

A happy ending for an animal who hitchhiked from Colorado to Toronto!

(TORONTO: July 29, 2022) – What happens when a wild animal in one country accidentally stows away in a vehicle headed for another? You need to rescue them and get them back home! And there begins the tale of a yellow-bellied marmot, native to the western United States, who ended up in Canada. Thanks to the Rescue Team at Toronto Wildlife Centre (TWC) and its networking with American wildlife rehabilitation colleagues, the story has a happy ending.

In late May, a Toronto Police officer was on a road trip with her friend and her dog. As they left Aspen, Colorado, they started hearing high-pitched chirping coming from the vehicle. But not finding any obvious signs of an animal, they continued on their journey home and 6 days later arrived back in Toronto.

At home they did a closer examination from the underside of the car, and whiskers were seen poking out from the area of the chirping - so they sought help to extract the accidental traveller. When municipal animal controls in two cities and a nervous mechanic couldn't help, they got in touch with TWC.



TWC's Rescue Team got the car into a secure underground parking garage, had 2 people on the ready with nets, and jacked up the car to gain access. Before long, the adult female marmot was safely netted – after travelling 3,000 km in the engine compartment of the car – and was gently transferred into a carrier and brought to TWC's hospital for examination.

TWC's medical team examined the American rodent and determined she was in surprisingly good health, albeit a bit dehydrated and extremely nervous and stressed. In the care of the Rehabilitation Team, the marmot ate well but nervously hid when anyone entered the room; chirping high-pitched warning calls at them.

But yellow-bellied marmots are not native to Toronto and she needed to return to her home area. So began the huge task of arranging to get the marmot home. Confirming the exact spot she got into the car, contacting wildlife rehabilitators in Colorado, contacting US border agents and airlines, booking her a ticket, figuring out the best transport container, investigating a sedative for the journey since marmots are very high stress animals, and more!

The process took almost 2 months, but TWC Rescue staff Andrew Wight and Sara Duffus-Martin finally crossed the border July 15th and got the travelling marmot to the Detroit airport by dawn the next morning, where soon she was in the sky and on her way back to Colorado.

After safely landing in Denver, staff from Greenwood Wildlife Rehabilitation Center met the marmot at the airport and transported her to volunteers from the P.S.S. Wildlife Foundation, where she finally arrived 3 hours after leaving the airport.

At the American center, she was examined to confirm she had safely made the journey (she had!), and then nestled into a cozy enclosure to let the sedative wear off and give her time to recover from her long trip before her release.

And just this past Wednesday, we received news the yellow-bellied marmot had been successfully released back into the wild! Because yellow-bellied marmots seem to stow away in cars often, she was released in great marmot habitat well away from parked cars.



About yellow-bellied marmots: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yellow-bellied_marmot

Local news coverage in Colorado: <https://www.9news.com/embeds/video/responsive/73-9a00caf9-05f4-4311-a2f1-1db5518a7f36/iframe>



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Some video is available.

Toronto Wildlife Centre is a registered charity dedicated to the rescue and rehabilitation of sick, injured and orphaned wildlife, and to educating the public on wildlife-related issues.

More information about the centre can be found at www.torontowildlifecentre.com.