



LISA COMEAUX, a graduate student at the University of Tennessee, extracts a sample of a Rodrigues fruit bat's wing Friday while zookeeper Lucinda Faunce holds the bat down. Comeaux is testing the DNA of the Rodrigues bats in North America as part of her doctorate research to halt the inbreeding of the bats.

DNA of Folsom's endangered bats tested

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leads to loss of genetic diversity, low sperm production, slow growth rates, lower disease resistance and lower reproductive capacity," she said.

The Rodrigues fruit bat has made a jump in population from an estimated 80 in 1974 to 540 in captivity and 1,000 in the wild on their native Rodrigues Island in the Mauritius chain east of Madagascar, which is off the eastern coast of Africa.

"But a single cyclone could wipe them out," Comeaux said.

Eighteen individual bats were

captured originally, and all the bats in captivity are descended from those. The Folsom Children's Zoo is one of only 18 institutions in the world to have Rodrigues fruit bats.

Comeaux said she will be traveling to other facilities in the country that house these rare bats, including the Lube Foundation in Gainesville, Fla., and the Bronx, N.Y., and Chicago zoos.

Randy Scheer, animal curator at Folsom, said the Rodrigues is the most endangered species at the zoo.

"The Mauritius Islands are in a path of hurricanes," he said. "The bats could become extinct before our

very eyes."

The process by which the DNA samples were taken involved small skin samples punched from the bats' wings. Comeaux will take all the samples back with her to Tennessee.

"I plan to have all the research done within two years," Comeaux said. "It is our goal to implement the new breeding program very soon afterwards."

"This project will certainly be a step in the right direction for preservation of this species, but it will be a long time before they can be removed from the endangered species list."

NIKKI FOX/DN

Dunagan to bargain; may avoid jail time

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Police affidavits filed with Lancaster County Court detail the events of that night:

Matt's parents, John and Kay Dunagan, had been arguing, which the report said was common. John had been drinking.

During the argument, Matt Dunagan went to his room and loaded a 12-gauge shotgun.

Two hours later, after the argument was over, John Dunagan threatened Kay in front of Matt.

Then Matt retrieved the shotgun from his room upstairs and shot his father three times as he lay on the couch, the affidavit said.

In her 911 call, Kay Dunagan said Matt defended her, and that her husband, John, had been threatening to kill her for a long time.

Dunagan admitted to police that night that he had shot his father.

After posting bond, Dunagan completed his senior year of high school at Lincoln Pius X through tutoring and graduated with a 4.0 grade-point average.

Dunagan started at UNL in August and has already registered for 16 hours of classes next semester.

Defense attorneys are trying to secure a plea agreement so Matt Dunagan can continue his studies, Hansen said. They want to give Matt a chance to have a life.

Senior to toss her last baton Friday at final home game

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going."

Despite having some slip-ups, Hill has continued to electrify audiences.

She began tossing her baton in the second grade. By age 11, she had captured her first championship. Lately, she's been all but perfect.

All in all, Hill has won six national championships and seven world championships in various solo competitions.

The champion solo twirler is anxious to show her stuff one last time to Husker football fans, though she'll miss doing what she does best.

"I'll definitely miss performing," Hill said. "There's nothing like performing at Memorial Stadium."

"I couldn't have been here at a better time," she said.

While "every year gets a little sweeter" for her, Hill cherishes most being a part of a program that has won three national championships in the past four years.

The first Husker championship Hill experienced was Nebraska's defeat of the University of Miami at the 1994 Orange Bowl.

After the victory, Hill began crying.

"The years when we won (championships) were awesome," she said.

Before she began twirling for the Cornhusker Marching Band, the seven-time world champion had considered twirling for the University of Texas.

"It wasn't my calling," she said.

A good friend of Hill's proved to be the difference in her decision. Hill's high school coach in Texas was originally from Omaha. She had always wanted to twirl for Nebraska, but was never able to do so.

Hill was leaning toward Texas at the time, but decided to take some advice from her coach and visited Nebraska.

Immediately, she said, she was in love with the campus. She said she loved the size of the school and also UNL's friendly atmosphere.

The biggest problem now, Hill said, is the two losses Nebraska has had to Texas in the past three years.

After this year's defeat, Hill said she didn't even want to speak with some of her old friends from Texas who were inside Memorial Stadium.

Still upset about the loss, Hill says Texas will always be her home. But she says Nebraska also fills a big place in her heart.

And Nebraska has definitely been a huge part of her life, considering her daily routine.

Hill admits to "never having enough time in one day to get everything done."

That's because of a hectic schedule filled with baton and dance practice, not to mention her usual travels with the football team.

She also has to juggle her courses

with the rest of her load. Endless nights working on broadcasting projects at Avery Hall have taken their toll on the champion twirler.

But Hill said her hectic schedule dates back to high school.

Many times in high school, Hill would practice three hours a day before going to either band or dance practice.

Her work ethic, however, is just one reason for her success, she said. Family support and good teaching are extremely important, too, she said.

Though she loves traveling, Hill said, there's nothing like performing in front of Nebraska's sea of red.

And sometimes, she said, she catches a glimpse of herself performing live via HuskerVision screens inside Memorial Stadium.

"It's kind of freaky."

Hill said that because of a two-second time delay on the screens, she tried to avoid looking at HuskerVision during her performances.

Besides her many travels to Notre Dame University for America's Youth on Parade championship competitions, Hill has seen much more of the world. Her career has taken her across most of the United States and also to Ireland and England. In Ireland, Hill marched in a St. Patrick's Day Parade.

But Hill said solo twirling is her favorite outlet for her talent. Solo twirling involves a lot of know-how, she said. Besides high tosses and gymnastic moves, Hill says doing low flips can be the most difficult.

"It takes such perfect timing."

But, for the most part, Hill is always on time with her moves, earning her praise from John Kloecker, director of bands and associate professor of the School of Music.

"You try to find something negative about Courtney and there really isn't," Kloecker said. "She may be one of the best twirlers in any college band in the country. I've had a lot of good twirlers in my 12 years, but she's the best I've ever had — by far."

Kloecker said Hill was "a natural from the beginning."

"She is going to be really hard to replace," he said. "Whoever comes in next year will have some really big shoes to fill."

The most admirable thing about Hill is that she always just casts herself as part of the group, he said.

"She's a good person all the way around," Kloecker said. "and I really appreciate that. She's down to earth, and she's part of the team. She's always been a part of us."

While twirling the baton is second nature for her, Hill now looks forward to a new challenge: finding a job in television reporting after graduation in May.

She also looks forward to Friday's performance.

"I'm sure I'll get a little misty-eyed after it's all over. I've had such fun and such a good time. I've met so many wonderful people."

Police team up for charities

Programs aim to collect \$20,000 during holidays

By JOSH FUNK
Senior staff writer

This year, like each of the last 18, Santa Claus will get a little help from some elves who wear badges and carry guns.

The Lincoln Police have two charities they work with during the year, Santa Cops and Special Olympics, and both have events planned for the holiday season.

During the busiest shopping days of the year, the first three days after Thanksgiving, off-duty officers will be camping out on top of discount stores in eight eastern Nebraska cities to collect donations for Special Olympics.

In Lincoln the officers will be atop the two ShopKo stores, at 27th Street and Highway 2 and 66th and O streets, with other people on the ground to accept donations.

"This time of year, people are thinking of helping others," Police Chief Tom Casady said, "and the Special Olympics is a great way to do

that."

Last year police raised \$200,000 for Nebraska Special Olympics with events such as Cops on Top.

The other holiday event Lincoln Police sponsors is the Santa Cop campaign, where officers distribute toys to 2,000 to 2,500 needy children.

So far, officers have raised \$16,600 toward their goal of \$20,000 through donations and a charity auction held last weekend, campaign organizer Officer Tom Duden said.

The community has been very supportive of the effort, Duden said, but there are always more children to reach.

Police plan to spend about \$10 on each toy to be provided to the 2,000 children.

Most of the families are chosen by the Lincoln Action Program, a community organization that helps families in need. Other families are identified by officers.

The families are then given vouchers for each of their children, and they get to go shopping in a toy store set up in the basement of St. Francis Chapel

church.

Police deliver some of the toys to homes and hospitals starting Dec. 19.

The program helps brighten the holidays for many children, and police said it gives them a chance to interact with people in a positive way.

"It gives us the opportunity to be the good guy," Duden said. "We have the opportunity to show our real attitude to the community."

Police are accepting donations of money and toys to help their efforts, though they won't take anything that looks like a gun, Duden said.

Toys can be dropped off at the Prairie Life Center, the Lincoln Children's Museum, Shelter Insurance offices and the Lincoln Police Department.

More information can be found online at <http://www.santacop.org> or by calling police at (402) 441-7204.

Santa Cops try to support children through gift giving, Duden said.

"We want kids to feel entitled to the same things the kids down the street are entitled to."

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