

All Ears in Sacramento

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Inside this Issue:

When Inspiration Comes Calling.....	1
Double Trouble Update	2
Hurricane Katrina's Victims.....	3
What to Do if You Find a Wild Rabbit	5
Rabbits Available for Adoption	6
Recent Adoptions.....	6
Upcoming Events.....	7
Keep in Touch!	8
Volunteer Opportunities	8

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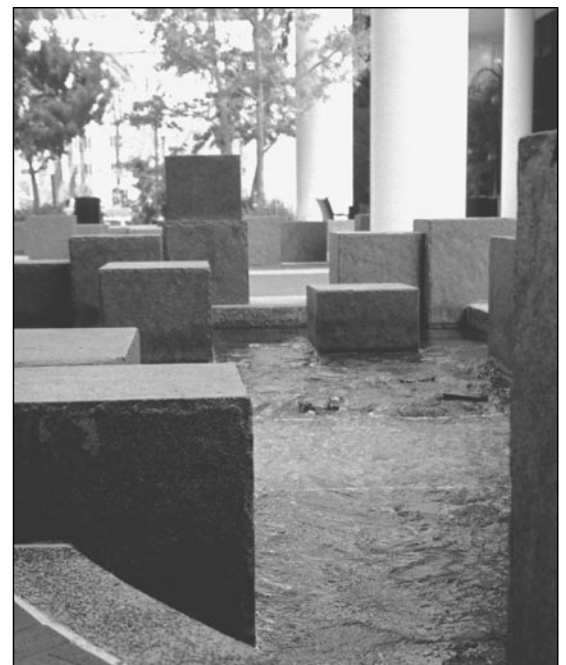
When Inspiration Comes Calling

This is a story that I didn't intend to write, but something happened to me recently that I thought was worth sharing. As a former rabbit fosterer and longtime volunteer, I was inspired to take another look at the two sides of volunteering – inspiration and burnout. I have embraced both at different times, and have learned that both are natural parts of the animal rescue cycle. I've come to believe that you cannot have one without the other. Here is my story.

Then and Now

Eight years ago, I joined SHRS and dove headfirst into volunteering. I loved fostering – having a houseful of rabbits and attending weekend events with likeminded people was sheer bliss. But as the years passed, my professional responsibilities increased, I married and had two children, and my own roster of family animals increased (three rabbits, two dogs, two cats). I was left with precious little time for fostering. Eventually, it was no longer fun – I came to dread calls from shelters, telling me about 11th hour rabbits in danger of euthanization. The guilt associated with saying “no” was too much. I resigned as chapter manager; though I agreed to continue editing the SHRS newsletter, being around the rabbits themselves was no longer something I could do.

As I got even more involved with work and family, I saw my HRS friends less often. I played with my own rabbits rarely – telling myself it was okay because they preferred their bunny companions to the human touch anyway. Truthfully, I was feeling awfully guilty. It all came to a head one Thursday afternoon this August as I was getting ready to catch a plane to Irvine for an important business trip. As I was rushing to leave, I realized my much-loved, decade-old bunny Austin was gravely ill. Knowing that he needed urgent care – and



What was waiting in the middle of this fountain?

that I could not miss this trip – I asked my husband to take Austin to our vet. I boarded the plane in tears, feeling terrible.

That night I checked into the Irvine Marriott close to 10 p.m. Depressed, I decided to go for a walk, ending up at the business park next to the hotel. The area was deserted, and I took solace in the lovely fountains nestled between the high-rise buildings. One fountain was constructed to look like a running stream,

continued on page 4

Double Trouble Update

It's hard to believe, but the adorable baby bunnies I wrote about in the Fall 2004 issue of *All Ears in Sacramento* just celebrated their first birthday. I've enjoyed see them mature, bond with my bachelor bunny Hank, and become part of the family.

One of the first issues we dealt with was how Hank would react to Nora and Fiona. When I first put him in the enclosure with the two 5-week old girls, he didn't really know what to do. The babies were fearless, and too young to be territorial, so they hopped right over to him and thought he was wonderful. Hank thought the babies were just bewildering! The fact that there were two of them made it difficult for him to decide how to act – his attention was always

split between them. After a few days of close monitoring in a neutral location, I introduced them to his territory. Hank would mount the girls during the first few days, and they would just hunker down and wait it out. That behavior tapered off, and I am amazed at how unflappable he has become; the girls will run into him full-speed and he won't even react. The constant grooming they lavish on him makes up for the occasional foot in the face. It's very interesting to see how the three of them interact. Sometimes they are all together in a pile, but usually, there are two rabbits together and one apart. They all shift throughout the day as to who is the lone bunny.

For all my years of knowing how to live with house rabbits, those little babies still caught me off-guard plenty of times. At first I kept them in an enclosure at night. They had a tendency (as all rabbits do) to get very active in the evening, and I didn't like the idea of them running around at fever pitch all night, devising all sorts of devilishly destructive activities. However, they really liked the idea of being out all night, so they simply escaped from their enclosure.

The first time, they worked on the opening to the x-pen. Thinking they were just tiny, helpless babies, I used only one latch, figuring that would keep them in. They figured out how to squeeze past it. Since they outsmarted me on that count, I figured three latches would keep them in. It did, until they pushed their cardboard house to the edge of the pen, hopped onto it and leapt over the top of the pen! This is where the importance of a truly bunny-proofed room comes into play – those babies were bouncing off the walls for hours, unobserved.

Baby rabbits are adorable, but they are a lot of work, and have a heart-breaking way of ignoring you completely. Sure, I was interesting to sniff at and climb on (Nora enjoyed jumping on my head when I leaned down to talk to her), but if I reached out to pet them, they would zip away, in search of less

*Fiona and Nora share
a sisterly snuggle*



*Fiona, Nora and
Hank, hanging out*



Hurricane Katrina's Victims

All of us are worried about the human and animal victims of Hurricane Katrina. To find out more and to help with the human rescue efforts, please visit www.redcross.org. To help with the animal rescue efforts, and to donate to this cause, please visit the following groups who are working on helping Katrina's animal victims:

Noah's Wish: www.noahswish.org

American Humane Association: www.americanhumane.org

Humane Society of the United States: www.hsus.org

United Animal Nations: www.uan.org

To network with others who are working to devise ways to get urgently needed help and supplies to rabbits and their humans in the stricken areas, you can join the Katrina Rabbits group: groups.yahoo.com/group/katrinarabbits

For information on the problems rescue groups are having getting animals out of the affected area, go to <http://www.helpinganimals.com/f-disasterupdate.asp>

Please also think now about putting together a disaster relief plan for your own family and animals. For more on this: <http://www.rabbit.org/care/emergency-planning.html>

demanding things to play with. This got very discouraging, and I began to worry that since I had adopted them together, they were too rabbit-oriented and really didn't need to relate to me. I decided to try to change that.

I spent a lot of time talking to them, and the fact that they live in our kitchen makes it easy to interact with them numerous times each day. I kept petting them, even though the usual response was for them to get up and move away. They were always so busy and flighty, I figured that part of the issue was their age. Sure enough, they started getting more mellow about being petted as the months went by. Now, they really enjoy it, and I take time each morning to pet them thoroughly as they are eating their carrot bits. I look in their ears, and put my hand around their bellies, and scratch their rumps and they are unfazed.

Nora and Fiona were both spayed at around four months of age. At three months, Nora started intense nest building, which was very interesting to watch. She chose a little round carpeted cat tree, and would fill it with fur,

newspaper, hay, anything she could get her hands on. Since she still was mostly covered in baby fuzz, she used Hank's fur to line her nest - I have no idea how she got him to agree to that! She would work furiously for about a day and a half, and then abandon the nest for days.

She recovered very quickly from her spay, as did her sister. At the time of Fiona's spay, I had a radiograph (x-ray) taken of her leg. Her leg was detached at the hip socket, and her muscles and tendons had compensated to the point where it was unfixable - the joint would simply not stay together if surgically fixed. This was disappointing news, but she is so adept at getting around and can use her leg in amazingly creative ways, so I just have to make sure she doesn't incur new problems because of it.

The girls are now a wonderful part of the family, and I can't imagine them not being here (neither can Hank!) From the first time I saw them at the shelter, I knew that they needed spend their lives together - and with me.

— Jill Walker

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Inspiration continued from page 1

with rushing water about five inches high at its highest point. I sat at the edge of the fountain and moped, thinking about my sick Austin back home.

As I looked into the water, I was stunned by something very unexpected: A tiny statue of a baby rabbit, exactly in the middle of the fountain. The statue was no more than four inches tall; the water was swirling around its neck. It was tiny – a brown-rust color in the moonlight. My first thought was that it had to be a good omen. But my second thought was, “Who on earth would put a rabbit statue in the middle of a fountain?”

I stared at it, mesmerized. What was it made of? Cast iron? Was it glued to the bottom of the fountain? WHY was it there?

The Bunny in the Fountain

Curiosity got the better of me. I kicked off my shoes and waded into the water. Leaning down to touch the forehead of the statue, I recoiled in surprise. It wasn’t cast iron. It was wet fur. A real baby rabbit had fallen into the fountain. He’d probably been trying to get a drink and toppled in; somehow he’d kicked his way to the middle and found a spot to stand that just barely kept his head above water. If he’d moved a half-inch to either side, he would have drowned. Instead, he stood there, frozen, not blinking, as though every ounce of his energy was concentrated on staying alive.

I scooped up the baby and scrambled back to the side of the fountain. Still not quite believing it myself, I dried him off in my suit jacket. He didn’t struggle at all, but stared at me with huge brown eyes. I knew he had to be wild, and I knew absolutely nothing about wild rabbits. From my cell phone, I called Jill Walker back in Sacramento – she is another former HRS chapter manager who has experience with wildlife rescue. I described the baby to her; from his size and the fact that his eyes were open, she confirmed that he was indeed wild. (Wild rabbits open their eyes and develop a full coat much sooner than domestic

bunnies, she said.) This baby, with his mottled brown, white and black agouti fur, a bushy white tail and huge back feet, had to have been about four weeks old.

Jill scoured the Internet for wild rabbit resources while I cradled the phone on my shoulder and held the baby close to my face, breathing on him in the hopes of drying him off. Then a movement caught my eye. A full-grown cottontail rabbit sat in the courtyard, watching me intently. “Jill!” I whispered, “I think Mama’s here!”

Jill suggested that I put the baby down and back away. I did, but Mama scampered off and the baby huddled where I’d left him, still immobile, damp and traumatized. I waited a while, then picked him up again and went in search of a better locale.

Not too far from the fountain, I discovered a great expanse of lawn, surrounded by shrubs and palm trees. I could see three or four rabbits playing chase in the field. I found a shrub that would provide protection and tucked the bunny under it, knowing his mother was watching close by. I kissed him goodbye and wished him well – which was really hard to do, because as a rescuer, my first inclination was to smuggle him to my hotel room and somehow sneak him back to Sacramento. I did imagine what fun it would be to take him home, but it wasn’t the right thing to do.

Once a Rescuer, Always a Rescuer

The following morning, I retraced my steps, wanting to ensure that my little friend hadn’t taken another tumble into the water. There was no sign of him – or any other rabbits – anywhere. Amid the hustle of people rushing to work was a man from the fountain maintenance company. I approached him, explained what had happened, and asked if baby rabbits fall into the water regularly. The man shook his head slowly. “No, ma’am,” he said, looking skeptical. “No rabbits around here that I know of.”

After returning home, I thought about my experience for days on end. Though I’m not usually a very “symbolic” person, I struggled to

make sense of this. I wondered if it was a sign that I was going to lose my own sick bunny, Austin. I'm happy to say that wasn't the case. Austin's back home now, and doing fine. He's still elderly and more fragile than he once was, but because of this experience, I appreciate him more than ever. I spend more time with him, and our other rabbits, too. Their quality of life has taken a turn for the better.

In addition to appreciating my own rabbits more, finding the bunny in the fountain was a reminder of what was once so very important to me. I had forgotten how good it felt to save a life. I've come to realize that even

when I was still fostering rabbits regularly, burnout blinded me and made me unable to see or appreciate the good I was doing. As animal rescuers, the work we do is profound and overwhelming at times. When it becomes too much to bear, I think it's natural and normal and probably necessary to take a step back. When the time is right, you'll find your own signs and reminders of what's important to you. Try not to forget that what you do is noble and good and really does make a difference. Even when you step back, as we all must do, you should still savor that feeling.

— Kirsten Macintyre

What to Do if You Find a Wild Rabbit

Many people mean well when they contact HRS after discovering an apparently abandoned wild rabbit. Often they wish to "rehabilitate" them with some advice from others. The reality is fewer than 10% of orphaned rabbits survive a week, and the care that people attempt to provide can be illegal, unnecessary, and potentially harmful. The best thing you can do is put the bunny right back where you found him, or in the general area, as the mom will only come back at night to find him.

Rabbits hide their nests in plain view, often putting them in the open; for example, in the middle of the lawn, as well as in brush piles and long grass. If you find a nest that has been disturbed, do all you can to restore and protect it rather than bring the infants inside. If a dog has discovered the nest, keep your dog away from the area and reconstruct the nest with grasses.

If you come across a nest of bunnies in the wild and the mother is nowhere to be seen, please DO NOT disturb them...this is normal. By removing them from the nest you are greatly reducing their chances of survival. If

the babies are pink and warm, they're likely being fed. If you're not sure if the mother is coming back, you can create a tic-tac-toe pattern over the nest with straw, grasses or tiny twigs. Wait 24 hours to see if the twigs have been disturbed. She may be able to feed them without moving the twigs much, so double check. If the babies continue to look healthy, then the mother is coming back. (If they are cold or dehydrated, get them to a professional wildlife rehabilitator* or rabbit vet immediately; do not care for them yourself. You can also take him to your local humane society or animal shelter/animal control. Call first as often they will come pick up an injured animal.)

If your dog disturbs a nest or you find a wild bunny with his eyes open, please put him back if he is not injured. Mom will be coming back to feed him in the middle of the night. Do not take the bunny inside or feed him. It is a matter of survival and up to us as humans to leave nature be and let the mom care for her young. Do not take the baby from the mom or she will be frantic.

Older baby bunnies who are found outside



photo by www.2ndchance.info

of the nest may not be orphaned or in need of assistance. Baby cottontails are born without fur but develop a full coat in a week. Their eyes open in 10 days, and in three to four weeks they are weaned. At this age, they may explore the world outside of the nest but return there to sleep. They are not ignored by the mother but stay with the family group until four or five weeks of age. If you find a baby that appears uninjured, he is likely just out and about, discovering his world and waiting for mom to return at night when we humans are asleep.

* In Sacramento, contact the Wildlife Care Association at (916) 965-WILD or www.wildlifecareassociation.com

Rabbits Available for Adoption



Sweetie and Little Bigwig are a bonded brother and sister. They are friendly to people, dogs and cats.



Fiona, Felicia and Finnegan (two girls and one boy) are friendly, playful siblings. They want to be adopted as a trio.



Honey Bunny is a 10 month old girl. She loves to run and play. She needs to be brushed weekly.



Cream is a 2-year-old Florida White boy. He is very mellow and likes sitting on laps.



Buttercup is a shy adult female lop with lots of love. She loves to explore. She needs a quiet home with no dogs or cats.



Baby is very active, sweet, young girl and enjoys snuggling. She is learning to use a litter box very quickly.



'Eleu is an adventure-some mini-rex. He is good at using his litterbox and escaping from his pen.



Spike loves attention and to be petted. He enjoys playing with toys. He is being litter trained. The vet thinks his ears were surgically removed earlier in his life.



Finley and Phoebe are cuddly sisters who enjoy sitting on your lap while you brush them.



Buster is an affectionate dwarf Dutch boy. His incisors have been removed and he no longer needs teeth trimming.



Hoppy Gilmore is a young active and playful boy.



Misha is an full grown Californian boy. He is curious, playful, and has wonderful litterbox habits.

Recent Adoptions

Ella (an adoption day guest from the Sacramento City Shelter) was adopted by Stacey Jonasen

Buddy (an adoption day guest from the Yolo shelter) was adopted by Jean Johnson



Hazelnut was adopted by Tracy Butler as a friend for Nico

Bandit was adopted by John Turner



Teddy was adopted by Linda Meeks as a companion for her bunny Missy



Natalie is a very sweet, affectionate Mini Lop who enjoys being held.

Upcoming Events

Bi-Annual Chapter Meetings

September 18, 2005

March 19, 2006

All Sacramento House Rabbit Society members are invited to attend the bi-annual chapter meetings held on the third Sunday of September and March at 1:00 pm. Find out about what the chapter has been up to, upcoming plans, and volunteering opportunities. To RSVP and receive directions, please contact Jill at shrs@macmail.com.

Adoption and Information Clinics

Are you thinking about adding a bunny to your household? Or are you just looking to learn more about the one you've already got? Regardless of whether you've had a rabbit for years or if you're new to the joys of rabbit companionship, you'll have a great time at our monthly Adoption and Information Clinics. Come ask us questions about bunny behavior, care, grooming, nutrition, or anything else you can think of. We have free printed information on a variety of topics, and, of course, we also have our fabulous fosters on hand, waiting for just the right family to come along! The adoption donation is \$50 (\$75 for two), and includes a copy of *The House Rabbit Handbook*.

If you already have a bunny, you're welcome to bring him or her to the Clinic in a secure carrier. We do offer nail trims for a \$5 donation, but please call our hotline at least 48 hours in advance to set an appointment time (so we'll be sure to have someone available for you!). Please also bring your own, sterilized clippers. Grooming and de-matting services are also available outside of Clinic hours, but by appointment only. Call our hotline for more information.

October 8

10:00 am – 3:00 pm

Folsom PetCo

855 E. Bidwell Street

November 12

10:00 am – 3:00 pm

Arden PetCo

1878 Arden Way

December 10

10:00 am – 3:00 pm

Fair Oaks PetCo

8840 Madison Avenue

January 14

10:00 am – 3:00 pm

Folsom PetCo

855 E. Bidwell Street

NEW! Special Adoption Day Guests

Mary Argo, November 12

Want to know what your rabbit is thinking? Please join us for our very first SHRS Adoption Day Guest Speaker. We are very happy to announce that Mary Argo, Animal Communicator, will join us on November 12 from 11 am – 12 noon at the Arden PetCo in Sacramento. Mary will share how she communicates with animals and give some valuable tips on how to be more receptive to what your rabbit is saying.

Mary will be available for rabbit consultations between 12 noon – 3 pm for (\$20 for 20 minutes). You may bring your rabbit although a photo is preferred. She will be available on a first come, first serve basis (to pre-register contact Margaret at mbat35@yahoo.com). For more information about Mary, visit her website at www.petchat.net.



*Mary Argo,
Animal Communicator*



*Rose Zahnn (bottom row, second from left)
with her Healthy Habits staff – and furry friends*

Rose Zahnn, January 14

We will welcome Rose Zahnn, owner of Healthy Habits, at our January 14, 2006 adoption day from 12 noon – 1 pm at the Folsom PetCo. Rose will speak about how she has successfully integrated her houserabbits into her workplace. This has brought great joy and delight not only to Rose, but to her clients who share their yoga classes and workouts with the buns.

The rabbits bring a sense of peace, calm and entertainment in a most unlikely environment. Rose will give us pointers on how we might better incorporate our rabbits into our daily lives.



Sacramento House Rabbit Society
P.O. Box 19850
Sacramento, CA 95819-0850

membership
expiration date



Not a Member?

Sacramento House Rabbit Society depends on donations to keep running. Please fill out the form below to keep receiving *All Ears in Sacramento*, and to support local rabbits in need! *SHRS does not sell or share our member's information with any other organizations or companies.*

Keep in Touch!

Time to renew your membership? New to the House Rabbit Society? The annual membership to the House Rabbit Society is \$18. This includes a subscription to the quarterly *House Rabbit Journal*. The annual membership fee for the Sacramento Chapter, which includes the quarterly *All Ears in Sacramento*, is \$15. The House Rabbit Society is an all-volunteer, non-profit organization. All membership fees are tax-deductible and go towards care expenses for the rabbits and for providing educational materials, such as these newsletters.

- ☐ Please sign me up for the National Membership, \$18
- ☐ Please sign me up for the Sacramento Membership, \$15
- ☐ Please sign me up for both for \$30
- ☐ I have enclosed an additional donation of \$_____
- ☐ I would like to volunteer with SHRS (see choices to the right)

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

email address: _____

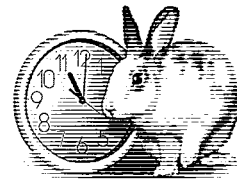
Return with check payable to House Rabbit Society to:

Sacramento House Rabbit Society, P.O. Box 19850, Sacramento, CA 95819-0850

Volunteer!

Would you like to help local rabbits and bunny-lovers? We could use volunteers in the following areas:

- ☐ Public Events (staffing education tables)
- ☐ Fundraising Events
- ☐ Distributing Literature
- ☐ Working with Shelters
- ☐ Transporting shelter rabbits to local adoption days
- ☐ Fostering



HOUSE RABBIT SOCIETY