

ROWAN ANIMAL TALK

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The first Animal Talk really should have been the second! We really didn't introduce who we are and what we hope to accomplish. So let's try that now. There are lots of things that we want to talk about that involves the shelter and laws and regulations about domestic animals. But over time, we want to talk about everything that Animal Services does.

Animal Services is a county government department that provides public services that involve animals and animal issues. We are three sub departments in one- Rowan Animal Shelter, Rowan Animal Enforcement, and Rowan Nature Center.

Rowan Animal Shelter and Animal Enforcement in the past have formerly been known as Animal Control. These two sub-departments work mostly with domestic animal issues. Sometimes they deal with wildlife issues as they relate to citizen safety concerns. Most counties in North Carolina have a similar department. Many are part of their Health Department, some fall under Law Enforcement-be it through city police or county sheriff departments, and some are stand-alone departments like us. Originally they were set up to address concerns related to rabies, enforce domestic animal regulations, and later to deal with domestic animal cruelty investigations. Many also evolved into what we are now, to include an animal shelter.

Rowan Animal Shelter works, along with the tremendous help from citizen Rescue and Foster groups, to help address the problems of unwanted pets, reuniting owners with displaced pets, and working towards finding a solution to the pet overpopulation issue.

The Nature Center was born back in the 1970s as a tool to provide education about nature and our local natural environment to the many visitors at Dan Nicholas Park. Back in the early days of the park's development, boy scouts were used (and still are) to do some of the minor development projects. These scouts were clearing trails, picnic sites, planting trees and providing a lot of sweat equity to benefit our park. In doing so they would catch lizards, snakes, and other wonderful critters and bring them to the Parks Director, Jim Foltz. He would show off their efforts in simple displays in the only building at the time which is now our Concessions Stand by the lake. That grew into the Nature Center, Wildlife Adventures, and Stanback Barnyard that we have today.

All of these pieces of the Animal Services puzzle have two things in common. The first is obvious- animals. The second may not be as obvious. All three involve an effort to provide an educational resource about "animals" to our local citizens.

It is the goal of this column to let the readership get to know us better, let you know what we do and also why we do it, and to use the many years of accumulated knowledge of our staff to help you understand animals and nature a little bit better. We hope to talk about the domestic animal population issue. We hope to talk about how we can better serve you and your pets and how you can find the resources to be a better pet owner. We want to talk about how you can support and nurture the wildlife in our community's big backyard of Rowan County. Maybe we can even address some of the concerns that folks have about wildlife in their backyard.

All of these things "animal" are what we at Animal Services love- be it dogs, cats, horses, snakes, bears,

eagles, etc. We want to share that. It is our hope that we can not only share what we do know through this column, but also use it to look back inside of ourselves and find out what more we can do for the people and animal citizens of Rowan County as a department and as a community-together with you. We might even throw in some fun or unique experiences from time to time. Say, for example, the time long ago that I walked up to a parent who had not yet read the sign telling their child that our late albino raccoon, Alfred, was certainly a “baby camel”.

We want to welcome you to also visit us off of these pages in real life. Please come adopt a pet in need of a new home with a loving owner. And please come visit the Nature Center facilities with your family or friends-meet some of our non-human friends that are not domestic animals. Look for us to try and do this on a monthly basis. If you have ideas or questions, shoot them to me via email.

I am going to throw in a little extra for our internal readers that will not be in the newspaper articles each time. So here that is-

Readers of the Salisbury Post will remember that Dan Nicholas Park’s Rowan Wildlife Adventures resident eagles Liberty and Justice produced an eaglet this past spring. The eaglet, named Freedom, was moved at a few weeks of age to the Carolina Raptor Center near Huntersville to be raised by foster parents away from human interaction. Then he was moved to a release tower nearby where he grew into flight age while discreetly brought food each day. He hung around there and taught himself to find and catch food for a while. Before he was able to fly free, CRC staff and Roland Keys from the NC Museum of Natural Sciences fitted him with a solar powered backpack long range tracking transmitter.

Right at the end of June, he apparently got the urge to travel. Almost non-stop and within less than three days, he flew from the Huntersville NC area to the shore of Lake Erie in northeastern Ohio! This was in pretty much a straight line as if he knew exactly where he was going. Since then he has been hanging out near a nuclear power plant outside of the town of North Perry, Ohio. He has obviously found a spot that he likes. Other than two trips about two weeks ago 30 miles south to a small lake near the two of Middlefield, he has been totally in the power plant area. If you want to keep up with Freedom yourself, download the Animal Tracker app to your smartphone. It is almost as entertaining as Pokemon Go!

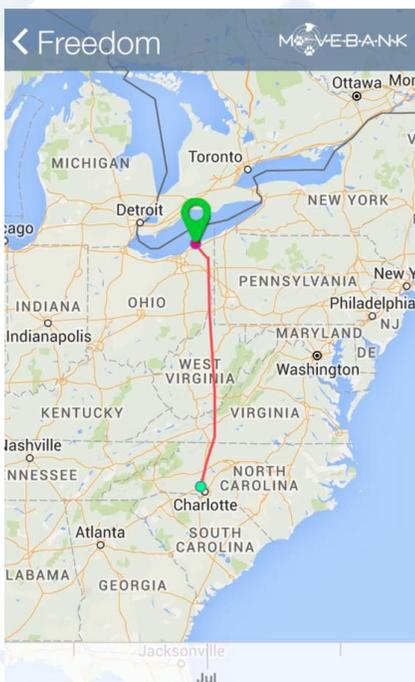


Image credit: Rowan Wildlife Adventures

