

Newsletter

About Us

In the last three years, the only choices for orphaned or injured wildlife found in the Ottawa area were euthanasia or letting them die slowly with no intervention. Some compassionate people probably tried to care for animals themselves but, without the proper resources or training, may have placed themselves and the animals at risk.

For these reasons, we established the Rideau Valley Wildlife Sanctuary in April 2005. We are currently the only Authorized Wildlife Custodian for small mammals in the Ottawa area. We are a volunteer, not-for-profit corporation and hope to receive our charitable status in the next month or so.

Our mission is to care for injured and orphaned wildlife, and once they are rehabilitated, return them to the wild. In the event that we, or others, are unable to return an animal to the wild, our long-term goal is to provide lifelong care for them at the sanctuary. We also plan to provide educational materials in order to improve the knowledge and understanding of wildlife and prevent and solve human/wildlife conflict.

Our Board of Directors include Linda Laurus (President), Krys Prichard (Secretary), Margot Sunter (Treasurer), Jennifer Forward and Russell Smith (Fundraising Manager). ❖



Xena Too

A Wild First Season

Between April and November, we admitted close to 90 small mammals, which was about all we could handle this year due to limited volunteers and facilities. Almost 90% of the wildlife received were orphaned animals: neonates (eyes-closed) or juveniles (“teenagers”). Our overall success rate was 55% and we are proud of what we have accomplished. However, this number is lower than we would like and can be attributed to several factors: most of the orphans had health problems; we weren’t widely known so orphans were without care for 24 hours or longer; some species are notoriously hard to rehabilitate.

We hope to raise our success rate to over 70% in 2006. With a greater public presence through referrals from the Ottawa Humane Society, Ottawa area veterinarians and other sources, people will be able to get orphans to us for immediate care.

But greater public exposure presents its own challenges. The better known we become, the more animals we will receive—we expect a minimum of 300 animals in 2006. But as hard as it seems, if we do not have an adequate volunteer workforce and facilities, we will have to turn people and critters away. The harsh reality is that we cannot take in more animals than we can handle. To do so would mean that all of the animals could suffer from a reduced level of care. So we will need to set intake limits because we cannot compromise the care of our current patients. You can help so that this doesn’t happen. We would be grateful if you would take a moment to see how you can help us help the animals (see Plans for 2006 and back cover).

All in all, it was an incredibly rewarding first season. Although our focus is on helping wildlife, we really are a community organization helping the community. We look forward to helping even more in 2006.

Linda Laurus, President ❖

2005 Rehabilitation Statistics (as of Nov. 20, 2005)						
Species	DOA	Died	Re-leased	Euth	In care	Total
Deer Mouse	0	5	0	0	0	5
Eastern Cottontail	1	11	8	0	0	20
Eastern Gray Squirrel*	2	12	15	2	19	50
Meadow Vole	0	1	0	0	0	1
Raccoon	0	4	2	2	0	8
Red Squirrel	0	0	3	0	0	3
Woodchuck	0	1	0	0	0	1
Totals:	3	34	28	4	19	88

* Eastern Gray Squirrel specie includes black and brown/brindle variations.

Volunteer Recognition

Volunteers are at the heart of our organization. Without the help of our many caring volunteers, we wouldn't be able to continue to help the animals.

Volunteer Spotlight

Rain and Dan, of South Mountain, were our very first volunteers. Rain volunteered as an in-centre Animal Care Assistant. Rain had previously volunteered at a rehabilitation facility in Florida and another wildlife center in Ottawa. And it turns out that Rain's husband, Dan, is a handyman extraordinaire with a flair for construction design. Dan built us over 25 squirrel nesting boxes with an ingenious hinged door that allows us to quickly confine the squirrels in the nesting box for transport to another cage or release site. They also fostered two squirrels for us until they were weaned and ready for release. On top of that, Rain and Dan spent a whole day at one of our cage-building weekends and, together, they designed a brilliant cubicle (aka the Borg Door or Superman Changebooth) that is a back-up system, or second door, to prevent unwanted squirrel escapes. Thanks Rain and Dan, you're amazing.

P.S. Rain is a jewelry designer in her spare time. You can see her beautiful work at <http://www.artinmetal.vstore.ca>.



Rockette, Nasty and Little One

Cage Building 101

We are overwintering 19 fall-born squirrels this year. Because they were smaller than normal due to illness this fall and it was so late in the year, we decided to not take any chances. The pros to overwintering are a controlled environment and adequate food. The cons can be boredom and inadequate space. So we decided to build three 8'x8'x8' cages, complete with a double-door system, ledges

for nesting boxes and trees! ("That tree is not going to fit." "Yes it will.") The cages are in the stable so the squirrels are still able to get sunlight through the open doors and acclimatize to winter but are protected from the harshest elements. We will be working hard on environmental enrichment over the winter to keep them busy and occupied. Thank you to all of the volunteers who came out to one or more of our cage-building weekends: John, Kryz, Jen, Russ, Cathy, Jane, Mike, Eve, Dan, Rain and Tracey.



Iggy and Squiggy

Foster Program

Part of our volunteer network includes foster caregivers who take care of animals in their homes, the same way we do at the center. We provide fosters with training, ongoing support, medical care, formula and caging. Fosters take care of neonates and juveniles that require formula feeding and/or weaned animals that need to be acclimatized to the environment at an appropriate release site. Thank you to our fosters this year: Jane, Ianthe, Laurie, Natalie, Eve, Margaret, Joan, Richard, Shannon, Christine and Rain.

Our New Website

Thank you to James Talmadge for volunteering to design, create and maintain our website (<http://www.rideauwildlife.org>). The website contains information on wildlife emergencies, finding a rehabber, etc. The website is constantly evolving and will be updated with more information in the new year.

If you ever need a Flash designer, particularly for kids' websites, James is an incredible animator (<http://www.flashfuel.com>). Jim is also an accomplished artist (<http://www.talmdageart.com>). ❖

Is this Animal really Orphaned?

Some statistics show that 80% of orphaned wildlife are “kidnapped” by well-meaning individuals who do not know that mothers leave their young on their own during the day or that mothers may re-collect their lost young (e.g., if fallen from a nest). One of the most important responsibilities of wildlife rehabilitators is to educate the public about the habits of wildlife. Successful public education can mean that more young wildlife can be reunited with their mothers, who do a much better job of raising their young than we do.

With some animals, such as rabbits and deer, mothers leaves their young during the day (the young do not have a smell yet so they don’t attract predators) and mom only returns to feed the young at dawn and dusk. So if you see a fawn lying in a field of tall grass or a nest of tiny bunnies in your yard, it is likely that mom is out feeding herself and drawing attention away from the young.



Bunny Release

Most of us know that mother dogs and cats will pick up their young by the scruff of their neck and move them off into different areas. This happens with wildlife as well. For example, if a baby squirrel or raccoon falls out of its tree nest and survives, the mom will retrieve it when she feels it is safe and bring it back to the nest.

There are times however, when mom might not come back for its young. Sometimes a neonate or juvenile will be injured by a fall, get cold during the night or have a respiratory infection. In these cases, mom can usually sense a problem and might not come back for the baby—human intervention is needed in these cases. If you find an orphan, please give us a call and we’ll give you tips on trying to reunite it with mom. ❖



Miracle Baby

Squirrel Physiotherapy?

There is one incredible story that needs telling about a foster volunteer with determination. A juvenile squirrel we received in the fall had a completely lame left rear leg, probably due to an old dislocation. It didn’t seem to bother the squirrel much—she was content and didn’t appear to be in pain—but it meant that she might not be a candidate for release back to the wild.

We decided to foster for a while and postpone a decision on euthanasia. Margaret, our first foster volunteer, cared for the squirrel and her sibling and started massaging the squirrel’s lame leg with a drop of castor oil (recommended by a homeopath) in the direction of the heart for about five minutes twice a day. And didn’t the little girl start to use her leg! After several months of therapy, we’re happy to report that you cannot tell that the squirrel had ever been lame. We are overwintering her and will release her in the spring. Huge kudos to Margaret *and* the determined squirrel! ❖



Juvenile Coons



Cottontail Litter

New MNR Regulations

The Ministry of Natural Resources, who regulates wildlife rehabilitation through the *Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1997*, came out with final, revised regulations (<http://www.ene.gov.on.ca/envregistry/023867ep.htm>) governing wildlife rehabilitators in October.

The most important change that will affect us is the expansion of the allowable release distance from the original point of capture, which changed (for most wildlife) from 1 km to 15 km. This corresponds to minimum standards set by international organizations. This change will allow us greater flexibility to release wildlife in appropriate areas, while still maintaining a reasonable boundary to prevent the possible spread of disease, etc. ❖

Thank you for your Support

One of the most unexpected benefits that has come from starting an animal organization is dealing with the public and witnessing the generosity of so many individuals. The kindness of family, friends and strangers has been so heartwarming and has fueled our efforts to continue. We received a room full of new and used donations, such as bedding, dishes, appliances and cages. Several vet clinics have donated medical supplies and provided reduced costs for services. Many others have volunteered their time and services. Thank you everyone for your support and donations.

(A special thank you from Linda to her mother, Eve Laurus, for her unending moral, financial and in-center support. Thanks Mom.)❖

Plans for 2006

We have big plans to get ready for a busy 2006 season. Based on this year's intakes and expected publicity, we expect to receive a minimum of 300 animals next year. If we are to be able to help them all, we need larger facilities and a major volunteer workforce.

So we are planning to convert part of a stable on the property into a full rehabilitation facility, complete with separate rooms for intake, examination, quarantine and rehabilitation. We will also need a kitchen, laundry and bathroom. To achieve this, we will be embarking on a major fundraising campaign in the new year to obtain funding and, especially, in-kind donations of construction materials. If any contractors or suppliers are willing to help, we would be most appreciative. We also hope to reduce costs by building the center ourselves so we welcome tradespeople and other handypersons to help with the construction in March.

We are also looking for volunteers for the 2006 season, particularly in-center volunteers. Animal Care Assistants help with formula feedings and other fun stuff such as laundry, dishwashing, cage cleaning, etc. We ask volunteers to commit to a consistent schedule for a minimum of three hours per week for three months. We are associated with several organizations to seek volunteers, including area high schools, Charity Village and Volunteer Ottawa.

To expand our services to the community, we will also be developing short- and long-term goals for a telephone hotline and educational materials on resolving human/wildlife conflicts and wildlife in general.

For further information or to help, please contact Linda Laurus at 613-258-9480 or by email at rideauwildlife@ripnet.com. ❖



Our new home for 2006

Our Wishlist

As a volunteer organization that receives no government funding, we always welcome donations of new and used supplies. Thank you for helping us to help the animals!

Rehabilitation Supplies

- towels, flannel sheets, receiving blankets, cloth diapers
- heating pads, hot water bottles
- small stuffed animals
- durable plastic kid's toys
- cat litter boxes
- cages, pet carriers, aquariums
- food storage containers, empty peanut butter jars
- pet food dishes, crocks and water bowls
- hamster water bottles
- Esbilac and KMR powdered formula
- walnuts, walnuts, walnuts!
- peanuts, chestnuts, acorns
- rodent chow
- striped sunflower seeds
- apples, yams, broccoli, corn
- leafy greens

Cleaning Products

- soap, disinfectants, bleach, etc.
- kleenex, paper towels, j-cloths
- brooms and dustpans
- mops and water buckets
- garbage cans
- trash bags

Veterinary Supplies

- gauze, cotton batting, vet wrap
- lactated ringers or saline
- lab coats, scrubs
- heavy-duty gloves, welding gloves
- incubators, heat lamps
- oxygen cage/mask
- ultra violet fluorescent lamps

Construction Materials

- lumber and materials to build caging
- tin roofing
- snow fencing
- any fencing materials
- hot water tank
- oil tank
- central air conditioner
- freezers
- plumbing items (e.g., sinks, laundry tub)
- cupboards/counters
- doors, large windows
- drywall
- lumber
- linoleum or other cleanable flooring
- fluorescent lighting

Volunteer Opportunities

Because of the number of animals we expect to receive next year (300+), we will need the help of many more volunteers, otherwise, as hard as it seems, we will have to turn people and critters away..

All volunteer positions are important, but we are particularly seeking in-centre Animal Care Assistants that can put in a minimum of three hours per week for three months. Because of the many mouths we have to feed, dishes to wash and laundry to do, we will need at least two volunteers covering all 3-hour day shifts from 9:00 am to 9:00 pm, April to October.

Following is a list of some of the volunteer positions available. We will provide training and ongoing support, the occasional pizza, camaraderie, work experience and references.

- Animal Care Assistant (April to October)
- Foster Caregiver (April to October)
- Release Sites (April to October)
- Cage Builder (January to October)
- Administrative Assistant (year-round, casual)
- Fundraiser (year-round, casual)
- Construction Worker (February to April)

Donations

Donations are most welcome. We are not yet a registered charity so we are not able to issue tax-deductible receipts at this time.

I would like to make a **non** tax-deductible donation to support wildlife rehabilitation. Please make cheque payable to Rideau Valley Wildlife Sanctuary.

Name:

Address:

City:

Province:

Postal Code:

Donation: \$

Mail to:

Rideau Valley Wildlife Sanctuary
P.O. Box 266
North Gower, Ontario
K0A 2T0

Corporate Sponsors

Corporate donations, particularly in-kind donations of construction and caging materials, are going to be a focus of our fundraising efforts in the new year in order to build the new facilities. We are also seeking contractors and tradespeople who are able to donate their time to help in building the new facilities.

We welcome inquiries from prospective donors about our recognition program, such as ads or promotion in our newsletter and websites, special events and other in-centre notices.

Contact Us

Rideau Valley Wildlife Sanctuary
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Website: <http://www.rideauwildlife.org>