

OWLS PATIENT OF THE MONTH: WILLET

A ranger at Hammocks Beach State Park observed a willet nest, and saw all the eggs but one hatch, and the parents lead their young away. Three days later the remaining egg hatched, but alas, the adults could not be found. So the 7-hour old baby was brought to us, and we fell in love with the sandpiper, who looked like a puffball perched on stilts!

Like ducks, willets are precocial - they start picking up their own food as soon as they are born. They usually start pecking by watching and imitating an adult; this baby had no adult to watch, and we could not get him to peck. In desperation, I tried putting our bobwhite chick in with him, and watched to make sure that the willet didn't hurt the quail [quail: 1½" tall, willet; 5" tall!]. To our amazement, the two little birds formed an instant bond!! The quail decided the willet must be his mother, and the willet, after carefully watching the quail pick up a mealworm, ran over and ate one, too. Soon games started; the quail would grab a worm and run like crazy, with the willet in hot pursuit. Or, the willet would pick up a worm, and in a flash, the quail would run between his long legs and snatch it from his bill. We especially love to watch them sleep; the willet lies down, and his buddy jumps on this back to snuggle down into his down feathers.

Because all our birds are raised to release, and because willet and quail habitats are very different, half of their enclosure contains sand and driftwood, and half has dirt, grass, and leaves. The quail turns up his beak at the fish and small crabs, and the willet stares in disgust as the quail eats seed.

It is a month later now, and "Dan Quail" is fully feathered and flying. It is almost time for him to go. "Willet Scott" will be with us another month. We do not like to think of separating them, but each must join his own species in the wild. We will find other quail to accept Dan into their flock, and Willet will join a colony of tall, gray-legged sandpipers who will take him South with them. We don't know if each will remember his strange childhood friend who provided comfort and instruction....but we like to think so.

OWLS NEEDS: DURING SUMMER MONTHS, WE USE \$35.00 WORTH OF MEALWORMS PER WEEK! CAN YOU HELP? CALL 240-1200.

SPECIAL THANKS TO DR. MARGARET HARKER, WHO IS DONATING HER TIME TO ADMINISTER RABIES VACCINATIONS TO ALL OUR VOLUNTEERS.

S. GOETZINGER

HURRICANE AWARENESS

Besides our Civil Preparedness program, the N. C. Aquarium is also having Hurricane Awareness Week, August 6-10. There will be films shown at 11 a.m., 2 p.m. and 4 p.m. Monday through Saturday. The titles:

August 6	"In the Path of Destruction"
August 7	"Hurricane Decision"
August 8	"Eye of the Hurricane"
August 9	"Eye of the Storm"
August 10	"Ready or Not?"

There will also be slide programs and talks by guest speakers taking place at 3 p.m. The subjects:

August 6	"Hurricane History"
August 7	"Hurricane Preparedness"
August 8	"Hurricane Hugo"
August 9	"Carteret County Preparedness"
August 10	"Hurricane Awareness"

The Aquarium will have many other programs throughout the summer. Watch for them!