

LIVING WITH WILDLIFE

Tough Start for these Baby Raccoons



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We hope by sharing some of the stories of animals we cared for when doing wildlife rehabilitation, you will develop a special appreciation for local wildlife.

It was mid-August one year when we received a call from a homeowner about baby raccoons. Initially, we didn't believe they were babies, as raccoons give birth in April or May.

It turned out that the family had trapped and relocated an adult raccoon on their property and a day later heard tiny cries coming from behind a fence. They could see the young kits but couldn't reach them because the fence backed onto their neighbour's shed. After three days of unsuccessful rescue attempts and weakening cries, they had to dismantle the shed to get the babies out.

On arrival at the Centre,

the four raccoons were understandably very weak, dehydrated and frightened. They were just four weeks old, a male and three females. First, they had to be rehydrated and stabilized. They were given fluids subcutaneously and warmed, after which they began to recover.

The little male raccoon was the strongest and it wasn't long before he was ready for formula, grabbing the nursing bottle like a fierce wee tiger cub. His sisters soon also learned to master a nipple although it wasn't quite the same design as their mom's.

Each of the raccoons had a distinct personality. The male was definitely the leader, assuming a spread eagle position at the front of the carrier to protect his siblings. The smallest of the females remained shy, another was quite bossy, always challenging her brother for dominance while the remaining female was full of mischief and fun, jumping on the others when they least

expected it.

They grew into a healthy and robust crew, spending the winter in an insulated nesting box in a large outdoor cage at the Centre. They were released at a wonderful site located on a lake the following spring where there were few people and no traps.

The family that had caused these young raccoons to be orphaned called regularly to check on their progress. They felt very guilty, having learned the lesson that an adult animal around your property often signifies that newborn babies are nearby. Wildlife seek out spots on our property during the spring and summer months because being closer to humans affords more protection for their young, when they are tiny and vulnerable to predation from other animals.

So, please give wildlife a grace period during the birthing season and remember to check out www.wildlifeinfo.ca before ever taking any action.