



On Track...

Fall 2012

Target Training and Its Importance

By Lara Joseph

What exactly is target training? Target training is getting an animal to touch a pre-determined object- a ball at the end of a stick, your finger, or even a pen- with a predetermined body part of the animal (beak, paw, or nose). For example, getting a bird to touch its beak to a ball at the end of a stick when you say “touch”, or, getting a dog to touch its behind to the floor when you say “sit”. Target training is extremely handy for several reasons.

Targeting an animal to touch its nose or beak to a ball on the end of a stick helps when needing to ask the animal to move from one part of the room to the other. If you train the animal to “touch” the stick with its nose or beak, you can move the animal across the room by asking it to “touch” the stick when presented at the other end of the room. Why is this handy? If you are trying to work with an animal that shows signs of aggression when people walk by a door or a particular walkway, you can get the animal to move to a location where it doesn’t show that undesired behavior. Another example is if you want an animal to go into a crate, and it is already trained to target a stick, you can put the stick in the opposite end of the carrier and ask the animal to “touch”. It has to go into the carrier to touch the ball.

I have recently given this target training program to a training team. They have accurately taught a program cormorant at Nature’s Nursery to touch a ball at the end of a stick. They have since been using the target stick to guide the cormorant to different areas of its enclosure. Next I introduced a scale. I laid a flat scale down on a bench, held the ball at the end of the stick over the scale, and said “touch”. The cormorant immediately went to touch the ball with its beak and it stepped on the scale to get the ball. This is a very handy behavior to train

and is of great use for guiding an animal around an enclosure and for performing husbandry behaviors on the animal.

All of this sounds great, but where do you begin? Make it very easy for the animal to touch the ball. I started with putting the ball close enough to the cormorant that it had to look at it, but not too close as to scare it. When she looked at the ball, I immediately said “good” and tossed her a piece of smelt. I used the word “good” as my bridge. A bridge is a sound or signal that is given to let the animal know it has given the exact behavior we are asking and that the treat or positive reinforcement is coming. The bridge ‘bridges’ the gap between the time the animal has given the desired behavior, and the time it takes to deliver the positive reinforcement. This time should always be relatively quick. The less the amount of time that is taken between delivering the bridge and delivering the positive reinforcement, the more effect it has. It should always be kept to under a minute. The amount of time will vary; I usually deliver within 5 seconds.

As soon as the cormorant looked at the ball, I bridged and delivered the treat. I placed the ball about 6” from her again, and as soon as she looked at it I said “good,” and reinforced. I did this several times until I saw her consistently looking at the ball as soon as it was presented. Once I clearly saw that she knew just looking at the ball caused her to be rewarded, I then moved on to the next step. I showed the ball and she looked at it. I wanted to wait for something more. She ended up leaning into the ball just about an inch. I immediately said “good” and reinforced. I did it again and again, until I could see she clearly understood that she needs to move toward the ball. Then I presented the ball and waited

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for more behavior. She ended up turning away from it. That's fine, as this is part of the learning process. I removed the ball and all opportunity for her to earn her reward. She quickly turned back around and looked in my direction. I presented the ball and she took a step closer to it. I said "good" and reinforced. She took another step closer to the ball and almost touched it with her beak. "Good," I said, and I reinforced. As soon as her beak was about 1" from the ball, I paid attention to keep the ball still and steady. She didn't touch it. I wasn't sure if she understood, so I turned the ball by twirling the stick in my hand. She quickly jutting her head out and touched the ball with her beak. It was the turning of the ball that caused her to reach out and touch it with her beak. Once she did, I immediately said "good" and then tossed her three pieces of smelt. I wanted to increase the size of the reinforcement, so it was a clear line of communication that that this particular behavior is what earned the reinforcement. She learned this behavior within her first 5-minute training session.

The cormorant, Darcy, is now a targeting pro thanks to the consistency of the training team. The training team now guides her around her enclosure with the stick with the ball at the end of it. Last week she needed to be weighed. I went in and placed the scale on a perch where I knew she had a strong history of being trained. The scale is flat and low and easy for her to step on. I held the training stick with the ball above the scale and asked her to "touch". She walked straight toward the ball which was hovering over the scale, and touched it. I leaned down and recorded her weight. Now the training should be focused on keeping her on the scale until cued to jump off of it.

I've worked several birds that have been labeled as aggressive. One of the first things I teach them is to target. If I ever find myself in a situation which I didn't mean to get into, I can quickly rely on the former target training to guide the animal's beak, mouth, or feet away from me so I can get out of any compromising positions. This works very well and prevents the need to use force or break down any rewarding communication.

When I first begin working with any animal, one of the first things I train is to target. I do this because

it is a clear baseline of communication between the trainer and the animal. It is a "you do this and I'll give you that" approach. It adds choice back into the animal's environment. Studies show that animals in captive environment prefer this type of rewarding or positive reinforcing environment. Once I've trained an animal using positive reinforcement, I take it seriously because I have shown the animal a preferred form of enrichment and communication. I find it very hard to walk away. Therefore, I feel it is my responsibility to continue training that animal, or find a person or a team of trainers that can continue to deliver this preferred form of enrichment.

If you would like to see videos of target training or the beginning stages of teaching this cormorant to target, please visit my website at larajoseph.com.

Happy training!



Lara is the Director of Training and Enrichment for the Bird of Prey Division at Nature's Nursery. She is also the original founder of the Parrot Society of NW Ohio. To see videos with examples of positive reinforcement training, visit Nature's Nursery's Facebook page, or read training entries on Lara's blog or website at larajoseph.wordpress.com or larajoseph.com

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WANTED

We are looking for informative mammal, avian, veterinary and general interest topics! Have you come across a great rehabilitation or other wildlife article you would like to share with our members? Please send it to our Editor at melisana@ymail.com for review for future publication.

President's Message

by Tracy Leaver



Dear Members:

I sincerely hope that your busy season caring for precious wildlife has been a successful one. As you wind down and get those final releases accomplished, be sure to be thankful to have the opportunity to help so many creatures in need – one way or the other. This is the

time to remember why we work so hard. To me it is easy: it is simply the right thing to do. Not for myself or for anyone else but, for that wild animal that is helped, and if I'm lucky, that human animal that is educated.

This work is hard and the family of wildlife rehabilitators in New Jersey, and as a whole, is small. While we may differ in the scale of the work we do, ranging from small home-based rehabilitators doing their absolute best while working and keeping a household, to larger centers doing their absolute best to continue to meet the demands of the communities in a trying economy; we do not differ much at all. We all work equally hard against the odds of success and the commitment, dedication and goals are the same. Whether you are a home-based rehabilitator trying to save two animals at a time or working at a center trying to save thousands a year, it is all to be admired and thanked for. Many larger centers began saving two animals and simply made different choices along the way. One way is not

better or worse than the other. It is about saving wildlife, or should be.

Unfortunately, and not to the benefit of wildlife, rehabilitators and NJAWR are being maligned through misconceptions, rumors, differences of opinion and untruths being spread by a very small and disgruntled group. To make slanderous accusations and speak ill of another rehabilitator in a public or government forum is certainly *not* the best for wildlife.

We all agree that changes and improvements are needed in the rehabilitation program in New Jersey. NJAWR has been instrumental in making many positive changes over the years – for the benefit and well-being of wildlife. In addition to NJAWR, rehabilitators also have the Wildlife Rehabilitators Advisory Committee (WRAC) to address concerns and recommend changes to NJDEP/FW. NJAWR believes strongly that further changes should be made within the current system and in collaboration with the governing agencies that protect our wildlife and have made wildlife rehabilitation even possible. It is *not* in the best interest of wildlife to have rehabilitation directed by an independent group of people with no oversight.

Please become informed by visiting our website at www.njawr.org about pending Senate bill S1864. This bill could change wildlife rehabilitation forever and not in a good way for New Jersey's wildlife.

Be well and stay strong,
Tracy Leaver
President

New Jersey Association of Wildlife Rehabilitators Board of Directors

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On Track is the newsletter of the New Jersey Association of Wildlife Rehabilitators (NJAWR) and is published four times a year. NJAWR does not officially endorse products, techniques, drugs, opinions, diets, etc. which are presented herein. Every effort is made to ensure accuracy; however, the reader is responsible for contacting the contributing author should problems or questions arise.

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What Is Botulism?

By Erica A. Miller, DVM, and Deborah Comings, MS

Botulism is caused by exposure to botulism toxin. This toxin is the most poisonous substance known. Waterfowl, particularly mallards, wood ducks, and teal are very sensitive to the toxin. Shorebirds, herons and gulls are also commonly affected. However, all animals (including people) are susceptible. Outbreaks are usually in late July/August, when water levels are low, but can occur in the winter when areas of open water are scarce. Maggots and mussels concentrate the toxin.

What Causes Botulism?

Botulism is caused by a toxin produced by the Gram-positive bacterium, *Clostridium botulinum*. Primarily seen in waterbirds, botulism has been documented in wading birds, shore birds, waterfowl, and diving birds. Some species, such as vultures, are extremely resistant to intoxication. Outbreaks rarely involve only one bird and may affect thousands of birds. There are several strains of botulism toxin (types A through F); types C and E are most commonly responsible for outbreaks in wildlife. This bacterium is very hardy because it is normally in an inactive spore form that allows it to survive extreme conditions, and it only grows in areas without oxygen. When conditions are favorable, the spore is activated, grows, and produces toxin. The bacteria producing type C botulism does not have the genetic material for toxin production and must first be infected by a bacteriophage (a virus that infects bacteria) in order to receive the genetic material necessary to produce the toxin. The toxin is only produced by active *Clostridium* (i.e., in the growth or vegetative stage), but the toxin remains functional even if the bacterium is destroyed. Maggots feeding on a carcass containing either types C or E toxin may accumulate the toxin, resulting in acute toxicity when ingested by another animal feeding on the maggots or carcass; therefore, carcass collection is key to controlling any botulism outbreak. Bottom-feeding mussels may concentrate type E toxin and perpetuate the outbreak when birds feed on the mussels.

How Does an Animal Get Exposed to Botulism?

There are three ways to become poisoned by botulism:

1. Most commonly, animals ingest pre-formed toxin.
2. Wounds can become infected by *C. botulinum*, which produces toxin as it reproduces.
3. Animals can also ingest clostridial spores which activate, grow in the gut and create new toxin. This usually only happens in very young animals; adults have normal bacteria in the gut that prevent clostridium from producing toxin.

What Happens When an Animal is Exposed to Botulism Toxin?

The toxin prevents signals from the brain from reaching the muscles by binding to motor endplates (the sites on nerves that release signals) and blocking the release of acetylcholine (the signal). Without these signals, voluntary muscles stop functioning correctly, resulting in signs of peripheral neuropathy (paralysis that moves from the outside inward). This neuropathy is dose related: the more toxin ingested, the fewer signals reach the muscles and the weaker the animal becomes. This reaction is irreversible as long as the toxin is present.

What are the Signs of Botulism?

Because the toxin acts very quickly, birds are characteristically in good body condition, and animals with varying degrees of incapacitation will be found together. Mildly affected waterfowl (Stage 1) cannot fly but may “wing-walk”. They are alert but cannot escape predators, so their level of stress is high. They are generally self-feeding and will recover with minimal supportive care. More seriously affected birds (Stage 2) cannot fly or walk and are not self-feeding. They can hold their heads up weakly, and possess a slow nictitans response (blink response). Critically ill birds (Stage 3) are almost completely paralyzed. They exhibit the classic sign of botulism, ‘limberneck’, which results from paralysis of the cervical musculature. They cannot hold up their heads; consequently, death frequently results

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from drowning. Paralysis of respiratory muscles may result in suffocation in birds in stage three. Inconsistent clinical signs include swelling of the eyelids and nictitans (third eyelid), ocular discharge, and hypersalivation.

DAILY CARE:

Stage 1 birds: LRS PO QID for the first day; Osmolite® or equivalent PO QID the second day; Osmolite®/Cereal diet (see recipe below)PO QID the third day. After the third day, the bird’s condition should be re-evaluated. If the bird is self-feeding, active, and waterproof, it can be moved to an outdoor cage. Monitor the bird’s weight every three days.

Stage 2 birds: LRS PO Q 2 hours for the first two days; Osmolite® or equivalent PO Q 2 hours for the third day; Osmolite® PO Q 3 hours the fourth day. The bird’s condition should be re-evaluated on the third day as it may be possible to decrease gavaging to Q 3 hours. The bird may be started on cereal diet on the fourth day as its condition permits. Baby cereal gruel and water can be offered once normal head carriage has returned. Eyes should be flushed/TAO applied as needed, usually QID the first few days, decreasing to TID-BID by day 5. Vents must be washed at least BID to remove accumulated feces and to keep the feathers in good condition until the birds are standing.

Stage 3 birds: LRS PO Q 2 hours and D2.5LRS IV BID for the first two days; Osmolite® or equivalent PO Q 2 hours on the third day; Osmolite®/equivalent PO Q 3hours the fourth day. The bird’s condition should be re-evaluated on the fourth day; dilute cereal diet can be introduced on the fifth day. These birds should be weighed every 3 days. Flush eyes/apply TAO QID until day three, then decrease to TID. These birds often need a follow-up eye exam around day 4 to check for corneal lesions.

Stage 2 and 3 birds will need supplemental heat

(brooder lamps) and rolled towels placed under their heads to keep them elevated. Position their heads so that their beaks point downward; any nasal discharge must be able to drain freely. They will initially need draped, padded playpens or similar restricted, soft-sided housing. Waterfowl that are deprived of bathing facilities for any length of time will often accumulate a build-up of dried mucus in the nares. Check their nares daily and remove any hardened debris.

Consideration for moving outside: Once the birds are self-feeding, active and waterproof, they can be moved to an outdoor enclosure with free access to pools.

Considerations for release: Botulism cases are often brought in by Fish and Wildlife personnel. They must be contacted when the birds are ready for release as they are often the people who decide where the birds will be released. Birds that are at or above incoming weight, active, self-feeding, waterproof, and flighted may be released.

QUICK REFERENCE FOR ADMISSION: Amounts can be increased slowly by the second or third day, depending on the bird’s condition.

SPECIES	AMOUNT OF LRS	AMOUNT OF AC (ToxiBan™)
Canada Goose	15-20cc	3cc
Mallard or Black Duck	10-12cc	2cc
Wood Duck	8-10cc	1.5cc
Teal (Blue or Green)	6-8cc	1cc
Shorebirds	.3-1cc	.05-.2cc

Products Mentioned in Text:

Ensure®
Abbott Laboratories, Abbott Park, IL

Gerber® Oatmeal Cereal
Société des Produits Nestlé, S.A. Vevey, Switzerland

What Is Botulism? (Continued)

Lactated Ringers®

Abbott Laboratories, Abbott Park, IL

Nekton-S®

Günter Enderle, D-75177 Pforzheim, Germany

Osmolite®

Ross Pharmaceuticals, Columbus, OH

Pedialyte®

Abbott Laboratories, Abbott Park, IL

ToxiBan™

Charcoal-Kaolin suspension, Vet-A-Mix,
Shenandoah IA

Cereal Diet:

Cereal diet is a gavage (or tube) feeding diet used for waterfowl that are not self-feeding

Ingredients

- 2 hard-boiled egg yolks
- 1 (2.5 oz) jar baby beef or chicken
- 1 cup Gerber® oatmeal cereal (dry)
- 8 ounces Ensure or equivalent
- ½ cup water
- 1/16 tsp. Nekton-S (vitamin supplement)

Preparation

Combine all ingredients in a blender. Blend till very smooth. Can be refrigerated for 3 days. This mixture can be frozen when it is made.

Helpful Websites:

Canadian website on Botulism

<http://www.pnr-rpm.ec.gc.ca/nature/migratorybirds/avianb/ce00s02.en.html>

Erie, PA outbreak

<http://www.post-gazette.com/healthscience/20021229avianenviron2p2.asp>

National Wildlife Health Center

http://www.nwhc.usgs.gov/pub_metadata/field_manual/chapter_38.pdf

Botulism in people

<http://www.merck.com/mrkshared/mmanual/section3/chapter28/28d.jsp>

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Erica A. Miller, DVM, is a staff veterinarian at Tri-State Bird Rescue & Research, Inc.

Deborah Comings, MS, was a student (Class of 2006) at the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine.

***The protocol was developed in 2009, and Lafeber Emeraid diets (Carnivore, Herbivore, Omnivore or Piscivore, depending on the species) are now used instead of osmolite.**



The American Beaver

By Ruth Brooks

The American beaver (*Castor canadensis*) is making a comeback in our area, and the public seems to be split on whether this is a good thing or a bad thing. Seeing them again in our waterways means that we have less pollution now than we had 15 years ago, but many people cannot tolerate their natural behavior of damming creeks, causing flooding, and cutting down trees, often in landscaped yards.

Whatever your opinion is, these animals are truly remarkable creatures. They have a calm, inquisitive personality and are not naturally aggressive. The male and female beaver mate for life, and can have as many as four kits each year. When the kits reach maturity at two years old, they migrate from the home lodge to find a mate and start their own families.



This beaver pictured came into our facility in late winter after being attacked by another beaver. She had infected bite wounds down her back and was thin and malnourished. When these animals are separated from their families before they are 2 years old, they will seek out the companionship of other beavers. This is when a beaver will become aggressive, defending the home territory from intruders. When we receive these animals at a young age, we have to commit to a lengthy rehabilitation because they cannot be released until they are mature, which is when they would naturally leave the lodge. This is what makes them one of our most expensive animals, but when you look at that face, how could you say no?

**This article was reprinted with permission from Freedom Center For Wildlife.*



NJAWR Board of Directors Call for Nominations

The NJAWR Nominating Committee is currently accepting nominations for the Board of Directors. Nominees must be members of NJAWR prior to their nomination, as required by the NJAWR by laws. Nominations must be made by current members of NJAWR. You may nominate yourself.

Nominees represent you, the members of NJAWR, and they must be prepared to attend monthly meetings and fulfill their two year term. These positions are working positions – each Board member is expected to participate in Board meetings, be a member of at least one committee, devote time to further the goals and purposes of NJAWR, uphold the by laws, and participate in the annual conference held in March.

Requests for an application for a Board position can be sent to Cathy Malok, Chair, Nominating Committee, by email at nominating@njawr.com. Incumbents in board positions whose terms are expiring must follow the nomination process if they wish to be considered as candidates in the next election. Nominations must be received by October 30th, 2012.

Nominees approved by the Nominating Committee will be notified and their names submitted to the membership for election. Absentee ballots will be included in the next newsletter for those who cannot attend the annual membership meeting. Election is by a simple majority vote of the members responding. Ballots will be counted at the annual membership meeting to be held in January 2013, and election results will be announced in the February newsletter.



News and Events

2012 Wildlife Rehabilitator Roundtable and Dessert Social

The Fall 2012 NJAWR Wildlife Rehabilitator Roundtable will be held on Sunday, October 21st., 2012 from 2-4pm at The Raptor Trust in Millington, NJ. As Baby Season ends, come celebrate with NJAWR and enjoy some... **Just Desserts!**



Come enjoy the sweet rewards of surviving (another) baby season in wildlife rehabilitation. Share your summer experiences, celebrate successes, ask questions, compare notes, and trade solutions to the season's many challenges with others in the field. Conversation to be followed by a tour of The Raptor Trust, an all-species avian rehabilitation center. All wildlife rehabilitators, apprentices, and volunteers welcome.

Coffee, tea, and a variety of delectable desserts will be provided. Please bring items for trading table (surplus supplies, equipment you no longer need, etc.). Also bring a bag or box to take supplies home.

AND if you have a special dessert you'd like to share—a family recipe or a party favorite—please bring it, too!

There is no cost to attend, but space is limited, and death by chocolate goes fast.

Please **RSVP by OCT 15** to Lauren Butcher, NJAWR Ed Committee Co-Chair, at lbutter@theraptortrust.org or 908-647-1091.

Please join us for an afternoon of information, networking, door prizes, fun—and dessert, did we mention dessert? Who says you can't have your cake and eat it, too!



On Track Is Available By Email

Would you like to reduce the amount of paper you receive? Want to save trees? Want to store *On Track* articles on your computer rather than in a file cabinet? Want to help NJAWR save money? Here's your chance to accomplish all of those things! The NJAWR newsletter is available in a PDF file format that can be emailed directly to you.

If you would like to receive *On Track* by email rather than snail mail, contact Michael Ginder at membership@njawr.org

Please include your full name and email address.



Stay Connected with NJAWR!

Facebook-

NJAWR has recently joined Facebook! Become a fan to stay up to date with photos, events, workshops, and more at www.facebook.com/NJAWR !

NJAWR Website-

NJAWR now proudly accepts Paypal as a form of payment for our events and memberships! An online store will be coming soon!

News and Events

You Might be a Wildlife Rehabilitator if...



1. You have a bumper sticker on your truck that says "I Brake for Road Kills".
2. You stop traffic on a 4-lane highway to retrieve an animal while your spouse pretends he doesn't know you.
3. You "react" every time you see a cardboard box.
4. You don't think it's strange at all to have dead animals in your freezer at home.
5. Children sing "Old McDonald Had A Farm", and they are referring to you... and they make sounds of raccoons and raptors when singing.
6. You plan your vacation around the "birthing" season.
7. The pictures of your releases outnumber the pictures of your children.
8. The name "Grubco" no longer makes you giggle.
9. You're in the mall, and all you catch are the words "The Bird Lady".
10. You're happy when you get a gift certificate for earthworms.
11. You have accidentally washed a few smelt in your Maytag.
12. Your mental picture is different from everyone else when you hear the words "Some loon is in my parking space!"
13. Feathers in your hair are not a fashion statement.
14. You buy more baby food than anyone else in town, and you don't have any children.
15. You use the word "Goatsucker" and you're not being insulting.

16. You buy cat food by the case and you don't own a cat.
17. You know what happens when you try to thaw a mouse in the microwave.
18. Your linen closet contains more than five heating pads.
19. You say, "Yes, they poop on me"... before any one asks.
20. Overnight guests cannot stay in the guestrooms because there are ducklings in the tubs and incubators in the rooms.

For more wildlife rehabilitation humor, see The Wildlife Rehabilitation Information Directory at <http://wildliferehabinfo.org/index.htm>



Rabies Vaccination Update!

We are happy to report that we are now able to assist our members with getting their rabies pre-exposure vaccinations! We were able to offer the vaccinations at a rate of **\$100 per series**. Dr. Martina Martin is generously donating her time and expertise to administer the vaccinations.

We will be offering the discounted pre-exposure vaccinations again in the near future. Stay tuned to our newsletters, website, and Facebook page for upcoming dates.

If you have any questions email us at: membership@njawr.com

Pre-Exposure Rabies Vaccinations!

If you have a rehabilitation experience, revelation, an exciting product, tips or tricks or other valuable information please consider sending it to us for inclusion in a future On Track publication!



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Sign me up as a member of NJAWR!

Your membership dollars support the work of NJAWR. To become a member or renew your membership, complete this application form and return with a check for your membership fee. Memberships can also be renewed online at www.njawr.org

Membership year is January to December. Please make checks payable to NJAWR and mail to:
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