



# Rideau Valley Wildlife Sanctuary Newsletter



(613) 258-9480

March 2008



## Wildlife Tips Issue

Whether we live in a newly built subdivision, an old farmhouse in the country or a townhome in the heart of the city, we encounter native wildlife every day. Many people see wildlife as enriching our environment – until wildlife move into their homes. Some wildlife problems are temporary. For others, there are sensible solutions. You can deal with most wildlife situations in a humane and cost-effective way by simply tolerating a temporary situation, understanding the animal's natural behaviours, animal-proofing your home and, if necessary, humanely evicting wildlife.

There are also times when wildlife need our help, from a baby squirrel that fell out of a nest, to a baby raccoon that got separated from its mother, or a sick or injured adult mammal. The trick is in knowing whether a wild animal truly needs rescuing. For some species, it is normal for the mother to leave her young behind while looking for food, but for other species, this may signal a problem. For animals that truly need our help, what do we do?

We hope this special *Wildlife Tips* newsletter will help people to better understand their wild neighbours, some of the humane ways to deal with common conflicts and how to help wildlife in need. If your situation is not covered in this newsletter, give us a call – we are here to help.

Wishing everyone a green spring, really soon!  
Linda Laurus  
President

### We Need your Help

Wildlife birthing season has begun -- we received our first 2-week old orphaned squirrels on March 22. A low food crop last summer, more snow, and fewer people out and about in their yards means it might be a hard time for wildlife this spring, particularly the orphans.

As the only authorized wild mammal rehabilitator in the Ottawa area, the Rideau Valley Wildlife Sanctuary will be asked to treat and care for hundreds more orphaned or sick small wild mammals than ever before. Thanks to our supporters, we are expanding our website (coming soon), improving our operations efficiency and outreach to the community, and building a new rehabilitation facility.

The Rideau Valley Wildlife Sanctuary is a volunteer-based registered charity (#827317744RR0001). We do not receive government funding for our wildlife care expenses but depend entirely on donations and grants from the general public, businesses and foundations.

With your help, we can continue to increase our community services and give a second chance to even more wildlife. Your gift could help with wildlife care expenses such as formula and food, veterinary care and enclosures. Or you could help us to triple the capacity of our facility by donating cash, construction materials, or your time and your construction skills.

Thank you to all our benefactors and volunteers for helping us to help the animals.

### Ottawa Wildlife Contacts

Mammals	Rideau Valley Wildlife Sanctuary	613-258-9480
Birds	Wild Bird Care Centre	613-828-2849
Turtles	Turtle S.H.E.L.L. Tortue	613-446-9927
Bats	Ottawa Humane Society	613-725-3166
Other	Ministry of Natural Resources	1-800-667-1940

## Construction Update

Construction on the new rehab facilities began March 1 with a delivery of 42 tonnes of stone dust to level the floor. After a night (actually several weekends) of freezing weather that turned the stonedust into concrete, rental of over 200,000 BTUs of heaters and the help of volunteer muscles and a bobcat (thanks Jamie), we had a level floor after several weeks. Now equipped with a wood floor, framing of the walls will begin March 29. Construction will continue every weekend until the end of May. Many thanks go to Kim, Bruce, Al, Robin, Rick and Sue for all their help and hard work.

While the first stage of our expansion has begun, our plans exceed our funding. If you would like to help with a donation of materials, give us a call for our construction wishlist. If you can wield a drill or paintbrush and would like to lend a helping hand, please send an email to [rideauwildlife@ripnet.com](mailto:rideauwildlife@ripnet.com) or call Linda at 613-258-9480.



## Evicting Unwanted Tenants

Do you have raccoons in the chimney, squirrels in the attic or skunks under your porch? It's that time of year when urban wildlife seek out suitable den sites to give birth and raise their young. Wildlife can enter buildings through chimneys and attics because of unscreened vents or openings left by loose or rotten boards. Trash, composters or pet food left outdoors provides easily accessible food.

While this may seem alarming, it usually is a temporary situation. Now is not the time to animal-proof your home since animals are denning and already having young. Most mammals give birth between March and June and some species again in late summer or early fall.

Evicting wildlife at the wrong time or using the wrong method can mean that orphaned wildlife are left behind—a situation we would like to prevent because nobody can raise a baby animal better than its wild mother. Excluding wildlife can cause even more damage to your home from mothers trying to get back in to their babies or from trapped animals trying to escape.

### *So what is the solution?*

If an animal has already moved into your eaves or is nesting under your porch, the solution may be patience since many wildlife problems are temporary. These animals have probably settled into a warm, quiet place to raise their young. Once the young reach a certain age (approximately 6 to 12 wks), usually in early- to mid-summer, the mother almost always relocates the whole family to a new nest in the natural environment. When you are sure that there are no young present and all animals have moved out, it is a perfect opportunity to animal-proof your home.

If the animals are not leaving or they pose a danger or health risk, you may try some passive exclusion techniques to make their den site inhospitable and seemingly unsafe, to encourage them to leave. Examples include using lights and battery-powered radios.

Feel free to give us a call for advice on your particular situation or for tips on helping wildlife to move along. While we are developing fact sheets to address common problems, you can also visit the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies' website ([http://cfhs.ca/wild/urban\\_wildlife/](http://cfhs.ca/wild/urban_wildlife/)) for solutions to common wildlife problems with raccoons, squirrels, mice and rats, and skunks.

## Live-Trapping is not the Solution

Although once a popular answer to wildlife problems, live-trapping and relocating wildlife is no longer considered a humane solution. Trapping and relocating adults may leave babies behind and that's a problem from all perspectives. Just ask the homeowner who live-trapped and relocated eight adult raccoons before screams from the attic revealed that orphaned kits had been left behind. The homeowner had to rip a hole in the siding and cut a hole in his house to get the babies out. The next day his neighbour delivered a second litter to us for care and rehabilitation.

Adult wildlife that are relocated may not survive because of competition with native wildlife and the inability to find appropriate nesting places, food and water. Here are some other reasons why trapping and relocating wildlife is not a solution:

- in Ontario, it is illegal to relocate wildlife more than one kilometer
- animals can suffer stress, injuries and even death trying to escape from traps
- baited traps can attract domestic pets or untargeted wildlife (skunks!)
- relocated wildlife can spread diseases and parasites to other areas
- removing animals will create vacant territory for other wildlife to move in

Instead of trapping and relocating, please try some of the other techniques listed in this newsletter or call us for advice.



## Choosing a Wildlife Control Company

If tolerance, preventive measures and passive exclusion techniques don't solve your wildlife problem, you may need professional help. There are wildlife control companies that practice a humane approach to wildlife services and, on the opposite scale, those who do not have the best interest of the animal at heart. Visit the Ottawa Humane Society's website at <http://www.ottawahumane.ca/wildlife.html> for a list of questions you can ask before hiring a wildlife control company.

## Is this Animal *really* Orphaned?

Statistics show that many orphaned wildlife are mistakenly "kidnapped" by well-meaning but uninformed people who do not know that it is normal for some wildlife to leave their young alone during the day or who later find them when they do get lost. If you've taken a wild baby and it doesn't have any signs of needing rescuing (see below), put it back and leave the area—the mother will likely return to collect it given the opportunity. If the mother does not collect the baby within several hours, it might need rescuing.

In the meantime, give us a call if you are unsure whether a wild animal needs rescuing or need tips on trying to reunite orphaned young.

with their mother. Following are some tips to help you identify if an animal is orphaned. If a young animal is not showing any of the above warning signs, there is a good chance you can reunite it with its mother.

## When a Small Mammal need Rescuing

It is common for many wildlife mothers to leave their young alone to feed or draw attention away from their babies. For example, cottontail rabbits only return to the nest to feed their young twice a day; deer often leave fawns alone in tall grass or by the side of a road and return only several times a day to nurse.

An animal needs rescuing when it:

- is vocalizing or following people or pets
- is cold to the touch (this might be a temporary rescue)
- is bleeding, injured, very weak or lethargic
- has fluid discharging or bubbling from the nostrils or mouth
- has a sunken abdomen, sunken eyes or looks emaciated
- is gasping for breath or has rasping or clicking sounds when breathing
- has visible parasites crawling all over the body
- has been handled by a cat or dog
- is found near a dead adult or sibling
- is wandering
- is in imminent danger (e.g., from predators, traffic)

If any of these conditions are present, please **contact a wildlife rehabilitator immediately** and follow the general instructions below.

## What to do When an Animal Needs Rescuing

After you have made sure that an animal is truly orphaned, the following information provides basic guidance until you can find an authorized rehabilitator. If you need to handle an animal, we suggest you always wear heavy gloves to protect yourself. You can also use a towel to scoop up a baby animal. We do not recommend that you handle any adult wildlife yourself—contact a wildlife rehabilitator or animal shelter for advice. If it is safe to do so, you can try to corral the animal into a pet carrier.

- Place the animal in a covered box or pet carrier with ventilation. You can use an old t-shirt or other ravel-free material as bedding. Do not use towels and make sure there are no holes or loose threads.
- Leave the carrier in a warm, dark and quiet place indoors, away from pets and people. Wildlife see people as predators and are not comforted by voices or petting.
- Baby animals always need extra warmth. Put the carrier half-on and half-off a heating pad set to low, so that the animal can move to the non-heated side if it is too warm. Never place an animal directly on a heating pad. You can also fill a soda bottle with hot water, wrap it in a towel, and brace it inside the box.
- Please do not give the animal any food, milk, formula or even water until you have talked to a wildlife rehabilitator. Feeding the wrong thing, at the wrong time, in the wrong way can be very harmful to the animal.
- Find your nearest wildlife rehabilitator immediately by contacting your local animal shelter, veterinarian, animal control, Ministry of Natural Resources (1-800-667-1940) or by visiting [www.tc.umn.edu/~devo0028/contact.htm](http://www.tc.umn.edu/~devo0028/contact.htm)
- To reduce stress on the animal during transportation, please turn the radio off and leave your children and pets at home.



## Common Wildlife Situations

Following are some common situations and natural behaviours with different wildlife species that may help you to determine whether wildlife needs your help.

Some general thoughts to keep in mind include:

- be sure that the animal does not show any signs of needing rescuing (see article above)
- any animal that has been brought in by a dog or cat, even if it doesn't look injured, needs immediate medical attention
- if you have to chase an animal to catch it (and it escapes!), it doesn't need help
- handling an animal will not normally prevent a mother from accepting the baby back
- when trying to reunite orphans with their mother, you need to keep out of the way and out of sight (wildlife moms will not jeopardize their own safety), so monitor from a distance

### Cottontail Rabbits

Rabbits are extremely difficult to rehabilitate--the stress of human handling can cause shock and even death.

Mothers leave the nest during the day to keep attention away from the young and only return to nurse babies two or three times a day, usually at dusk and dawn. Baby cottontail rabbits are on their own at about three weeks of age and about 4" long, warm and active. So letting mother raise them and keeping children and pets away for this short time is their best chance of survival.

If you have found or uncovered a nest of rabbits, they are warm and show no signs of injury, put the babies back where you found them and cover them up with the nesting material or grass. Moving a rabbit's nest is not

recommended. To be sure mother is coming back to feed them, you can place pieces of string over the nest in a checkerboard pattern. If the string has been moved after the next feeding time (dawn or dusk), or the babies are still warm, the mother has returned to feed them.

## Squirrels

If a baby squirrel is following people and pets, it is looking for food and absolutely needs rescuing. Baby squirrels are about the only mammal that will make a bee-line to climb on your shoe or up your pantleg looking for help.

Sometimes a squirrel will fall out of a nest and mom will retrieve it, no matter how big it seems, as long as it is warm and healthy. If you've found a single baby squirrel beneath a tree and it shows no signs of needing rescuing, put it in a small container attached to or at the base of the tree, leave the area and monitor from a distance. Keep the baby warm by filling a small soda bottle with hot water, wrap it in a towel, and brace it inside the box. Do NOT cover the animal—mom needs to see the baby. If the mother has not retrieved the baby in an hour or two, it might need rescuing. Never leave a baby squirrel out overnight since the mother will not retrieve it after dark. It needs rescuing, at least temporarily, at this point.

If you have found more than one baby squirrel at the bottom of a tree, the babies might be orphaned and may need rescuing.

If you have recently excluded a squirrel and found babies left behind, immediately put the babies in a small box as close as possible to the entrance, leave the area and monitor from a distance. Squirrels moms are extremely dedicated and, given the chance, will almost always retrieve her babies and move them to one of her back-up nests.

## Raccoons

Older baby raccoons often play under their mother's supervision. Before disturbing them, observe from a distance to see if the mother is indeed watching over them.

Baby raccoons seen crawling on the ground or wandering on their own during the day are usually orphaned and need rescuing. Baby raccoons with their eyes closed probably need rescuing. If they are still warm though, mom may have dropped them during transport—monitor from a distance for a short time to see if mom comes back.

If you have recently excluded a raccoon from your attic or other area and found babies left behind, immediately put the babies in a small box as close as possible to the entrance, leave the area and monitor from a distance. Keep the baby warm by filling a small soda bottle with hot water, wrap it in a towel, and brace it inside the box. As long as the babies are

**warm** and not in imminent danger, leave them out during the first night, at least for a few hours, since the mother will usually retrieve them during the night.

## Skunks

Skunks often take older babies out for walks during the night. If you see a baby during the night, observe from a distance to see if the mother is watching over them.

If you find a baby skunk out during the day, it is usually orphaned and needs rescuing.

## Chipmunks and Groundhogs

It is very unusual to find a baby chipmunk or groundhog. If you find one, it is probably orphaned and needs rescuing.

## Fawns

Fawns are often found lying quietly in a field or by the side of a road—this is normal. Mothers leave the young during the day to draw attention away from them and come back several times a day to nurse. If you find a fawn and it is not showing signs of rescuing (see article above), leave it there (leave quickly so it doesn't follow) and check back in 4-8 hours. Note that the Rideau Valley Wildlife Sanctuary does not have the facilities to rehabilitate deer. If you have found an orphaned fawn, call us to find the closest rehabilitator.



## Our Wishlist

### Rehabilitation Supplies

- towels, sheets, receiving blankets, fleece
- heating pads, hot water bottles
- small stuffed animals
- cat litter boxes, cat condos
- pet carriers, aquariums
- pet food dishes, crocks and water bowls
- hamster water bottles
- heavy-duty gloves, welding gloves
- rodent block
- striped sunflower seeds
- walnuts, almonds, chestnuts, acorns
- apples, bananas, grapes
- yams, broccoli, corn
- leafy greens, dandelions
- digital camera
- office supplies

### Cleaning Products

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

### Services

- printing
- accounting
- construction and trades (heating, electrical, plumbing, drywall, carpentry)

### Veterinary Supplies

- disposable gloves
- gauze, cotton batting, vet wrap
- syringes and needles
- lab coats, scrubs
- incubators

### Construction/Caging Materials

- lumber, plywood
- ½” and 1” welded wire mesh
- tin roofing
- fencing materials
- freezers (energy efficient)
- vinyl flooring
- full-spectrum lighting

Many Thanks To...





## How You Can Get Involved in Wildlife Rehabilitation

### Construction/Trades

Help with building and maintaining our new facility.

### Fundraiser

Help raise funds from the public, foundations and corporations.

### Animal Care Assistant

Help to care for the animals at the sanctuary.

### Foster Caregiver

Care for wildlife in your own home.

### Release Caregiver

Provide a release site for rehabilitated wildlife.

### Cage Builder

Build indoor caging, outdoor enclosures and nesting boxes.

### Office Support

Help with newsletters, mailings and data.



## I would like to help injured, sick or orphaned wildlife!

Our work is made possible through the generous donations from the community, foundations and corporations. With your support, we can help give a second chance at life to even more animals.

Name:

Address:

City:

Province: PC:

Email:

Phone:

Date:

Donation: \$

### Membership:

- Individual \$25/year
- Family \$40/year
- Student/Senior \$15/year
- School \$35/year
- Life \$500
- Small Business \$100/year
- Corporate \$1000/year

Cheque

Cash:

For secure **Credit Card** payments, please visit our website at <http://www.rideauwildlife.org> or **CanadaHelps** at <http://www.canadahelps.org> and search for Rideau Valley Wildlife Sanctuary.

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

### THANK YOU FOR HELPING US TO HELP THE ANIMALS!

Tax-deductible receipts are issued for donations or memberships over \$10.00

(Charitable Registration # 82731 7744 RR0001)