

Sunday travelers on the ferry: two sparrows and a mastiff

by Gloria S. Redlich

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6/21/10 — Going off on the 8:15 a.m. ferry Sunday, this traveler suddenly became aware, as did other passengers, of an incessant chirping coming from one of the green booths of the Carol Jean. Upon investigation, I discovered the insistent sounds were coming from a bag holding two baby sparrows that were being fed by wildlife rehabilitator Wendy Taylor Humphry.

Volunteering with the Rhode Island Wildlife Clinic in North Kingstown, Humphry, who is an attorney, mostly focuses on water fowl. “At home I have 11 baby wild turkeys and a baby female mallard. Last week I had a mute swan,” Humphry explains.

Other rehabilitators concentrate on other species: “Some do mammals, rabbits, possums and

squirrels. Eleven others have specific licenses to work with rabies vector species like foxes and raccoons, and one woman does large birds — owls, falcons and hawks.”

Though unaffiliated with BioBlitz, the state natural history survey that had just brought dozens of scientists to the island for a species count, Humphry said her home borders the Tiverton Land Trust that houses the organization. On the island for a holiday, she did catch up with her neighbors at “science central,” set up on the Lapham property, where she saw a variety of plants, trees, amphibians, mammals, mosses and grasses.

“There were specialties and subspecialties, and it was a great learning experience,” she said.

A dog named Bob

Across the aisle, a deep throaty cough made me aware that a rather large co-traveler occupied a considerable square of floor space not far from my seat. I soon found myself being introduced to Bob, an English Mastiff weighing in at 170 pounds.

Addressed as “Bobbie” by his companions, Kim and Jason Morritz of New Jersey, the oversized pet was soon the center of attention, drawing the curiosity of many passengers, young and old. One man quipped, “Oh, look, a horse on the ferry!”

The trio was returning from a holiday weekend on the island before Jason deploys to Iraq next week. One of several return engagements for him, Jason’s work is to secure oil platforms off the Iraqi coast, and he is also responsible for training Iraqis to eventually take over.

Recently married, the couple came here looking for some time to themselves before their next separation. Bob seemed entirely nonplussed by both the ferry ride and the attention he drew.

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