

BIRD LADY OF WOODSTOCK

Rehabilitator gives quality care to injured birds

by Chuck Hutchcraft

The couple found a Canada Goose with an injured wing along a street near their house. They thought it may have been shot. They wrapped its wing in a bandage and brought it to Andrea Kane.

In the kitchen of her Woodstock farmhouse, Kane unwrapped the bandage and examined the bird. Her strong, long-fingered hands gently explored the wing's surface while the bird remained still, quiet.

These hands have held thousands of birds, injured or sick, and nursed them back to healthy flying machines. "Does it feel any pain?" asked the woman as Kane examined the goose. "They handle pain much differently than you or I," said Kane as her flatcoat retriever, Pepper, wandered in, lending her nose to the effort. "One nice thing about having a dog around is that it takes the bird's mind off what you're doing," she said. "And one of the nice things about having cats around is it takes the bird's mind off the dog," Kane added as her cats sauntered by.

"It feels like a long fracture," Kane said after several more minutes of examination. She rewound the bandage to hold the wing tightly against the bird. "We'll take an X-ray and if the doctor feels she is a good candidate for surgery, we'll see what happens." Kane lifted the large bird into a cardboard box near the wood stove, then discovered that the goose had left a deposit on the floor. Kane wiped it up and continued. She has long ago stopped counting the mishaps on her kitchen floor.

But she religiously counts the birds she has worked to rehabilitate for sixteen years. Licensed by the U.S. Wildlife Service and the Illinois Department of Conservation, Kane is required to keep detailed records of the birds she receives and what happens to them under her care.

The goose was Kane's 450th patient in 1992.

On that fall afternoon, the light faded early over the fields surrounding Kane's framed farmhouse. The busy season for the Florence Nightingale of the bird world was winding down, but the calls kept coming. The phone rang several times in an hour. The callers said they had injured birds and asked for directions to Kane's

home.

They come from a considerable distance, after having gone to great lengths, making sixteen phone calls or more, "taking hours out of their day," to track down the Bird Lady, to bring her the ailing birds they find in their backyards, along road sides, in fields, or fallen out of trees. "That's a lot of caring don't you think?" said Kane.

One might say the same of Kane. To be a skilled rehabilitator requires textbook knowledge, common sense, years of experience, an uncanny understanding of birds, and a strong sense of commitment and caring.

Kane is a city girl. Her husband, Charlie, hails from down state Winona near the Illinois River.



Bird rehabilitator Andrea Kane cares for a Red-tailed Hawk near her Woodstock home. The hawk was imprinted on humans and can not be released into the wild. Photo by Paul Dawson.