

POTS OF LOVE

"IF WILHELMINA DOESN'T MELT YOUR HEART upon meeting her, I swear it's made of stone," says Geneva Brooks, outreach and education coordinator at Cleveland Amory Black Beauty Ranch. Clearly smitten with the 100-pound potbellied pig, Brooks adds, "Some pigs have their favorite staff person or volunteer, but Willie loves everyone."

The personable pig was rescued from a hoarding situation and put up for adoption at the Texas SPCA, but there were no takers. Wilhelmina and Charlotte, another potbellied pig at the shelter, were no longer the tiny piglets often sought as pets.



Wilhelmina

Eventually, the pair found a home at Black Beauty. Kept in neighboring pens at the SPCA, the girls finally met at the ranch. "It was the easiest introduction I've ever done," animal caregiver Katie Birk says.

Wilhelmina loves fellow "pots" Fred and Barney, too. "She's not too interested in flirting with the boys," Birk says. "She just pals around with them."

Not only has she won hearts at the ranch, she's also influenced a lifestyle. "I haven't eaten pig products since meeting her," Brooks says.



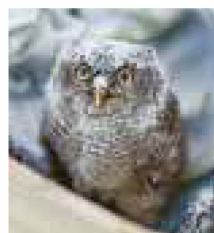
Release specialist Shelby Proie helps three owlets settle into their new nest.

BABY OWLS' RETURN FLIGHT

ONE CAN ONLY IMAGINE the mother Eastern screech owl's surprise—or perhaps her consternation—when her babies suddenly reappeared. Missing for nearly five days, the tiny nestlings had not only returned, they were healthy and comfortably ensconced in a new nest.

It all began in late March at Math Iglar Citrus Park in Davie, Florida, when workers cut down a rotting avocado tree before realizing a nest with three tiny owls was inside. They transported the owls to the South Florida Wildlife Center, where the animals were evaluated, fed and hydrated. Staff members then made plans to return the owls as soon as possible.

With permission from park officials, center release specialist Shelby Proie attached a nesting box to a mango tree near the original nesting site. The tree was close enough for the owlets' mom to hear them if she was



still around, and it had plenty of branches for them to fledge to when testing their wings.

Before putting them in the nesting box, Proie weighed the owls, gave them subcutaneous fluid and hand-fed them. The next day, she returned and weighed them again. "Generally if they aren't fed at all by Mom they will be down at least 5 to 10 grams," Proie says. "But their weights only went down about 2 grams and they were bright, alert and spunky."

By the third day, the owls had actually gained weight and were hydrated, convincing Proie that their mom was indeed caring for them—and that the renesting was a success. "It's wonderful to be able to renest and reunite young animals with devoted wild parents better skilled than we are," center executive director Sherry Schlueter says. "That is the way it should be."

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