

CHAMPIONS

FOR OUR COMMON FUTURE

Ordinary people taking extraordinary action

JAN SHADDICK: BALANCING THE SCALE

In an average year Jan Shaddick and her team nurture about 2000 wild animals back to health. Most of these animals are sick or injured due to interactions with humans. It is a big task. In 2023, 110 animal care volunteers put in more than 2600 hours. Additional volunteers put in time fundraising, doing construction and repairs, and writing grant applications and developing educational materials. Local veterinarians also help when needed. It is a lot of work, but Jan believes that it is important work that helps to balance the scale in the relationship between humans and the natural world, even if only a little bit.

Jan's commitment to taking care of our wild neighbors and the planet we share was instilled in her during her childhood in California. Her mother Gloria was ahead of her time when it came to understanding the links between human and the world around us. Gloria regularly organized ecology camps for children and community recycling days. Between her mother's influence and her participation in organizations like 4H, Jan became enthralled with animals, particularly birds.

As an adult, Jan volunteered as a wildlife rehabilitator in the United States even as she worked professionally as a Family Therapist. When she was in her thirties, she moved to Saskatchewan to join family members who had moved here. Once people heard that she was a wildlife rehabilitator, wounded and sick animals again started appearing. Once again, she was helping people by day and helping animals by night.

By 2008 it became clear that Jan and her husband Stan could no longer foot the bill for an increasing number of animals in their care. Together with supporters they incorporated as Living Sky Wildlife Rehabilitation which would allow them to fund raise and apply for grants. By 2015, the work outgrew their basement and backyard, so the organization purchased a house in Saskatoon. They renovated and moved in by 2016. Since then, ongoing renovations by volunteers have expanded the facility to include a squirrel pen, a fox pen, duck runs and aviary system. Recently a neighboring house was purchased to allow expansion. Jan says that they have been lucky with their neighbours. Most have been supportive of their work.



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Living Sky works to provide a safe space for injured or orphaned wild animals to grow and mend until they can return to their natural habitat. Birds make up most of the animals treated. In 2023, the facility saw 144 different species of birds, including songbirds, waterfowl and finches and hummingbirds. Mammals include bats, squirrels, porcupines and beavers. By addressing injury or illness caused by humans, not by nature, Living Sky aims to help offset the impact of humans on Saskatchewan's natural populations.

Jan knows that the work of Living Sky will not eliminate the impact of humans on wildlife, but she hopes it will nevertheless make a difference – not only through the animals that it returns to their habitats, but also through the public education that it provides. Certainly, Living Sky has come a long way – it is even the subject of the CityTV documentary series “Staying Wild” that will soon be starting its third season. But challenges remain. Funding and renovations and repairs are always challenging. Most importantly, as human activity expands, so does our potential to harm wild animals with which we share the world.

This column is a collaborative project of the Saskatchewan Environmental Society and the Regional Centre of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development – RCE Saskatchewan.



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Saskatchewan Environmental Society is a non-profit, registered charity that is committed to supporting sustainable living and sustainable resource use in Saskatchewan. We work with, and on behalf of, communities, organizations, businesses, and policy makers to encourage informed decision-making that moves us towards sustainability. SES's current action

areas include sustainable energy and climate solutions, water protection, resource conservation, biodiversity preservation, and reduction of toxic substances. Our work in Saskatchewan is carried out in Treaties 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, and our office is in Saskatoon on Treaty 6, the traditional territory of Cree peoples and the homeland of the Métis Nation. Learn more at: www.environmentalsociety.ca



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RCE Saskatchewan is a voluntary network of individuals, organizations, and experts advancing sustainable development in Saskatchewan. Founded in 2007, RCE Saskatchewan's partners are the University of Regina, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan Polytechnic, Luther College at the University of Regina, First Nations University of Canada, Campion College at the University of

Regina, the City of Regina, City of Saskatoon, Craik Sustainable Living Project, and United Nations University. Our honorary patron is Her Honour the Honourable Bernadette McIntyre, Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan. There are more than 190 RCEs around the globe. Learn more at: www.saskrce.ca