



TOASTY – A NORTHERN FLYING SQUIRREL

In November 2007, a Bedford gentleman was preparing a fire in his wood stove when he heard something in the chimney. He looked but could not see anything, so he finished lighting the fire. Shortly after, he looked back at the roaring stove and was horrified at the sight of silhouette of a little animal, paws outspread on the inside of the stove glass door. He quickly opened the door, and a little fireball rolled out. He immediately put out the flames on the unidentified burning animal. Unfortunately, it would be another day before he was put in touch with the Hope for Wildlife Society. At that time, a Society volunteer transported the burned animal to the Dartmouth Veterinary Hospital to be evaluated.

The animal was identified as a male northern flying squirrel. Veterinarian Barry MacEachern assessed the squirrel's injuries: All four paws, his ears, and his tail were badly burned. His whiskers were scorched and his eyes were seared shut. The little patient would require antibiotic and pain medication, as well as twice daily washing and application of an ointment on all his burned areas. Despite this medical treatment, his future was still uncertain.

Under the care of the Hope for Wildlife Society volunteer, the squirrel, given the name 'Toasty', began his slow healing process. From the beginning, Toasty's will to live was strong and he tolerated the regular handling involved in his daily care. After approximately a month, new skin began to appear on Toasty's paws, and his fur began to grow again. Unfortunately, he lost most of his outer ears, as well as the end of his tail, and several toes. Toasty also underwent surgery to remove exposed bone in one rear foot.

Toasty still doesn't have full use of his hind legs, so his climbing and gliding abilities are limited, preventing his release back to the wild. He has grown accustomed to regular human interaction through the care required for his rehabilitation. Toasty is involved in educating visitors first hand about the important roll that these little 'flyers of the night' play in our forest ecosystem.

