

# Free Again, Inc.

Conservation Through Rehabilitation & Education

4031 Big Muddy Road

Carterville, IL 62918

(618) 988-1067

Mission Statement: Free Again, Inc. is a volunteer non-profit organization providing the Southern Illinois region with rehabilitation services for injured, ill, or orphaned wildlife. Through awareness and education, we encourage a peaceful coexistence between people and our native wildlife. Founded in 1987, we serve nearly 400 avian and mammal species yearly.



Winter 2010

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## Laurie Geiger's second grade class adopts Bonnie

Laurie Geiger's second grade classroom of Carbondale New School raised \$274.50 during their annual bake sale. Unlike many bake sales, the money will not go toward extracurricular activities or new classroom supplies.

Instead, Geiger's students pick one of Free Again's resident animals to adopt for the year.

Bonnie, the raccoon, was this year's lucky recipient. The money will be used to provide Bonnie with

cage repairs and enrichment activities.

As a reward for the students hard work, Beverly hosts a tour of the Free Again premises and allows the students to meet their adopted animal. For many students, this is a one of a kind opportunity to get up close and personal with wildlife.

Geiger's students learn what it takes to run a rehabilitation center, how to determine whether an animal is injured and where to take it

to be rehabilitated.

The money will be used for Bonnie's annual vaccination and exam. This year, we will also be upgrading Bonnie's cage with a new perimeter enclosure. Bonnie also got a special purchase of cookies.

Geiger's classroom not only gets a special lesson in living with wildlife but also helps Free Again in fulfilling its mission statement of encouraging a coexistence between people and wildlife.



Photo courtesy of Laurie Geiger



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## Fall/Winter 2010 Release Highlights

### Barn Owls (*Tyto alba*)



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Barn owls reside in the Southern Illinois region year round.

### Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*)

This young fox was brought to us as an orphan, not quite big enough to be on its own. As young kits disperse on their own at four months, we can only assume this orphan was separated from his mom. Lots of privacy and mice helped this fox develop the skills necessary to hunt and the fear required to stay away from humans.

After one of our volunteers found an excellent release site in Ava, the fox was released.

Red foxes are efficient rodent hunters and are able to store excess food in the snow for later consumption.



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### We're on

**facebook**

Visit [www.Facebook.com/FreeAgainWildlife](http://www.Facebook.com/FreeAgainWildlife) for updates on Free Again animals and upcoming events. You do not need to be a member of Facebook to stay up to date with us!

### Release Sites Needed

Free Again is always looking for willing individuals to allow us to release wildlife on their property. If you, or someone you know, has access to suitable property please contact us! Before we release any animal, we will contact you and let you know which animal release we have lined up. We will only proceed with your permission.



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## *Bev's Corner*

Here we are again wrapping up another year. In some ways, it was routine. As with the calendar year, our year has seasons—baby season, growing up season, release time, and clean up everything before we do it again season! But this year has had some remarkable highlights. Summer Marshall (one of our volunteers) and I attended the 2010 National Wildlife Rehabilitators Association symposium in Seattle, WA. We had a good baby season in spite of being perpetually short handed. We reached thousands of kids with our educational programs through out the year. We have a Facebook page to reach even more people with interesting events on a weekly basis. Summer and I also attended and were certified in the Flying Wild Environmental Educa-

tors Program. Free Again also got its thirty minutes of fame when the documentary “Second Chances” was aired on WSIU in November.

Unfortunately it hasn't been without some crisis'! Midsummer our clothes washer died and had to be replaced, costing us \$350. Shortly after that, our van had to have a major carburetor “surgery” totaling \$650. After that, we had furnace issues to the tune of \$250. All of these expenses were unplanned, of course. The remarkable thing is, each time donors miraculously came through with contributions that managed to cover our expenses. And we are so very thankful to each and every one! Thank you again!

I wish I could say that we're all set now but we recently learned that

we need to upgrade the cages of our USDA educational animals—Taz the bobcat, Bonnie the raccoon, and of course, Simba the cougar. Regulation changes in the last few years require us to change a few things in order to be in compliance. We've already started to address these items, but this will incur additional expenses. I'm now concerned about having enough financial “cushion” come February to order our milk formulas.

I recognize that the tough economy is affecting everyone but if you are doing a year end gift giving, please keep us in mind! It'll greatly help with the baby season of 2011.

Staff and volunteers of Free Again sincerely thank the donors for their generosity!



### **On Behalf of Free Again, Inc.: We Thank You!**

Free Again would not be able to operate without the time, effort, knowledge, and kindness of the individuals, businesses, and groups that have opened up their heart to wildlife. With your help, we are able to help injured and orphaned wildlife be free again!

**Contributions & Support from:** Kroger of Herrin, Wal-Mart of Herrin, Target, Cooksey's Bait Shop, Bowlin's Foodland in Christopher, Marion Animal Control, Central Hospital for Animals, Creekside Veterinary Clinic, Carterville Rotary Club, Women's Life Insurance Society, Lori Geyer and her second grade class.

**Commitment of Time & Service from Volunteers:** Barb Burd, Kathy Brautigam, Rob Krajawski, Maria Gorinshteyn, Dani Eichholz, Ginnie House, Janette Smith-Manning, Justin Elden, Amy Larson, Melissa Hadley, Mara Varvil, Summer Marshall, Stacy Gucciardo, Matt Adelman, Monaleya Piper, Dee Chambers, Christy Chambers, Katie Chambers, Genevieve Howerton, Lauren Welch, Lauren Okon, Gabriel Illovsky, Lucas Gabel, Shereen Hammad, Beth Chester.

## Raccoon proofing home for winter relieves nuisance in spring

As winter sets in, porches, chimneys, garages and attics are prime real estate for female raccoons as they search for a warm, safe place to raise their young in April. Combined with the abundance of food provided by the urban environment, raccoons and their offspring flourish and create a nuisance to homeowners.

Homeowners can take simple precautions to ensure that they do not unknowingly open their homes to wildlife.

Heavy screens should be used to cap all accessible chimneys and crawl spaces.

Dog and cat doors must be secured and their usage monitored.

Raccoons have opposable thumbs and can easily maneuver the doors open. The mother raccoon can pass this skill to her offspring so it is important that doors and windows are always latched shut, especially at night. Attics need to be checked for easy access points, windows, and holes.

Raccoons are agile climbers and can easily find their way into trash bins. It is important to have a trash bin with a secure lid. If the trash bin is easily maneuverable, it may be tied to a post to prevent the raccoons from tipping it over. If the problem persists, the trash bin may need to be moved into an indoor location such as a garage or shed.

Any bird seed or pet food left outside will attract the attention of a hungry raccoon. Feed pets indoors or only during daylight hours; putting away any left over food.

If the home is raccoon proofed before the raccoon decides on making it her home as well, the homeowner will not have to deal with possible property damage and the time and effort needed to trap out baby raccoons, orphaning them in the process.

Raccoons that become dependent on people for food and shelter become bold and troublesome, and a hazard to themselves and their human neighbors. Please take this time to assess your property.



On November 13, 2010, Summer Marshall and Beverly Shofstall attended the Flying Wild certification program hosted by the Council for Environmental Education.

Through games and activities, Flying Wild introduces middle school students to bird conservation and migratory birds. Flying Wild focuses on giving students opportunities to interact with wildlife and related habitat issues.

With this certification, Summer and Beverly can expand Free Again's conservation program. If any teachers or groups (such as Boy/Girl Scouts) would like to learn more about conservation, contact Free Again at 618-988-1067.

## Carterville Rotary Club raffle raises funds for caging

This past fall, the Carterville Rotary Club sponsored a raffle for wildlife photographic prints to benefit caging for medium sized predators being rehabilitated at Free Again.

The Rotary Club raised over \$1,800 and acquired a matching grant of \$500 from Women's Life Insurance Society. These funds, along with previously acquired funds, will be used to purchase caging within the next few weeks.

The Rotary Club has also committed to assisting with the actual cage construction. With any luck, these cages should be useable for the spring season.

If you personally know a Rotary Club member, please thank them on

## **Animal Profile: Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*)**

Shorty, Free Again's resident Short-eared Owl, arrived at the facility in December 1998. Shorty was discovered in a ditch with a severe wing injury. The left wing ultimately was amputated because the injury was so old, repair was not possible. Short-eared owls are migratory birds and only inhabit Southern Illinois in the winter season. In the state, Short-eared Owls are endangered but across the nation their populations are relatively stable. This fact, as many other interesting qualities, makes Shorty a great educational ambassador.

Short-eared Owls inhabit open country and prairies as well as woodland areas. Short-eared Owls are ground nesters and lay clutches of 5-7 white eggs. These owls feed on small mammals, sometimes birds, and insects.

In addition to hunting at night, like most owls do, these owls can be found hunting late afternoon hours, before sunset, and in the morning hours after dawn. In the winter, these owls may flock together in areas where prey is abundant.

Short-eared Owls are about 15 inches long with a 38 inch wingspan. The body is a buffy brown with a mottled breast. From afar, the head appears round but in close range small ear tufts are visible. The dark wing bar is a key in field identification of this bird in flight.



## **Upcoming Events at Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge:**

### **January 8—F.U.N Bald Eagle**

Crab Orchard's Families Understanding Nature (F.U.N) Program will be hosting Free Again on January 8, 10:30am - 11am. Come learn about the majestic Bald Eagle and enjoy a morning of eagle related activities!

### **January 22/23 and January 29/30—CONWR Bald Eagle Tour**

Join Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge on a Bald Eagle adventure! CONWR will hold morning and afternoon tours around the refuge to witness Bald Eagles in the wild. At the end of the tour, enjoy an up close and personal experience with Free Again's resident Bald Eagle. The tours are free, however, reservations are required! For more information, call Crab Orchard Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center (618) 998-5933.

### **February 12—F.U.N Cougar**

Crab Orchard's Families Understanding Nature (F.U.N) Program will be hosting Free Again on February 12, 10:30am - 11am. Come learn about the beautiful cat!

### **March 12— F.U.N Barred Owl**

Crab Orchard's Families Understanding Nature (F.U.N) Program will be hosting Free Again on March 12, 10:30am - 11am. Come learn about the graceful Barred Owl!

### **April 9—F.U.N Raccoon**

Crab Orchard's Families Understanding Nature (F.U.N) Program will be hosting Free Again on April 9, 10:30am - 11am. Come learn about the playful raccoon.

For more information on F.U.N Programs, call Crab Orchard Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center (618) 998-5933. For the most up to date information on Free About events, check our Facebook page!

## **Red-shouldered Hawk Released**

In November, we received a Red-shouldered Hawk from Buncombe in Johnson County. The bird was acting a little “off” which told us that we were possibly dealing with a head injury.

After ten days in a small hospital cage, it finally started acting more alert and aware. The hawk was then moved out into a flight cage where we could monitor its flying and hunting ability. After proving it can hunt and fly, it was released back to its original location.



### **Wish List**

Chain link kennels  
Motorcycle tires for cages  
Aquariums  
Dog/Cat food  
Disposable exam gloves  
Gift cards to assist w/ printing costs  
Pet bowls  
KMR  
Gravel

Esbilac  
Brooms  
Whisk brooms  
Pine litter  
Welders gloves  
Newspapers  
Pedialyte  
Duct tape  
Useable lumber

Straw (no Halloween decorations)  
Alfalfa hay  
Ear corn  
Peanuts  
Gerbil food/ Bird seed  
Keep us in mind when cleaning your freezers—  
our predators eat meat and fish!



***Free Again, Inc.***

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Remember to save commemorative stamps to be used by the Illinois Audubon Society to support land acquisition. Go to [www.IllinoisAudubonSociety.org](http://www.IllinoisAudubonSociety.org) to download the “Stamps for Wildlife” brochure.