

Twenty years ago Kane's parents moved to Woodstock. She and her husband followed, buying the house and six acres on McCauley Road.

"I was an active birder before I started rehabbing," said Kane. She started rehabbing as a part-time clerical employee for the McHenry County Conservation District. She and another employee voluntarily began caring for injured animals people brought to the district.

The birds needed constant attention so each night Kane would take the birds home and then bring them back in the morning. Eventually Kane decided she wanted to rehab on her own.

As migration season begins until the last brood of the summer is hatched, Kane tends the injured and the sick in a whirlwind of daylight hours melding into night. "Baby season is the most intense," said Kane. Juvenile song birds must be fed every twenty minutes, the period between feedings expanding as the birds get older.

Volunteers share the load. Nevertheless, it is still a long grind. Kane often tends more than 100 young birds at one time during the late spring and summer months. "We go from morning till night."

Her reward? "It feels good to watch something fly away. When I started rehabbing I never thought of the fact that birds were flying machines. When I was a birder I thought flight was irritating."

Kane's work also has reaffirmed her faith in the human race. "I am Pollyannic. I really think people care. I'm very fortunate in having a job that lets me meet them."

A Pollyanna she might be, but naive she is not. Not everyone is as sensitive as she is. "People control the fate of wildlife," said Kane. "If you want to help wildlife you have to change people's attitudes."

She furthers that effort through the tours and talks she gives. Each year, groups of school children and adults come to hear the Bird Lady



Andrea Kane gives a crow its breakfast. Photo by Paul Dawson.

talk about her work and birds.

Kane might show them one of the several homemade cages designed uniquely for housing wild injured birds. The cage ends are wooden, the tops rounded. Instead

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of wire, the cages have a mesh over the top. "Wild birds don't understand wire," said Kane. With wire, the birds can hurt themselves compounding their injuries. The cages are also portable, so when

ever the bird must be taken to a veterinarian, "we can throw a towel over the cage and off we go."

Kane handles the birds as little as possible "which probably accounts for our success rate." To determine the success rate, Kane records the total number of birds received. From that number she subtracts the birds dead on arrival and the birds that must be euthanized. In this business, Kane said, it is important to realize that "nature needs death as well as life."

Her success rate is about 66 percent. "From what I understand, that's pretty darned good," said Kane walking outside to where several aviaries were located behind the house. One is for young song birds, another for adults, and another for raptors. The adult songbird aviary provides limited vision to the outside world to keep the birds from becoming upset. "Birds' eyes are their most important sense," she said. "What they can't see won't hurt them."

A fenced-in area with low buildings houses waterfowl. A sign on one of the low buildings reads: