

New rules on wildlife prompt student protest

By Casey Hane
staff writer

NEW STATE regulations forcing pest control companies to kill the wild animals they capture has prompted two classrooms of students at Hillside Elementary to write letters of protest to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

"I think it's unfair because the animals don't deserve to be killed," third grader Derek Reay said in his letter, echoing the sentiments of several classmates. "How would you like it if you had a broken leg and somebody came and told you they were going to kill you?"

Another letter from Kara Varilone pointed out: "If you kill the animals, they might become extinct. You should give the animals a chance to live; they don't deserve to die."

Students from Dodie Harris' and Linda Web's classrooms wrote their protest letters after reading about licensed wildlife rehabilitation specialist Beverly Cornell of Farmington Hills, who had just begun caring for an orphaned raccoon baby, Bambi, when news of the new law hit in early April.

WEH IS ALSO licensed by the state to care for orphaned baby animals.

The students' love of animals apparently led to classroom discussions and the letter-writing campaigns. In Harris' class, students had just completed a unit on natural resources and were preparing to study animals, animal babies and their environments when they read about the new regulations and Cornell.

Cornell visited Harris' and Web's students Tuesday to introduce them to Bambi, now four weeks old, and Flower, another orphaned raccoon who is 19 days old. Both travel in a heated carrier and go almost everywhere with the Cornell family.

"They've been to church, but they haven't been to school yet," she quipped.

Cornell explained the DNR ruling was put into place because a handful of pest control companies were capturing wild animals, then letting them go in the same neighborhoods instead of taking them the required 20 miles away to set them free. By letting them loose nearby, the animals would bother another neighbor and get the company additional business. "Some companies were cheating. They were thinking about money," she told the students.

She also disagrees with state studies that show that suburban raccoons do not do well in the wild and that 50 percent of them die when released.

DNR officials will still refer people to rehabilitators like herself and Web, Cornell said, but pest control companies are still required to kill bats, chipmunks, muskrats, raccoons, skunks, opossums, squirrels, woodchucks, foxes, coyotes, crows, pigeons, sparrows and starlings they capture.

MICHIGAN HUMANE Society officials have estimated between 5,000 and 10,000 animals per year will be killed under the new regulation. Cornell's "babies" are now fed



photos by SHARON LAMIEUX/staff photographer

about every four hours and sleep through the night. She will raise them through the summer, then take them to a friend's land out of town to release them into the wild. Both would have been subject to the new law if individuals had contacted a pest control company instead of calling her.

As students cooed over Cornell's temporary houseguests, Web warned students they should not try to handle wild animals. "It's really important you understand you cannot do this," she said. "To go into the wild and take an animal from its home would be wrong. A person needs special training."

"If you even see a wild animal in trouble or in danger, Mrs. Cornell's number in the phone book and so is mine."

Harris, who has invited Cornell to speak to other students in years past, said the DNR wrote a lengthy, complicated letter responding to the students and explaining the DNR's position.

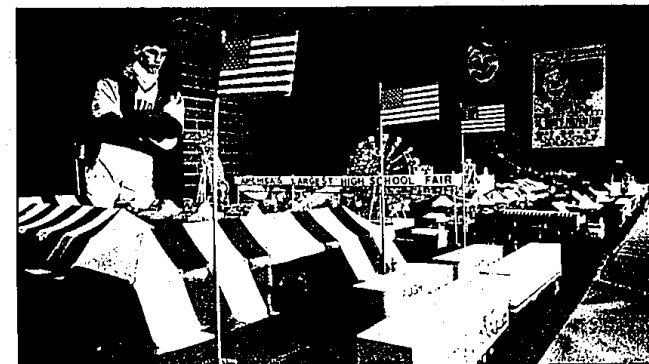
Bambi the raccoon waves "hello" to students at Hillside Elementary Tuesday as wildlife rehabilitator Bev Cornell shares her stories. Cornell and students also discussed recent DNR rules that require pest control services to destroy wildlife after capturing it.



Hillside students Aaron Muncey (left) and Michael Brzozowski listen to Bev Cornell talk about the new DNR ruling as she shows students her orphaned raccoons, Bambi and Flower.



Bambi, a one-month-old orphaned raccoon, is surviving with Bev Cornell's help. He is currently on medication because he has been unable to retain his own body heat.



DAN DEAN/staff photographer

Jim Stuart, an 11th grader at St. Mary's High School, towers over the intricately detailed handmade model of the school's high school

fair. The model recreates almost exactly how the fair will be set up from May 23 to May 27 on the school grounds.

Local high school fair to offer 3 days of fun and excitement

The focus will be on kids May 23 at the Orchard Lake St. Mary's High School fair.

Possibly the largest high school fair in the nation, the event will feature a variety of games, entertainment and food. It will run May 23 to 25 on the St. Mary's campus, at Indian Trail and Commerce. But the first day of the fun is dedicated to the kids.

"The kids are left out of so many events, we wanted to do something for them," said Bob Goddard, who is in charge of publicity for the fair. Clowns and a magician will be brought in specially to entertain the kids.

AND, OF COURSE, there will be rides. Lots of rides. Enough to make a grown person sick and give even the toughest kid a queasy stomach. For a \$9 ticket, the kids (or adults) can spend the day on 34 rides, including the Tilt-A-Whirl, a ferris wheel and a nasty looking contraption called The Zipper, which apparently swings you over and under a T-shaped frame.

Still haven't lost your lunch? Try the ever-popular Himalaya, which takes you around and around and up and down.

You can get a look at what you're in for with an incredibly detailed handmade scale model of the fair

that was crafted out of balsa wood by a Minnesota artist and bought by Goddard.

The model, on a 4-by-8-foot base, recreates every ride and booth that will be at the fair.

Each ride is laid out as it will be at the real festival. There are even tiny figures, including religious brothers, wandering through the attractions. The rides are carefully detailed to match the real versions.

Goddard said the model is used to promote the fair and is taken to

other fairs across the country, where it generates a lot of interest.

Apparently it works. Last year's St. Mary's fair drew about 52,000 visitors. For those looking for more sedate entertainment, in addition to the rides, the fair features hot air balloon races, arts and crafts, live music, dancing, plenty of food including baked goods, a Las Vegas room and bingo.

Whatever your level of indulgence, the fair has something to offer, Goddard said.



Details of the festival model are so complete it even has tiny visitors. The model, which tours the country to promote the event, also will be on display at the festival.

We expect the response to this sale to be pretty laid back.

After, of course, people have had the chance to select a sofa from our expansive array of quality, affordable designer styles.

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