

Green Bay Duck Hunters Association

Duck Rescue 101

For over thirty-five years, members of the Green Bay Duck Hunters Association have operated a duck rescue program. It began in the late '70's by two founding members, Ted Thyron and Milt Geyer, to whom this program is dedicated to, who volunteered numerous hours and miles to "rescue" the ducklings.

Operating as a field extension of the Green Bay Wildlife Sanctuary, GBDHA volunteers monitor reports of ducks nesting in high-risk locations such as parking lots, business and residential areas. Duck rescues occur as hens and ducklings find themselves trapped in storm sewers, swimming pools and in traffic on roadways. Volunteers are on call with the **Green Bay Wildlife Sanctuary (920) 391-3671** and the **Brown County Communications Center (920) 391-3671** to respond to such incidents. More than 15,000 ducks to date have been "rescued" by this program and the numbers grow every year.

In the case of a hen found nesting in a high-risk location, a member will contact the property owner and evaluate the location. They will then monitor the progress of the hen and may install a small fence to contain the brood for safety.

During this time, observation at a distance is encouraged but do not interfere with the natural progress. Nesting hens will take care of their own food and water needs. They can be seen leaving the nest during early morning or evening hours to feed, water and exercise. Placing any water or food near the nest will attract predators. Some of the predators include crows, cats, raccoons, opossums and squirrels.

The closer to the hatch date, about 28 days after the last egg is laid, the more protective the hen will be. In the extreme case of a disturbed hen or abandoned nest, eggs may be collected and incubated at the sanctuary. In most cases the hen will nest again and raise a second brood but not always in the same place. It is not uncommon that a returning hen may nest in the same location or within a few feet of it.

In the case of a brood trapped or in traffic, keeping them together is important. This can be accomplished by simply "herding" them from a distance, away from trouble or into a confined area. In the events ducklings drop into a storm sewer or are otherwise trapped, the hen will stay nearby, trying to coax the others into coming along. By staying up on the curb, she can be safe until all are reunited.

A box type trap, with remote control is used to catch and contain the ducks. After capturing them, a blanket will be laid over the trap to calm them. The hen and ducklings are then transported to a wetlands area for release into the wild. Locations vary so as to disperse the groups. In partnership with the Wisconsin DNR and the US Fish & Wildlife Bird Banding Program, past hen mallards have been banded and the hatch data forwarded for study. Several of those banded hens have returned year after year.

You may wonder why we have taken this on. Our commitment is to conservation and stewardship efforts aimed at conserving our resources for all. In fact, under the direction of Joe Loehlein and Tim Braunel, this program has been awarded the WI Wildlife Federation's "Conservationist" award for 2010, the Brown County Conservation Alliance's "Conservationist" award, featured in Field & Stream Magazine's "Hero's of Conservation", received a special recognition as a volunteer group award by the WI DNR and in 2017 received special recognition from the Wildlife Sanctuary for 35 years of volunteer service. You can observe our other projects and view waterfowl and wildlife at the Bay Beach Wildlife Sanctuary on East Shore Dr and at Barkhausen Waterfowl Preserve on CTH J in Suamico.

Check us out on face book or at www.gbdha.com or www.duckrescue.com