

ANSWERS TO FREQUENT WILDLIFE QUESTIONS

Wildlife emergency? Please call 716-629-3528!

Note: If you find a wild animal (especially a baby), please do not attempt to raise it on your own. We do our best to reunite mothers with babies – they may not be orphaned after all! Many species have specialized dietary needs and will soon decline in health if not cared for immediately, as well as the possibility for zoonotic (animal to human) disease transmission. Wildlife is protected and there are permit requirements to rehabilitate.

P.S.: We are always looking for volunteers! If you are interested in learning about how to help our wild neighbors and assist in their care, please call 716-799-8653!

RABBITS

- Eastern Cottontail rabbits grow very quickly. From birth to leaving the nest, it takes only 3-4 weeks.
- Rabbits that are hamster size, with ears up, round eyes, and spiky-looking fur are old enough to be on their own and should be returned to the tall grass.
- Babies that have smooth slick fur and ears lying back should be returned to the nest. It is always advisable to wear gloves but if accidental contact was made with human hands, their mothers will not reject them.
- If you are concerned that mom has abandoned the nest, please note that she only returns to the nest at dusk and dawn in order to protect her babies from predators. To see if she does return, tie string or dental floss in a criss-cross pattern across the nest to see if mom comes back. If there is no nest disruption in 24 hours, please contact the Wildlife Department at 629-3528.
- Your dog found the nest? A laundry basket or recycling bin can be placed over the nest temporarily while the dog is outside. Your dog is still trying to get into the nest, even with a cover? The dog may have to be leashed when outside for a couple weeks or so. Thank you for your patience! Remember, mama cottontail does a much better job raising babies than a human can. They will soon be on their way.
- Young cottontails that have visible injuries OR confirmed contact with a cat should be admitted for treatment due to the high risk of infection.

SQUIRRELS

- Young squirrels that have recently been found on the ground that are active and possibly vocalizing, should be put in a shallow container and left by the den tree or near to where it was found in order to give the mom an opportunity to reclaim her young. Did the nest get destroyed? Not to worry, mama squirrel has alternate

nesting sites that she can bring her babies to. If mom has not returned for the babies after a few hours, they likely are in need of medical care.

- Young squirrels that appear lethargic, cold, and/or dehydrated should be brought to and treated in our wildlife hospital.

BABY BIRDS

- What does your bird look like? If it has bald patches with no feathers, it may be a nestling and needs to be back with mom ASAP. Are you able to return the bird back to its nest? If that is impossible, please call us at 629-3528.
- Most birds grow in the nest to a certain stage and then “fledge” or leave the nest and flutter to the ground. The young birds are still cared for on the ground by the adults for a number of days while they develop the necessary skill and strength for flight.
- Unfortunately, there are cats and predators everywhere and there is no way to relocate them to a spot that is absolutely safe. In most cases, they should be left alone. You may place them in a nearby shrub or bush – just a couple steps away – so the parent bird is able to find them again.
- No one can raise an animal better than its’ own parents. We take careful measures in the hospital to avoid imprinting.
- If you find a baby bird that is visibly injured or bleeding, it may be in need of pain medication and antibiotics. Please call the Wildlife Department (629-3528).

WATERFOWL

- If a family of waterfowl is living on, traveling through your property or nesting, it is a temporary situation that will change as the ducklings grow.
- If the birds are trapped by a man-made structure or the young are obviously orphaned, a rehabilitator should be contacted (call 629-3528).
- Birds, nests and eggs are federally protected and should not be disturbed without a permit from the Fish and Wildlife Service.

BIRD NESTS – If a songbird nest is in danger of destruction due to human intervention or natural causes, it is sometimes possible to move it. Please contact the US Fish and Wildlife Service via phone call or their website to obtain a permit to do so. The SPCA does not have the equipment or manpower to take in eggs with the goal to hatch them.

DEER

- Early in a fawn’s life the doe periodically “stashes” her young in what she deems a suitable place. The fawn then usually stays motionless and waits for her return.
- If a fawn is vocalizing out of hunger for several hours and begins to wander, the fawn may be in trouble and a rehabilitator should be called.
- We do NOT rehabilitate deer. Please call Leondra “Fuzzy” Scherer for deer rescue and rehabilitation 716-909-8536 or 716-626-9797.

TURTLES

- Hatchling turtles are ready to go from the minute they leave the nest. If you find one or a group, please let them be. They are not in need of rehabilitation.
- Turtle crossing the road? Kindly, move the turtle to the side of the road, in the direction it was going! (Snapping turtles: pick up from the back of the shell to move. Do NOT drag from the tail.) Female turtles will often pick routes alongside roads to lay their eggs.
- If you see a turtle that is visibly injured or in a dangerous location (i.e. parking lot or another random place), please call us at 629-3528.

BATS/SKUNKS/RACCOONS

- Bats, skunks, and raccoons are a “Rabies Vector Species” animal in New York State. This means that these animals have a higher percentage in our region of contracting rabies than other mammals. **Please do NOT touch these animals with your bare hands.** (This does NOT mean every individual has rabies – other diseases can present with similar symptoms.)
- While often nocturnal/crepuscular, mother Raccoons or Skunks will often forage with their babies during daylight hours. This may not be abnormal. Please call us if you have any questions.
- Did you find a bat, skunk, or raccoon? Please call us at 629-3528 before touching the animal.

REGARDING NUISANCE ANIMALS

- Woodchuck living under your porch? Skunk hanging around your yard? Deer or rabbits eating your vegetable garden? There are multiple ways that you can safely and humanely deter wild animals from your residence.
 - **In crevices:** Animals look for places to hide that are dark and quiet. We can encourage them to leave by making the opposite environment. Shine a bright light or flood lamp under the crevice or around the area where the animal is frequenting. Play a radio station (talk station is the best) at a volume loud enough for the animal to hear. You may also soak rags in ammonia or pine sol and leave them around.
 - **Eating plants/veggies:** Used cat litter may be distributed throughout the garden (acts as a predator’s scent), as well as cumin. There are many OTC remedies and solutions that you can also try.
- Be sure to seal up the entryway to under your deck/shed/etc. ASAP so the animal does not return. Just be sure they’re not under there still!
- Please note, the SPCA does NOT trap nuisance animals and/or remove them from your property. We are a wildlife hospital that only has the facilities to care for sick and injured wild animals.
- If you do end up needing to hire a nuisance removal agent, be kind and do some research to find a humane company. 😊