



TattleTails & Tidbits



Spring Farm CARES Animal & Nature Sanctuary Journal

Volume 3, Issue 1, January/February 2024

In This Issue:

- Page 2. Giving Thanks
- Page 3. Animals and Change
- Page 4-5. Believing in Miracles
- Page 6-7. Nature's Master Builders
- Page 8. In Memory of Cornelius



The Start Of A New Chapter

As we turn the page and start a new chapter in our lives, we look ahead to what the new year will bring. Here at the farm, we are still going through intense renovations of our cat rooms. We are about half way through the project at this point and there is a lot more to do. In the barn, our staff is dedicated to making the winter as easy as possible for the animals. While it has been a lighter winter so far, we are bound to get ice and snow that will keep them off their pastures for long stretches of time. We look for various ways to enrich their day as well as to keep up with the daily chores.

And as we set our sights on our mission and how that will unfold in 2024, always striving to help the animals, we seek also to enrich the human hearts that the animals so expertly reach out to and touch. We learn so much from them.

We look back at 2023 with gratitude for all of you who are on this journey with us. We could not do any of it without you. And we look forward to this new year with renewed hope and anticipation that the human heart will continue to heal and grow and that we will understand what the animals all seem to innately know - that we are all in this together. We are all one. And we need to understand this now more than ever. That is what the heart of the Spring Farm CARES mission is all about.

Thank you for joining us on this mission. The world changes one heart at a time.

There is amazing strength in that truth.

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

CONNECT WITH US:

3364 State Route 12,
Clinton, NY 13323
(315) 737-9339

office@springfarmcares.org

Visit our Website and Blog:
www.springfarmcares.org

Follow us on Facebook:
www.facebook.com/springfarmcares

Oh So Often Forgotten - Giving Thanks

by Bonnie Reynolds



Whisper was always grateful to lie in the sun and soak in the warmth anytime that she could.

Each holiday season, Thanksgiving through New Year's Day, Dawn publishes each day on Facebook, as a gift to our friends, a message from one of our animals, the animal telling what it is the most thankful for in this life. This is no small undertaking. Dawn starts well over a month in advance, calling out to the animals, making a list of those who want to contribute. Then she begins to record their messages, one or two a day. The messages are beautiful. And humbling. The very simplest things in life are revealed, as regarded by our animal friends, as shining gifts of almost inexpressible value. And we have learned that our reader friends look forward to each year's messages. Many families tell us that they make it a morning pleasure around the family breakfast table to read and discuss each day's message.

Thanks is so much a part of our history here at Spring Farm CARES. Yet so often we forget. We get so wrapped up in the daily nuts and bolts and problems of running what has become

a large organization. But, every once in a while, Dawn and I stop what we are doing, look long and meaningfully at each other, and say, "Wow. How fortunate we are. How very much we have to be thankful for."

Spring Farm CARES almost didn't happen. We were dirt poor when we began rescuing animals. The bank was finally actually preparing to foreclose on us and take the farm. And how well we remember a particular day when we were totally out of feed for the horses -- but were one dollar short on what was needed to buy a bag of their food. And suddenly a lady walked in. Apologizing profusely for what she considered to be so little, she gave us a \$1 donation. That lady left understanding how very huge that \$1 was to us. To this day, we make very sure to tell those donating perhaps just \$5, and apologizing for "giving so little," the story of the miraculous \$1. And we give thanks for these meaningful little things that keep occurring, reminding us to stop and give thanks to the Angels, both human and Heavenly, who make sure that that desperately needed \$1 will always be there for Spring Farm CARES. And for its animal friends.

Our donors can always be sure that, when we say "Thank you," that that "Thank You" comes from a deep well of understanding that taught us, over thirty-three years, to know what "Thank You" really means.

The animals, though, don't have to be reminded. Each of them is a "Thank You" walking.

About TattleTails & Tidbits

TattleTails & Tidbits is a free bi-monthly journal of Spring Farm CARES Animal & Nature Sanctuary. We have an amazingly talented group of Directors and Staff and we started this journal to share both creative writing, inspirational stories of the farm, educational articles, and artwork just to name a few. The purpose of our journal is to give you helpful information and to touch your heart and stir your soul.

There will be stories shared through animal communication with the many animal teacher residents of the farm as well. We hope that each issue gives you a variety of topics from both our animal and nature sanctuaries.

TattleTails & Tidbits is available only in electronic form. You can [sign up for our email list](#) to receive it directly in your In box and/or you can [download your copy directly from our website](#).

[Donations](#) are gratefully accepted and we hope you will share this with those you think would be interested as well.

Animals and Change

by Christine Schneider, DVM, cVMA, CHPV

As many of you are probably aware, we started a large renovation project of our small animal facility (the "Hall") last year. This meant that the cats in each cat room would be displaced for a period of time while their former living environment was torn apart and re-built. The spacious temporary holding areas are located in the center of the hall, which for our social cats is the ideal situation. However, some of the other cats had difficulty adjusting to the changes.

Dusty, a cat who is typically full of attitude, thrived when she was moved to the temporary living arrangement at the front of the hall. She sat on her perch atop a cat tree and monitored everyone who entered and left the hall. J-WOW, a cat that is considered mostly feral, transformed into a completely different cat. Staff was able to start grooming her and she became more social. Some cats, like Lorinda, who were already friendly, just enjoyed being able to interact with people constantly as opposed to waiting for someone to visit her room.



Chester, left, had also just the day before lost his friend Meia, on right. That additional stress also made things more difficult for him to adapt to his change of rooms.

Not all of our cats took the change in stride. Chester, a relaxed, easy-going, affectionate cat, had a brief stress-induced seizure when he was put in his carrier and relocated to the center of the hall. He went back to normal activities and started exploring his new environment once the seizure was over. Tarzan, another seemingly stress-free cat, developed stress cystitis (inflammation of the bladder) when he moved into his new home. A few days of anxiety meds put him on the mend and he's now happy with the change.

Just like people, it is hard to predict how cats will react to a major change. Some will continue on with life, where their biggest struggle is thinking about if this means that their breakfast will be late. Others will develop medical complications from internalizing their stress. The most important thing is how we react, as their owners, caretakers or medical staff. For example, during Chester's seizure, it could have been human nature to panic and congregate around the patient. However, that is the exact opposite of what kind of reaction seizing pets

need. Fortunately, our staff is well versed in dealing with cats with seizures and as soon as it was announced that Chester was seizing, all the lights went off, the music in the hall stopped playing, and everyone was intentionally quieter in their assignments. The calm environment we created for Chester during his medical crisis allowed him to quickly recover.

We also need to be conscientious about how we prepare for change, both for ourselves and the cats. The energy that we put out is what the cats will absorb. If we went into this major renovation stressed and worried, then the cats would be stressed and worried. Instead, we approached everything with excitement for the outcome and catered the new temporary rooms to handle any potential stress or apprehension. We used tons of Feliway, an aromatic pheromone meant to promote relaxation in cats. We provided ample hiding spots for the shy cats and tons of scratching posts and toys for the cats that needed distractions.

Change is inevitable in life, whether you're a human or a cat. Especially with the New Year, there may be some things changing in your personal life. Our attitudes about these changes will affect how well we adapt to the changes themselves. Change, after all, can be the start of something wonderful.

Believing in Miracles

by Dawn Hayman

Often, after I share some of the many miracle stories we have here at Spring Farm CARES, I am asked – “Why don’t I have anything happen like that?”

The truth is that there are miracles all around us every single day. The question is, do we allow ourselves to see and experience them? We are often limited by our very own beliefs. You know the old saying, “Seeing is believing?” In reality, it is the other way around - Believing is seeing.

When we hold a belief, idea, mission, or dream in our hearts and truly trust and believe that it will happen, the Universe holds nothing back in helping us. From the very first day that Bonnie and I started to dream Spring Farm CARES into reality, it has been that way. Even in our toughest times, we felt as if we were being guided and lovingly nudged along the path that we were creating, even when we ourselves couldn’t see it.

Oftentimes, animals present themselves as messengers on our path. Sometimes even as conduits from the Spirit realm as our loved ones in Spirit send us signs to keep moving forward and to let us know they are cheering us on.

You actually do have things happen all the time. Many times, you write this off. But if you will really stop and look at these things when they happen in your life, you will start to experience these miracles and messages from Spirit more and more.

Butterfly Messengers

Believe

In 1993, we lost our small animal facility, a large renovated barn, to a tragic fire. We lost 24 animals in less than thirty minutes. Miraculously, the horse barn, a mere twelve feet away from the fire, was saved, while we had evacuated all 30 equines and goats safely out of the barn just minutes before the smoke might have killed them. It was near midnight on a dark night in the middle of a raging snow storm. It would be two days before the animals could safely return to the barn. All of them were herded out into that dark night with a raging fire just yards from them. They later explained that they thought that Bonnie and I were dead and lost in the fire.

We couldn’t safely go out to them until daylight broke a long few hours later. We knew they were safely fenced in, but we didn’t know if they were hurt. We had let them all out into one big herd which they were not used to. Everything from blind Shetland ponies to 17-hand Thoroughbreds were running around together. Thankfully, at daybreak, we found them all ok. They had positioned themselves peacefully into small groups. But they were clearly as relieved to see us as we were to see them.

I had lost all of my personal possessions in the fire, plus my own small animals in addition to the rescued animals that we had in that building. Seeing those horses running up to greet me was healing. They literally wrapped themselves around me and did everything they could to come together for each other and for me. All of us were traumatized and all of us held on to one another. It was a beautiful moment.

The horses then began telling me about their experiences of the night before. It was not, though, anywhere near what I had expected to hear. Three mares in particular shared their combined experience with me. Arab Princess Deeteza, Anglo-Arab mare Scherry, and seriously crippled Shetland pony Sugar.

“We knew everything would be alright when suddenly all the butterflies came!” said Scherry.

Butterflies? What is she talking about? It was October 31st in a snow storm in the pitch dark of night. There were no butterflies. Being the all-so-wise human, I explained to her that there were no butterflies. "Scherry, you were seeing burning embers floating in the air from the fire."

At that point head mare and Master Teacher Deeteza stepped in and set me straight. "My dear friend, I know that you are going through a lot right now, but you must understand that we do know what butterflies are. The field was full of them as they danced all around us."

Sugar chimed in, "Yes! They were Angels, keeping us safe from harm."

Butterflies.... Angels... yeah, right.... Ok. I was a non-believer.

Fast forward to late December of that same year. We had been doing fire recovery in the ruins of our office and living quarters. We shoveled and sifted through pile after pile of ash trying to find anything of value. It was a monumental task. Winter weather had now closed in and I was out there alone, sifting one last time. I was especially trying to find a gold brooch that was very meaningful to Bonnie. But I had emotionally and physically reached a point where I could do no more that day. My hands were numb and my toes were frozen. Exasperated and defeated, I gave up. I took my shovel and pitched it into a pile of ash. But as I did, I heard the clink of metal against the shovel. Probably just another one of thousands of nails, I thought. I turned to walk away.

Yet, as I stepped out of the ruins, something made me turn and look back at that shovel.

Circling the handle and the head of the shovel sticking out of the ash were several monarch butterflies!

I ran back and grabbed the shovel as the butterflies danced all around me. I twisted the shovel upright and pulled it out. As I dumped the load of ash into the sieve, I heard that distinct clink again. I ran my gloved hand through the ash -- and found Bonnie's gold brooch staring back at me. And it was crystal clean as if someone had just painstakingly polished it. I headed for the house, eager to show it to Bonnie. I looked back from what once had been the door into the barn.



The butterflies were gone. And it suddenly occurred to me. Butterflies in December? Where had they come from? How did they just disappear?

Before I could just write it off as happenstance and carry on as a non-believer, a familiar friend telepathically joined me standing there in the ruins. Deeteza. "Angels are everywhere, Dawn. Just as the butterflies that we saw the night of the fire were real, too. You need only believe in Angels to see them. It's up to you. "

Nature's Master Builders

by Matt Perry



The sturdy grass nest of a Red-winged Blackbird

Some wild animals are particularly gifted when it comes to construction work. From Beavers to paper wasps to most songbirds, they all exhibit tremendous skill, and resourcefulness when it comes to fashioning their homes. Bird homes may be as large as a Bald Eagle's nest, measuring 4 to 10 feet in diameter; 2 to 8 feet tall, and weighing over a ton, or they can be as small as a hummingbird nest, which is only the size of a half walnut shell. Building styles, and even building materials utilized by wildlife for their homes vary greatly. Animals use mud, bark, leaves, grass, pine needles, moss, plant silk, spiderwebs, saliva, stone, animal hair, feathers, and so much more. Some animals excavate their homes in wood; some excavate in soil. They may chisel out a simple cavity like woodpeckers do, or they may create a labyrinth of tunnels and chambers like Woodchucks and ants do. Animals may be true artisans – fashioning elaborate and intricate structures, or they may be more like novice craftsmen, sticking with simple utilitarian designs.

As it happens, observing animals build or excavate their homes is not an easy thing to do. With some notable exceptions, most animals take pains not to be seen during the nest construction phase. This makes sense since a discovered nest is much more vulnerable to predation. Some exceptions include those species that choose remote locations for their nests like the tops of trees, or on high cliffs or towers. Eagles, Osprey, Red-tailed Hawks, Peregrine Falcons, and Great Blue Herons are among the birds which typically build their nests in remote locations. During the construction or the renovation process, as well as when raising young, these birds can be monitored if the observer is scrupulous about keeping their distance. If the bird builder is constructing a new nest, they may make hundreds of trips back and forth ferrying materials. It's rare for a bird that's reusing its nest from a previous year not to add to it or make alterations. Some raptor nests become increasingly massive as they get older. This is true with Bald Eagle and Osprey nests which can get especially large over the course of several years. For many birds, the building process is inextricably linked to breeding behavior. Indeed, engaging in nest construction together helps to establish and/or strengthen a pair bond.



Hazelnut, the beaver, adds an armful of mud to the lodge

Frequent renovation of a dwelling takes place with some animals, most notably with Beavers. Like a particularly obsessive handyman, the Beaver almost constantly adds to or otherwise improves their lodge. After its initial construction, a beaver lodge might be heightened, widened, or have a whole new wing added. Before each winter season, the lodge's exterior is "winterized", which entails being slathered with a fresh coat of mud. Of course, we only see the changes that happen on the exterior of the structure. Inside the lodge, the inner chambers are also subject to frequent refurbishment. The levels of the ceilings and floors may be heightened. Also, entrances may be reworked. Some of this work is done in reaction to changing water levels in their pond which in turn is

brought about by their own dam construction efforts. From my observation shelter at our Nature Sanctuary's

main beaver pond, over the course of five years, I've watched a beaver lodge undergo many alterations. What began as a single-mound lodge became a duplex, with an added mound that gradually grew until it surpassed the size of the original one. It was like watching the birth of a new volcano albeit on a mini scale. And this one contained Beavers and not magma. I recall back in 2012 watching the colony patriarch at the time (named May Apple) and his apprentices working around-the-clock to add height to their lodge while simultaneously raising the ceiling of the lodge's main chamber. Three Beavers brought load after load of mud, branches, and stone and added it to the lodge's exterior. Meanwhile, at least one Beaver was inside the structure, chewing away at the inner chamber's ceiling to lift it. All this extra work was brought about by the Beavers' subsequent work on the dam which had caused the pond's water level to rise.



Warbling Vireo on her nest

Of the many open-cup style nests built by songbirds, there are some that strike me as true architectural masterpieces. These nests are functional, structurally sound, and comfortable for their occupants. They are also decorated to be congruent with their surroundings. The nests of vireos, gnatcatchers, and hummingbirds fall into this category. The latter two tend to be meticulously camouflaged to look like a natural knot on the branch they are attached to. Vireo nests differ from gnatcatcher and hummingbird nests by the way they are attached to their host tree. While gnatcatcher and hummingbird nests are secured to horizontal branches by their base, vireo nests are secured to forked branches by their rim. Essentially, this makes them more like baskets than cups. One of the things that always impressed me about the vireo's nest is its elasticity. A considerable amount of spider silk incorporated into the structure is largely responsible for that. Several times I've watched female Red-eyed Vireos using their bodies to mold the shape of their nest's interior. Like a hammock, the nest stretched one way and then the other as the bird pressed her chest into each side. The durability of vireo nests is remarkable. I challenge anyone to go outside and make a similar structure out of grass, bark strips, rootlets, spiderwebs, and lichen and see how it holds together when you stretch it.

Finding active bird nests in nature is often difficult; and, as mentioned above, most wildlife species purposely conceal their nests from the prowling eyes of predators. However, after the nesting season is over, and the leaves are off the trees, suddenly the veils have been lifted and it's possible to discover virtually all the bird nests you couldn't find during the summer. This is when you can examine and marvel at the construction methods and innovation of the builders – and all without disturbing their breeding activities. It's sometimes difficult but try to resist the temptation to collect old nests. It's always best to leave them to be recycled or repurposed by some other animal.



The sturdy grass nest of a Red-winged Blackbird

In Memory of Cornelius

by Trinity Cook



Cornelius passed away on January 15, 2023.

Cornelius was a unique and special cat, not just in his appearance but also in presence. He touched many lives in the years he was with us. He was found in our nature sanctuary as a stray in 2013. While he wouldn't come to us, we were eventually able to catch him in a humane trap. We assumed that he had been dropped off on the side of the road, as happens a lot.

In the 10 years he spent with us, he was a very happy boy. We were able to provide him with a space that made it easy for him to succeed. Cornelius did not take well to change and new situations. He loved to live life on his own terms. And that is exactly how we let him be here with us. He was loved and adored for his quirky ways.

Cornelius suffered from multiple health issues as he aged. But it was a mass in his lungs that ultimately ended his life. As we said our good-byes and helped him out of his failing body, he exuded pure peace and contentment. He had a good life here.

But grief is a part of loving them and no matter how many times we go through losses here, each one still holds an indelible place in our hearts and memories.

Trinity captured her feelings after his passing with this poem.

The Circle

by Trinity Cook

Skies are lightening,

Painted with blues and pinks,

The clouds are only a whisper.

How can it be,

When I am consumed with grief?

How can it be

Warmth of daybreak dances on my skin

When my heart is frozen,

Stuck in the time before.

Then, in stillness, I see....

The horses whinny as they graze;

Peace and contentment.

The birds glide on crisp morning air;

Playful and free.

Life awakens everywhere.

All That Is wraps her arms around me.

"How can it be?" I ask.

She whispers gently,

"Somewhere beyond all you know,

Souls weep joyfully.

Familiar hearts are full again,

As they hold your dear friend tightly.

Their love will be here with you always.

Even now, as they return

To the other side of The Circle.

Trinity Cook is a Senior Animal Caretaker for Small Animals. She is also finishing up her Veterinary Technician training and will be assisting Dr. Christine when she completes her licensing.