

The Raccoon Mission

A Canada Day Story

It was the Canada Day long weekend and our family was driving up to our cottage in the Kearney area. When we got to our street, we saw one of our neighbours, a friend of ours, who was taking a walk and stopped by our car to tell us some important news.

She explained that she saw three raccoon babies, likely under 6 weeks old, three days in a row, without their mother, making 'screeching' noises over and over again.

So, she called Aspen Valley Wildlife Sanctuary, a rehabilitation centre for injured and orphaned wildlife. They said that those calls meant they were calling for their mother, and because they were seen many times crossing the roads alone, they were most likely orphaned. After we heard this, all of us were on the lookout for these orphaned raccoons, including other neighbours in the area.

While we were busy celebrating Canada Day weekend, another one of our neighbours caught the first raccoon on Saturday, when his dog found it hiding in the bushes.

The next morning, the neighbour who told us about the orphaned baby raccoons drove the first baby raccoon down to Rosseau, where Aspen Valley was located. They explained to her that the raccoon was a female, and she was in rough shape, but it got to them in time.

Now it was Sunday and many neighbours were on the lookout for the other two baby raccoons. We didn't have much luck so we all decided to do something about it.

We set up live raccoon traps to safely trap the baby raccoons (but not hurt them), near the place we found the first baby. We put finely sliced fruit, nuts, and a little canned tuna, which are good for the raccoon babies, to lure them into the trap.

After we were done, we went back into our homes and we both prayed for the raccoons to be safe, calm and well, from all the dangers outside of their nest.

It was going to be a very cold night, with temperatures expected close to 8 degrees.

Just as we were about to go on an evening drive, we saw a crowd of our neighbours huddling around a crate. Everyone yelled with joy saying, "We found the babies!"

We ran over to take a look and in the crate were two adorable baby raccoons, the size of small rabbits!

The next morning, which was going to be Canada Day, the plan was to take the two babies down to Aspen Valley early in the morning, expecting no more surprises to come, but sure enough, we were wrong 😊.

We were about to go to sleep early the night before, when we got a call from our neighbour. She told us that our neighbour caught another raccoon in the trap! Now there are four baby raccoons in total! Our one neighbour dropped off the little raccoons at our other neighbour's house and she kept them for the night – they listened to classical music, stayed warm with a personal heater and fell asleep in a comfortable dog crate huddled together .

Now it is the morning of Canada Day and we had to wake up at 6:00 to get to Aspen Valley right when they opened at 8:00 am. We got in the car to pick up our neighbour and the 3 baby raccoons who had spent a warm night in a dog crate 😊

We sang lullabies in the car so they could sleep and be calm during the drive, but one of the raccoons wasn't moving at all for a very long time and we thought it may have died. We were very worried it hadn't survived the night.

While we were driving we talked about the raccoons' journey and how they had survived many nights without their mother. There are so many dangers out there for baby raccoons (and other such baby critters) this small, and every night would have been harder for them to survive.

When we got close to our destination, it was still only 7:30 am, so we decided to go for a drive to look around the beautiful town of Rosseau. As soon as it was 7:45 we drove back to Aspen Valley.

As soon as we got to Aspen Valley, the staff immediately took the baby raccoons into the building. We waited and hoped that all the raccoons were safe and alive. When the staff came back with our empty crate they told us that all were safe and sound, including the one brought the day before! And that all four baby raccoons would be reunited immediately. We all jumped with joy and were satisfied about what we had accomplished these past two nights. A small amount of money was donated to Aspen Valley, with a promise that we would visit the Sanctuary soon. We drove back knowing that this was the most important and most Canadian Canada Day ever!

The End

We named the first raccoon that we found *Freedom* because she was the first one to be rescued and because she was the leader of the group.

We named the two raccoons in the crate *Tucker* and *Spirit*, because Tucker was always tucked under the blanket and Spirit was always brave and stood strong and alert, so his siblings could rest and not be afraid.

We named the raccoon who was found last, *Plum* because with a plateful of fruit and vegetables left to lure it into the trap, it always ate and hid the plums.

Lastly, we named their mother who had not survived *Poppy*, because poppies are always to be remembered. She taught her raccoon babies how to survive in the limited time she had with them.

Always lead with kindness



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