



TattleTails & Tidbits



Spring Farm CARES Animal & Nature Sanctuary Journal

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With Gratitude And Thankfulness

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Sanctuary

As the season shifts to winter and daylight gets ever shorter, we turn our sights to this time of year that seems suited best for reflecting on our blessings and gratitude. It is a time to reflect on the current year and set our sights on the years to come.

This is the season of holidays as friends and family gather together and communities host festivities bringing people together with a focus on thankfulness and gratitude. It is a time to set aside differences and remember that we are all in this together.

For others, it is a difficult time as hardships come to the forefront and the reality of loved ones who are no longer with us fill our hearts with grief and longing for other times.

We watch as our animal friends understand both the joy and the pain that the holiday season brings. They hold a steady space of unconditional love and trust in the power of the heart to create a better world. They remind us that we are all one. And they remind us that the holidays are truly about love and gratitude.

Let's not lose sight of the enormous power of love and kindness. We wish all of you the very best as we close out another year together.

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Ties That Bind

by Bonnie Reynolds

We humans seldom credit animals with possessing the range of emotions that we, ourselves, display – and that we often suffer from. Oh, most people credit animals with some of the basic emotions, admitting that animals experience fear, sometimes loneliness. And we can see that they often demonstrate love for the people who care for them. Animals like dogs and horses and some primates are those of the animal kingdom most usually credited with anything like human emotions. But here at Spring Farm CARES over the 38 years that Dawn and I have worked together, we have seen a panoply of emotions from all kinds animals -- a panoply that puts us to shame -- totally honest, poignantly heartfelt emotions and actions. Repeatedly, for instance, we have seen noble demonstrations of nursing and caretaking. Two situations come immediately to mind.

A pair of goats, Fern and Magic, came to SFC together and shared a stall and run-in area for years -- fast friends. The day Fern grew ill, obviously failing, unable to get up or even to sit up by herself, Magic remedied the situation. With her head, she would burrow under the invalid, then push in with her body, lying down alongside Fern's body, propping her into an upright, sternal position, keeping her both company and comfortable during her final hours as we prepared for her euthanasia appointment. A very touching tribute between two friends. We captured this photo which says it all as Magic said her good-byes to Fern.



We then witnessed similar heartwarming behavior between two rabbits, Rusty and Pancake. They had for years been companions in our rabbit room. Then Pancake began to have seizures. She grew so weak that, like Fern, she was finally unable to walk or even to sit up sternally. Like Magic however, her companion Rusty devised a method of lifting her up with his head then pushing in and lying down beside her, propping her sternal, so that they could enjoy time, and lettuce and apples and parsley, together.

Over our 38 years we have come to understand and respect the very deep bonds that two animals can develop, and to understand the suffering inflicted upon them when they are separated, or one of them dies. Always whenever devoted friends were left behind by the death of beloveds, we did everything that we could to supply new companions for those grieving friends. For grieving they certainly were. Grieving and obviously deeply depressed. Recently we were presented with another grieving friend – again this time a rabbit.



When we paired Clover up with Blue, she herself had been mourning the death of her friend Dandelion, with whom she had been rescued from an abusive situation. Eventually, however, Clover herself began to decline. Like some of the animals above she was still alert and very much wanting to participate in life, but unable to function physically. In Clover's case, our staff did the "propping up", with rolled towels and other ingenious methods of helping Clover eat and drink and continue to, as best as possible, enjoy her life. Throughout, Blue would lie beside her, grooming her, eating with her, both giving and receiving warmth and comradeship.

When we had finally to euthanize Clover, Blue went into unmistakable depression. We had no other rabbits with whom he could be paired, so Dawn put out an SOS to other sanctuaries, rescues, and humane societies for a senior bunny as eager for a home and a new friend as was Blue. Usually we would have had such a bunny in days. Now there seemed to be a shortage of senior

bunnies!

So Blue found a friend of his own. Seeking to give Blue solace, the staff had put some stuffed toys into his enclosure, one of them a panda, good-sized and standing on all fours. We soon realized that Blue was spending all of his time lying beside Panda. This went on for weeks -- till finally we were able to adopt a bunny who had recently lost her own companion.

I was there when Annie was let out of her carrier, turned loose with Blue in his enclosure. I remained, watching to see if they would like each other or at least that their behavior with each other would be cordial. I will never forget what I witnessed.

Blue was as usual lying alongside Panda. Annie hopped into the shredded-newspaper-filled litter box and hunkered down. And for a while they both just sat there, looking at each other. Finally Blue got up and hopped over to the litter box, where he began to groom Annie, licking her face and ears, oh so gently cleaning her up. "Great!" I thought. "He likes her! They're going to be a pair."

But Blue then turned around, hopped back over to Panda, nuzzled him and laid down beside him. The emotions spoke loud and clear. Blue was concerned about Panda's feelings. He was assuring his, to him, very alive friend, who had given him solace for weeks, that he was not going to abandon him.

Quickly I got a photo of the situation. The intricacy, delicacy (and obviousness) of the emotions and thought involved in what I was witnessing was stunning. The gratitude and loyalty being displayed was on a par with any human drama.

And it stayed that way for days. While Blue paid frequent attention to Annie, and obviously liked her, he always returned to Panda's side. Annie, for her part, spent most of her time in the litter box, using the deep and comfortable shredded newspapers as a bed. Seeing that Blue was beginning to frequently jump into the box with her, the staff made the brilliant decision to put Panda in the box as well. And we had a happy threesome.

In the following weeks, the affection between Blue and Annie increased. They chased one another, ate and cuddled together. Blue's attention to Panda grew less with each day. So that when the staff decided to remove Panda from the enclosure and put him in as a companion for some kittens, Blue seemed content.

In the future, however, whenever we have an animal needing consolation, we will again call upon the services of Panda, hoping that he will again work his magic.



Panda is in the box between Blue and Annie, just covered in shredded paper.

The Gift of Grief

by Dawn Hayman

At this time of year grief is sometimes harder than ever to bear. We see people gathering in celebrations around us while many of us feel alone. All we can feel is the emptiness left by the one or by those that we have lost. There seems no reason to celebrate. All we feel is pain. Emptiness. But it doesn't have to be that way.



This year marked the 31st anniversary of the fire that took the lives of 24 of our animals -- almost instantly it seemed at the time. Five of the 24 were my personal cats -- my own little family. They had been my comfort in such a profound way. When I moved here to the farm with them, I was so happy to have them right close by, where I knew they would be safe. Before that, I had rented a house, and I was so afraid when I left them to come to the farm for long hours each day that something would happen to them and I wouldn't be there to save them. Now they were right here with me, safe in my apartment on the farm.

But on Halloween night of 1993, a massive fire swept through the barn that housed our offices, living quarters, and small animal facility. In not much more than 20 minutes everything was gone. Not just my five cats, but 19 other animals as well, one who Bonnie had had for many years, the others more newly rescued by the two of us, but all dearly loved. So fast. We never even got to say goodbye.

It takes a while to wrap your head around that kind of loss. One of my own first realizations in the days that followed was that I didn't have a single photograph of any of my five cats. I had taken tons of photos of them over the years. But those photos had perished with them. All that I had left were memories. And memories, like photos, fade with time.

This year, 31 years after the event, it struck me that I could no longer remember what any of my beloved cats had looked like. That sparked my grief all over again. I went out and stood beneath the stars. How could I have forgotten anything so dear?

And that is when I felt them. All of them. They were still alive! Right there in my heart, and in spirit. It wasn't necessary to remember every detail of their bodies. I could feel every detail of their hearts and souls. And, as I felt them, I embraced them once again in my heart -- where they have always remained. I started to remember precious details. How they'd make me laugh. How they would lay on top of me when I cried or felt alone. I began to remember the joy and the love that we shared. So many memories came flooding back. And, yes, I missed them all over again. By now, each of them would have lived out his or her natural life span. But the ache for each of them is still real.

That is when I got a much deeper message from them as a group. "We're proud of how you and Bonnie moved on," they told me. "That is what we wanted you to do. That is what we urged you to do. And look what you have done!"

"We were, and are, and always will be, a part of this story," they told me. "You never let us down. You didn't fail to save us. We have been here all along. We ask you to see your grief as a gift. It's the gift that love has left with you. But instead of feeling it as an emptiness, shift your thoughts and realize it is a presence. If you didn't know the love we shared, you wouldn't feel the grief. But at the same time know that the very love we shared is what

still connects us. It will never go away. Our separation is an illusion. We are still here, just in a different way.”

I thought about this for many hours. I had never looked at grief that way before. But they were right.

And I reach out now to those of you who are feeling great loss at this time of year, or any time of year. Grief indeed is a gift. For to feel grief, you have to have loved -- and been loved in return -- very deeply. That's a truly amazing gift. Love has lifted you up -- and held you strong, in ways you might not have realized.



You are stronger than you know. And what you also need to remember is that your loved ones are still feeling your love. When you think of them and remember something that makes you smile, even in your grief, what is happening is the mutual exchange of love. It's all still right there, inside the hearts involved, yours and theirs, to keep forever. Nothing can ever take it away.

So, when you feel the waves of grief come over you, remember the gift of love that “lost” loved ones afforded you in your life – no matter how long or how short your time together was. That relationship between the two of you is unique. And although you can no longer see or touch them, you can still feel them. They are right there in your heart, where they have always been. Grief is here to remind us of that love and to fill us with that love, rather than the loss that we perceive.

We need to change our understanding and perception of grief. Don't get lost in the loss. Instead immerse yourself in the gift of forever love.

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.

The Return Of The Porcupine

by Matt Perry



In many ways, the wildlife of Central New York (where Spring Farm CARES is located) has transformed significantly over the past several decades. Many species commonly encountered in 2024 were either absent or extremely rare in the 1960s and 70s. Back then, there were no resident Turkey Vultures. There were also no Wild Turkeys, Bobcats, Coyotes, Fishers, or River Otters in our region. Additionally, bird species like the Tufted Titmouse, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Common Raven, Bald Eagle, Osprey, and Peregrine Falcon were not present. These species, and several others, are relatively recent settlers in our region. Almost all are returning former residents that had disappeared due to anthropogenic reasons, such as overhunting, over-trapping, habitat destruction, and the use of pesticides.

Even without human influence, the geographic ranges of wildlife are in a near-constant state of flux. As some species find new opportunities and expand their home ranges, others face shrinking habitats and declining populations. These changes might be barely discernible year-to-year, but when the data is examined over decades, the trends become much clearer. Understanding these long-term trends is crucial for effective conservation efforts and for

ensuring the resilience of local ecosystems in the face of ongoing environmental changes.

One of many significant range changes I've noted in recent years involves the Porcupine. Porcupines are the second-largest rodents in North America, characterized by their distinctive quills, which serve as a defense mechanism against predators. They are primarily nocturnal and herbivorous, feeding on a diet of leaves, twigs, and bark. Porcupines are well-adapted to a range of habitats, including forests, shrublands, and even some urban areas. Historically, Porcupines were found throughout much of the northern United States and Canada. However, in the Northeastern US, in the last two centuries since European settlement, their populations have been patchy, with fewer sightings reported in some regions including Central New York. Over the past few decades, that has changed, and Porcupines have become increasingly common here.

Warming temperatures and milder winters in our region have created more favorable conditions for Porcupines. As relatively cold-sensitive animals, Porcupines benefit from shorter and less severe winters, which reduce the risks of hypothermia and starvation. Many parts of the Northeast have seen a resurgence of forested areas due to the decline of agriculture and the return of abandoned farmlands to natural vegetation. These regenerating forests provide ample food sources and suitable habitats for Porcupines. While urbanization can negatively impact many species, Porcupines have shown a degree of adaptability to human-altered landscapes. They can sometimes be found in suburban areas, where they may feed on ornamental trees and shrubs. However, this adaptability can lead to conflicts with humans, particularly when Porcupines cause damage to property. This is why providing them with safe havens like our nature sanctuary has become so important.



At the Spring Farm CARES Nature Sanctuary, I've been observing Porcupines and finding their sign for about two decades. During this time, the frequency of encounters has steadily increased. Last winter, I discovered that a Porcupine was regularly using the same game trail night after night, apparently traveling from a denning site to a favorite feeding area. Although I had come across Porcupine tracks semi-regularly in past winters, I had never known one to repeatedly use the same path. This summer, for the first time, we found evidence of Porcupines breeding on the property, and it's highly likely that the female involved was the same individual I had been tracking during the winter. One early summer day, we were fortunate to see her nursing a single small kit, with both parent and kit making their species' characteristic peculiar wailing-type vocalizations. Of course, discovering that an animal is breeding in an area is a clear indication that the habitat is conducive to hosting the species and it was our habitat preservation and restoration efforts had made that possible.



Perhaps most intriguing is how the return of the Porcupine reshapes the ecosystem dynamics – adding another layer of biodiversity and benefiting predators like Fishers and Bobcats that prey on them. As Porcupines find new breeding sites and establish territories, they are also contributing to a greater understanding of how species can adapt to climate and habitat changes over time. Here at Spring Farm CARES, the sight of a Porcupine mother nursing her kit is not just a heartwarming scene; it's a testament to the Sanctuary's role in providing a safe, supportive environment for returning species. With each new generation born, Porcupines and other wildlife are reclaiming their place in the tapestry of nature, restoring a balance that had been disrupted for far too long.

Daily Animal Messages Of Gratitude

by Dawn Hayman



Our Gift To You

Daily Messages of Gratitude From The Animals November 28th - December 31st

This has been an annual tradition for several years now. Many of you have told us that it has become a tradition in your families to read these messages and share them. Each day, a message from one of our animals and their photo will be posted to our Facebook Page and on our Website. The animals are asked, "What are you most grateful for?" You will be inspired by their answers.

This year we are upgrading our daily messages! Each day, a video of the animal will also be posted with Dawn reading the message from that animal.

You can find the messages here:

www.springfarmcares.org/blog

www.facebook.com/springfarmcares

www.youtube.com/@springfarmcares



Happy Holidays From All of Us
at Spring Farm CARES

Here is one of our messages of gratitude from last year

From Charlie:

"Being a pony is a privilege only bestowed upon the most noble of animals. It takes a certain kind of delightful mixture to be a pony. It is not for the faint of heart. You have to meet certain criteria. And I am grateful to check all of the boxes! One has to be cute with a side helping of charming. One has to be masterful at knowing when to use that charm and cuteness to get your way. One also has to have a fair degree of spunk. It shows great character and steadfastness. One has to know how to fit your big-size soul into a tiny body and be prepared that people will not see your large size inside of that pony body. In fact, you may be the only one who sees or understands that. And, sadly, as a pony, one has to be resilient. Because you will get moved around a lot. You will be important to little people. But little people grow up and then outgrow you. It's tough being a cute pony. People tend to forget who you are. And while you seem to be ever so popular at times, you will also need to be prepared to feel ever so lonely. I am most grateful because I spent a lot of lonely and misunderstood years. But I have landed in a most delightful place. A place where I'm treasured for being cute and for being just a touch naughty. And I am loved for all of it. For this, I will forever be grateful!"

