

'Blonde' raccoon caught, orphan raised by family

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KINCARDINE NEWS STAFF

A local Bruce Township family caught an unusual furry visitor earlier this year and it's not something many of the local farmers are familiar with.

Brent News caught a 'blonde' or seemingly Albino raccoon wandering around on his farm, a day or so after he saw it scurrying away from his barn and later, up a tree.

"I was cleaning out the barn and it took off running," News said. "I never thought I'd see it again, but I did."

News said he lured the creature, which lacked an Albino's typical red eyes, into a live trap with some tuna and peanut butter over three months ago, but held onto it to see if it was rabid.

Of the neighbouring farmers he's shown, none have every seen a raccoon of its colour: an off-white to a yellow-brown.

Since then, News said "Earl", as they named it, hadn't died of rabies and seemed to be healthy, as they kept it in a larger cage and fed it cat food and fresh water daily.

His family is no stranger to raccoons either. Two months ago he ran over the mother of a raccoon nest while he was haying and came upon an orphaned cub, which he put into the care of his wife Karin and her children Eric and Cassie Graham.

The two-month old male, 'Bob' as they named it, was bottle fed and now plays with the barn cats and follows the children around like a common pet.

News raised orphaned raccoons from cubs many times and said they can be fun, if they're

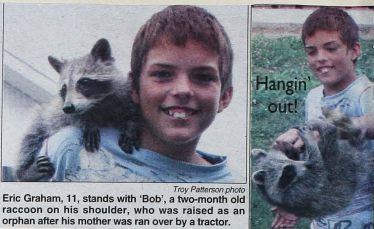
raised from infancy.

But he said they're still animals and although they may seem friendly now, raccoons, especially females, can turn vicious as they mature.

"They can tear up your arm pretty good," he said.

He said raccoons are easy to turn back to the wild, as they they may become familiar with people, but they don't lose their 'animal instinct'.

"When they get to a certain age, you can take them back to the bush and they'll figure it out on their own," News said.



Troy Patterson photo

Eric Graham, 11, stands with 'Bob', a two-month old raccoon on his shoulder, who was raised as an orphan after his mother was ran over by a tractor.

Shelley's Bistro changes hands 2007

By Eric Howald

After 32 years of working in Kincardine's main street, Shelley Bonnett says, "It's time for a change."

She locked the doors of Shelley's Bistro Saturday afternoon for the last time.

"It's been neat to see the changes (in Kincardine's downtown)," says Bonnett. "I'll miss seeing the people day to day. I've come to know the different generations of many families."

She's had good staff and says she has learned a "lot of life lessons."

Bonnett started working at Caruso's Fruit Market when she was 13 years of age and later worked at Henry's Gift Shop and Krupp's Food Market.

She started Shelley's Bistro in 1993 in the building at the north-east corner of Queen and Lambton Streets. She moved one door north to the current location in 2001.

Bonnett has sold the business to Gary Track who will re-open Shelley's on March 1.

Track attended KDSB and has been a chef since 1981 when he graduated from college in Sault Ste. Marie. He worked three years in Ottawa and three years in Peterborough before moving to Baffin Island for 11 years where he was the cook for a mining company.

After returning to Kincardine in 1997, he worked at the Grey Rose in Hanover for 3 1/2 years and then at the Best Western Governor's Inn in Kincardine



Gary Track, left, takes over operation of Shelley's Bistro from Shelley Bonnett. (Eric Howald photo)

until last spring.

Although Bonnett didn't really have the bistro for sale, Track heard via the rumour mill that it was available, and inquired about the business.

Track and his wife, Dana (Fyke), have twin daughters who are away at college.

He doesn't have any major changes planned for the bistro and will keep the same hours - Monday to Saturday, 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Bonnett says her two daughters, Whitney and Lauren, "feel funny about it (the sale). They've worked here a lot."

Both girls are now in college.

Now that the bistro is sold, Bonnett is taking a holiday in Arizona. After that, she's not sure of her plans.

Whatever she does, there are 32 years' worth of customers and friends wishing her well.



Troy Patterson photo

This 'blonde' raccoon was caught on a Bruce Twp farm and is a rare sight for many local farmers.