



A NETWORK OF VOLUNTEERS DEDICATED TO CARING FOR WILDLIFE

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✂ A Summer for the Birds ✂

BONNER SCHOLAR LENDS A HAND WITH RAPTORS

BY ANDREW GLASS

While exploring the bulletin board in the Biology office at Guilford College, I found a small piece of paper, similar in size and shape to that found in a fortune cookie (I guess it was fate), which gave the website address of Wildlife Rehabilitators of North Carolina. As a Bonner Scholar at Guilford College, I am required to do two summers of service of at least 280 hours with a nonprofit organization. I saw this as a chance to combine what I enjoy with my service. I contacted Jean Chamberlain who set up a volunteer schedule. What I ended up doing was working mainly at Owl's Roost Sanctuary as well as helping Gail Dawson, WRI's events coordinator, with the education birds.

It was a tremendously awarding experience, exactly on the line with what I would enjoy doing in a future career. As a child, I flip-flopped between



Photo by Jean Chamberlain

Andrew Glass, a student at Guilford College, is considering a career in wildlife conservation.

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naturalist and veterinarian as long as I can remember. This internship fulfilled my need to work with wildlife. In fact, I feel it would be selfish to call it service, because it is what I would do given the chance even without the summer service requirement. Working with birds I had read about from childhood in books such as “My Side of the Mountain” and others I didn’t even know existed, was ideal. I was extremely excited to work with Tears, the Peregrine Falcon used in education programs, especially after reading about Peregrine Falcons in literature and about their amazing recovery after their populations were nearly decimated by the use of DDT, a pesticide which was banned in the United States in 1972.

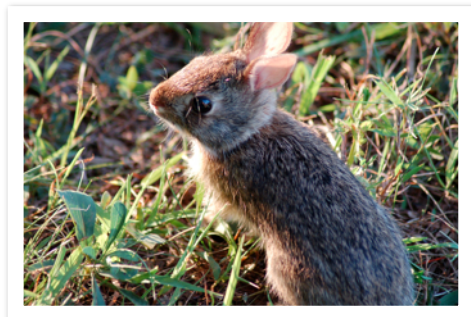
I took notes in a small red notebook, and looking back, it’s amazing what I learned, such as how to differentiate between a Red-tailed Hawk and a Red-shouldered Hawk. It was always remarkable watching them fly, and I enjoyed catching the birds when we’d weigh them or do check-ups. The experience was definitely inspiring.

I learned an incredible amount about native (and non-native) species. It caused me to rededicate myself to exploring the field of wildlife conservation. I am exceedingly grateful to all the rehabilitators, especially Jean Chamberlain and Gail Dawson, who have made this experience possible.

The Bonner Scholar Program provides college scholarships with an emphasis on community service.

What Would You Do?

On your walk, you notice a baby bunny by itself. Although it has fur and its eyes are open, it is very small, the size of a tennis ball. You should:



- A. Leave it alone because it is old enough to be on its own
- B. Catch it and take it to a wildlife rehabilitator since it is probably an orphan
- C. Catch it and try to locate and return it to the nest
- D. Catch it, place it in a box, and wait for the mother to show up

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Editor’s Pick

Dancing Pelican: Award-winning photographers Bob Rozinski and Wendy Shattil offer wildlife prints for sale on their website: www.dancingpelican.com. The prints cost an average of \$45.

There’s an app for that! Several wildlife and nature apps are available for smart phones, ranging from the Falcon field guides that help identify tracks and scat to Audubon’s series for birds, mammals, trees, wildflowers and butterflies. The Audubon series also lets you keep a list of what you find on the trail.



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Why Do You Ask?

Before treating an animal, wildlife rehabbers need answers

BY SHIRLEY AND ALLAN CASEY
WildAgain Wildlife Rehab Inc.

“When I deliver an injured wild animal to rehab, why do rehabilitators ask so many questions instead of immediately starting treatment?”

Wildlife rehabilitators need basic information from the rescuers to determine the appropriate action and treatment to take with wild animals delivered for rehabilitation. Some rehabilitators ask these short questions and make note of the answers. Others have the rescuer complete a short form while they are transferring the animal to a more secure cage for transport or taking the animal to a quiet area in a rehab facility where an examination and care may be initiated. Here are some typical questions and the reasons why the questions are asked:

The rehabilitator asks for the rescuer’s name and contact information, preferably phone, email, and address.

This information is especially important so the rehabilitator can contact the rescuer if the animal has a disease or problem that could place the rescuer or rescuer’s family at risk. For example, an animal that may initially look reasonably healthy, particularly a wild orphan, may

“Questions from Rescuers” is part of a series from WildAgain Wildlife Rehabilitation, a nonprofit based in Evergreen, Colo., that provides resources for wildlife rehabilitators.

These answers provide basic information for rescuers, but are not intended to address all local issues or represent all wildlife rehabilitators. Contact a local wildlife rehabilitator for additional information.

actually carry and develop a disease that could put the person at risk, such as plague, tularemia, or even rabies. It is really important for the rehabilitator to be able to contact the rescuer. Some states require the rehabilitator to collect contact info on the rescuer and communicate that to health agencies in the case of potential disease exposure. Occasionally a rescuer has been reluctant to provide name and contact information due to privacy concerns or not wanting to be solicited for donations. A few other wildlife rescuers have said they did not want to be ‘targeted’ by wildlife agencies, particularly if they had been somehow connected to the reason

that it needed rescue, such as hitting it with their vehicle. Most of these rescuers, however, are willing to provide contact information when they are reassured it will be used in case of health concerns, not for other purposes.

Many rehabilitators ask who has had contact with the animal and if anyone has been injured.

This is especially critical in areas that are experiencing serious disease outbreaks, such as rabies, plague, tularemia or West Nile Virus. In such cases, the rehabilitator may be required to provide that information to a state or local health department so they can follow up with the person in order to initiate preventative measures. ***The rehabilitator wants to know the circumstances under which the animal was found and why the rescuer believes it needed rescue.*** For example, if an adult Robin was found lying below a large window it will need different immediate care than a Canada goose with fishing line tangled around a leg and neck. A baby cottontail rabbit that was ‘played with by a cat’ needs different care than a young rabbit that fell into a window well and was left there for a couple of days while the homeowner waited for it to ‘jump out.’ A nest of baby

birds that was accidentally sprayed with pesticide needs different care than those in a nest that fell to the ground in heavy wind and hail. While a rehabilitator, and possibly a veterinarian, will use physical symptoms to determine treatment, the more they know about the initial circumstances, the better they can identify initial steps and continuing care. When only left to guess at the circumstances, the rehabilitator may miss critical facts or treatments.

A rehabilitator needs to know the source location where the animal was found. In many cases, the rescuer found the animal at a location other than their neighborhood, so it is important for the rehabilitator to ask source location. In some cases, the rehabilitator may notice a trend in admissions from an area. For example, several different species of songbirds may have been found in the same area and show symptoms of toxins. This could be a clue that there has been a leak of a toxin that could be harming other animals, and possibly humans as well. A raptor may be found lying on the ground near a power line pole – which may reveal a problem with the overhead electric lines. Or the rescuer might have believed that a raccoon had diarrhea from ‘eating spoiled food’ but was really a case of parvovirus and highly contagious to some mid-sized mammals. This information could be extremely important to determine treatment options.

In other cases, the location of the animal may identify potential

disease risks for wildlife or people. For example, a baby skunk may be found in a county that has rabies – which would be very important for the rescuer who might have been exposed – as well as for the rehabilitator. A bat that was found in a bedroom would raise similar concerns since the person may have been exposed to rabies during sleep and without knowledge of a bite.

Also, many state rehabilitation regulations require wild animals be released back to the wild close to the initial source location to reduce the chance for spread of disease.

A rehabilitator will ask when the animal was found. This is helpful since it gives an idea how long the animal has had a particular condition. While some rescuers may think this is a strange question since they assumed that animals would be immediately taken to a rehabilitator, there are many cases when the animal has been in possession of a rescuer – or someone else – for several days prior to it being taken for rehabilitation.

A rehabilitator will ask if the animal was given any food or liquid, and if so what and how was it fed, frequency and amount. This information may help the rehabilitator anticipate and hopefully prevent conditions such as aspiration pneumonia, bloat, and diarrhea that could result from such feedings.

WILDLIFE INTAKE FORM

RESCUER INFO

DATE _____

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____

ZIP: _____

PHONE(S): _____

EMAIL: _____

ANIMAL INFO

DATE & TIME ANIMAL WAS FOUND: _____

WHERE? PLEASE BE SPECIFIC _____

WAS A CAT / DOG INVOLVED? Y N
HAS IT BEEN GIVEN WATER? Y N

FOOD? Y N IF YES, WHAT? _____

WAS ANYONE INJURED OR BITTEN
BY THE ANIMAL? Y N
WHO? : _____

ANY OTHER INFO THAT YOU
CONSIDER HELPFUL:

REHABILITATOR RECEIVING
ANIMAL: _____

DATE & TIME ANIMAL WAS
ADMITTED: _____

SPECIES _____

AGE OF ANIMAL: JUVENILE ADULT

NOTES:

A rehabilitator needs to know if the animal was given any first aid or medical treatment, including by a veterinarian. This information helps the rehabilitator understand what types of conditions may have been found through examination or diagnostics and develop a treatment plan. It also helps the rehabilitator and his/her consulting veterinarian avoid duplicating tests or treatments, such as medications.

Lots of questions, but the answers can be critical in saving the animal's life!

Try to be patient. If you have taken the time to rescue an animal and find a rehabilitator, just a few more minutes can be life saving. While rescuers may be surprised

Find a local wildlife rehabilitator by checking online or contacting local veterinarians or emergency animal clinics, animal control agencies, humane societies or rescue societies, state wildlife or natural resources agencies.

with the number of questions asked by rehabilitators or being asked to complete a short admission form, the information is essential to help the rehabilitator care for the animal – and give it the best chance to recover and be released back to the wild. Plus, some of the information, such as location and possible disease exposure, is required by state

agencies. So instead of considering the rehabilitator's seeking the information to be time-consuming or invasive, recognize it is an essential part of the rehabilitation process.

Authors: Shirley and Allan Casey have been licensed wildlife rehabilitators since 1986. They founded WildAgain Wildlife Rehabilitation in Colorado. They conduct research, publish, and conduct training on wildlife rehabilitation subjects around the country. Their website, www.wildagain.org is used by hundreds of rehabilitators each day.

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What Would You Do...

(A) Leave it alone. Although a rabbit 4 inches long seems too little to be on its own, bunnies leave the nest and become independent at a very early age. If its eyes are open and it seems healthy, leave it alone, and do not attempt to capture it. Rabbits, more than a few weeks old are easily frightened and rarely survive capture and captivity. Unless it is in a dangerous place, such as a road, don't bother it. Because of its tiny size, the baby is vulnerable to attacks from pets. The best way to help it is to keep your cat or dog inside.

Keeping Count, Online

Enter your call counts online!

Most of us try to send our counts to Wanda the day after we are on call either by e-mail or a phone call. She faithfully enters them into an Excel spreadsheet, accumulating them so that she can report totals by species and type of call. If we forget to send them by the end of the month she sends us an e-mail to remind us.

You now have another option.

Enter them on WRI's website. Starting Oct. 1, the data will be kept in an online database. This will eliminate the need for Wanda to re-enter the information. It will also give her the option to report the data in various ways and keep a complete history over the years all in one place, making it easier to compile statistics. Entering the data is easy and you can verify what you enter. Look for instructions which will be sent to everyone who takes calls at the end of this month.

— Jean Chamberlain

Partners in Education

WRI's animal ambassadors carry a message about wildlife conservation to the public.

Stand in front of a gathering with a Great Horned Owl perched on a glove, and you're likely to get everyone's attention. Add an Eastern King Snake and a Peregrine Falcon, and with a little encouragement, the questions start coming.

Is that real? What do snakes eat? Where do they go at night?

Gail Dawson, Wildlife Rehab Inc.'s events coordinator, is often the one answering the questions and working with WRI's education animals.

Education animals are those animals that have come into rehab and cannot be released back to the wild because of injuries. Special permits allow rehabbers to keep animals – mostly raptors – to use in education programs.

WRI has seven education animals: two snakes and five birds of prey.

"I'm always conflicted when we use a live animal for a program," Dawson says. "On the one hand I am delighted to have the opportunity to share these magnificent creatures with others up close and let them act as emissaries for those unseen animals that inhabit this county, but I am sorry that they have ceased to be able to live free in the wild and must make this sacrifice of a life in captivity."

Education animals shouldn't be confused with pets. "I take great care to never deal with the animals as pets but as work partners," Dawson says.

Education animals often emphasize points made by rehabbers during programs. Dawson remembers standing in front a class of high school students as an Eastern King snake bit her finger. "It was great for making my point about the overinflated danger of non-venomous snakes."

Dawson has been involved with wildlife education for 20 years. She began by volunteering to feed raptors for The MacBride Raptor Project in Iowa. "I found that I preferred to work the night shift and feed the owls, even in the hard Midwest winters," she says.

She enjoyed talking to visitors so much that she began helping with tours of the center and taking birds to programs. She also helped coordinate research



projects, including a kestrel nest box study and an osprey reintroduction project.

WRI does between 20 and 35 education programs every year, ranging from Scout groups to the annual Piedmont Earth Day Fair at Wake Forest University.

It costs several hundred dollars to care for education animals year-round, and to provide the appropriate caging and diet. If you would like to sponsor one of our education animals, contact <http://wildliferehabinc.org/funding.html>.

Wildlife and environmental education is high on the list of duties for wildlife rehabilitators, because it's another way to help humans and animals. The more people learn about wildlife and their environment, the greater respect they have for the state's natural resources, and everyone benefits.

To schedule a program, contact programs@wildliferehabinc.org.

Scenes of Summer



Michele Poe



Gayle Molsinger



Michele Poe



Brenda Hiles