

A Deer Mouse and Her Babies

When gathering supplies to set live small mammal traps one evening, we noticed that there was something unusual in the bait bucket. There were six baby deer mice or “pinkies” in the bottom of the bucket. A bucket without any bedding or nest material seemed like a strange spot for a deer mouse to have her babies but the large supply of peanut butter and oats must have enticed her. The bucket was shut tight but she chewed through the lid and left a small pile of white, plastic shavings on the floor of the classroom next to the bucket. We placed some cotton batting inside the bucket to keep the pinkies and the adult mouse warm and put the bucket in a safe spot right outside the classroom. Later that evening, we checked on the mice again. The mother had returned to her babies and was nestled into the batting. It was such a relief to find that the mother had returned to her babies. We continued to check on the mice over the next day because it was so exciting to see such young pinkies. However, the following morning, when we peeked in the bucket, the mother and the pinkies weren’t moving. It had gotten pretty cold the previous two nights and the cotton batting must not have been sufficient to keep them warm. The mother mouse made a poor decision on her nest location and unfortunately she and her babies didn’t make it. It was a sad reminder of the circle of life. ~ by Anna Fornili



Photo: Dina Schwartz