



Second Chances Wildlife Center is 🍌 asking for donations. ...

10 January at 09:34 · 🌐

Our Fruit Bat Express became an emergency rescue.

What a whirlwind 48 hours! With two fellow rehabbers, I flew to Texas to pick up four Egyptian fruit bats that needed to be re-homed. I was SO excited to get these little ones but was a bit nervous due to inconsistent communication regarding the bats.

This inconsistency was confirmed at 10:30 PM, right before turning in at our hotel. We were planning on picking them up the following morning, but we tossed on clothes and headed out the door to get them. We navigated in pitch black rural Texas town and finally arrived at the lady's home who had them.

The door was unlocked to an outbuilding and we stepped in to a room that we could not see, only smell. The odor of ammonia was pungent. The lights were turned on. Literally and figuratively. I quickly surveyed the small space and right then, I felt like breaking down into tears. These were not tears of joy, but tears of despair. There were other species in this room in small cages in their own filth. But the bats made my heart hurt. There was bat feces all over every wall of the cage. The floor substrate was unsanitary outdoor dark mulch. Mulch can not be cleaned adequately and harbors insects, feces, urine, and molds. There is another mulch issue that I'll address below.

The bats were in a cage that was an estimated 4.5' X 8', very limited flight area. The ceiling was 10' tall which meant that the bats could not be safely unhooked from their hanging position when checking them for medical reasons. This turned out to be problematic for us. There was no visible drinking water in their cage. There was only one water bowl in sight and it was dry. There was only one food bowl that appeared to be sitting there for a while. The fruit had been eaten with only brown peels remaining. Bats really should have multiple bowls with fresh water and multiple food bowls both on the ground and hanging.

Bats NEED enrichment. Ideally, food should be offered in a variety of ways to stimulate their intelligent minds and natural behavior. Toys should be offered. Fruit bats love toys and Egyptian bats seems to prefer stuffed animals. THIS is what made me so sad. Not. One. Toy. I still am having a difficult time knowing that they have been living their lives in these dismal conditions.

How many bats were in these small quarters with one food bowl and empty water bowl? There were approximately 20 Egyptians and 40 Sebas. Sebas are much smaller fruit bats with the cute little leaf noses.

Time to get the bats and run. Remember that 10 foot ceiling? Let the challenge begin. Since these were not my bats yet and this was her house, I let her take the lead on this. She was having a tough time as she has my height and does not handle the bats. I sent one fellow rehabber, who is taller, in the cage to help. She was able to get one with a net. (Not an ideal way to get them but necessary in this circumstance). The rehabber handed the bat to the lady who asked me to help determine the sex of the bat. I alerted the lady to the fact that she had some hair loss and an injury that required immediate medical attention. I asked if she would just give me the bat so I could get medical help for her. She said no since she can get medical attention cheaper and still make money on selling her. I had to process that.

She placed the bat back in the cage, on the ROUGH mulch. The bat was only able to scoot and drag herself around instead of climbing. I continued to watch her as the other rehabber and I caught the other ones. The lady left the room to find a crate to isolate a Mom with a nursing baby. In this time frame, we got locked in the cage as the door did not work properly. Our other rehabber friend was in the car waiting as she was having breathing issues in that room. We called and called for help but could not get cell reception. At one point, we had to laugh...it was midnight in Texas and we were locked in bat cage getting peed on. The lady walked in, we caught some more and made arrangements for us to trade a healthy one for two injured ones. I had to do that. It's just what I do. Those bats needed us. They all did, but we just could not take all 60 bats! I also had to pay to rescue each bat and funding is SO difficult for us. So I paid for two injured bats to have to turn around and pay for medical care. And I am glad for that choice. We ended up leaving with 7. Ya'll, I made this choice in part because I had faith that you would help us see this rescue through. So thank you for that.

We arrived back at our hotel at 2:30 AM, exhausted but adrenaline pumping. We made the choice to head out early in the morning and drive the 12 hours back to Kentucky so I could take all 7 to the vet first thing the following morning. Morning came and so did a HUGE surprise!!!! One female had a BABY over night!! One more that we get to care for and love!

We went to the vet first thing Thursday morning and checked each one. We have our work cut out for us. One of the injured ones had X-rays and a sonogram. The X-rays showed a significant break in her leg. We would amputate but there is a problem. She already only has one leg! Ugh. The plan is to put a pin in her leg and limit her mobility for healing. She currently is placed with the brand new Mom so she does not have to be by herself. Mom seems relaxed and the injured one was just laying on top of her food bowl. To my knowledge, all they have been offered is apples and bananas. Last night we offered mangos and today they were offered a few grapes and melon. They LOVED the melon. They even humbled me by accepted a bite from my hand. It warmed my heart and brought tears to my eyes. I am so glad I have the chance to provide these bats with the care, enrichment, and attention they need. Those that were left behind, were only left behind one day. I have worked with Bat World several times over the last ten years and this is one time that we made a great team. They picked up the remaining bats Thursday.

