



WEDNESDAY

NOVEMBER 11, 2009

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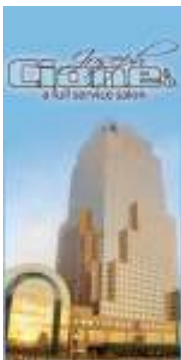
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No Duck Left Behind

GERTRUDE THE DUCK SAVED

Downtown landscape: Armistice Day

WORLD WAR I ENDED IN THE 11TH HOUR OF THE 11TH DAY OF THE 11TH MONTH - NOV. 11, 1918

Letter to the editor : Library Lions

WTC WORK SCHEDULE DOWNTOWN BULLETIN BOARD



Gertrude was one of two ducklings born and raised in the pond in Battery Park City's Rockefeller Park this past summer. Here, in a photo taken in early June, Gertrude swims with her sibling and her mother. (Photo: Terese Loeb Kreuzer)

THE DUCK LEFT BEHIND
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DOWNTOWN LANDSCAPE: ARMISTICE DAY
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The days grew shorter, the nights grew colder and the ducks flew south, but one forlorn Mallard hen, who was born and raised in the Battery Park City pond at the foot of Vesey Street, was left behind. She was undersized and her wing feathers were underdeveloped.

Several people noticed her plight, among them Todd and Mary Rose Engle and Battery Park City resident Tom Baade. The Engles contacted Animal General Hospital's **Wild Bird Fund**, a non-profit Upper West Side organization that aids sick and injured wild birds. Simultaneously, Mr. Baade got in touch with Mary Xanthos, a Tribeca veterinarian, who told him to call a newly formed organization called Wildlife in Tribeca that cares for wildlife in distress. Wildlife in Tribeca also turned to the Wild Bird Fund for help, which put the Tribeca group in touch with Laura Hechtman, an experienced bird collector. On Saturday, she waded into the chilly pond and captured the duck, naming her Gertrude.

"I am not clear if Gertrude had a name before we took her to the Wild Bird Fund," said Donald Jenner, one of the founders of Wildlife in Tribeca. "Laura Hechtman was quite clear about it, though. When I was doing the standard intake form, Laura told me that the duck's name was Gertrude. It's a pious custom of avian rescuers and rehabilitators to name a bird when brought to the WBF - perhaps because we feel more strongly and positively about an animal with a name?" he said.

Gertrude's growth problems were probably caused by her diet. "Ducks need more protein than was apparently provided by Gertrude's diet of mostly refined human food, like bread and other carbohydrates that came from visitors to the park," explained Laurie Spiegel, another member of Wildlife in Tribeca.

Legally, Wildlife in Tribeca was authorized only to collect Gertrude. "After that, we had to transfer her to a proper facility immediately," said Mr. Jenner. "While Mrs. Jenner, Ms. Spiegel and I have New York State wildlife rehabilitation licenses, ducks require additional federal licensure - they are migratory species and are covered under international treaties. Wild birds require special attention, special housing, special food and so on. The Wild Bird Fund has that, and is housed in a top veterinary practice, which has an associated avian practice (the lead vet there has two doctorates, and wildlife as well as pet bird experience)."

Gertrude is now receiving special duck food, "and getting used to new surroundings," Ms. Spiegel reported. "She is recovering well and her friends should not worry." Since Gertrude cannot continue the fall migration, "once she is stabilized, she will be moved to a sanctuary where she can spend the winter with other ducks," Ms. Spiegel said. "By next spring, the good food and care should see her sprout a fine, strong, new set of feathers."

- Terese Loeb Kreuzer and Matthew Fenton