

He Grabbed Our Hearts!!! by Jeannie Lorraine



It was a usual busy Thursday morning in November at the CWC clinic. We were at the end of the season and it was cold and rainy outside. Although most of our patients had been released, we still had a nearly full intensive care unit, and the “almost rehabilitated” animals were now in the “outback” (an area for recuperation before final release back into the wild), so we were still rushing around feeding, cleaning, and treating when the call came in. The caller

had been watching a young fox grow strong on her farm all summer; however, for the second day in a row, the little one had just been lying in her field, not moving. She was worried. What to do?? The location was close to CWC, so we made an executive decision...lets go and get it!! We each scrambled to grab a carrier, a blanket, heavy gloves, and a snare. No way, I thought, were we going to get this animal. He/she is going to take one look at us, size up the situation, and bolt for the woods...sick or no sick! Still, out we went, into the cold rain. Our Shift Leader, Brooke, instructed us to surround the animal while she crept up to it with a blanket over her fists and snare ready. Yeah, right, I thought, he’s going to hop right into her arms. To my utter surprise, she laid down the snare, carefully draped the blanket over the young fox, lifted him, carried him to the carrier, and placed him gently inside. He didn’t even attempt to bolt. We drove faster than we should back to the clinic, hoisted the carrier onto the exam table that also had a large heating pad on it, turned the pad on, and took a look. What met our gaze was a fox that obviously was in lots of trouble. Shivering, cold, wet, and covered with vermin, he barely looked at us and couldn’t even raise his head.

It broke our hearts! Not giving up, Brooke immediately gave him fluids beneath the skin with a large syringe, then proceeded to examine him, ignoring the vermin that were creeping up her arms! Twice I thought he was dead, but then an eye would twitch and we feverishly renewed our life-saving efforts. We did all we could do at that point, then left him alone, trying not to stress him any further. We draped a large blanket over the carrier, jacked up the heating pad another notch, snuggled him on warm dry towels, and thought that at least he would die out of the cold and rain.



We were about to leave the clinic with heavy hearts when Animal Care Director Cyndi Leech came on the scene and went right to work. Vermin were removed, more fluids were given, treatment was administered, and the fox then placed in a warm, dry cage in the intensive care unit, complete with a stuffed teddy bear and warm blankets and heating pad. I worried about him all afternoon, knowing that we had done all we could but feeling in my heart that he probably wouldn't survive. Evening arrived and I had to know, so I drove back that night to see if the little fellow had "made it." As I lifted the protective cover of his cage, I was stunned to see that he looked directly back at me and lifted his head an inch or two! Hope began to burst through my being...he may actually make it!! Some vermin still crawled over his still damp fur, but at least he was alive! Every day, for a week, all of us on the Thursday a.m. crew drove by on some flimsy excuse to "sneak a peek" at our little guy. Every day he became stronger and began to eat and stand up and, with vermin gone, he looked pretty darned good. We were so pleased with ourselves, we high-fived all around!

For him, he considered CWC to be the Holiday Inn, receiving two square meals a day, lots of rest, and a clean, dry room. Eventually, in the spring, he too was moved to the "outback," the final placement before freedom. Then, at last, his lucky day arrived. In April we once again loaded him into a carrier, this time with a snare, as he was now a full-grown adult and was nice and wild. We returned him to the farm where we had originally picked him up, opened the carrier door, and without a backward glance, he bounded over the field, tail up, heading straight towards the trees, freedom, and his family. Not a thank you to be had. Seeing him running free, completely healthy and strong, was our thank you. We were so grateful to have had the chance to help this little guy and loved caring for him through the winter and to witness his eventual release. We appreciate the caring people (we call them our Wildlife Warriors) who bring us the hurt, orphaned, and sick animals to see if we can save them. Most of the time we sure can!