

## Dumpster Diving Anyone?

~Lena, March 7, 2014

Lindsay, Queen of Critter Rescues, and I went out on a squirrel rescue call that came in through the *North Country Wild Care* hotline. Poor Siggy, Hotline Extraordinaire, was answering the hotline from 1,000 miles away – feeling helpless as she went down the member list looking for someone to go help the squirrel, wishing she were back in Saratoga so she could jump in the van and get the squirrel herself.

Why such a rush? Well, the squirrel managed to poke her head through the drainage hole of a “mini” blue dumpster but was fighting like hell to get it back out. Who knew those things had drainage holes!?!

When I arrived, Lindsay had already attempted to free the squirrel and was just requesting some veggie oil from the tenants of the property; the Crisco I sent her off with wasn't cutting it. What a horrific sight! The poor girl had obviously been struggling awhile. From the outside of the dumpster, I could see her head and her wide, terrified eyes. She was still trying to eat the granola bar that Lindsay had given her though! It's been a long, cold winter for wildlife in the Northeast. I grabbed a sweater meant for goodwill out of the bag of clothes in my car and covered her head so that she would calm down a bit. The struggle had already produced a tear on her left ear and her nose was bleeding.



“Dumpster Diving Squirrel”.  
Photo by Lindsay Gardner.



“The Other End”  
Photo by Lindsay Gardner.

Peering into the dumpster, Lindsay pointed out what looked to be a swollen or abscessed right rear paw, maybe from pushing against the dumpster to free her head? Something didn't seem right about some of her injuries so far, but we weren't going to stop and dwell on it...we had to get her freed and ASAP. She was clearly shivering and we were about to make it worse!

Lindsay was gracious enough to climb in the dumpster and handle the squirrel from the inside, while I covered the squirrels head from the outside of the dumpster. Luckily, the dumpster had been emptied earlier so it was pretty much empty. Still smelled like the dumpster at Long John Silver's where I worked as a teenager (flashback!) but empty nonetheless.

Veggie oil in hand, Lindsay started to saturate the neck while holding the body of the squirrel in a pillowcase to 1) keep her warm and 2) hang onto her if she did get free. Lindsay struggled for a while and I held a stick to the squirrel's mouth for her to bite down on (and she did!), keeping her line of vision as free from me as possible.

I figured I should try to get some oil on her head from the outside to see if it would help. There was no easy way to make sure I didn't drown her in oil, but I managed to soak her whole neck. It was becoming clear that her ears were what the part of her head stopping her from getting back through the way she came. Lindsay would release from pulling her body backward while I tried to manipulate the direction of her ears – trying not to cause any more injuries.

I must admit there was a point when I was contemplating having to put her out of her misery and I knew Lindsay was not going to be happy about the prospect! Thankfully, after shimmying the squirrel's body back and forth and side to side, ears in different positions, one ear came out through Lindsay's side!

Almost there baby (we had both been talking to the squirrel softly the whole time from our respective sides of the metal container)! A little more manipulation of the right ear and I could see it was going to work!

Finally, she was freed! After a second in utter shock, she wanted nothing to do with us. We managed to work together to get her into a carrier that was all wrong for the situation. The carrier opened from the top all the way instead of having a door in the front...easy to lose a struggling critter with this type of carrier but it was all I could find in a hurry earlier.

Lindsay and the squirrel hopped in her car and raced off to Ballston Spa Vet Clinic, where Dr. Salamun and staff took good care of the traumatized squirrel. I cleaned up the gear and headed home.

At the Clinic, the squirrel got a good dose of tranquilizer, pain meds and antibiotics in her, and a nice long bath to remove all the veggie oil we dumped on her. Amazingly enough, the squirrel does not have any serious injuries! She is going to be just fine. After her visit to the Clinic, the squirrel went to Lynn Goldsmith, North Country Wild Care member/rehabilitator and definitely the Queen of Squirrels in the North Country! She will be well cared for while she recuperates. *Great teamwork!*

Driving home, I dialed the number posted on the side of the mini dumpster. You didn't think I was going to let that go, did you? I won't say which company it was. I am holding my breath for a return phone call in response to the message I left about the incident and requesting they come up with a way to start adding screens to the dumpster drainage holes.

Speaking of the garbage company, remember the bloody nose and swollen rear right foot I mentioned? Now that I have had a chance to go over the ordeal in my mind a few times, my gut tells me that the squirrel already had her head stuck in the hole when the garbage was emptied this morning. ☹️



"After sedation and a bath"  
Photo by Lindsay Gardner