, even further into the ice. What, Dawn asked them, was the lesson that they expected humankind to learn from their deaths? They only said that they hoped we would find out.

News broadcasts confirmed that, indeed, the youngest whale had died, and the other two were moving even farther from the breathing holes. Bonnie and Dawn were both sad and perplexed, wondering what in the world their deaths could teach to humankind.

The following morning we had our answer ... and Dawn felt the joy flowing through the whales. They are so proud, so excited, so honored by whatever it was that we humans had done or understood. What Dawn heard when she contacted them was, "We are going to live!!! You humans not only got our message but you have far surpassed what we thought you would do. We can now teach our lesson better by living."

Turning on the news, we learned that the US State Department had asked the Russians to send ice breakers. And, miraculously, the Russians were coming.

To worldwide jubilation, the Russians broke a path into the ice. And the whales swam free.

Two countries that, for decades, had been bitter enemies, countries which had never cooperated with each

other in any humanitarian way, had come together in that cold sea and "broken the ice" to save life.

That event was the beginning of the end of the cold war. Within three years, the Soviet Union had folded, the Berlin wall had fallen, and Russian Communism, as we knew it, was history.

So, we all thought, was the nuclear threat.

Our teachers, the whales, had understood all of this. Thank goodness that, that time, humankind got the message.

Here at Spring Farm we understand the amazing teachers that animals are. We understand that their wisdom far surpasses ours.

And now, once again, the USA and Russia are at each others' throats. Once again, the nuclear threat hangs over our heads. And this time the situation is entangled with other threats worldwide. This time the situation is worse than the first time.

Could the wisdom of the animals possibly, once again, come to this world's rescue? What miracle could the animals possibly cause to occur that would, again, bring humankind to its senses?

The first time, the shout of joy was, "The Russians are coming." This time, could "The animals are coming " bring joy to this world in time for Christmas?

Communicating with Groups of Animals by Dawn Hayman

As an animal communicator, I am often asked by people to help communicate with animals in major publicized situations, such as mass beachings of whales and dolphins. People call and email begging me to tell them to not beach themselves or to turn around and go out to sea. "Why can't you just tell them?" people ask me.

But it's never as easy as that. Often times, animals in these kinds of situations are participating as part of a larger mission than we can ever fully understand. Many times they are sacrificing themselves to deliver a larger message to reach the masses. There have been whales that have come up the Hudson River and captured the hearts and attention of millions of people. When I've communicated with them, that is exactly what they were hoping to do. They were not lost on some whim that took them the wrong direction. They were part of something bigger to capture the hearts of a large part of humanity to deliver a message. They are ambassadors, teachers, emissaries of love and light. And their goal is to deliver to as many hearts as they can.

Of course, not all situations are like this, but it has been amazing and humbling to learn and hear just how many of these cases are animals reaching out to free the better part of humanity. They try to show us, reflect back to us, demonstrate to us a reminder of who we humans really are. They try to wake us up to our connection with them, with mother Earth, and, as importantly, to one another. Humanity has forgotten so much. But the animals hold space for us to come home and to open our hearts to one another and to ourselves.

So, what can we do? The answer is as simple and complex as it can get. They beseech us to go into our hearts and find the love we have for ourselves, for them, and for one another. "Remember your light and shine it bright," I was once told by a pod of dolphins. "That is what you can do to honor us."

A Falcon On My Hat

n Sunday, July 16th, Deb Saltis, raptor rehabilitator at Falcon Heart Rescue, brought me two young American Kestrels intended for release at the nature sanctuary. One of them, a female with the fearsome name of "Sweet Pea", had come to her the previous month as a downy chick. She had fallen from her nest and could not be returned. Deb raised her from a nestling to an adult-sized juvenile bird. The male had a similar origin story but was a little older when Deb received him. He came to me fully flighted, and more independent. My job would be to keep them in our sanctuary's aviary for a day or two; enough time for them to acclimate to the sights and sounds of the habitat. The plan was then to release them. If they stayed, I was to put out food for a few days, supplementing their nutrition while they learned to hunt for themselves.



The next day (Monday) I opened the aviary door. Somewhat surprisingly, the female Kestrel was the first one to leave. She flew through the open door and made an awkward landing in a nearby tree. That was understandable, since flying outside the confines of a cage was new to her. However, she then proceeded to clamber up a branch in a manner more like a squirrel than a raptor. It made me wonder if she was truly ready for prime time. While I considered recapturing her, the male Kestrel made his move and left the cage. Although he dashed quickly out of view, I was able to track his progress across the sanctuary due to the moving wave of songbird alarm calls. He was eager to be free and would not be seen again for several days.

Meanwhile. Sweet Pea was still struggling to get her footing in the low branches of the locust tree next to the aviary. At one point she was nearly in reach. I offered my arm for her to climb onto, but she scampered up to another branch instead. I had a net and considered using it on her, but just then she competently flew up to a higher branch. Virtually the entire time since she left the cage, she was looking at me and begging like a baby – "killy killy killy killy". I decided to leave the aviary door open in case she wanted to return for food or shelter. When I checked on her later that afternoon, she was in the tree branches above the cage, still begging. I put some food in a dish on the roof of the structure and, after a few minutes, she flew over and ate some.

On Tuesday morning I looked around and couldn't locate either of the Kestrels. I heard a disturbance coming from just north of the beaver pond. Songbirds of several species were giving alarm calls. I thought they must have been reacting to one of the Kestrels. I bushwacked through tall grass and goldenrod to the field border but saw no falcon. The focus of the songbirds' ire was on the back of a densely foliated ash tree – one I could not penetrate with my binoculars. On my way back I decided to check near the aviary once more and I found Sweet Pea. She was up in the same spruce where she took refuge the night before. I left to do some chores. When I returned in midmorning, she had moved to the top of a dead snag just south of the aviary. She started giving begging calls when she saw me. Calling the whole way, she flew directly to me and landed on top of my hat! I hadn't expected that. Certainly, no one had ever trained her to do it. This was all her idea. As it happened, she didn't stay on my hat long and soon dashed off to a more conventional perch.



Later that afternoon, I quickly relocated Sweet Pea. Before I saw her, I heard her distinctive begging calls coming from the trees around the aviary. She almost immediately landed on my hat. From my hat, she then flew to the ground several yards up the footpath. For a while I thought she was eating insects on the trail, but she was just moving around small sticks. When she was in the rehabilitation facility, she was getting crickets and mealworms on the floor of the cage. I think that's what she was looking for in the path. She flew back to a locust tree branch, and from there, back to my hat, begging the whole time. I decided to walk her out and

take her to an open area where she was more likely to see and catch grasshoppers. She stayed on my hat while I made my way to the meadow. I stood there looking ridiculous for about twenty minutes, all the while pointing out large insects and offering words of encouragement to my hat passenger. During that time, she did not try to catch anything, she only begged.

First thing Friday morning, I didn't see or hear Sweet Pea around the aviary. I put her food ration on the roof of the enclosure and set out to find her. It did not take me long. She was on a dead snag over one of the beaver ponds. Once again, she started calling when she saw me. I kept my distance, intent



on studying her behavior. I wanted to see if she was hunting. There were lots of songbirds around, and none of them seemed concerned about the little raptor in their midst. I believe they knew she posed no real threat. Despite my keeping a discrete distance, the Kestrel reacted to my presence, first by giving begging calls and then by landing on my hat. I started heading back to the aviary grove. As I walked, she made a few forays off my hat and to the tops of nearby bushes and other high perches. I had become her mobile command perch! She amazed me by plucking a cicada out of the air while on the wing. This was the first time I had confirmed her taking prey. She then flew to the top of my hat where she consumed the entire insect except the wings. That was a first for me. I never had a raptor eat a meal on my head before. I began walking back to the aviary grove. After taking a few steps she launched from my hat once again and darted low over the path. As if on a zipline, she slid expertly between the tight knit bushes. She then dashed by the bird feeder at the hedge causing the small birds to scatter like struck bowling pins.

On Monday morning Sweet Pea was down at the beaver pond, perched on the roof of our observation shelter. She began calling when she saw me. She didn't fly to me but instead landed on a post. She appeared quite animated. Several Jays were harassing her which, to her credit, was barely an annoyance to her. After darting over the water and landing on a snag, I noticed she was picking at something. She had caught another cicada. She gripped it in one foot and was nibbling on it. After watching her for a few minutes, I went about my business, collecting willow boughs for the Beavers. Sweet Pea watched me leave but didn't follow me. However, on my way back through the field, she flew over, landed on the branches I was carrying, and began begging in my face. She then hopped to the top of my hat and rode me like her own personal beast of burden to the top of the field. From there, she flew to a snag over Morton's Pond where she rekindled the interest of the Blue Jays. They chased her as she moved from perch to perch. Interestingly, I watched how much greater her acceleration was than that of her pursuers. They stayed with her on the turns but fell far behind on the straightaways.

On Monday afternoon, I was unable to find Sweet Pea. I checked all her usual spots but had no luck. The truth was, she had become proficient at hunting and no longer had need for a surrogate parent or a mobile command perch. In the following days and weeks, I kept my eyes open for her. I examined each Kestrel that came through the area, but I never saw her. Would she ever come back to the nature sanctuary? If she did, not only would she look different and be in full adult plumage, but she would be unlikely to pay any attention to me. Of course, for her own good, I hoped that would be the case. It was a wonderful experience having a close relationship with a healthy wild raptor, and one I am unlikely to forget.

Messages of Gratitude by Dawn Hayman

Every year we have a holiday tradition of sharing an animal message a day from Thanksgiving through December 31st. It started out as a private tradition and has now turned into something that has become meaningful to many people over the years. The messages can be found each day on Facebook and on our website blog. I thought we'd end our 2023 Volume of TattleTails & Tidbits with some of those messages.

I ask the animals what they are most grateful for in life or what they'd like to share with humans. Their responses always give us reason to take pause for a moment from the hectic pace of life.

Happy holidays and we will see you next year for the 3rd year of TattleTails.

From Cumin

"I may seem little but being a guinea pig is a big job. We have a lot of wisdom to share with the world. Often, we are around children and that gives us an opportunity to impart the seeds of kindness and compassion and joy into their lives. It is hard to be sad around a guinea pig who is exuding joy and happiness. We are built for that! Besides all of that, I am equally grateful for good morsels of food. Food tastes so good! And I love tasting a variety of foods. Life is full of good things. But we need to take the time to stop and recognize that."



From Woodward

"What I have found to be the most amazing thing in my life is learning to trust. I am blessed with people who were really patient with me. I was born wild. And then when I was still very young, I got attacked by an animal that almost killed me. I fought back hard but was badly injured. I was in so much pain. When people found me, they tried to help but I fought them because I was scared. Eventually I ended up here at the farm and they helped me to heal. With all of this, I started to watch other cats around me who were friendly with humans. They seemed really happy. I was so scared. But I decided to give it a try. Learning to trust was a big effort and it has changed my entire life. I still need people to move slowly at first. But I am so proud of myself when I purr and purr while they pet me. Sometimes we just need to take risks on things that at first seem scary. It was a blessing in my life and I am grateful."

