



WILDLIFE CENTER

# Wildlife Rehabilitation



# Outline

- What is Wildlife Rehabilitation?
- Why is Wildlife Rehabilitation Important?
- The Wildlife Rehabilitation Process
- Dane County Humane Society's Wildlife Center
- Common Calls
- Wildlife Rescue and Handling
- Emergency Care Instructions
- How You Can Help



# Wildlife Rehabilitation

What it is, who can do it, and how is it funded?

*“The goal of wildlife rehabilitation is to provide professional care to sick, injured, and orphaned wild animals so ultimately they can be returned to their natural habitat.”*



National  
WILDLIFE REHABILITATORS  
Association

# Wisconsin Wildlife Rehabilitation Licensing

## Wisconsin DNR Wildlife Rehabilitation License

- *Basic Level*
  - Pass exam, veterinary partnership, facility protocols and inspection, advanced rehabilitator sponsor
- *Advanced level*
  - 2 years of experience at basic level
  - Required to have sub-permittees



## United States Fish and Wildlife Permit

- Migratory birds
- 100 hours of experience over the course of 1 year

## Reporting

- State quarterly and annual reports
- Federal annual reports

# Legal Requirements

The law allows for citizens to legally hold on to wildlife no more than 24 hours for the purpose of transporting them to a licensed wildlife rehabilitator.

*It is illegal to:*

- Raise or care for wildlife without appropriate licensing
- Disturb the nest of any migratory bird
- Possess any part of a migratory bird including eggs, feathers and nests



## Common Misconception:

\*A veterinary license does not give authority to care for wildlife unless working directly with a licensed rehabilitator.

# Who funds wildlife rehabilitation?

- No Federal, State or County allotments
- Most centers are non-profits that depend on donations to operate
- Most centers are highly dependent on volunteers
- Few people are paid to rehabilitate wildlife—it's a labor of love!



**Why is wildlife rehabilitation  
important?**





To save the lives of animals that cannot care for themselves.



To end suffering after traumatic injuries



To help identify emerging diseases



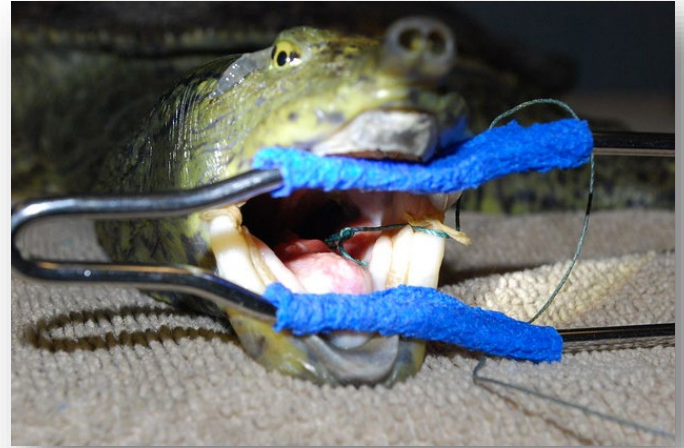
To help identify illegal activity



To aid in conservation efforts



To educate the public



Moral obligation?

# Dane County Humane Society's Wildlife Center





# Our Organization

- Program of Dane County Humane Society – Founded in 2002
- 6 full-time permanent paid staff
  - *Licensed rehabilitators but also...*
    - *Volunteer managers, fundraisers, solicitors, educators, public relations and outreach – its not all about the animal care*
- Veterinarians – shelter staff and volunteer (UW Madison)
- Werndli Apprentice and LTE staff
- Interns – 28 summer, fall, or spring
- Volunteers – over 200 in summer
  - *Wildlife caretaking*
  - *Wildlife reception*
  - *Rescue and transport*



# Wildlife Assistants

## **New Volunteers:**

- Housekeeping

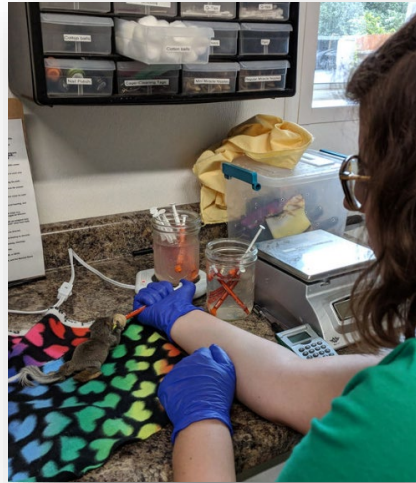
## **Training areas:**

- Songbirds
- Mammals
- Waterfowl
- Reptiles and Amphibians
- Bats (rabies pre-exposure required)

## **Advanced Species:**

Requires a full summer season at the WC and into the winter:

- Raptors
- Specialty Birds



## All areas include:

- Diet preparation
- Feeding
- Cage cleaning
- Record keeping
- Dish washing
- Facility cleaning
- Organization

# What species do we care for?

## Top five species of 2019

1. Eastern Cottontail – 721
2. Snapping Turtles – 320
3. Big Brown Bat – 268
4. Gray Squirrel – 256
5. Mallard Ducks – 236



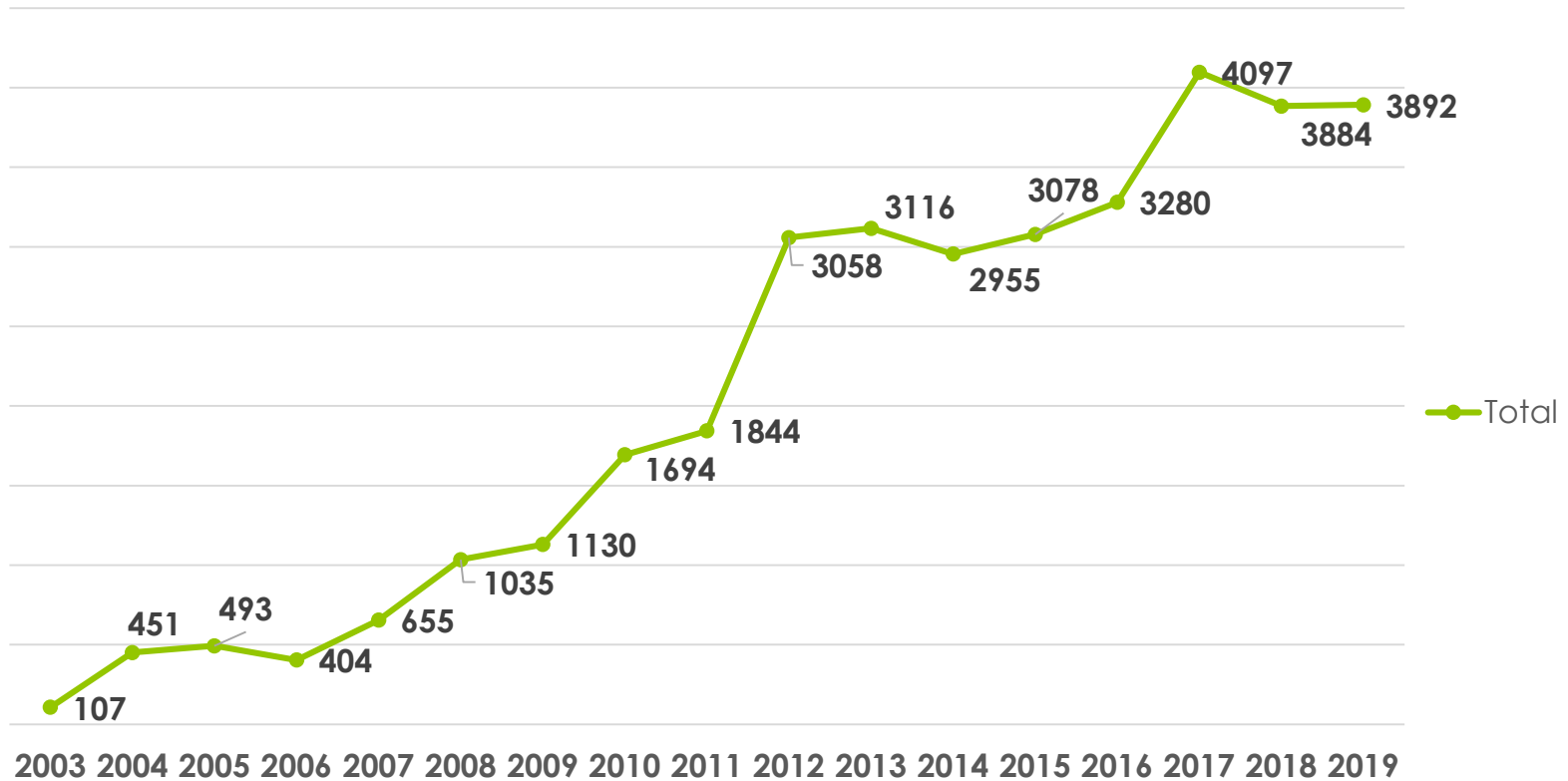
# Variety is the spice of life...

- 157 different species in 2019



# Rapid Growth

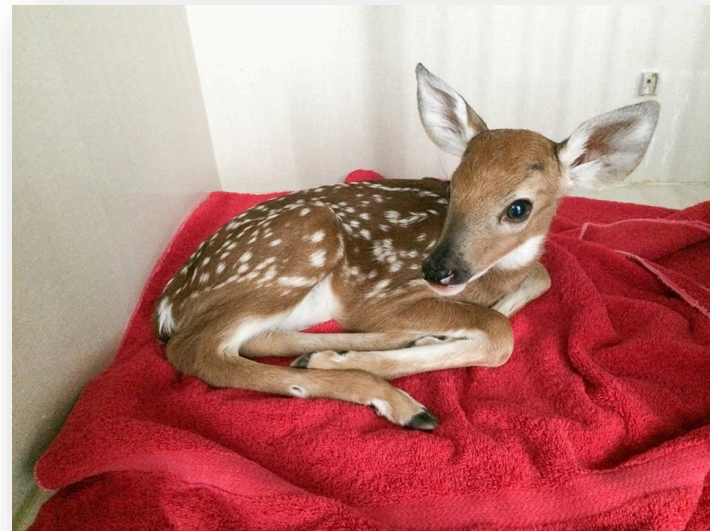
## Annual Wildlife Admissions



There is a growing need, but not enough rehabilitators in Wisconsin to meet the demand!!

# Species we don't rehabilitate...

- Whitetail Deer – Chronic Wasting Disease and space
- Skunks – Prohibited (primary rabies vector in WI)
- Raccoons – Space and zoonotic disease risk
- Non-native/invasive species – House sparrows, European Starlings, Mute Swans
- Infant (eyes-closed mammals); mice and voles



# The Wildlife Rehabilitation Process

## Common Causes for Admission

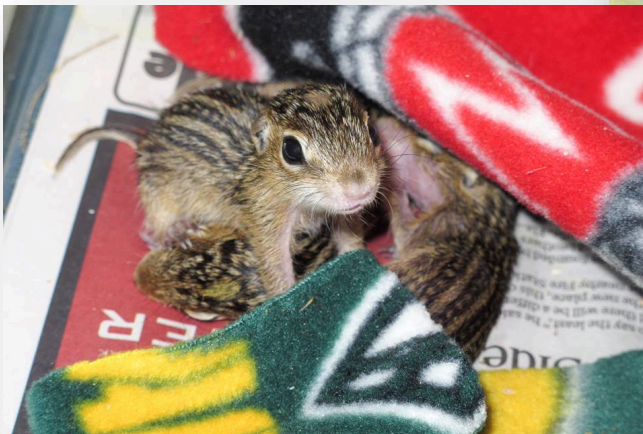
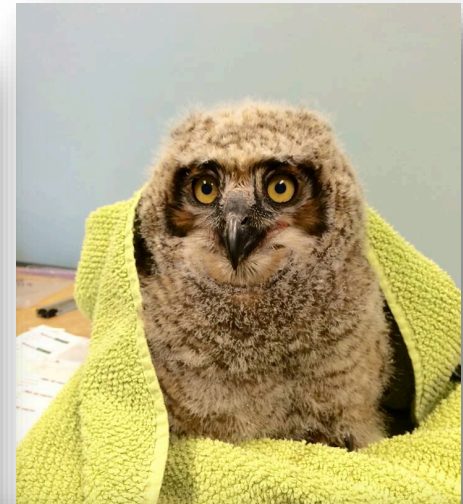
- Hit by Car
- Window Collision
- Dog and Cat Bites
- Neurotic Behavior
- Parasites
- Emaciation
- Dehydration
- Toxicity





# Rehab Process

...and lots of “orphaned” babies!



## Are the truly orphaned?

...volunteers field over 6,000 calls each year from the public

**Does the animal truly need our help?**

- Not every “orphan” is truly an orphan.
- Animals like these plump, healthy baby bunnies will be sent back with the finder to return to the nest.
- We must save our limited space for animals truly in need of rehabilitation



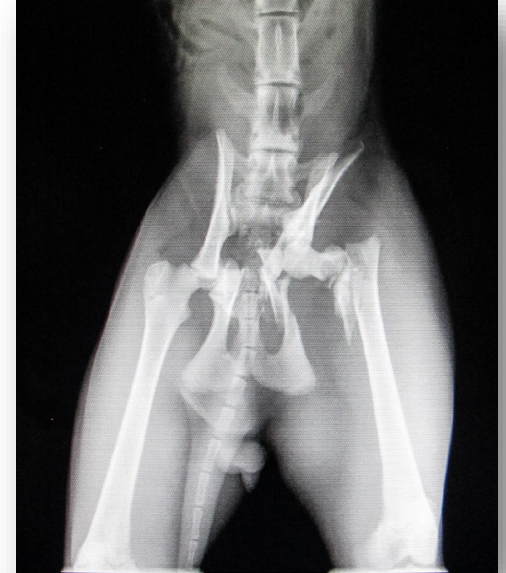
## Admission and Initial Assessment

- Physical exam and diagnostics
  - Is this animal a candidate for rehabilitation or euthanasia?
- Lots to consider –
  - Prognosis for survival and release
  - “Cost” of captivity
  - Species and life stage
  - Time and resources



## Wildlife have a right to Humane Euthanasia

- With few exceptions, animals sustaining injuries that will prohibit them from returning to the wild as a fully functioning animal are euthanized.
- Life in captivity is not an adequate substitute to life in the wild for most animals.
- Rehabilitators strive to save as many patients as possible, but a 50% release rate is a realistic outcome for most centers.



## Treatment

- Rehydration – SQ and Oral fluids
- Nutritional support
- Physical therapy
- Surgery
- Medications
- Wound care



## Special Considerations in Wildlife Rehabilitation

- **Stress** is the leading cause of death in a wildlife rehabilitation setting
  - Do not talk to or pet wildlife
  - Avoid eye contact, provide visual barriers, reduce noise
  - Keep handling to a minimum
- **Habituation, Imprinting and Tameness**
  - Imprinted and tame animals cannot be released
  - Habituation must be minimized



## Conditioning and Acclimation

Move to larger outdoor caging to...

- regain physical conditioning and stamina needed to survive in the wild
- acclimate to current weather conditions
- detach from human caregivers (aka: “get wild”)
- demonstrate full abilities to behave normally for the species: to fly, hunt, climb, dig, eat, swim



## The Happy Ending...RELEASE

Final evaluation—animal must be able to:

- Recognize and obtain appropriate food
- Select mates of their own species to reproduce
- Avoid and respond appropriately to dangers
- Be in good physical condition

Site Selection and Timing

- Where did the animal come from?
- Animal's age
- Weather
- Season and migratory patterns





# Common Wildlife Situations

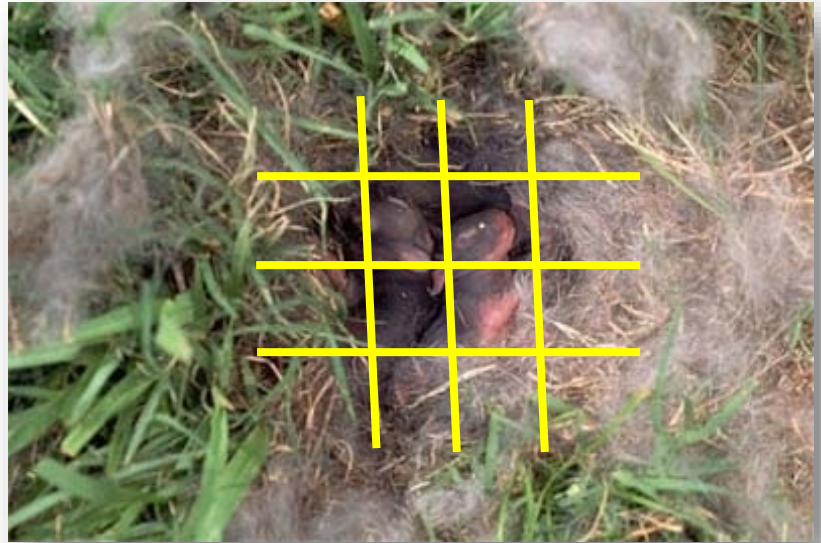
What should you do if you find a  
sick, injured, or orphaned wild animal?

# An animal should come in if...

- Any cat or dog bite was involved
- The animal is actively bleeding
- The animal is visibly injured (droopy wing, broken leg, etc.)
- The animal was seen hit by a vehicle or other moving object
- The animal displays abnormal neurological signs
- The animal is heavily parasitized – fleas, ticks, maggots or fly eggs
- The animal has been trapped in an area for longer than 3 days and looks unhealthy (window well, chimney, garbage can, etc.)
- If the animal struck a window...
  - Allow the animal to sit in a low-stress environment (dark, covered box or other container in a cool area) for one hour
  - Test if the bird flies away on it's own; if not, bring to DCHS
- A baby animal(s) has truly lost it's parent (we need to make absolutely sure that the **correct** parent has abandoned the nest or was killed)

## Eastern Cottontail Rabbits

- “I found a nest of baby bunnies.”
- “I haven’t seen the mother around all day.”
- “I saw a dead rabbit on the road last week.”
- “I have a dog – he’ll eat the bunnies.”
- “We have stray cats/foxes/coyotes in the area.”
- “They will eat my garden.”
- Techniques for testing abandonment:
  - Grass/Sticks/Yarn/Flour
- Send us a picture!  
([wildlife@giveshelter.org](mailto:wildlife@giveshelter.org))
- Text a photo to 608-960-8328



## Squirrels and Raccoons

- Re-uniting or re-nesting
- Give mom a chance to retrieve her babies

Squirrel mom to the rescue!



## Nestling or Fledgling Birds

- “There is a baby bird in my yard – it can’t fly.”
- “I’ve touched it...the mother won’t care for it anymore!”
- “I have it in a box – another bird was attacking the baby (or me) when I went to pick it up.”



## “Nuisance” Animals

- ◉ Woodchuck digging a den in the backyard
- ◉ Fox with mange in the neighborhood
- ◉ Virginia Opossum interaction with a dog
- ◉ Squirrel nesting in the attic



# Tips for “nuisance animals”

- Light and sound
  - Wind Chimes
  - Radio
  - Flash/scare-tape
  - Flood lights
- Olfactory
  - Pepper Spray
  - Ammonia
  - Human hair or dog fur
- Taste-buds
  - “Flaming hot squirrel seed”
- Objects
  - Rubber hose (snake)
  - Pinwheels
- **Physical Changes**
  - Locked Garbage Cans
  - Supplemental Feeding Stations
- **Bad options:**
  - Trap and Relocate
  - Baiting/Poisoning
  - Glue traps

## **Keys to success:**

- Use harassment techniques
- Make the environment undesirable
- Solve the root problem

# Wildlife Rescue and Handling

Its all about safety!



# Rescuing Wildlife

- those in need of rescue may be dangerous to people...
- Visit our website for detailed rescue info: [www.giveshelter.org/](http://www.giveshelter.org/)

A wild animal will always try to defend itself

- Think safety for the handler and the animal
- Know the animals primary means of defense
- Use safety equipment:
  - Boxes, laundry baskets, thick comforters, leather gloves, safety glasses, rubber gloves



# Emergency Care Instructions

Care before rehabilitation

## Temporary Housing

**Good temporary housing should...**



- allow the animal room enough to sit or stand in a normal upright position, and be able to turn around.
- have solid sides or be covered to reduce visual stimulus.
- have a non-slip bottom surface.
- have holes for ventilation, but not large enough for the animal to escape.



## Do NOT feed the animal

- Feeding a dehydrated or starving animal can kill it
- Lots of bad information on the internet about diets
- Many specialized diets are required for wildlife
- Offer water with caution – must be able to stay upright



## Transport the Animal ASAP

1. Be sure you have called us first to set up an appointment!  
Open 8 am – 6 pm (winter) or 8 am – 8 pm (summer)

**DCHS Wildlife Center: 608-287-3235**

2. The best chance of survival is if care is received quickly

### **Transportation options:**

1. Drive the animal yourself – preferred and fastest way to get the animal to care
2. If in Dane County, call an Animal Service Officer between 9 am – 5 pm: **608-255-2345 ext. 6**
3. Call the DNR toll free number **1-888-936-7463**

**Want to Help?**

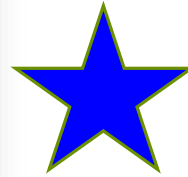
# Be a Wildlife Advocate

- Help spread our message – be an advocate for wildlife in our community!
- Educate to end “kidnapping” (aka “Abduction with the Intent of Rescue”) of healthy babies from their parents



# Volunteering

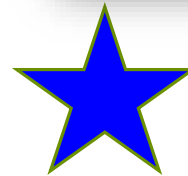
- Animal caretaking, reception, rescue, building and grounds
- One regular weekly shift (4 hours in busy season/2 hours in slow season)





# Internships

- Spring, summer and fall internships offered
- Average 18 weeks in length and 20-26 hours per week
- Unpaid or paid (UWSP)
- Get lots of hands-on experience
- Available for college credit



# Make a Donation

- Donate an item from our wish list
- Shop from our Amazon.com Wish List
- Cash donations help us purchase specialized medical supplies or formula
- Donations of expired medical supplies
- Build nest boxes
- Knit or crochet baby bird nests
- [www.giveshelter.org](http://www.giveshelter.org)



If you remember nothing else...

# Call us first...

...before you remove an animal from its habitat

...before you bring an animal to a rehabilitator

...before you trap and relocate any animals

...before using deadly means to control nuisance animals

## also...

1. Get to know your local rehabilitators
2. Know that not all wildlife needs rescuing

**Remember...a baby's best chance of survival is with its parents!**

Enjoy this release video!



Questions?

