

## ***Big Bend DART Meeting- April 23, 2008 Bradfordville Animal Hospital***

Twelve members were in attendance: Barbara Barnett, Joanie Batten, Russell Batten, Haven Cook, Nancy Gabrielsen, Cavell Kyser, Nicole Lilly, Leslie Long, Laura Morse, Bill Schmitt, Darla Wolak, and Mary Ellen Zydell.

### **Volunteers of the Year**

Haven nominated Big Bend DART for the Tallahassee Democrat Volunteers of the Year. She described the work that we did to purchase pet oxygen masks for local fire departments. Numerous organizations and individuals were nominated, and Big Bend DART was not selected for an award this year.

### **Upcoming Trainings**

The First Aid/CPR training scheduled for April 19 was canceled. It will be rescheduled for a later date.

Animal Decontamination and Hazardous Materials Training will be held April 26th in Apalachicola at the Franklin County Emergency Management Center. It will consist of classroom and practical. The local shelter will provide the animals that will be used during the hands-on session. The training costs \$10 per person. For additional information, please see the following URL:

<http://www.bigbenddart.org/meeting%20flyers/AnimalDeconHazmatTraining.pdf>.

A DART training will be held June 27-29 in Gainesville. Details are available at

[http://www.humanesocietyu.org/workshops\\_and\\_classes/disaster\\_animal\\_response\\_team\\_.html](http://www.humanesocietyu.org/workshops_and_classes/disaster_animal_response_team_.html).

Bill and Mary Ellen mentioned later during the meeting that the local ICS 100, 200, and 700 courses were canceled. However, the ICS 300 training is still scheduled to be held in Tallahassee in June. The application for this course is available at <http://www.fldart.org/events.htm>. Gary Painter at the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services is the contact for this course.

Additionally, Bill mentioned that ham radio training will be offered in the future.

### **Update on Legal Requirements**

Haven discussed the various legal requirements that she recently handled for Big Bend DART. These included paying \$61.25 for the incorporation fee, \$10 for the charitable solicitation fee, and \$32.10 for the trailer registration. Additionally, she filed the 2007 taxes using the e-Postcard.

### **Reptile Emergency Care**

Susan Sentman presented information about emergency care for reptiles. She has 20 years' experience working with reptiles, and is licensed and permitted through Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. While in Brooksville, she handled snake calls. Susan currently has more than 200 snakes. She does educational programs and likes to use examples of local reptiles.

Haven mentioned that Big Bend DART may have animals in a disaster relief shelter for 3 to 4 days. Susan said there are four necessities for reptiles that should be addressed during this time period. These are food, water, warmth, and shelter. Following are notes from Susan's presentation:

1. Food will not be a priority with snakes because they can go almost a year without eating. However, food may be a concern with lizards because they are herbivores or insectivores. Turtles and tortoises can eat romaine lettuce, apples, and vegetables. Iguanas need really green food.
2. Snakes need to be confined. They are smart at finding their way out of containers. For example, they can lodge themselves and push something out. Thus, you need to make sure a

container is secure. This may require using duct tape to tape the container down. Alternatively, weights or anything else heavy may be used to weigh down openings. Note that snakes have a slow metabolism and do not need the same amount of air as puppies or kittens. As a result, a plastic sweater or shoe box may be used to hold snakes as long as the top is controlled. However, a jar cannot be used because it does not have enough air.

3. Heat is a concern when housing reptiles. In the summer, the temperature will be fine. If a disaster occurs during a colder period or if there is heavy use of air conditioning in the shelter, a source of heat must be provided. You can use heating pads set on low. Nancy suggested using cozies, which heat in a microwave and stay warm for 12 hours. Susan also recommended using flex watt heating tape that is specifically made for reptiles. This can be purchased online. If you use heat packs, they will only last 6 hours. Alternatively, a clamp light with 25-40 watt red bulb may be used to keep reptiles warm. A red bulb should be used because it will not interfere with nighttime. Only one-third to one-half of the area in a container should be heated.
4. It is hard to tell whether snakes are stressed. If a snake is crawling around a lot, you will want to provide it something to hide in. For example, you can use a pet water dish, cardboard box, or hollow log.
5. If the snake has any obvious cuts, you can use an antibiotic cream (e.g. triple antibiotic ointment or Neosporin) on them.
6. If the rescue team needs to catch and transport snakes, pillow cases and laundry bags can be used. Make sure there are no holes in these items. Susan also demonstrated the use of a grabber and hook. If a person has a venomous snake, he or she are supposed to post a notice.
7. Any bowl can be used to provide water to snakes. A snake will actually stick its head in a water bowl. The signs of dehydration in snakes are the same as with mammals. Some reptiles may require high humidity. Lizards in particular may need misted water. You must be careful with lizards to ensure that they do not have liquids going into their lungs. Provide a low bowl for tortoises. Turtles can actually stay in water.
8. Non-venomous snakes bite. They have four rows of teeth on top and two on bottom. Generally, the bite will not be serious. Simply wash the area. A concern is if the snake latches onto you. Alcohol, i.e. liquor, poured into the mouth of a constrictor or king snake will make it release you. Note that a snake does not smell like we do; as a result, having the animal simply smell the alcohol will not work.
9. When a snake is loose, you can take a towel and drop it over the snake. Then you can proceed with picking the snake up.
10. In distinguishing certain venomous from non-venomous snakes, pit vipers are known to have a triangular-shaped head. However, not all venomous snakes have this distinguishing characteristic. For example, a coral snake has a small head.
11. A microchip in a snake will be located towards the back of its body.
12. Note that you must keep pythons warm. If one is left cold for a few days, it may develop a respiratory infection. This condition will need to be treated with warmth and antibiotics.

Susan brought three snakes for us to see and try to catch: a gray rat snake, ball python, and Columbian boa.

Susan told us how she is prepared to evacuate if needed. She has a 21-foot travel trailer and numerous boxes to house all of her snakes.

Haven mentioned that we have a snake identification book in our rescue kit. Susan provided us with additional guides.

In appreciation for Susan's educational presentation, Haven gave her a book titled Snakes of the Southeast.

### **First Aid Kits**

Haven developed a list of supplies. We now have appropriately sized bags to hold the supplies for each kit. At the next meeting, we will assemble and prepare to sell the kits as part of a fundraiser.

### **Dues**

Haven mentioned that membership dues should be paid for the year. Several people paid their dues at the meeting.

### **Miscellaneous**

The National Conference on Animals in Disaster 2008 will be held June 2-6 in California. Leslie suggested having a fundraiser to send Haven. Further information about this conference is available at [http://www.hsus.org/hsus\\_field/hsus\\_disaster\\_center/conference/national\\_conference\\_2008.html](http://www.hsus.org/hsus_field/hsus_disaster_center/conference/national_conference_2008.html).

Russell did a ride-along with Leon County Animal Control. Other Big Bend DART members are encouraged to spend a day with an animal control officer. Simply contact Richard Zeigler to arrange a time during the week.

Mary Ellen said that rescue team members need to submit paperwork to her as soon as possible.

Two walkie talkies were purchased for the rescue team.

Haven mentioned the recent election of board members and officers. The Big Bend DART Board consists of the following members: Cavell, Nicole, Laura, Barbara, Joanie, Haven, Bill, Mary Ellen, Richard Ziegler, and Laura Bevan. Additionally, the officers are as follows: Haven continues as President, Joanie is Vice-President, Nicole will now serve as the Treasurer, Laura continues as Secretary, and Bill continues as the Communications Officer.

Nicole discussed a recent meeting that she had with Rasmus Praestholm regarding the Big Bend DART website. Rasmus is currently redoing his server. After that is complete, we will have him take control of the website.

### **Next Big Bend DART Meeting**

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, May 28th, at 7 pm. The location is to be announced. See the Big Bend DART website for further information (<http://www.bigbenddart.org/>).