



# The Nature Connection

*Bringing Nature, Animals & the Arts to People*

Spring 2011 Newsletter

## *Venus and Mars: NC Volunteer Inspires Children with “Wild” Chinchillas*

Heidi Caro serves as one of many NC volunteers who own and care for animals that we bring on programs. Her generosity enables us to bring her captivating and unique chinchillas to hundreds of children and elders every year. Here she gives us an insider’s view into caring for, and sharing, chinchillas:

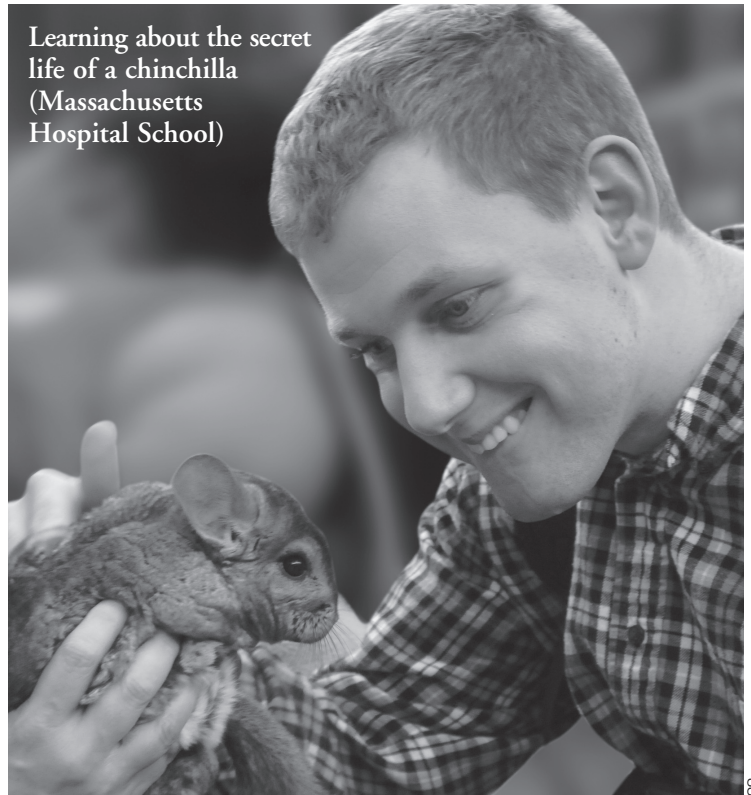
Their fur feels other-worldly soft, and they love to roll in volcanic dust—they are Venus and Mars. Their high energy gives children and elders great pleasure as they dart about and run on their exercise wheel. Chinchillas are naturally very curious, but at the same time they startle easily. Children learn that to watch them do anything requires staying still, and being patient. A quick movement sends them darting back. But they’re not afraid, and settle quickly to being held.

At home, I feed them at night, which gives them fuel for their late-night marathons on the exercise wheel. (They are nocturnal.) They eat grain-based pellets, hay, shredded wheat, and their favorite—peanuts in the shell. They love nibbling on the shells to open them up. Their nibbling, however, extends to almost everything, including baseboards when they are allowed to roam outside of their cage!

An important part of caring for the chinchillas is providing dust for them to ‘bathe’ in. Children laugh at seeing them rolling in the dust. We teach them that this is how they clean the oils and dirt from their fur, to keep it healthy. Although they are bred domestically, chinchillas retain a ‘wildness’ about them. I think this explains why Venus and Mars are so popular. The children react with mutual curiosity, smiles, and tentative reaching out. Sharing these creatures with children and elders is a truly rewarding experience for me.

—Heidi Caro, Volunteer

Learning about the secret life of a chinchilla  
(Massachusetts  
Hospital School)



Shawn Fogg

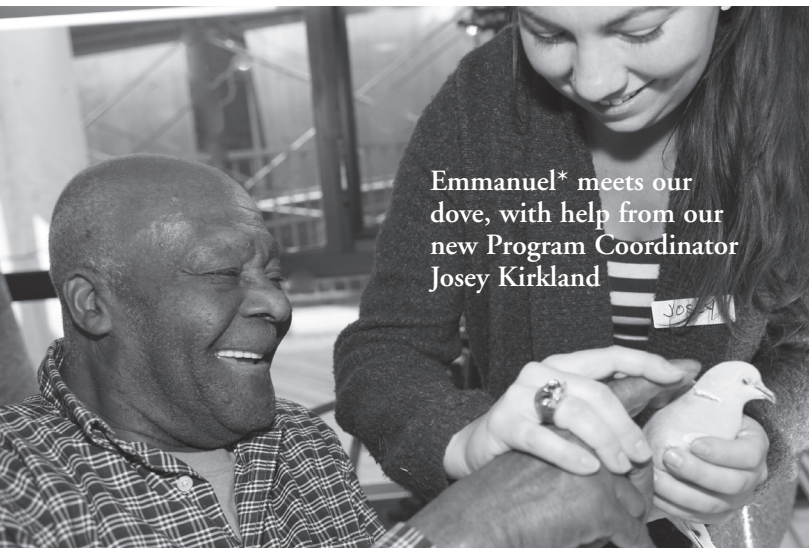
## *Letter from New Executive Director Learning to Listen to Snails*

After our first Meet the Animals event, one woman exclaimed: “My grandson has not stopped talking about the *snails*.” Board member Nancy Stillman helped the children experience snails’ secret lives, explaining: “If you get *very* quiet, you can actually *hear* the snails eating lettuce.” Over 100 visitors also met NC’s hedgehog, dove, rabbit, finch, crow, chinchillas, and hermit crabs that day. Our injured crow, housed and cared for by volunteers, made her debut and will soon be ready to go out on program visits.

What is the magic between children and animals? As we bring the natural world indoors to children and vulnerable individuals of all ages, we see the child in everyone. In an interview in this issue, NC supporter Mary Ann Gore recalls how elders broke into applause on seeing our rambunctious ducks during a program at Cambridge Health Alliance.

Last summer, NC’s board chose to appoint me as Executive Director, following Sandy Campbell’s move to Virginia with her family. I feel honored and privileged to step into that role. My work with NC began about 10 years ago as a program volunteer. Since becoming Director I have returned to these roots by leading Nature Connection programs. The youth and elders I encounter leave lasting impressions on me. At

*(continued on page 2)*



Emmanuel\* meets our dove, with help from our new Program Coordinator Josey Kirkland

Sue Huszar



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## Nature Connection Newsletter

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Pito Salas, Nanri Tenney/NanriStudio,  
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*The Nature Connection is a nonprofit organization that brings nature-based programs to people with limited access to the natural world. Founded in 1983, The Nature Connection brings individuals together with nature's capacity to heal and to teach.*



Rose Lincoln

the Walden Street School, a residential program, we help young women who have experienced trauma develop self-confidence and life skills. I wish you could see them creating a small habitat for our therapy rabbit, Cha Cha: arranging soft grasses for her bed, placing a carrot, adding a hollow log as a hiding place. Having led lives marked by a lack of safety, they eagerly learn about the rabbit's needs and natural environment. One girl added: "Besides safety and food, they really need love."

We are excited to announce the addition of new staff members this past fall, including program coordinator Josey Kirkland, and Certified Public Accountant Leslie Bove who provides monthly oversight for NC's finances. We also welcome new board member Wade Edwards as our treasurer (husband of longtime volunteer Aliza Edwards). Please join me in applauding the important contributions they have already made to our organization.

In addition to our first Meet the Animals event, this year we hosted the annual Blessing of the Animals with local churches, a panel event on environmental education, a successful benefit concert with Lori McKenna, and our annual Turtle Walk with wildlife ecologist Bryan Windmiller.

This newsletter gives wings to our new image—a logo that we hope represents our mission and dreams. We seek to reach out to increasing numbers of vulnerable children and elders in need. Each one of you makes this work possible! I look forward to hearing your thoughts and ideas, and sharing new stories in the season to come.

Best wishes.

Sophie Wadsworth, *Executive Director*



Bruce Morgan

Hugh Wadsworth Morgan, NC's newest fan, born Dec. 22, 2010!



Wildlife Ecologist Bryan Windmiller Inspires Stewardship of Blandings Turtles at NC's 4th Annual Turtle Walk, Great Meadows, Concord



Mark Erwich, Sophie Wadsworth



## A Door Opens: A Nature Connection Supporter Celebrates Connecting Elders with Nature

Last spring I had the pleasure of interviewing Mary Ann Gore. An artist who loves the natural world, Mary Ann has seen Nature Connection programs first hand. Below are excerpts from our conversation. —S.W.

Every time you make a connection with another human being, a kind of electricity is created, a sense of a door opening that affects everyone. The “aha” that goes off inside a troubled child, a tormented teenager, a completely inward-turned elder, is like a bell sounding and we can all hear it. I think people need to be helped individually: there’s a ripple in that moment and into the future. You do the great work in small ways.

I remember so much from seeing the elders’ program [at the Cambridge Health Alliance], especially the stand offish ones who were reluctantly drawn in. When the ducks got loose, how they flapped around! Hands going up. “Oh my lord!” one elderly woman said. Applause, spontaneous laughter.

It was the spontaneity, that out of the ordinary event. They’re not expecting the pandemonium of ducks escaping, or the feel of the rabbit, or the soft cool nose of a therapy dog sniffing. Those things break down barriers. That’s why I’m a staunch supporter of your program.



Pito Salas

What’s different about The Nature Connection is the vehicle that you use: *nature*. Bringing animals is unique, and not just animals but nature. I’ll never forget the story about the elderly man who feels the fish net in his hands, and recalls a lobster net weighted down with stones. His whole body became alive. It ignited him. He hadn’t talked in two years. All these people are wounded, and it’s a gift whenever you go to interact with them. And this re-informs the site staff, too. Something happens, even something small, every time.

I would encourage anyone to go out on a Nature Connection program. . . . It broadens your perception of what’s possible and how to reach people in a meaningful way. I found it exhilarating, profoundly moving—and fun. It makes me feel better knowing that you all are out there every week, doing this work.

—Mary Ann Gore

## Calendar



Courtesy of BSC

### **A Boston Harbor Evening to Benefit the Nature Connection!**

Wednesday, Aug 24th • 6-8:30 p.m.  
Boston Sailing Center, Lewis Wharf

Sunset Reception with hors d'oeuvres and  
cash bar, harbor sailing tours with BSC staff,  
and an Oceanic Presentation

\$65/person • Tickets on sale in July at  
**[www.nature-connection.org](http://www.nature-connection.org)**  
or call 978-369-2585.

All proceeds to benefit The Nature Connection

### **New NC Summer Program:**

Join us in exploring nature as Thoreau might have done!  
Discover the world in our nature classroom and the  
great outdoors with NC's professional staff as your guide.

*Ages 7-10. August 15-19.*

Early bird discount before July 18.

For information/ to register call 978-369-2585 or visit  
[www.nature-connection.org](http://www.nature-connection.org)!



*Stay Tuned  
for the Date!*

**Fall 2011:  
Meet the  
Animals of  
The Nature  
Connection**

Connecting with a  
Chinchilla at NC's  
Meet the Animals  
event, Fall 2010

Nanni Tenney



**Like us and share  
The Nature Connection on Facebook!**

Follow current program stories, view photos and  
get news on upcoming events. Submit your photos  
or stories by emailing us at: [swadsworth@nature-connection.org](mailto:swadsworth@nature-connection.org)  
or call (978) 369-2585.



# Our Thanks and Appreciation for your Support

## Youth & Elders We Serve

**Massachusetts  
Hospital School**  
Youth with Disabilities,  
Canton



**Edith Nourse Rogers  
Memorial VA  
Hospital**  
Veterans, Bedford



**Cambridge  
Health Alliance**  
Elders, Cambridge

**Katherine Kennedy  
Senior Center**  
Elders, Natick



**Unitarian Universalist  
Urban Ministry**  
At-Risk Youth,  
Roxbury



**The van der Kolk Center  
Glenhaven Academy**  
At-Risk Youth,  
Marlborough



**Walden Street School**  
At-Risk Youth, Concord

## Grant Support August 2009–July 2010

The Harpley Foundation  
Massachusetts Cultural Council  
Middlesex Savings Charitable  
Foundation

Red Acre Foundation  
Unitarian Universalist Urban  
Ministry/  
Unitarian Universalist Association

## Business & Community Support Cambridge Trust Company Emerson Umbrella Center for the Arts

Alcott School  
Amerscot House Inn  
Applefield Farm  
Bird House Garden Center  
Budget Printing of Concord, LLC  
The Concord Bookshop  
Concord Outfitters  
Concord Free Public Library  
Codman Farm  
Debra's Natural Gourmet  
E & S Mobile Service  
Enclave Antique & Modern  
MacKinnon Printing  
Marilyn Strong Health  
The Minor Chord  
Nu Yu/Naturally You Salons  
Phillips Fine Paint  
Tom Ricardi

Sager Animal Hospital  
Small Farm  
UpStyle Consignment  
West Concord 5 & 10  
Wood & Strings

## Special Thanks for In-Kind Support and Professional Advice

Tom Ahern, publicity  
Judith Aronstein, program  
animal care  
John Bach, carpentry  
Rick Blain, development  
Howard Cannon, sound  
Heidi Caro, program  
animal care  
Joanie Caruso, program  
animal care  
Codman Farm, program  
animals and natural materials  
Keith Dawson, website support  
Emerson Umbrella Center  
for the Arts, facilities and  
general support  
Mary Firestone, clerical and  
technical support  
Carrie Flood, organizational  
support  
Gaining Ground, program  
animals and natural materials  
Holly Gettings, lighting  
Leslie Hartwell, graphic design  
Heritage (New Heritage Capital  
Partners LLC), office supplies  
Susan Huszar, photography

Kate Kaplan, development  
Jake Kensinger, sound  
Kathleen Kilgore, development  
and publicity  
Jane Lothian, program  
animal care  
Bob Lotz, photography  
Kristine Merz, graphic design  
Musketaquid, publicity  
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Nancy Reilly, program  
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Normandy Real Estate Partners,  
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Pete Slonka, computer specialist  
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Johanna Sparling, Greenpoint  
Graphics, graphic design  
Nancy Stillman, program  
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Lisa Tang Liu, database  
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Nanri Tenney, photography

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Carol Zell and Robert Andrews  
Robert Zevin



We have made every effort to be accurate and complete. Please accept our apologies and call us with corrections at (978) 369-2585.

*Yes, I can help bring nature, animals  
and the arts to people!*

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E-mail (Stay informed with our periodic e-newsletter!)

\$75       \$150       \$300

\$500       \$1,000       Other \_\_\_\_\_

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Please send me information on how to make a bequest to NC through the Seabury Circle.

**Send your donation to:**  
The Nature Connection, PO Box 155  
Concord, MA 01742

*The Nature Connection is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization.*

## *Wish List*

Large, thin area rug for office,  
approx. 14 x 12 feet

High Quality Digital Camera,  
please call for details

2 Cordless Business Phones,  
with speaker phone etc.

3 Weatherproof Sandwich Boards

Desk, approx. 5 feet, with built in file drawer(s)

Small 2 drawer/letter size file cabinets

Blank DVDs with cases

Sturdy lightweight folding card table for events

Mortars and Pestles, medium/large sized,  
4 stone, 3 wooden

Bookstore Gift Certificate, for program  
related books

*For details on any of the above,  
please call 978-369-2585*