

A Lucky Goose!

One morning in early November, Erica was walking her dogs near the lake in the Rivermist subdivision in Lilburn when she noticed a Canada goose that was being picked on and run off by its flock. The goose seemed to be having trouble walking, and as she got closer, Erica was appalled to see that the goose had an arrow going straight through its body. Fortunately, Erica contacted AWARE, and its director Michael Ellis promptly made arrangements for the goose's rescue.

Matthew, an AWARE rescue volunteer, arrived on the scene ready with a net gun, a non-lethal capture tool designed to fire a net which entangles the target. Although this equipment is immensely useful for capturing wildlife needing rescue, AWARE is one of the few organizations in the country fortunate enough to own a net gun because it is expensive. Even with this useful piece of equipment, catching a goose is no simple matter. Matthew's first attempts to capture the goose were unsuccessful. Even though the goose was unable to walk well, it was still capable of flying, and before Matthew could get close enough, the goose flew off across the lake.

Matthew was persistent, however, and on his third day of trying, he was able to sneak up close enough to the goose to get a good shot. Once the goose was netted, Matthew was able to see that the arrow had entered through the goose's left thigh and had exited through its right shoulder. Miraculously, it had threaded its way through the goose's body without any significant damage to its vital organs.

Once the goose arrived at AWARE, it was anesthetized and prepped for the arrow removal. Michael cut and sanded the arrow so that no damage would be done to the goose during its removal. Because the tissue around the entry and exit wounds had already sealed, there was actually very little bleeding when the arrow was removed. The whole procedure took about 15 minutes. Once the arrow was removed, the goose was treated with strong antibiotics for two weeks.

As with all the animals under their care, Michael and the volunteers at AWARE paid close attention to the goose's recovery and made daily assessments of its progress. After only two weeks, the goose was ready to be released back into the wild. Amanda, one of AWARE's volunteers, offered to return the goose to Rivermist for its release.

Several members of the Rivermist neighborhood, including Erica, were present to give the goose a warm welcome home. According to Amanda, watching the goose return to its home was an extremely rewarding experience. She said it was incredible to see the goose jump right out of the box and waddle down to the lake to join the other geese on the water. While the other geese were a bit standoffish at first, it wasn't long until the rescued goose was accepted back into the flock.

It is hard to imagine what kind of person would commit such a cruel act against a harmless animal. Fortunately, this goose was lucky. It was one of several animals that AWARE rescues each year that have been shot by bow and arrow or cross-bow pistols.

Sadly, the majority of animals that are shot with these weapons never make it to a rehabilitation center – they escape into the woods and suffer a slow, painful death. These animals are often shot by young people who receive these weapons as presents from their parents, who then fail to provide proper control and supervision of their use. These are deadly weapons, however, and they should require the same regulation as firearms.

AWARE is proud to have been a part of the rescue and release of the Rivermist goose. We are thankful to Erica and others like her for demonstrating compassion and concern for the wildlife in their neighborhoods. We also appreciate our faithful volunteers who give countless hours of their time to protect and preserve Georgia's wildlife.