

Living with Wildlife



What wildlife?



- Even though we think of our homes in a neighborhood setting, one of the most luring things about living in the south is the natural beauty!
- We need to respect that this was their home first, and they have very limited options as far as relocation. They are what keep our ecosystem together!
- We tend to label animals as “Nuisance”, without really understanding what that word means



What wildlife?

- Raccoons
- Opossums
- Mice
- Rabbits: Marsh and Cottontail
- Squirrels
- Fox: Grey and Red
- White tailed Deer
- Nine banded armadillos
- Birds
 - Songbirds
 - Wading birds
 - Ducks
 - Raptors

- Alligators
- Turtles
- Snakes
- Bats









Recognizing Wildlife

- Identifying habits of different species
- Understanding needs of different species can help understand the species as a whole
- Recognizing that WILD animals are not the same as pets!
- **Understand why they are in your yard-** because it wasn't always yours!!



Living with the Wild!

- Recognizing why an animal is in your yard!
 - Food source?
 - Do not feed wildlife in an unnatural way
 - Water source?
- Is that animal actually causing a REAL problem?
 - Safety
 - Financial
- Protecting your home
 - Securing all entrances
 - Barrier planting
 - Scare tactics
 - Preventative sprays



Living with the Wild!



WILDLIFE IN YOUR TRASH

Keep your trash cans in the garage or other enclosed area if possible. Put trash out the morning of pick up instead of the night before. If raccoons are the culprits, secure lids closed with bolt clips (like those on the end of a dog leash), and keep trash cans upright by fastening them to a sturdy pole or stake.

WILDLIFE IN YOUR GARDEN

Put up a barrier fence using 1/4-inch hardware cloth. It should extend at least one foot below the surface and three feet above. This should deter rabbits and some burrowers. Commercial rodent repellents may also be useful. They are available at most garden or hardware stores. Cayenne pepper may be sprinkled around plants to deter unwanted nibblers.

WILDLIFE GNAWING YOUR TREES

You can protect fruit or ornamental trees by wrapping the bottom three feet of the trunk in hardware cloth.

WILDLIFE DIGGING IN YOUR YARD

Use an environmentally safe insect control product to eliminate bugs as a food source. Place noise-making devices (pinwheels) around your yard.

Living with the Wild!

WILDLIFE UNDER YOUR HOUSE, DECK OR PORCH

Block off all access holes except one. Place dryer sheets in the area. The odor will eventually drive the animal(s) away. Sprinkle baby powder or flour outside the remaining access hole. Check daily for activity. Once you are sure that the den is no longer being used, seal the access hole. To be certain, sprinkle baby powder or flour inside and outside the newly sealed hole. In the following 48 hours, check the access hole on both sides of the barrier several times to be sure that all of the former residents have truly vacated.

WILDLIFE IN YOUR CHIMNEY OR FIREPLACE

Hang a heavy rope from the top of the chimney in case the animal cannot get out the same way it got in. Place scented dryer sheets in the fireplace to deter the animal. Once the critter has vacated, properly cap the chimney.

WILDLIFE IN YOUR HOUSE

If a wayward animal should make its way into your home do not attempt to catch it yourself! This could be dangerous for you and your belongings that would surely be damaged in the pursuit. Close off access to the rest of your home and open as many doors and windows to the outside as possible. This will give the animal time to calm down and find its own way out.

Humanely Removing \



- Havahart traps
- Seasonal!
 - NEVER during nesting season!
 - In spring and summer, people often set traps in a misguided effort to resolve garbage and other “nuisance” issues. Use more humane and effective methods instead like protected garbage containers and cayenne pepper spray.
- Calling local Wildlife Management companies that are familiar with native animals and know how to HUMANELY relocate them
- Making sure you prevent further issues or the problem from recurring!

Further Living with Wildlife Informatio

- Species specific information
- DNR has tons of information about native species and how to reduce disturbance and encounters!
- Animalhelpnow.org
- Georgia Wildlife Network (volunteer!)



Help, I've found an animal

- Does it really need your help?
 - Look for the nest site
 - Make sure the mother is not present but hiding!
- Identifying the species is KEY
- Understanding difference in ages
 - Communicating this efficiently
 - Knowing that just because it is small, DOES NOT MEAN IT IS A BABY!!
- Look for injuries
- Keeping calm and keeping the animal calm
 - Do not try to snuggle
 - Do NOT feed or try to get them to drink
- Keeping animal warm and preventing movement
 - Depending on size, shoebox to tupperware with ventilation
 - Paper towels or appropriate bedding
- Contact Rehabilitator!



What is Rehabilitation?

- 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.
- Wild animals that sustain injuries or illnesses preventing them from living successfully in the wild usually are euthanized. Occasionally, individual animals that have recovered from their injuries but are not able to survive in the wild are placed in educational facilities to help inform the public
- Wildlife rehabilitation is not an attempt to turn wild animals into pets!!
- Every species plays a niche or role in its ecosystem that helps the whole ecosystem work. This includes prey animals like rabbits, and predator animals like raccoons. Wildlife rehabilitation helps injured and ill animals return to their ecosystems so that they can continue to play their roles.

Why Rehabilitate?



- Responsible Stewardship

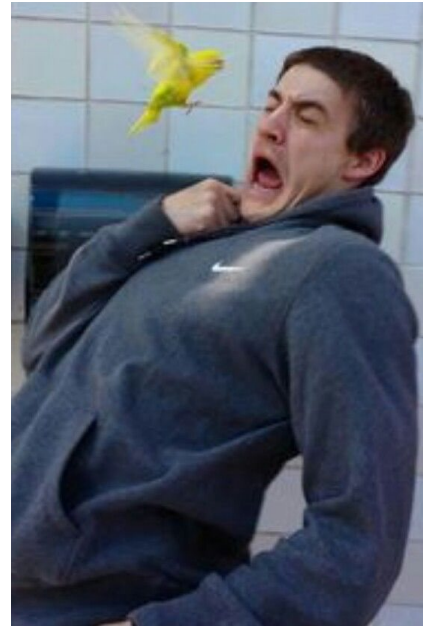
Stewardship is caring for something that is your responsibility. Living with wildlife is everyone's responsibility in this area. **Unfortunately, the main reason wildlife needs help from wildlife rehabilitators is due to something harmful other humans did.**

- Encouraging the survival of Threatened Species like bat species, terns, indigo snakes and more in Ga



Why Rehabilitate?

There are two types of people who ask this question:



“Just let Nature Take its Argument



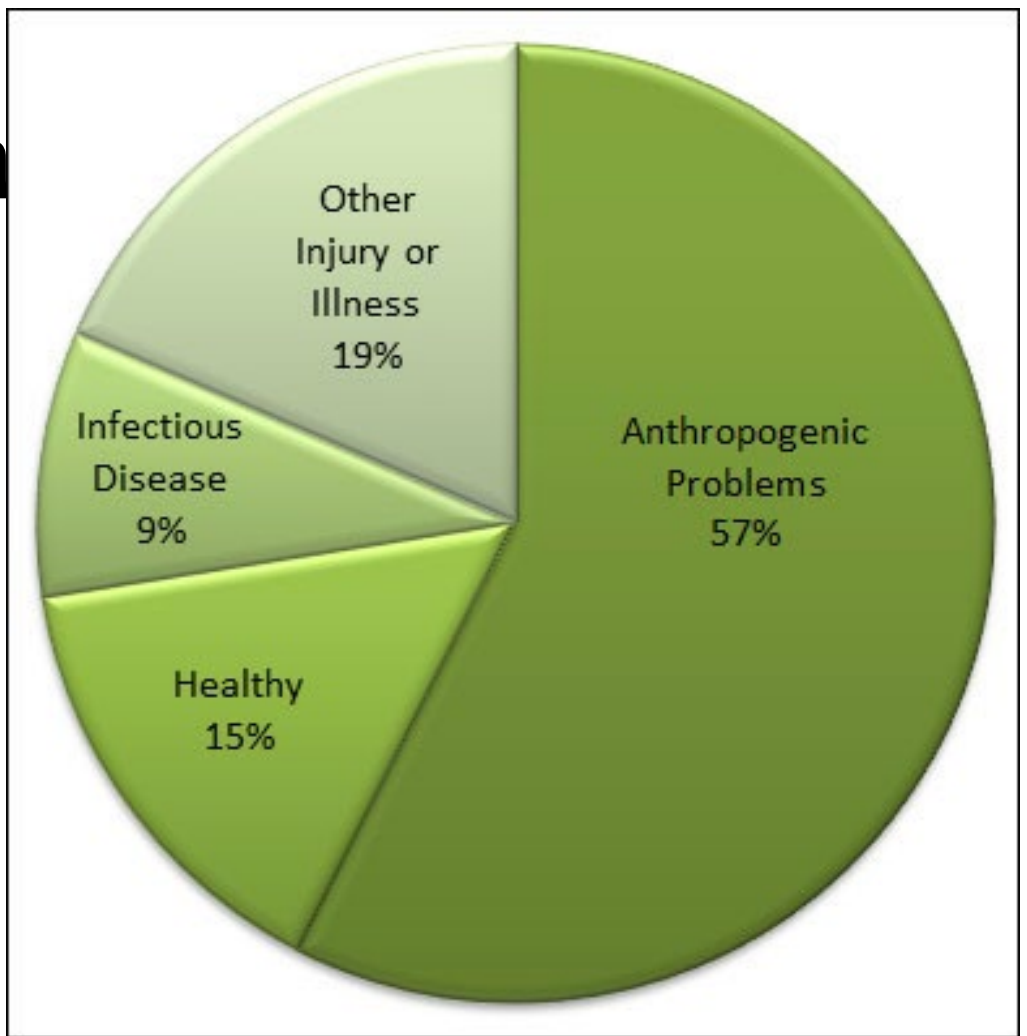
The anthem of those against Wildlife Rehabilitation!

- We are not out there pulling the squirrels from jaws of hawks!
- The truth is we very rarely see animals injured in a **natural** predator/prey situation unless a human intervenes, which we definitely don't encourage!!
 - Predator/prey relationships
 - Prey animals rarely are able to survive after severity of natural attacks, they have evolved not to! The human "savior" has probably now caused the death of two animals, since the predator now has to go catch another one or may starve themselves.

Vast majority of the animals brought to us are not due to mother nature's design! They are due to **human impact!**

Why Rehabilitation

- This is data from all the reptiles that the University of Illinois Wildlife Medical Clinic saw over 7 years. You can see that **most of the reptiles came in due to anthropogenic problems, or problems caused by humans.**
- Wildlife rehabilitation is responsible stewardship because it helps fix some of the damage humans cause to wildlife.
- Not about saving the world; **Negating the Human Impact to Nature!**



Why Rehabilitate?

- Window Strikes = 97 to 976 million bird deaths annually
- Communication Towers = 4 to 50 million bird deaths annually
- Power lines = Up to 174 million bird deaths annually
- Electrocutions = 10's of thousands of bird deaths annually
- Vehicle collisions = 60 million bird deaths annually
- Wind turbine rotors = 33,000 bird deaths annually
- Pesticides = 72 million bird deaths annually (this figure does not include orphaned chicks or secondary poisoning)
- Oil pits = 2 million bird deaths annually
- Cats = hundreds of millions of bird deaths annually (In Wisconsin alone, rural cats are estimated to kill between 8 million and 219 million birds annually; this figure does not include feral cats!)
- Fishery by-catch = tens to hundreds of thousands of seabird deaths annually



During a 14-month period along a dual lane highway, road mortalities were documented for 11 species of mammals, 12 species of birds, 5 species of reptiles, 9 species of amphibians, and insects belonging to 11 orders (and more than 249 different species) (Seibert and Conover 1991).

Why Rehabilitate?



- Wildlife Rehabilitation is good for human health too!
 - Wildlife rehabilitators may be the first people to know when disease outbreaks happen because the animals with the disease are brought to them for care. This is really important for disease like rabies or West Nile Virus that wildlife can give to people.
 - Locally, rehabilitators help contain the cyclical outbreak of canine distemper in the raccoon population, which also affects fox and coyotes, weasels and mink, and, domestic dogs.
- Wildlife rehabilitators are also in a prime position to monitor circumstances that might evade the scientific community
- Rehabilitators have been whistle-blowers in flagrant violations of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act by identifying large numbers of gunshot or poisoning victims coming from a specific area.

But there are so many X out there, do we need more; even if it is anthropogenic??

- Most rehabilitators would agree that even the millions of animals with which they have collectively worked with probably have made no statistically measurable impact on most species overall numbers. It is not about the species, it's about an individual!

“Rehabilitators have made a difference to countless number of individual animals, however -- why is that not important?...Despite the vast overpopulation of humans these days, any of us would stop to help a child injured beside the road. Why not the raccoon, squirrel, hawk or eagle?”

-Louise Shimmel

- Rehabilitators and rehabilitation facilities popularity can be seen as an affirmation to members of the public finding an injured animal that caring about wildlife is appropriate



EDUCATION! EDUCATION

- **Our primary goal as rehabbers is to never have to rehab in the first place!!**
- **The second goal is to release ALL animals back into the wild to live natural lives!**



Put that thing back where it came from me!

Even caring too much can be a big issue:

- Kit napping!
 - Leave that resting baby alone!
- Attempts to rehab at home
 - Imprinting!
 - Wildlife as a pet is NEVER a good situation for either human or animal!



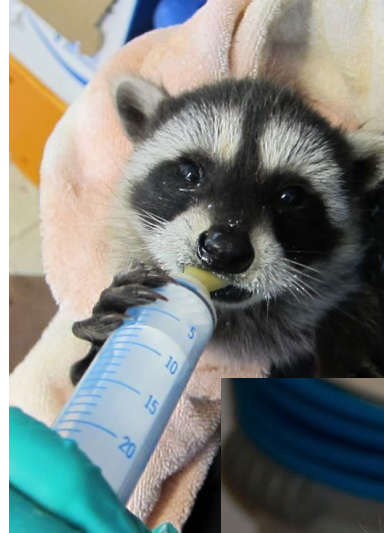
Put that thing back where it came from or so help me!

Do not offer water or food!

A cold animal can not process food!

Incorrect food slows down the weaning process and can lead to diarrhea, which leads to death!

If you bring it to a rehabber soon enough, they can worry about food. If you have to keep it overnight, they will instruct you on properly feeding it



But what about disease

A rabies scare in West Virginia turned out to be just raccoons drunk on crab apples



- Rabies myths and facts
 - First, just because an animal is out during the day does not mean they are Rabid!
 - Only one person has ever died from raccoon strain of rabies! 2.4 average yearly death rate is usually from canine specific strains from overseas!
 - Saliva to Blood transmission ONLY!
 - Orphaned babies are just hungry and looking for mom
- Although possible, babies transmitting diseases to humans is rare. Mostly parasites that you have to worry about. Throw away anything contaminated with feces

When to help, when to watch!

STOP! Don't pick up that baby!!

Signs that a wild animal needs your help:

- Presented by a cat or dog
- Evidence of bleeding
- An apparent or obvious broken limb
- Featherless or nearly featherless and on the ground
- Shivering
- A dead parent nearby
- Crying and wandering all day long



When to help, when to watch

- Baby birds are one of the most common finds
- Knowing your ages
 - Just because it is small, does not mean its a baby!!
- Found on the ground? Fully feathered? Leave it be!
 - It is a fledgling learning to fly and mom is nearby monitoring and feeding it! Keep pets away and monitor it for signs of mom. If no parents in an hour, call Rehabbers

Nestlings and Fledglings
Know the difference!



Nestlings— often bare, or covered in fuzzy down. These young belong in the nest at this stage of development.



Fledglings— well feathered, alert and hopping on the ground. This is a baby bird, learning to fly & its parents should be nearby.

When to help, when to w

Placing it back in the nest should be your first attempt!

- Old wives tales hurt animals! Birds don't smell you!
- If you can't reach the nest, make a new one
- Take care with raptor chicks. They do have talons and sharp beaks
- Watch for at least an hour to see if parents have accepted the new nest
- If you don't see mom after an hour, call Rehabber



When to help, when to w

A squirrel who is nearly full-sized, has a full and fluffy tail and can run, jump and climb is independent.

There are a few cases where you might need to intervene:

- A baby squirrel falls from a nest
- A nest falls from a tree
- A felled tree contains an intact nest

If the baby and/or their nest fell from the tree today, give the mother squirrel a chance to reclaim their young and relocate them to a new nest. If the baby is uninjured, leave them where they are, leave the area, keep people and pets away and monitor them from a safe distance.

If the babies are not retrieved by dusk, contact a rehabilitator.



When to help, when



Rabbits at least four inches long with open eyes and erect ears and who hop well are independent from their mother and should be allowed to fend for themselves.

Uninjured baby rabbits in an intact nest should also be left alone.

Mother rabbits visit their dependent young only a few times a day to avoid attracting predators. If the nest has been disturbed, lightly cover it with natural materials you find around the nest, like grass, fur or leaves and follow these steps:

- Keep all pets out of the area.
- Avoid touching the babies, because foreign smells may cause the mother to abandon them young.
- Use yarn or string to make a tic-tac-toe pattern over the nest to assess whether the mother is returning to nurse them young. Check back 24 hours later.
- If the yarn or string was moved aside, but the nest is still covered with fur, grass or leaves, the mother has returned to nurse the babies.
- If the “X” remains undisturbed for 24 hours, contact a rehabilitator.

When to help, when to v



People often mistakenly assume that a fawn found alone is orphaned. If the fawn is lying down calmly and quietly, their mother is nearby and they are fine! A doe only visits and nurses their fawn a few times a day to avoid attracting predators. Unless you know that the mother is dead, leave the fawn alone.

Although mother deer are wary of human smells, they still want their babies back. If you already handled the fawn, quickly return the fawn to the exact spot where you found them and leave the area; the mother deer will not show herself until you are gone.

If the fawn is lying on their side or wandering and crying incessantly all day, they probably need help. If this is the case, contact a rehabilitator.



When to help, when to watch

Fox kits will often appear unsupervised for long periods while their parents are out hunting for food. They will play like puppies around the den site until the parents decide they're old enough to go on hunting trips. Then they will suddenly disappear. Observe the kits from a distance; if they seem energetic and healthy, leave them alone. If they appear sickly or weak, or if you have reason to believe both parents are dead, contact a rehabilitator.



When to help, when to watch



Baby opossums are born as embryos, barely larger than a bee, and spend about two months nursing in their mother's pouch. When they get to be about three to four inches long and start riding around on their mother's back, they may fall off without the mother noticing.

As a general rule, if an opossum is over seven inches long (not including the tail), they're old enough to be on their own. If they're less than seven inches long (not including the tail), they are an orphan, and you should contact a rehabilitator.



When to help, when to

- If a baby raccoon has been seen alone for more than a few hours, they are probably an orphan. Mother raccoons don't let their young out of their sight for long.
 - Put an inverted laundry basket over the baby and monitor them until well into the nighttime hours. If the mother does not return, contact a rehabilitator.
- **Not purely nocturnal.** The idea that if you see them in the day, they are rabid is **COMPLETELY FALSE!**
 - Did you feed your babies at strange hours? Were you rabid? :) They eat depending on food availability



When to help, when to

- Reptiles and amphibians generally do not provide maternal care, so babies are self sufficient and do not need your help!
- Exception: Alligators under 12 inches
- Mothers take care of babies for up to a year! And provide a lot of protection as well as teach them to hunt.
- Place babies in container with small amount of water and wait to see if mom responds to calls- believe me you'll know...



Well then what do I do?

- Keep animals stress free!
- Although a good learning experience, children should not be allowed to handle orphaned animals!
- Keep animals in dark, quiet place
 - Stress easily kills prey animals like rabbits and possums
- Make sure if you have an aquatic animal like an alligator, water is provided! They can overstress without it quickly



What can I do?

- Responsibility does not end by finding help for the orphans! You must strive to prevent further issues
- Saving habitat and other large scale efforts should continue to be high priority.
- Using responsible wildlife management practices
 - Creating backyard habitat with native plants that produce food and shelter for wildlife, keeping cats inside and dogs on leashes for their safety and wildlife, avoiding the use of pesticides and poisons, making windows safer for birds, restricting clearing and heavy landscaping to the non-nesting season
- Reducing litter
- Safe driving practices!
- **Donations of time or items to your local Wildlife Rescue Center**



“We can count the number of people attending educational presentations, but not the number of hearts that have been moved by the true stories we tell, nor the future actions that have changed because of them...**We cannot count the good that comes from fostering the idea of caring for a living being that you also have the power to destroy.**”

-Louise Shimmel

