

Coffee Break

Tell us about the most difficult (or interesting!) field rescue operation you've ever been involved in.

That was the question we asked you for this issue's Coffee Break. Many of you mentioned animals trapped in unusual places, some of you mentioned hoarding incidents, others dealt with unusual species. To read more of your answers, visit animalsheltering.org/coffeebreak.



DAN WILTON/ISTOCKPHOTO.COM

Our most difficult field rescue took place in January 2007. ... A tenant had moved out of a rental unit and abandoned 72 Siamese mix cats and kittens. When we arrived, the home was in complete disarray. ... It seemed every drawer, door, or item we opened was filled with more cats. After days of trapping them, we were finally able to catch the last one. ... Once back at our shelter, we slowly worked on health and temperament assessments. None were spayed or neutered, and vaccinations were lacking. We were fortunate that this rescue took place in a "slow" time, as we had ample room available. One of our local veterinarians volunteered her time to spay and neuter all of the cats with the help of another [vet] from Madison. The wonderful people at a Madison rescue assisted with the surgeries and offered to help us place the cats into homes. ... We adopted out the last cat in April, and many of the new adopters have sent us pictures of their new family members! Without the support of our local veterinarian, an area rescue, and our community, this rescue may not have had such a positive ending!

—Jenny Vandeveld,
Operations Manager
Lakeshore Humane Society
Manitowoc, Wisconsin

The local fire department called to say that there was a duckling trapped in a pipe under the expressway. The pipe ran between two different grates on either side of the eight-lane expressway, and they had no idea how to get it out. I advised them to put a net over the down slope side of the pipe, put a fire hose in the up slope side of the pipe and slowly flood the pipe. The duckling would then float on the current of the water and into the net. They called back 30 minutes later to say that this worked and that they were able to capture the duckling and return her to her mother, who was standing 20 feet away with the rest of her family the whole time.

—Robert Heslop, Animal Control Officer
Santa Clara County Animal Care & Control
Morgan Hill, California

A phone call from our local humane society informed me that there was a loose horse at our local dump! No other info so we went with a trailer. A beautiful Arabian mare came running over the hill to greet us. We never found out where she came from, but we placed her in a fantastic adoptive home a year later. Who could dump a horse at a dump?

—Mary Hetzel, President
St. Francis Horse Rescue &
Retirement Fund, Inc.
Rosholt, Wisconsin

The call came from our county's humane officer. Hundreds of animals—dogs, cats, rabbits, cage birds, fowl, goats, ferrets, guinea pigs, hamsters, and gerbils—were being seized from some hoarders. "That sounds like a sexing emergency!" I said, and immediately started thinking about what I should take with me. There was no question what I would be doing the rest of the night, until every last male was separated from every last female. An hour later, I was kneeling on the floor of a barn at the fairgrounds, where all the guinea pigs, hamsters, gerbils, cats, caged birds and ferrets were, and that is where I stayed until my mission was accomplished. The cages were all filthy, so I was cleaning them as I went. Some cages were cracked or broken, and we discovered they were only being held together by the crusted-on poo we were scrubbing off! Needless to say, never before, and never since, have I ever looked at so many genitals in one day! There were over 100 guinea pigs and over 100 hamsters, a handful of gerbils, a dozen cats, a few caged birds, and a couple of ferrets. The rest of the story can be seen here: waupacapets.com/critterhotel.htm.

—Monica Gates, Operations Manager
Humane Society of Waupaca County
Waupaca, Wisconsin

One warm January day, my supervisor, Rick, and I received a call from an antique store owner. A Coopers Hawk had flown into the store. We were concerned about [doing] the rescue with a large net on a 6-foot pole. The hawk ended up cornered behind a display case. This left little room to work with the net. As I held the ladder, Rick climbed on top of the display case. His head and arms were hanging behind the case while his feet dangled in front of me. ... When Rick emerged, he had successfully captured the hawk, who had no injuries. We took the hawk back to our 350-acre campus, a short distance away, and released the hawk back to the wild.

—Jason Clark, Experiential Education
Facilitator, Waterford Country School
Quaker Hill, Connecticut

Our most interesting rescue occurred when a local construction crew that was repairing a home near the local railroad tracks contacted us to rescue a stray tortoise. The tortoise (later to be called Huey) was sleeping in the middle of the tracks on the railroad, and with him weighing in at more than 100 pounds, it took three of our staff to lift him into our van. Huey was later reunited with his distressed owner. It turns out Huey was able to push his way under the fencing in the yard and go for a stroll!

—Liz Friedenfels, Executive Director
Lincoln County Humane Society
Merrill, Wyoming

Several years ago, I received a call from a man who had been fishing on the Kennebec River. He stated that a week prior, he had seen a dog on a ledge along the riverbank and didn't think too much of it until [that day], when he saw the same dog on the same ledge. ... Because it was located on a remote section of river without road access, I requested help from the fire department and was provided a boat and operator. We had to travel 10 miles upstream to a boat landing where we put in and traveled eight miles downstream before the dog was located. On approach it appeared as though we were too late, as there was no movement by the dog, and calling to it did not get a response. The dog was located on a small rock outcropping five feet up from the water and about seven feet down from the ground where it had fallen. When I approached ... its nose picked up off the ground and smelled the air, its tail began to wag. We had to carry the dog down to the boat because it turned out to be blind and deaf. It had become lost and fallen onto the ledge where it couldn't climb out, had spent the week there eating sticks and dirt. It turned out to be a very friendly dog who I would have adopted myself had the owner not been found.

—Emery Toulouse, Animal Control
City of Augusta Maine
Augusta, Maine

Animal Sheltering congratulates Liz Friedenfels of Merrill, Wyoming, whose submission was selected in a random drawing from those published in this issue. The Lincoln County Humane Society, where she works, will receive a free coffee break: a \$50 gift certificate to a local coffee shop. "Bone" appetit!

Next question: Do you have a hero or mentor in the animal welfare field—someone who inspired you or taught you the ropes? Who was it, and what made them so influential?

Please submit your responses (150 words or less) at animalsheltering.org/coffeebreak or send them to Editor, *Animal Sheltering*/HSUS, 2100 L St. NW, Washington, DC 20037. **Your answer may be printed in a future issue of *Animal Sheltering*.** If your response is chosen for publication, you will be entered into a drawing to win a **free coffee break (valued at \$50)** for your organization. Responses may be edited for length or clarity; no donation or purchase is necessary to win. See animalsheltering.org for contest rules, or send an e-mail or letter to the above addresses to request a printed copy.