

That's one lucky duck (or goose): Edwardsville Fire Department saves wild animal from icy doom

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE - One Canada goose in Edwardsville has the **Edwardsville Fire Department** to thank for being plucked from certain doom.

At approximately 2:30 p.m. Monday, Dec. 19, the Edwardsville Fire Department received a 911 call from a UPS driver who spotted a wild goose seemingly frozen in a lake on the western outskirts of Edwardsville, in the warehouse district. **Edwardsville Fire Chief Rick Welle** said such a predicament is usually outside the bounds of the department's usual duties, but luckily for the goose, his department was due for a refresher course on utilizing rescue equipment on icy waters.

"Typically, we don't deal with animals in the wild," Welle said. "There are two main reasons why we don't. First: wild animals can be very hostile toward rescue attempts, especially when they are in pain. Secondly, they are very often in remote areas posing more hazards than acceptable for response. In this particular instance, however, the information we had seemed like something we could accomplish readily. We did not perceive a great risk from a goose."

Usually, the Edwardsville Fire Department performs rescue exercises in icy water at **LeClaire Lake**. Welle said the opportunity to rescue the goose would not only provide very valuable training for firefighters, but also could benefit the life of an otherwise helpless creature.

"When the weather gets cold like this, we look for a good opportunity to train on ice rescue," he said. "It's very important we get our equipment out and become familiar with it, so if an emergency occurs, we can respond."

Welle sent one of his lieutenants to assess the situation. When his lieutenant confirmed they could perform the unusual rescue, Welle said firefighters utilized their ice rescue equipment to free the goose. The goose was trapped by its frozen wing, which Welle said had been injured previous to its precarious situation in the retention basin.

"We decided we could safely rescue the goose and turn it over to our community service officer and get the goals of ice rescue training for our department," Welle said. "All of that was accomplished. As a bonus, we were able to save a wild animal from what certainly would have been a situation he could not free himself from alone."

The goose was taken by the community service officer to a representative of the **Treehouse Wildlife Center**. The Treehouse Wildlife Center, located in **Dow**, rehabilitates wild animals with the goal of returning them to their natural habitats. The center thanked the Edwardsville firefighters through their Facebook page.

"We'd like to extend a big thank you to the **Edwardsville Fire Department** for rescuing this Canada goose who had unfortunately gotten itself frozen in a small lake!" The post

read. "They were able to cut the bird free and meet our director of operations halfway to make sure he could get the care he needs. We are grateful for these brave individuals who go above and beyond the call of duty for other lives, even the wild ones."

The post was updated to state workers at the Treehouse Wildlife Center were able to successfully remove the rest of the ice from the goose's body and are currently in the process of assessing his condition to best figure out the best course of action for his treatment.

Welle cautioned against potential Good Samaritans attempting to perform rescues on wild animals, especially when icy water is involved. He said the fire department has access to special tools and equipment for performing such rescues, and even they could not do much of anything for most cases of injured or trapped wild animals.

"I would warn citizens against trying to get out on the ice," he said. "This is something we train for with specialty equipment. If they see an animal in distress, we advise them not to go out to get it. We usually cannot do anything for it. These were rare circumstances for accomplishing training goals with a positive result of saving an animal in distress."