

## What To Do In A Wildlife Emergency

Injured Raptor in Oregon - call 24hr hotline: 541-485-1320

Injured Raptor outside of Oregon - please email us

SHOCK- The Number One Killer

How to Handle an Injured Animal

Transporting an Injured Animal

Does it Really Need Rescuing?

Why Call a Wildlife Rehabilitator?

To find the nearest licensed wildlife rehabilitator or wildlife care center, call your local humane society, veterinarian, or Department of Fish & Wildlife office, Department of Natural Resources or whatever your state agency is called that deals with wildlife.

What You Can Do - You never know when you might have the opportunity to help a wild animal in distress: you may find a bird that has flown into a window, been caught by a cat, or tangled in fishing line, fencing, or kite string; a nest of babies fallen from a tree or bush; or a deer, owl, or opossum hit by a car.

The first thing to recognize is that the animal will not understand that you are trying to help it. It is conditioned by instinct, training, and usually experience to look on humans as enemies, as much to be feared as the cat or car from which you have rescued it. Possibly, on a subconscious level, an animal is aware of the difference between the hands of a friend or foe. Whether or not that is true, however, what IS true is that an injured wild animal operates from the instinctual level and, on that level, it reacts out of fear. Fear and pain.

SHOCK - The Number One Killer

The second thing to assume is that the animal will be in shock, both from the original cause of its injury or trauma, and from being handled by you. And, like with any human accident victim, shock can kill. Eliminating extra stressors and alleviating shock, therefore, are the first priorities. A bird like an owl, small falcon or hawk, or even a sparrow, that seems content to sit on your finger is in shock. As nice as it is to assume it knows you are trying to help, it is far more likely to be simply hiding the fact that it is paralyzed with fear. Very simplistically, on a physiological level, shock involves loss of body heat and fluids. Shock and stress are related and can compound each other.

Therefore, any animal (which can be safely handled by you) should be placed in a covered box, with a hot water bottle wrapped in a towel, or with the box itself placed half on a heating pad set on low, unless it is a very warm day.

Place something absorbent in the bottom of the box - newspapers, paper towels, or clean cloths with no holes or raveled edges. This helps keep the animal clean and dry, and gives it more secure footing.

Keep the animal in a quiet place, away from family or pet traffic, and at a

Temperature between 80° and 90°, and you have made the biggest contribution you can towards stabilizing its condition until you can get it to a licensed rehabilitator or care center.

Resist the temptation to check on it: you are adding stress each time you open the box or subject it to unfamiliar noises (e.g., human voices, radio) or smells, in the case of mammals. Of course, if the animal is bleeding,

Stopping the bleeding is critical. Gentle pressure at the wound site, or styptic powder or even corn starch combined with gentle pressure should be sufficient. Tourniquets are NOT a good idea unless you are trained: you can cause irreparable damage by not knowing when to let up on the pressure.

Do not try to immobilize fractures except by wrapping the whole animal securely in a towel.

Be aware of the danger of overheating the animal, particularly birds, during warm weather.

Now, call a wildlife rehabilitator or wildlife care center. If there will be a delay in the animal coming in for care, the volunteer may walk you through an attempt to replace lost fluids. This is very dangerous to attempt on your own, since it is all too easy to get fluids "down the wrong pipe." Aspirating fluids, especially on top of other injuries or stress, or with a debilitated animal, can kill.

**DO NOT OFFER FOOD:** it also could kill.

#### How to Handle an Injured Animal

PLEASE REMEMBER the Number One rule of handling wildlife: keep YOUR SAFETY foremost in your mind. No matter how noble you might be in risking life or limb in the cause of injured wildlife, you won't do much good if teeth, talons, or beak injures you first! Even though a small bird or young mammal may not be able to hurt you, gently wrapping it in a cloth as you pick it up gives you a better grip, helps keep the wings or legs from being further damaged as it struggles, and covers its eyes: if it can't see you, it has one less reason to be scared.

It is not recommended that you try to handle an adult raccoon, opossum, deer, or ANY heron or large bird of prey. Call a wildlife rehabilitation center first and they'll do their best to send a trained person with appropriate equipment.

If you must handle such an animal for its safety even before you contact a rehabilitator (e.g., it's in the middle of the road), do so with great caution. A heron will go straight for the eyes and can blind or kill you with its sharp, powerful beak; the talons of a large bird of prey can go

through your hand and you might not be able to get it to let go; a raccoon, even one which looks very weak, can break a finger; a deer can break a rib or cause even more damage if it kicks you. (Please know that these warnings are not meant to imply that these animals are mean or vicious; they are scared, in pain, cannot run away and so will try to defend themselves in any way they can.) The best suggestion in these circumstances is to get a box or blanket over the animal and leave someone with it while you call for experienced help.

### Transporting an Injured Animal

After you call a wildlife center, the quickest way to get the animal to care is the best. Though the animal may be sent to a veterinarian later, many clinics prefer that the wildlife center deal with it first. Their trained volunteers can stabilize its condition, deal with shock, blood loss, and dehydration, can immobilize fractures and/or start a program of antibiotics, as appropriate. If you can bring the animal in, that is going to be quicker than a rehabilitation center searching for a volunteer available to pick it up. Normally, a rehabilitator will be happy to do so, however, if that's the fastest way to help it or if it is an animal which could be dangerous.

If you're transporting it, remember three important things: heat, dark, and quiet. Have the car warm and have a hot water bottle in the box (unless the weather is already 80o or higher). A hot water bottle can be made from any container (even a zip-lock bag) which can be tightly closed. Fill it with hot tap water, wrap it in a light towel to protect the animal from direct contact with the hot glass or plastic, and carefully wedge it so it will not roll. Keep the box closed and placed directly on the seat. It may be tempting to let your child have the 'experience' of holding it or carrying it, but PLEASE EXPLAIN THAT YOU MUST THINK FIRST OF THE NEEDS OF THE ANIMAL. Have the radio OFF and keep voices low and to a minimum. Remember you are dealing with a wild animal, not a kitten or puppy used to the presence of humans and which finds our touch or voice soothing.

### Does it Really Need Rescuing?

Before picking up any wild animal, BE SURE IT REALLY NEEDS RESCUING! Young animals are often picked up by someone who mistakenly thinks they are orphaned, injured, or abandoned, when they are simply exploring, having left the nest on schedule and are still being cared for by their parents. Though to an untrained observer they may look too young to be on their own, usually the best thing you can do is to leave them alone! [redtail] (Exceptions: if the baby is injured, very cold to the touch, in an area of danger, or a parent is found dead. Remember, however, that most baby birds are raised by both parents and the loss of one is not an automatic death sentence for the young.) Young birds may be placed back in the nest or in a tree if found on the ground. It is UNTRUE that parents will abandon young touched by humans, although they may abandon a nest in an area where there is continuous disturbance. If you see an animal which seems orphaned or abandoned, stand back and watch from a considerable distance, or leave and come back later to see if the parent or parents return. Often a wild mammal mother will be off feeding for 4 or more hours. This is especially true with fawns,

whose primary defense in their first couple of weeks is camouflage and lack of scent. Just remember, no matter how hard even the most experienced rehabilitator might try to match the care these animals would receive in the wild, humans are still poor surrogate parents. **BE SURE THEY REALLY NEED YOUR HELP BEFORE YOU INTERVENE.**

#### Why Call a Wildlife Rehabilitator?

Often, people finding wild animals, particularly orphaned animals, want to care for them themselves. We strongly suggest against this for several reasons.

First, state and federal laws prohibit you from having in your possession any protected wildlife (most native animals), even temporarily while caring for it with the intention of releasing it. Wildlife rehabilitators or care centers are licensed to hold wildlife while it is being rehabilitated. In Oregon and many other states, licensed rehabilitators have to pass a test and are trained to recognize and deal with the injuries, illnesses, parasites, or other conditions which may be present.

Veterinarians who work with rehabilitators have many years' experience with wildlife, which can be very different from dogs and cats, even parrots and canaries.

Rehabilitators know the special formulas developed for different species, and their dietary needs and caloric requirements; can administer medications safely; and are trained to observe carefully and know the difference between normal behavior, appearance, or even droppings, and something indicating a problem. There are also diseases which you, or your pets, might catch from wildlife. The field of wildlife rehabilitation is no longer a backyard hobby but a science, with its own body of literature, journals, national trainings and certification.

Rehabilitators work closely together to provide the top care available for our wild neighbors, who surely deserve the very best - both in their own right and because so often their problem is human-related. In the best interests of the wildlife about which you so obviously care, we urge you to place their well-being above your personal attachment and turn them over to a trained, experienced, licensed rehabilitator