



# Rideau Valley Wildlife Sanctuary Newsletter



(613) 258-9480

Spring 2011

## Spring Rush Begins

The Rideau Valley Wildlife Sanctuary (RVWS) was able to help 310 animals in 2010, bringing the total number of animals admitted to our facility to 1,500 since we opened in 2005. More than 100 volunteers helped care for the animals in-centre or helped with other jobs around the facility. We were also able to provide five summer interns with valuable career-related experience in animal husbandry.

This spring saw a later wildlife birthing season than normal. But the recent storms have caused havoc in the wildlife community. Downed trees and winds have meant a recent rush of orphaned wildlife that we are scrambling to help. We expect to admit up to 400 small mammals this year.

We are also excited to be helping turtles this year—all turtle species, except painted turtles, are species at risk in Ontario. In cooperation with Turtle S.H.E.L.L. Tortue, RVWS will serve as a drop-off location for injured turtles, where we will provide immediate medical attention until they can be transferred to another rehabilitator if necessary.

In this newsletter, we take a look back at some of our most memorable patients, and stories from our clients and volunteers. With wildlife birthing season upon us, we also provide some tips and advice for co-existing peacefully with our wild neighbours.

Please accept our gratitude for your continued support. With your help, we can give a second chance to even more wildlife in 2011. We wish you a lovely spring!

Linda Laurus  
Director

*Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has.*  
~ Margaret Mead

### Wishlist Spotlight: A Modern Computer

We desperately need to update our ancient computer. As we are working with photos, video, databases and high-speed internet connections, we need a high-quality model that can do the job. If you have a spare computer to give away, whether desktop or laptop, we would be happy to give it a good home.

### HBC Rewards

You can donate your HBC reward points to help the Rideau Valley Wildlife Sanctuary purchase much-needed supplies:

- go to [www.hbc rewards.com/community](http://www.hbc rewards.com/community)
- click *Donate to an Existing Community*
- enter our Public ID#: 9874818
- follow the instructions to donate all or a percentage of your points.

Thank you for your support!

### Authorized Wildlife Rehabilitators in Ottawa

<b>Mammals and Turtles</b>	<b>Rideau Valley Wildlife Sanctuary</b> <a href="http://www.rideauwildlife.org">www.rideauwildlife.org</a> 613-258-9480
<b>Birds</b>	<b>Wild Bird Care Centre</b> <a href="http://www.wildbirdcarecentre.org">www.wildbirdcarecentre.org</a> 613-828-2849
<b>Bats</b>	<b>Matt Saunders</b> 613-387-2475
<b>Reptiles</b>	<b>Paul Goulet</b> 613-822-8924
<b>Other</b>	<b>Ministry of Natural Resources</b> 1-800-667-1940

## Our Memorable Wild Patients

When people hear about RVWS and the work we do, the question they ask most often is, “Where do the animals come from?” In this issue, we recount some of the more memorable stories from the last six years—stories about animals, the people who found them and volunteers who cared for them. *All of the animals in these stories were successfully released back to the wild.*

2005

A baby squirrel had a lame hind leg but x-rays did not show any injuries. Margaret P, our first foster volunteer, massaged the squirrel’s lame leg twice a day upon advice from a homeopath. The squirrel regained full use of her leg and was released in the spring.



2006

Not a happy story but a happy ending—a baby cottontail rabbit was rescued from being abused by teenagers on Parliament Hill on Canada Day.



2007

“Ms. Muffet” was rescued by a passerby on Greenbank Road who noticed some noise coming from a garbage can, where she found a baby raccoon sealed in a plastic garbage bag.



2008

We received an extremely emaciated adult Red Fox that had a severe case of mange. Mange, a skin mite, can be fatal but easily treated if caught in time.



Join the Rideau Valley Wildlife Sanctuary on *Facebook!*



Another sad story in that teenagers were found abusing a baby raccoon, but happy in that a bystander intervened. "Jaws" had several surgeries under the care of Dr. Turmel, Richmond Animal Hospital, and his broken jaw and extracted tooth healed remarkably well.



'Sinead' the skunk arrived almost completely bald except for her head and feet. As you can see from the photos, the infamous skunk markings are visible in the pigments of her skin. After medical treatment, she grew back a lustrous, full coat of fur.



2009

"Hat" the raccoon kit came in with a broken femur but his leg mended beautifully



2010

George the groundhog was found by a dog, but mended beautifully.



## Wait! That Baby Rabbit Might not be Orphaned.

Eastern Cottontail Rabbits are extremely difficult to rehabilitate because they are so sensitive. If a cottontail shows no signs of illness or injury, it is best to leave a nest where you find it.

### Natural Behaviour

Rabbits make their nests in burrows, a depression in a garden and even in the middle of a lawn. The nest is usually covered with dried grass and bits of the mother's fur. Mothers leave the nest during the day to draw attention away from the young. The mother usually returns when it's dark (at dusk and dawn) to nurse the bunnies, so you may never see the mother.

### Found a Baby Rabbit?

Most young rabbits do not need rescuing. A young rabbit is on its own at 3–4 weeks old. At this age, they are about the size of a fist or 4" long (see top photo), with eyes open and ears erect. Babies that are long and slim with eyes closed (see bottom photo), still need to nurse from their mother to survive.

### Found a Nest of Bunnies?

If you found a nest of babies, especially if their eyes are closed (see bottom photo), their best chance of survival is to let the mother raise them. If the bunnies show no signs of illness or injury, put them back where you found them and cover them up with the nesting material. Moving a rabbit's nest is not recommended. Keep children and pets away from them for this short time. If you need to let a pet out during the day, you can protect the nest by covering it temporarily with a recycle bin or laundry basket with a rock on top.

To be sure the mother is coming back to feed them, place several twigs on top of the whole nest in a checkerboard fashion. If the twigs have been moved after the next feeding time (dawn or dusk), the mother returned to feed them.



## Choosing an Animal Control Company

While most wildlife situations can be solved easily and cost-effectively on your own with our guidance, there may be times where you need professional help with wildlife removal or to animal-proof your home.

There are wildlife control companies that practice a humane approach to wildlife services and, on the opposite scale, those who do not take the best interest of the animal into consideration. Visit the Ottawa Humane Society's website for a list of questions you can ask before hiring a wildlife control company (<http://www.ottawahumane.ca/wildlife.html>).

## RVWS Volunteer Opportunities

Volunteers are at the heart of our organization. We are always looking for enthusiastic, dedicated volunteers to join our team. The following lists our major volunteer positions and we welcome your suggestions on other ways to help.

- Construction/Trades
- Fundraiser
- Animal Care Assistant
- Release Caregiver
- Cage Builder
- Driver
- Office Support

## Wildlife Tips

### Live-Trapping is NOT humane!

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 to die from starvation and dehydration, unless they are lucky enough to get to a wildlife rehabber.

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 kilometre
- 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 visit our website or call us for advice.

### 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 needs 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.

To reduce stress on the animal during transportation, please turn the radio off and leave your children and pets at home.

## Our Corporate and Foundation Supporters

A special thank you to:

- Community Foundation of Ottawa
- Elvis Sighting Society
- HIVA Environmental Fund
- IceGreen Reusable Eco Bags
- TD Friends of the Environment Foundation, Ottawa Chapter and Ottawa Valley Chapter



## Our Wishlist

We are always grateful for donations of new and gently-used supplies:

- receiving blankets, towels, sheets, fleece
- electric heating pads
- cat litter boxes
- tip-proof pet food dishes, crocks, water bowls
- puppy/dog kibble
- striped sunflower seeds
- natural foods (walnuts, chestnuts, acorns, pinecones)
- fruits (apples, bananas, grapes, berries)
- vegetables (yams, broccoli, corn, leafy greens)
- kleenex, paper towels
- x-large trash bags
- dish soap, bleach, laundry detergent
- liquid hand sanitizer
- disposable and rubber gloves
- modern computer, screen and keyboard (or laptop)
- telephone (preferably speaker capability)
- video camera
- postage stamps
- paper, envelopes, etc.
- lumber (all sizes), plywood
- ½" and 1" welded wire mesh
- printing sponsor

## 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)