

Stuck ducks plucked from fowl fix by inventive rescuers

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An attorney with the appropriate name of Reed Flocks came to the rescue of four ducklings who fell into a drain outside the Santa Cruz County Governmental Center yesterday.

Flocks was on his way to court about 11:40 a.m. when he heard the sound of chirping ducks from a drain in front of the courthouse. He alerted a court staff member, who called

the SPCA.

The SPCA was busy with another call, but just about everybody else who came by offered help.

Flocks and two others went into the drain, Sheriff's Lt. Ken Oakes provided his billy club to use as a pole to help reel in the ducks, and Court Commissioner John Salazar took apart his courtroom flagpole and offered it as a pole. The flagpole wasn't needed.

The wayward ducklings were following their mother from their birthplace, in the ivy next to the judges' parking lot, to what was apparently to be their first swim, in a pond behind the county building.

Eight ducklings followed mama, said judges' secretary Jane McDonough, but four wandered too close to the drain and fell in.

After a maintenance worker removed a heavy grate, Andy

Kriege, who works for Mountain Network Solutions in Scotts Valley, climbed down into the drain. The ducklings were in water a few feet from where Kriege could reach.

Kriege used a flashlight to lure three of the ducklings to him. "They're really curious. They followed the light," said Kriege, who raised ducks as a youth.

Flocks went into the drain next, joking that it was "Flocks

looking after his flock," but he couldn't get the last duckling.

Next into the drain was Mary Reeves, who works in the Recorder's Office. She had retrieved a small net from her car, which was attached to the billy club and another pole with the sheriff's "police line, do not cross" tape — dubbed "duck tape" for this mission.

Reeves fished around in the drain for five minutes before netting the last duckling. He

emerged scared and soaking wet, and Reeves got a bit wet herself. Like his wayward siblings, he was reunited with his mother by one of the onlookers.

One young man who lended a hand by keeping an eye on the mother duck was at the courthouse to sign up to do community service for a minor offense. After helping out, he asked about doing his volunteer work for an animal-rescue service.