

# Focus on Animals

THE FOUNDATION FOR ANIMALS ANNUAL REPORT NEWSLETTER  2019-2020 EDITION



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## BIRDS THRIVE AT MONTANA WILD

### Improvements Needed for Raptors and Visitors

After many years and hundreds of injured and orphaned birds successfully rehabilitated, there is now a growing need for new bird enclosures at Montana WILD's wildlife center adjacent to Spring Meadow Lake State Park in Helena.

This year FFA is joining a fundraising campaign for a new configuration of enclosures that will benefit raptors that come to the center. The improvements will enhance rehabilitation for birds, while also expanding public viewing opportunities of ambassador birds.

The enclosures that are planned at the Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks facility meet species-specific standards, provide a more natural environment, and have better access to outdoor elements for all the birds. In addition, they will accommodate the different housing needs of those in rehabilitation and those of ambassador birds. Seclusion and limited exposure to humans help ensure birds in rehab their best chance for a return to the wild. Enclosures designed for public viewing are suitable for ambassador birds that become members of the education team.

*If you would like to contribute to the project, please designate your donation to the Bird Enclosure Fundraising Campaign, Foundation For Animals, PO Box 389, Helena, MT 59624. *



One of Montana WILD's ambassador birds, a Great Horned Owl, recently was a surrogate 'mom' to four Great Horned owlets. In the rehabilitation center, she taught them the owl skills needed to survive on their own so that all four owlets were able to be released back to the wild.

Wildlife photos courtesy of Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

## ORPHANED BEAR CUBS

### A Different Journey for Each Species

It happens sometimes. Orphaned cubs can result from a hunting, car or train accident that kills the sow, or a sow may abandon her cub because of drought or other conditions. Fortunately, in Montana, orphaned cubs often have a second chance at a new life.

Montana's Wildlife Rehabilitation Center at Montana WILD, a division of MT Fish Wildlife & Parks, receives both black bear and grizzly cubs that are orphaned too young to survive on their own, but the two species are managed differently. Black bear cubs at the center are potential candidates for release back to the wild. Grizzly cubs require special handling and State policy prevents releasing them into the wild, so Montana WILD staff works with other agencies to place them in a certified wildlife sanctuary or zoo to ensure their future.

Over the years, the Foundation has raised funds through donations and grants to meet the needs of the center's bear cub compound, from materials for denning enclosures and off-loading gates to muscle-building outdoor jungle gyms and other equipment. Interest in the cubs grew quickly, but the rehabilitation area is closed to the public in order to give black bear cubs the best chance at a successful release to the wild. FFA funded an exhibit at Montana WILD that shows visitors how the bear cubs are rehabilitated. 



All in the family: Grizzly cubs at Montana WILD before the orphaned siblings traveled to their new home at Bearizona Wildlife Park.



*Photos by Brian Powers*

*The Ambassador Bird Program offers an opportunity to view these majestic birds with their volunteer handlers.*

## MAJOR DONORS CONTRIBUTE TO BIRD ENCLOSURE CAMPAIGN

Fundraising partners for the planned improvements at Montana WILD include Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Montana Outdoor Legacy Foundation and the Foundation For Animals.

Leadership donors include the Cadeau Foundation, Fanwood Foundation, Esther L. Heit Foundation, Toyota/Helena Motors, Partners For Wildlife and Treacy Foundation. Thanks also go to individual donors who contributed through Birds & Beasleys and FFA's fundraising appeals. Special thanks to Wall Family – Power Townsend Foundation and Joan Poston who gave substantial donations.

## FFA SMALL GRANTS PROGRAM 2019-20

**Carroll College Canine Center:** FFA awarded \$9,800 toward veterinary equipment and sponsorship of shelter dogs for school years 2019 and 2020.

**SPAY Montana:** A grant of \$5,250 supported the 2020 spay/neuter clinic, and \$3,150 went toward a 2019 clinic for pets of low-income owners in Helena. Due to Covid-19 and related restrictions, the number of surgeries that can be done at clinics declined while applications for assistance have skyrocketed. Donations to FFA's spay/neuter and emergency funds programs are needed for the spring 2021 clinic.

**Fairgrounds Duck Pond:** FFA contributed \$1,200 in 2019 and \$1,500 in 2020 to the supplemental feed that Mikal Kellner provides for domestic waterfowl abandoned at the Lewis & Clark County Fairgrounds.



*Photo by D. Nickman*

*Volunteers are vital to Spay Montana clinics, which help the neediest people whose pets could not otherwise be spayed and neutered. FFA supported annual Helena clinics in 2019 and 2020.*



*Photo by Connie Rote*

*Carpenter Bruce Bannon and Montana Wild employee Laryssa Rote with 3 of 12 new denning boxes built for bear cubs. A grant from FFA funded materials.*

**Montana Wild:** FFA contributed \$4200 toward materials for 12 denning boxes built for the bear cubs at the wildlife rehabilitation center.

**Adopt-A-Species:** As a sponsor of the Adopt-A-Species elementary school conservation program, FFA contributes \$1,000 each year to the publication of student artwork

and essays in the Helena Independent Record's Earth Week news supplement.

**Helena Area Friends of Pets (HAFoP):** FFA's grant of \$500, along with contributions from Pad for Paws and Wild About Cats Rescue & Sanctuary, funded spay/neuter surgery for a colony of feral cats abandoned at the Montana Law Enforcement Academy. 



*This conceptual illustration shows planned enclosures for the rehabilitation and education birds, as well as a new hawk barn. (Robert Peccia & Associates)*



## HELPING PETS AND PEOPLE SPAY/NEUTER AND EMERGENCY FUNDS PROGRAMS

**Spay/Neuter:** Since the program's inception in 1992, FFA has dedicated \$137,381 toward efforts to curb overpopulation of pets. Since our last newsletter, FFA has contributed \$8,400 to support low-cost public clinics in Helena and \$550 in other grants and vouchers.

**Emergency Funds:** This program is designed to help low-income pet owners meet emergency veterinary expenses. Since 1992, FFA has dedicated \$88,815 to this program. Since our last newsletter, FFA has provided \$2,836 in emergency assistance.

## PROTECTING PEOPLE AND PETS

**Rabies vaccination for pets.** If exposed to rabies, unvaccinated pets can expose humans to this deadly disease. Quarantine for an unvaccinated pet that bites a person can be lengthy and is at owner's expense. Local laws vary so check with your city or county regarding rabies vaccination requirements for dogs, cats and ferrets.

**Speaking of cats...** populations are exploding, especially near or outside city limits where unwanted cats are often abandoned. Animal groups are struggling to help spay/neuter, vaccinate and find homes for them. Donations can be designated for FFA's spay/neuter program.

## PANDEMIC IMPACTS PEOPLE AND PETS

COVID-19 has changed how animal-care is conducted. To minimize risk to their staff and to pet owners, many clinics went to 'curb-side' service. Communicating by cell phone, a pet owner drives up to meet a clinic worker who takes the pet from the vehicle and into the clinic for exam and/or treatment. Later, the pet is returned to the owner, 'curb-side.'



*Spaying and neutering is key to decreasing the number of homeless cats.*



*Photo by D. Niskman*

*This kitty was homeless when she ran in front of a truck. A neighbor took her to a clinic. With assistance from FFA, the young cat was cared for, then spayed. Dubbed 'Pixie' by her rescue family, she won a permanent place in their hearts and home.*

*"Jazzy," once a family pet and then abandoned, was on the run when she stepped into a leg-hold trap. Infection had set in when a caring neighbor found her and requested FFA emergency assistance for the cat's leg to be amputated. With devoted after-care from her rescuer, Jazzy recovered and is a cherished member of that family.*

## CARROLL COLLEGE CANINE CENTER OPENS Students work with Canine Companions

Excitement ran high when the new Perkins Call Canine Center opened its doors in time for the 2020 fall semester at Carroll College. Students and dogs in the Anthrozoology (ANZ) program now have a place on campus to train, observe and study.

The program selects many of the dogs from Montana shelters. Each student lives and works with a canine for the school year, learning its aptitude for specific tasks like scent detection and service for people with special needs, while also training to qualify for a "Canine Good Citizen" certificate. After canine



*Photo by Jeff Wall*



*Photo by Jeff Wall*

*Students groom a dog in the new canine center at Carroll College. An FFA grant helped fund veterinary and training equipment.*

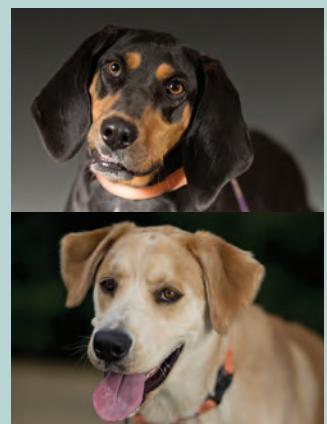
*The new Perkins Call Canine Center building allows plenty of room for training exercises.*

graduation in May, the dogs are vetted for adoption or go on to receive advanced training in specific fields. Students continue their studies, many of them in majors that include working with animals.

FFA has sponsored a shelter dog for several years, including 2020 and 2021, in addition to grants toward veterinary and training equipment.



*Photo by D. Niskman*



*Photo by Chris Martin*

*Felix and Willow, two of last year's canine graduates, were matched with forever homes by the Lewis & Clark Humane Society. For information on adopting a future Carroll College 'canine graduate,' visit the school's website and the ANZ program's Adoptable Dogs. Posts will be updated in spring.*

Visit our website:  
[www.foundationforanimals.org](http://www.foundationforanimals.org)



## Focus on Animals

### The Foundation For Animals

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and volunteers at the  
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## ADOPT-A-SPECIES PROGRAM

For over 20 years, the Adopt-A-Species (AAS) program has been educating and inspiring students in Helena-area elementary schools, and the program's impact has come full circle in some families. Many children in the program today have parents who credit their own participation years ago as having motivated them to be good stewards of wildlife and habitat.

Students study the Montana wildlife species their school has chosen for that year. Then, in April, their art and essays are published in the Independent Record's annual Earth Day Supplement. The program is sponsored by the Helena-Lewis & Clark National Forest; Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks; Montana Discovery Foundation; and the Foundation For Animals.

Each year a fun and classroom-friendly theme is developed with input from teachers. The theme in 2018-2019 was *Born To Be Wild*. Students researched the time of year their adopted species are born and what the first year or two of life is like for the young. The goal was to have students understand what the young animals need to grow to maturity and the odds they must overcome to survive into adulthood.

The 2019-2020 theme focused on *The Life That Fire Brings*. Students were tasked with researching how wildfires affect wildlife habitat. For 2020-2021, the theme is *Helping Hands for Wildlife*. Look for student artwork and essays in the annual Independent Record student supplement in April during Earth Week.

**REMEMBERING CARLA WAMBACH:** This past spring we lost Carla who was a founding member of FFA's advisory group and a long-time Helena educator. She was also instrumental in developing the Adopt-A-Species program, believing that teachers can have a significant impact on the future through their students. Her dedication to teaching and her passion for wildlife left a lasting impression on her students and the Foundation. 

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Carla Wambach, a dynamic force in the classroom.

Photo by D. Nickman