

Focus on Animals

THE FOUNDATION FOR ANIMALS ANNUAL REPORT NEWSLETTER 🐾 2016-17 EDITION



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FLIGHT BARN FOR INJURED RAPTORS HASTENS THEIR RETURN TO THE BIG SKY

Great news! The barn is up and rehabilitation time for injured raptors is down. It took several years and a lot of planning, fundraising and community effort to finish the large steel structure that allows birds to gradually return to full flight.

An on-site flight barn had long been on the wish list of Lisa Rhodin, manager of the Montana Wildlife Center in Helena. From 2011-2016, the center treated 83 eagles, including 35 Golden and 48 Bald. Handlers were limited to exercising injured raptors, mostly eagles and hawks, on long tethers. Even then, some birds had to be transferred to the Montana Raptor Conservation Center in Bozeman for further rehabilitation exercises.

In the new flight barn at the Montana Wildlife Center, staff and volunteers can encourage birds to fly from perch to perch. The barn is 32' wide, 104' long and 16' high. The large free-flight area offers a variety of perches designed to accommodate birds as their strength and abilities increase. The barn is secluded to limit the birds' exposure to humans and ensure the best chance for successful rehabilitation and survival in the wild.

The Foundation For Animals spearheaded the fundraising campaign for the flight barn. Through individual donations and support from Burlington-Northern, Last Chance Audubon, Montana's Outdoor Legacy Foundation, North Western

Flight Barn, continued on page 2



A bald eagle spreads its wings after being released by Lisa Rhodin, manager of the Montana Wildlife Center. The rehabilitated raptor, one of four released that day, benefited from free-flight exercise in the new flight barn.

Photo courtesy of Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks; photographer, Thom Briggs, Helena, Independent Record



The flight barn dedication honored volunteers and donors to the project, and remembered Kelly Kuntz, long-time wildlife center supporter and former FFA chair. Holding a mockup of the sign now installed on the barn are Jeff Hagener, former director of MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks; Cindy Utterback, Foundation for Animals co-chair; and Thomas Baumeister, supervisor of Montana WILD.

Photo courtesy of Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks; photographer, Dianne Nickman



These orphaned black bear cubs, only 5 pounds each when found, are thriving at the Montana Wildlife Center. Secluded rehabilitation increases their chances for a successful return to the wild.

Photo courtesy of Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks; photographer, Brady Murphy

ORPHAN BLACK BEAR CUBS ARRIVE AT MONTANA WILDLIFE CENTER

When a lactating black bear sow was struck and killed by a vehicle near Lincoln recently, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks wardens located her den and rescued the two cubs inside. Because the little cubs were very young and unable to survive on their own, they were taken to the Montana Wildlife Center in Helena for evaluation. Fortunately, the cubs are healthy and vigorous. They are being rehabilitated at

Cubs, continued on page 2

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Flight Barn, continued from page 1


Energy, Plum Creek Foundation and Treacy Foundation, the pre-fabricated frame was purchased. It required an enormous amount of volunteer labor to complete construction, as well as siding, doors and interior beams. Helena Sand & Gravel and other businesses donated materials and labor, Peccia & Associates donated employee volunteer time, and a group of carpenter-savvy volunteers customized and wrapped up interior work.

Dedication of the barn took place in August 2016. Several months later, a 'wild' celebration took place when four eagles were set free at Montana Audubon Golden Eagle Monitoring Site at Duck Creek. Without exercise time in the barn, three of the raptors might not have been releasable, but their rehabilitation at the Montana Wildlife Center was cinched when they could fly end-to-end in the new flight barn.



Photo courtesy of Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks; photographer, Dianne Nickman

Volunteer Bill Fairbank works with Rubicon, a golden eagle whose injuries prevented her from being released. Now an ambassador bird, she makes appearances at programs and events aimed at educating the public about Montana wildlife.

To view video of wildlife center eagle releases, please go to www.foundationforanimals.org and click on Montana Wildlife Center. 

Cubs, continued from page 1

the Center and will be released when big enough and old enough to fend for themselves.

If you would like to donate to care of the cubs, 'dogloos' make perfect denning boxes. The wildlife center also accepts gift cards from local ranch and hardware stores. Please confirm specific needs by calling 444-9942.

GRIZZLY CUBS NEED SPECIAL HANDLING

Grizzly cubs present unique problems at the Montana Wildlife Center in Helena. As Lisa Rhodin, manager of the Center, explained: "We can safely release orphaned black bear cubs that are not habituated to humans but grizzly cubs, after any human contact, are too high risk." Grizzly cubs stand a better long-term chance in the wild if they can make it on their own. "However," she added, "in rare cases when humans have caused the death of a lactating grizzly sow and the cubs are too young to survive, game wardens may decide to bring them to the Wildlife Center."

Two sets of orphaned Montana grizzly cubs were recently placed in safe homes after time spent at the Montana Wildlife Center.

The first twins, about 9 months old, were brought to the Wildlife Center in July 2016 after their mother was euthanized because of her history of killing domestic animals. Later, after evaluation at the Center, they were transported to ZooMontana near Billings, where a naming contest dubbed them Huckleberry and Finley. They thrived, eventually weighing over 200 pounds each, and were transferred to the St. Louis Zoo where a \$10 million habitat for grizzly bears includes a bear grotto to allow visitors a view of bears enjoying a waterfall and catching their own food. According to Rhodin, "We would like to have returned the cubs to the wild but couldn't because they were habituated to humans. This is the next best home for Huck and Finley."



The second set of twins, found in September 2016, were found trying to survive without their mother. The decision to bring them to the Wildlife Center was made only after it was clear they could not survive on their own. The sow was later found with shotgun wounds to her face and had to be euthanized. At the Wildlife Center, it was discovered that one cub had also been shot and required treatment. Because grizzly cubs cannot be released back to the wild, after a short stay at the Wildlife Center, the little bears were placed with the Maryland Zoo. Now enjoying life to the fullest, their progress can be monitored through the zoo's Facebook page. 



Photo courtesy of Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks; photographer, Dianne Nickman

VOLUNTEERS MAKE IT HAPPEN

It takes many hands to keep up with work during the busy season, spring through fall, at the Montana WILD visitor center and the adjacent wildlife rehabilitation facility. Volunteers logged a total of more than 7400 hours assisting staff with operations at both facilities. College students also play an important role, including students from Carroll College's Anthrozoology program who participate in volunteer and internship programs at the wildlife center. 

At left, Montana WILD offers volunteers the opportunity to help educate the public in a variety of ways. From left to right, with some teaching tools in hand, are Sharon Liederman, Lynne Dixon, Marti and Bill Cook, and education program manager Laurie Wolf.

SPAY/NEUTER AND EMERGENCY FUNDS PROGRAMS HELPING PETS AND PEOPLE

Spay/Neuter. In 2016, FFA contributed \$5,650 toward efforts to curb overpopulation of pets, including \$150 through FFA individual vouchers and \$5,500 to fund low-cost public clinics. Since 1992, FFA has dedicated \$122,745 to this program.

Emergency Funds. In 2016, FFA dedicated \$2,049 to helping primarily low or fixed-income pet owners who are faced with emergency veterinary expenses. Since 1992, FFA has devoted \$83,449 to this program.

FFA AWARDED \$5,500 TO 2016 SPAY-NEUTER CLINIC

A clinic held in July 2016 by SPAY Montana was made available to pet owners in most need of assistance. With the help of a \$5,500 grant from the Foundation, 163 dogs and cats were spayed and neutered at the two-day event in Helena.

“BEAUTY” AND THE BEST, a true story of exceptional volunteers going above and beyond to help animals in need. The futures of a dog and her 9 puppies were transformed when they were brought to a SPAY Montana clinic early in 2016.

Realizing the mother was in poor health and unable to feed her pups, clinic workers quickly decided to volunteer foster care for all of them back in Helena. Tabitha fostered the pups and Sophia took the mom home. Months later, fully recovered and named “Beauty,” the mom was spayed by SPAY Montana and adopted by Sophia. More good news, her pups are in forever homes, too! 🐾



Photographer, Dianne Nickman

This kitty, found in freezing weather, needed help quickly. Tips of her ears were gone due to frostbite. Her tail, badly infected, needed to be amputated. With assistance from the Foundation, she received veterinary care from Dr. Kristi Costley at Valley Veterinary Hospital and is now happy with her new family.



Photographer, Dianne Nickman

“Beauty,” recovering from spay surgery, is surrounded by her best friends (left to right) Chaz, clinic volunteer; Tabitha, S.N.I.P. Committee chair; and Sophia, clinic technician.

DUCKS AND GEESE ABANDONED AT FAIRGROUNDS POND ARE HELPED

The past winter was hard on humans but even harder on the domestic ducks and geese, most of them originally abandoned, at the Lewis & Clark Fairgrounds duck pond. For many years people of all ages have visited the pond to enjoy watching the birds that make the area their home. For almost as many years, Mikal Kellner has devoted much time and effort to feeding the domestic ducks and geese. In 2016, FFA granted \$1,200 toward the purchase of grain to feed them.

An important reminder: It is unlawful to abandon any domestic animal, including ducks and geese. 🐾

OUTDOOR CLASSROOM CONSTRUCTION TO BEGIN SOON AT MONTANA WILD

Work has started on plans and permits for construction of a covered outdoor classroom gazebo. A partnership between Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Montana’s Outdoor Legacy Foundation and the Foundation For Animals helped match a grant from the Land and Water Conservation Fund to build the gazebo at Montana WILD.

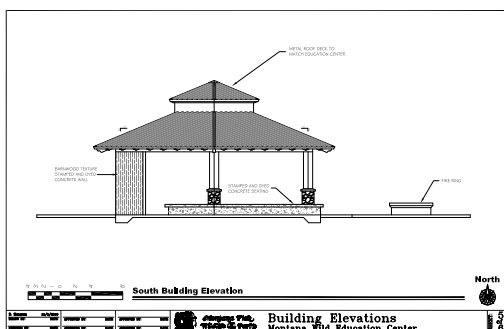
This addition to the grounds will create an open-air venue for students and adults to learn about fish and wildlife in the greater Montana landscape. “It’s not always easy to learn about the outside when we are inside,” says Thomas Baumeister, Montana WILD Supervisor, referring to existing indoor classrooms.

The gazebo will be located on a ridge overlooking the lake and trails, blending in with its surroundings and the

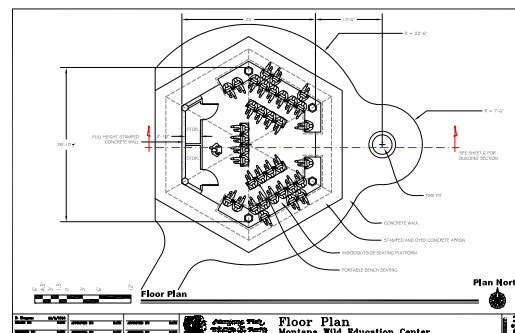
Montana WILD building. Visitors, including school and community groups, will experience the outdoors in birdsong, breezes, and sights of the lake, valley and mountains. The roof will provide shade on warm summer days, and protection from rain as well. Five of the six sides will be open to the air, and one wall will provide space for a screen and will display items used in teaching (see sketch).

The public-private partnership that has raised funds and launched design work for this project is one of several cooperative ventures that tie Montana wildlife education to real-life experiences. The Foundation for Animals is proud to play a part in this exciting effort. The goal is to have the plans and environmental assessment

finalized in time to begin construction by summer, with completion targeted for autumn 2017. 🐾



Sketches courtesy of Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks



Visit our website:
www.foundationforanimals.org



Focus on Animals

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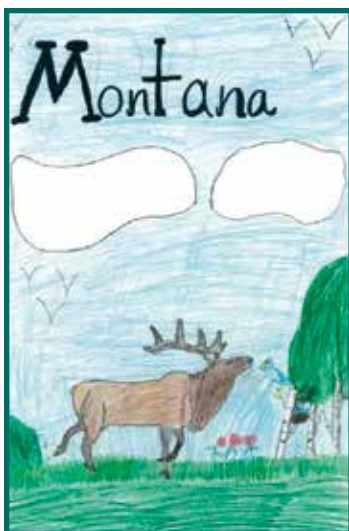
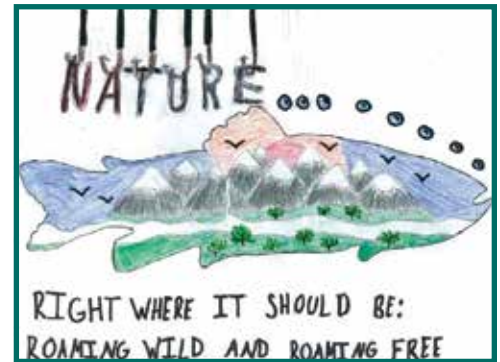
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*Cindy Utterback
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Special thanks to the staff
and volunteers at the
Montana Wildlife Center.



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POSTERS FOR WILDLIFE ADOPT-A-SPECIES PROGRAM IN ITS 20th YEAR

The focus of the Adopt-A-Species program is to increase student awareness and understanding of Montana wildlife and the need for habitat stewardship.

During the past school year, students in participating Helena elementary schools were tasked with researching wildlife habitat, then using that knowledge to create posters depicting their school's adopted species. A poster art contest produced winning entries that appeared in the Independent Record newspaper supplement during Earth Week. To view all winning student posters, go to www.foundationforanimals.org and click on Education. The program is sponsored by the Helena Forest Service-Lewis & Clark National Forest; Montana Discovery Foundation; Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks; and the Foundation For Animals. 🐾



The Foundation for Animals 2016-2017 Donor Recognition Honor Roll

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In Memory of Richard Barker

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Dianne Nickman

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Judy & Blaine Palmquist

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Deborah & David Cooper

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VISIT GREATER HELENA GIVING CAMPAIGN. An annual 24-hour online fundraising campaign in

May. This local giving event is organized by the Helena Area Community Foundation.

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To learn more go to www.greaterhelenagives.org.

#GIVING TUESDAY CAMPAIGN. An end of the year celebration during the holidays. #Giving Tuesday is a

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To learn more go to www.givingtuesday.org.

THANK YOU FOR CARING ABOUT ANIMALS, BOTH DOMESTIC AND WILD.

All gifts to the Foundation are greatly appreciated. Your tax-deductible contributions allow FFA to support spay-neuter efforts in the Helena area, contribute to emergency veterinary care for pets in need, provide a sponsorship for the Adopt-A-Species program in schools, and award small grants to worthy organizations that promote animal welfare. Moreover, thanks to your significant donations we have been able to fund many improvements at the Montana Wildlife Center.