

The Wild Times

A Newsletter from Wild Things Sanctuary • vol. 1, no. 1, Spring 2010

The Kidnapping Epidemic!

Hundreds of babies are kidnapped every year! Being apart from their mothers many babies do not survive while the frantic mothers look everywhere for them. I am not talking about human babies; I am talking about the many different species of wildlife babies: squirrels, bunnies, deer, various birds, etc. Most are kidnapped by well intentioned humans who think that the animals' mothers have abandoned them; some are taken by people who want the baby as a "pet." Whatever the intention of the kidnapper the baby should usually be left just where it is.

As a wildlife rehabilitator, I get phone calls all the time about babies that have been found in various locations. In most instances I reply with "Put them back!" Many different species of wildlife mothers will leave their young unattended for hours every day while they forage for food. Often they are nearby and will come straight back if they hear their babies calling out in distress. Their most important goal is to raise their babies, and as humans, we can save the day for wildlife by putting the babies back and keeping pets away. I have heard extraordinary stories of the lengths that mothers will go to get back their little ones:

Once, several baby raccoons of various ages were found trapped in a garbage skip. Trying to help get them back to their moms, human rescuers sorted out the babies according to size and left in boxes near the edge of the woods. Come evening three mother raccoons emerged from the forest and gathered them up, going from box to box to make sure they had them all, and to make sure that they had the right ones!

A sadder story involves a frantic mother cottontail rabbit trying to get back to her babies in someone's yard. The gate had been shut and she couldn't get in, but all night she tried to dig under the gate. At some point she became trapped and was found dead the next morning from exhaustion and worry.

After a big storm, a squirrel nest with several babies came down. A rehabilitator left a bunch of babies in a box under the tree where she thought the nest had come from. The mother squirrel soon arrived and



This fawn was only a few days old when it was kidnapped by a young man to impress his girlfriend. Thankfully she brought the baby to Wild Things.

grabbed all the babies, one at a time, and even came back for the blanket to help build a nice new cozy nest!

A baby bird was found on the ground with the remains of a nest. A make-shift nest was made out of a margarine tub (with holes poked in the bottom), lined with bits of the old nest and dry grass, and tied to the tree with the baby placed inside. Within an hour the parents had found the baby! They continued to use the makeshift nest until the young one was ready to fledge (when they get ready to leave the nest)¹.

No matter how capable humans are, we are not a replacement for a wild animal mother. Whenever possible babies should be reunited with their mothers. Not only do wild mothers teach their young the proper behavior in order to survive, they also provide them with all of the exact right nutrients to become healthy.

For example, in some species, especially the Eastern Cottontail Rabbit, babies younger than 10 or so days almost never survive in rehabilitation because they need the unique formula of their mother's milk in order to digest and absorb all of their nutrients. Ironically, and sadly, cottontails are probably the most common babies brought to rehabilitators. Often their finders simply found the nest in the yard and thought their pets might disturb it so they bring the babies to a rehabilitator. If you ever find baby bunnies, put the nest back in the exact same spot (even if you have to rebuild it) and watch to see if the mother returns. Keep pets away for 1-3 weeks while the babies mature and they will be just fine! Baby bunnies have a better chance of surviving in the wild with

their mothers than even with the most experienced rehabilitator.

NB: Mothers of all species will accept their babies regardless of whether they have been touched by humans.

But in what instances is it OK to take the baby? When do you call a wildlife rehabilitator for help? Sometimes it is obvious- you've seen the mother or baby hit by a car, the baby has a broken limb or an obvious injury; but other times it's harder to be sure. Below is a list of instances when babies should be brought into rehabilitation:

- 1) The baby has been brought in/"toyed with" by a cat or dog. In these instances there are often internal crush injuries as well as puncture wounds from teeth or claws. You cannot always see the injuries under the fur, but if they are there they are usually fatal within a few days if left untreated. Our beloved pets carry harmful bacteria that are essentially "injected" into the baby once the baby's skin is punctured.
- 2) A baby is found wandering alone, sometimes with its eyes still closed. In this case something has usually happened to the mother and the starving baby has left the nest to go look for help.
- 3) A baby is cold, emaciated or weak, vomiting and/or disorientated (stumbling around)
- 4) You can see parasites on or around the babies- fleas, flies, ticks
- 5) The baby is crying persistently and the mother is not answering their cry

As for adult animals, if in doubt about whether they need help, know that if you are able to get close to an adult animal without it running away, something is usually wrong.

By following these simple guidelines we all have the ability to ensure the safety and survival of our native wildlife babies.

¹Fledglings often hop about on the ground for the first few days after leaving the nest. Many get scooped up and brought to wildlife rehabilitators at this age as their rescuers think that they have been abandoned. However this is normal fledgling behavior and their parents are usually close by and will continue feeding the little fledgling until it is ready to eat and fly on its own.

² How can you tell if the mother bunny returns? Get some yarn or string and make a tic-tac-toe pattern over the nest. If the mother comes back to feed the babies this pattern will be messed up. You can also pick up the babies and if they feel nice and pudgy, their mother has been back to feed them.

Mission Statement

Wild Things Sanctuary (WTS) is dedicated to helping native wildlife through rescuing and rehabilitating debilitated and orphaned/displaced animals until they are ready for release back into the wild. Eventually, WTS is also aiming to provide a sanctuary for non-releasable native animals.

WTS is also committed to improving the well-being of wildlife through public education; focusing on how humans can safely and peacefully coexist with native wildlife, and on wildlife's importance to man and the environment.

Letter from the President

To all wildlife lovers,

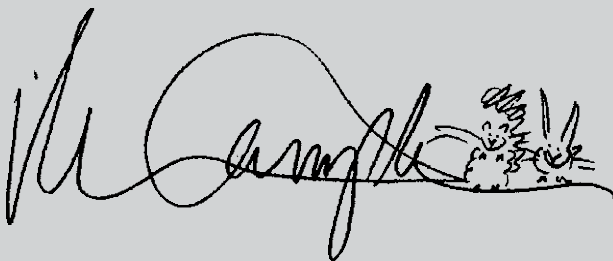
Welcome to the first issue of *The Wild Times*, a biannual newsletter from Wild Things Sanctuary.

The Wild Times aims to educate readers on different aspects of wildlife and wildlife rehabilitation. This issue covers a few important topics that come up during the spring and summer months when the wildlife babies are born; with a little knowledge from the public, many wildlife babies can be rescued, reunited with their parents, or just left in place, allowing their parents to retrieve them.

If you find a baby animal make sure it's parents are around before "kidnapping" the baby, which can be fatal to young animals. If trapping wildlife, make sure you don't separate mothers from their babies. And never, *ever* think about keeping a wild animal as a pet.

We can all be guardian angels to the wildlife all around us. Read on to find out more!

Happy spring and summer, and don't forget to check out the WTS website for more information: www.wildthingssanctuary.org.



Victoria Campbell

President, *Wild Things Sanctuary*

Trapping & Relocating: A Wild Times Report

All of us know the importance of having a roof over our heads, a warm, safe place to sleep, and food to keep us going. We spend a lot of time in our homes, making them more comfortable and more livable. We keep the pantry stocked and frown upon strangers loitering around our front doors. Guess what? Wildlife does the exact same thing!

In order to survive, all wild animals need to find shelter, food, and a secure place to give birth and raise their young. Wildlife really wants nothing to do with humans, however, as the human population



This baby groundhog was orphaned when it's mother was "trapped & relocated"

increases and expands into wildlife territory many wild areas are no longer available to wild animals. In order to survive they must find homes in and around human homes where there is usually always food available and hiding places that are kept heated during the coldest of the winter months. Offer an invitation of food or shelter to a wild animal, either intentionally or accidentally, and it will probably be readily accepted!

Some species adapt so well to these new living situations that their populations can increase dramatically. Consequently, homeowners are faced with various wildlife related problems, from nuisance situations to health hazards and fires caused by rodents gnawing on electrical wires.

Though home repairs/modifications and tolerance are the best solutions for both humans and animals, most humans' initial reaction is to trap the wild animals, sometimes inhumanely, and kill them or relocate them miles away; humans label wildlife pests and worry about disease and damage to their property.

But will trapping and relocating solve the problem? In fact, trapping and relocating is rarely a long-term solution and can actually cause the spread of wildlife diseases and certainly cause a lot of animal suffering. With a little education there are much better solutions available if you are having conflicts with wild animals in and around your home.

To begin with, it is important to know that wildlife will not willingly threaten or try to harm people or their property. As mentioned previously, animals are looking for food and shelter, a safe place to live and to raise their young. Trapping wildlife does not address the

problem of the availability of food and shelter, and therefore trapping is not an effective method of wildlife control. The vacated niche left empty by trapping an animal is quickly filled by another animal, or the original resident may return as many animals have strong homing instincts: a male raccoon can travel as many as 5–10 miles each night, and bats routinely travel hundreds of miles to their hibernacula.

Trapping can also lead to tremendous animal suffering. Trapped wild animals can severely injure themselves in attempts to escape from the trap, and trapping often leads to young being separated from their parents and dying a slow painful death of starvation.

While many people think that live-trapping animals and taking them "to the woods" where they will live happily ever after is an ideal solution for all involved, this isn't actually what happens. More than 70% of relocated animals die soon after relocation due to stress, starvation, dehydration and aggression of resident animals. Newly introduced animals do not know the land, where to get water, food, and what predators are out there. Resident animals will see the new animal as a threat and attack. If young animals are relocated without their parents, their deaths are even more likely as they do not know how to find food, hunt, or protect themselves. The same will happen to them if their parents are relocated and they are left behind with no one to look after them. Many animals, such as raccoons, will stay with their mothers for up to a year, after they are fully grown, before they are ready to strike out on their own. Finally, there may even be problems if animal families are relocated together; the stress of being trapped and moved may cause the mother to kill her young.

Trapping and relocating wildlife, transporting it off your property, and releasing it elsewhere is also illegal in many states, New York included. Relocating an animal may not only give someone else a nuisance problem, but it also facilitates the spread of diseases, such as rabies and distemper, Lyme disease and West Nile virus. Handling wildlife also puts you at risk for disease.

If an animal must be removed, make sure you call a qualified nuisance wildlife controller who knows how to handle animals. Find a company or individual dedicated to wildlife removal (i.e., not those who do it "part time" or as an "add on service") with at least three years experience. Ask about their methods of catching a nuisance animal. You want to find someone who uses humane animal removal strategies

involving one-way doors or "hands-on" removal, and companies should not trap and relocate animals as a rule. A good nuisance animal controller should also offer

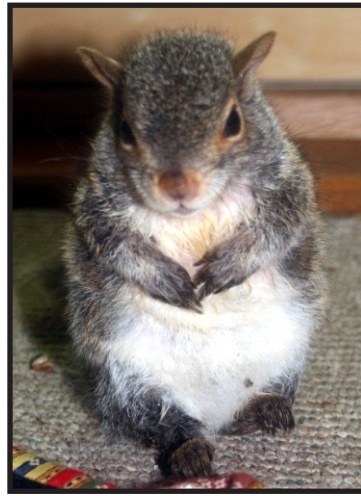


Building a brush pile near your home helps encourage wildlife to live someplace other than your home.

preventative long-term solutions that solve wildlife problems at their source: blocking the entry sites into your home, working out ways to deter re-entry (such as the use of biodegradable deodorizers), and preventing animal damage (via animal proofing and habitat modification). Repairs on the entire serviced area (not just the entry holes) should be guaranteed. Professional wildlife controllers can help humanely catch the animal and any babies, so that wildlife families are kept together. Always presume that young are present and make sure that families are reunited before re-releasing the animals (this is the "3R Approach": Removal, Reunion, Release). *Cont. on page 6.*

A Special Grey Squirrel

Little "Stella Bella" the grey squirrel was about 6 weeks old when she was found at the base of a tree and brought to a local veterinarian. When the vet handed her over to Wild Things he told us that she was a bit "dopey".



But Stella wasn't dopey, she was what is called a "Down's Baby". Down's squirrels don't necessarily have the same chromosomal abnormalities as humans with Down's syndrome, but they are born with shortened limbs and a short little face. Stella was fully alert and active but just not able to do all the things that a normal squirrel could do. Stella loved being at Wild Things and made friends with all the other patients and with everyone who came to visit. She loved to play with her toys and with others and loved to run around as fast as her little legs could take her. Sadly, she only lived to be about 6 months old, but she spread immeasurable joy in that short time. In her honor The Wild Times will have a special section called "Stella's Corner" (see page 6) that will give the readers food for thought about other living creatures.

Mama Opossum

Mama Opossum was found dying on the side of the road after being hit by a car. A good Samaritan picked her up and brought her to a vet. Upon arrival Mama was found to have 13 babies in her pouch. Sadly, 7 of the babies had died in the accident, but 5 were alive and well. Mama's injuries were cleaned and sewed up and she and her babies were taken to Wild Things Sanctuary to recover. Across the room from her cage was a small cage with 2 orphaned baby opossums. Within 24 hours Mama started calling to the little orphans and the babies started calling back. The babies were brought to Mama and she promptly took them and shoved them into her pouch with her nose. She adopted them as her own. Eventually all were released and live in the Wild Things woods.



Whistle Pig Sisters

Danny & Daisy were 5oz baby groundhogs (a.k.a. woodchucks or "whistle pigs") when they came to Wild Things (see picture page 3). Their mother had been trapped and sadly neither the trapper nor the homeowner thought to check if she was a nursing mother before they relocated her far away. Several days later a tiny little groundhog emerged from the burrow crying for its mother. The next day another one emerged. These little orphans came to Wild Things and were soon stabilized and on the road to recovery. Most groundhogs give birth to 4-6 babies, so it is likely that there were more babies in the burrow who were not strong enough to get out and look for help, but Danny & Daisy made it and within months were about 6 lbs each and big enough to be released before the cold weather. They were such characters and were constantly escaping and casing mischief while at Wild Things! It was sad to say goodbye, but Wild Things friends found them a great spot to live far away from anyone's gardens or homes.



PATIENT NEWS

A Young American Crow

This young crow was only a fledgling when it was found with both wings broken. It was uncertain how the youngster received its injuries, but if it was ever able to fly again it was going to require a couple of months to heal and get ready to live on its own in the wild. The vets were



pessimistic that it would be able to fly after such severe wing injuries, but they wanted to give it a chance. When animals are this young rehabilitators must be careful that the young animal does not "imprint" on humans, thereby thinking that it is a human and not a crow; if this happens the animal is unreleasable. Great care was taken with this bird to make sure that it understood it was a crow; a difficult task when it required months of contact with humans. It was given mirrors and crow shaped toys. After its bandages came off the young bird was given physical therapy and lots of space to exercise its wings and relearn flight. Against all odds this little crow did very well and was last seen flying off through the woods, perhaps to join a local group of wild crows.

The Little Red Throated Hummingbird



Hummingbirds are so tiny and have such high metabolisms that even a few hours without food can mean death. This young hummingbird was just a fledgling when it was found on the sidewalk, dehydrated and barely alive. It was brought to Wild Things and until it learned how to feed itself it had to be fed almost constantly with a special baby hummingbird formula administered by a tiny syringe with a yellow plastic flower on its end. Soon the little hummer learned to associate the yellow flower with food and figured out that it could use the hummingbird feeder in its cage with the same little plastic flower. Everyday it was allowed a few hours to fly around the room and exercise its wings. When it was out it loved to investigate anything that was brightly colored in case the bright color was a flower filled with nectar and little yummy insects. Once released, the little hummer stayed around the feeders at Wild Things all summer before heading south for the winter. At 2g this little one has been Wild Things' smallest patient.

A Young Eastern Screech Owl

Ophelia is a little Eastern Screech Owl. She was about a year old when she came to Wild Things. One night, while out hunting, she was hit by a truck. Amazingly she survived but sustained bad injuries to both eyes. Owls rely on both vision and hearing to hunt, and may survive in the wild with only one good eye as long as their hearing is intact. No one knew whether either of Ophelia's eyes would heal and she needed several months of recovery time and various eye and anti-inflammatory medications. It became clear that one eye was irreparably damaged, but it was uncertain if the other eye had enough sight to allow this little owl to successfully hunt. Wild Things is in the process of raising funds to build a few big outdoor aviaries, and so had no place for Ophelia to practice hunting. After a few phone calls another wildlife rehabilitator offered to take her and test her hunting abilities with live prey. She passed the various tests with flying colors! One night her cage was left open and off she flew, back to the wild.



What does *The Wild Times* think of all this? We think that if an animal is not causing damage or harm they should be left alone. Many species of wildlife will perform free rodent control for people. Being tolerant of species like raptors, fox, coyotes, skunks and snakes can help restore a predator-prey balance and minimize human-wildlife conflicts. You can even build artificial raptor perches to encourage these hunters to hunt near your homes.

Consider offering wildlife more habitats on your property so that they will have places other than your house to live. As one source notes, "Lawn maintenance requires phenomenal amounts of water, fertilizer, herbicides, and pesticides that have known toxic effects on birds and other animals, not to mention the environmental effects of runoff. Every acre of these landscapes, of course, could be an acre of forest or other habitat with much greater value to both wildlife and people." (*Wild Neighbors*, pg.141).

If an animal must be removed, humane eviction strategies are by far the more ethical and biologically appropriate approach. Animals should NOT be removed from their home range; on-site release is the preferred means of conflict resolution. By releasing wild animals close to where they were caught they are able to go to another den nearby and still have their food source (animals often have multiple den sites). Releasing onsite also keeps presence of animals and possible diseases in the environment in a healthy balance. And remember if you relocate an animal far away, another one will just move in and take the empty space, or the resident may return putting itself at risk by traveling through unfamiliar territory as they try to return to their original home range.

Investigations made by *The Wild Times* has discovered that there is a tendency to adopt a band-aid approach to wildlife intrusion problems, often dealing only with the existing problem and neglecting potential problem areas. This does not end up solving the problem, but is more costly in the long-run, and will certainly cause more animal suffering. Preventive measures have proven to be less costly and less stressful for both wildlife and the homeowner.

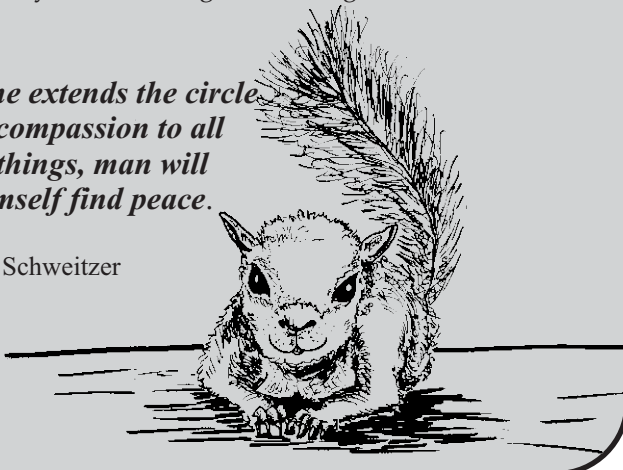
To learn about long-term solutions that solve wildlife problems at their source, take a look at Wild Things Sanctuary's webpage "Living with Wildlife" (<http://www.wildthingssanctuary.org/living-with-wildlife.html>), where you will find reprints of some great fact sheets for coexisting with various forms of wildlife, as well as ideas for preventing human-wildlife conflicts, and tips for keeping your house secure from uninvited wild animals. And the next time a mother animal has decided to nest near or around your home, she probably picked that spot because larger predators won't come near a human household with human pets around. Look upon it as a compliment and a privilege!

Stella's Corner

Everyone can be a guardian angel to wildlife!

*Until he extends the circle
of his compassion to all
living things, man will
not himself find peace.*

~Albert Schweitzer



Wild Animals Are Not Pets

One of the most important things to know about wild animals is that *wild animals are not pets!* Looking through the pictures in this newsletter and on the Wild Things website, or seeing wild animals outside, people may think, "Oh, that animal is so cute: I want one!" But as one colleague remarked to me recently, "Wild animals are as good as dead the day someone decides to keep them as a pet". This article will take a look at why keeping a wild animal is a bad and misguided idea, and often results in the sad life and even death of an animal, as well as in injuries and diseases to humans.

People who find wild animals, especially orphans, are often tempted to care for these animals. Why is this a bad idea? To begin with, in most places there are both federal and local laws prohibiting the possession of wildlife without a special license. In other words, it is illegal to possess a wild animal, even if your intention is to eventually release the animal.

Secondly, wildlife carries fleas, ticks, lice and other diseases and parasites that can be transmitted to humans and their pets. Conversely, wild animals can also contract sicknesses from humans and their pets.

Wildlife also needs to be handled in special ways. They have very sharp claws, teeth, beaks and talons, and will not hesitate to use them!

Another reason not to keep wildlife is that each species has very specific dietary and behavioral needs. Without the right diet animals can become very sick and die, and without the right behavioral enrichment and same-species companionship, animals can become aggressive and/or end up with retarded mental growth, making them unable to survive in the wild and unmanageable to keep in captivity. People wanting to keep a wild animal may also not know that wild animals are great escape artists and special caging and equipment are needed to keep animals healthy and happy and to keep one's home from being destroyed!

Finally, if improperly raised, wild animals may lose their fear of humans and become tame; these animals will not survive in the wild, and may even be caught and put down if the animal starts bothering members of the public after learning to associate humans with food. It is very important to remember that wild animals are not like domestic animals; they need specialized care, including special capture and handling, diets, caging. Without such specialized care, wild animals often die or are killed.

Baby animals look cute and cuddly, but do not be tempted into keeping a little wild baby. Babies will grow up into adults with very strong survival instincts and will eventually turn wild, and usually aggressive towards humans. I have raised and released hundreds of animals. Many of these animals are babies when they arrive at Wild Things. As babies I give them everything that they need; food, warmth and even affection, but I also have to know when to keep my distance and let them learn both who/what they are and what they need to do as animals to stay alive. No matter how much time I spend with a baby animal, at a certain point their wild instincts will kick in and that sweet little baby squirrel will suddenly not only take the nut out of your hand, but give you a deep bite and/or scratch as well! And I could not be happier when this happens as it means that I did my job well and that that squirrel is wild and understands how to protect itself.

Last summer I got a call from a woman trying to raise 3 baby bunnies. One baby had died and the other two were sick; she wanted to know if the remaining 2 could come to Wild Things. The baby bunnies arrived in very bad shape. One was half the weight it should have been,

and the other was not much more than a third of its proper weight. The latter also had cataracts, it was blind due to poor nutrition, and died hours after admission. The other one started gaining weight, but then started breaking bones. Due to the poor nutrition it received the first few weeks of its life, it had contracted metabolic bone disease and its bones were very weak. This is a very painful condition which can also cause internal organs to become deformed with growth, and the bunny had to be kept in a tiny cage for 2 months to allow its bones to heal. Eventually, after a lot of care and visits to the vet, the bunny was able to be released (picture at right). Bunnies are hard to raise even by trained rehabilitators. If only this well meaning finder had called earlier, it would have saved lives and a lot of pain and distress.

A college student had kept a grey squirrel as a "pet" for 3 years. Returning home, her parents wouldn't let it in the house as it was destructive and chewed things up, which is a natural behavior in the wild. No one would adopt it as it is illegal to possess a squirrel and the animal was sometimes aggressive towards strangers. The squirrel was unable to be released as it had no idea to survive in the wild; what foods to eat, how to build a nest, who was friend or foe. Last I heard, this poor little animal had been passed around from place to place and was still looking for a permanent home.

A couple thought it would be fun to raise a few baby raccoons. They did a good job addressing their nutritional needs and the babies got big and healthy and in the fall were ready to be released. The well-meaning humans were glad to let the raccoons go as the animals were now very big and strong and had started tearing up their house and marking "their territory" with urine and feces. Unfortunately, the animals had been over-socialized with people and thought that humans were their friends. To date, at least one of them has been shot by another member of the public who thought the raccoon was rabid after it would not stop following his family and children around and tried to get into their house.

These are all sad stories that might have been prevented. If you find a wild animal in trouble, please have the animals' well being as your first priority and contact a wildlife rehabilitator or a wildlife center. Specially trained and licensed wildlife rehabilitators know how to recognize and diagnosis even subtle injuries, illnesses, parasites and

other conditions. They are familiar with ways to handle wild animals and to minimize and manage risks that the animals' sharp teeth, claws and talons present! Rehabilitators know how to stabilize and medicate animals who are in shock or are injured, and know the correct dietary requirements of babies and adults so that the animals will not get sick. Rehabilitators have proper caging and enrichment materials for animals of different species and know how to preserve the wildness of wildlife so that they can be returned to the wild to successfully live out their lives.

Wild animals are not here to serve humans' need to possess, or need to be emotionally connected to something. Like human children, they need to be nurtured and cared for, set up to

be able to make it on their own, and released at the right time. If you really want to handle and look after wild animals, become a trained and licensed wildlife rehabilitator!



At 3 months old this Eastern Cottontail Bunny was finally able to be released after surviving terrible nutritional deficiencies inadvertently caused by someone not trained to care for wildlife. Become a bunny expert, not a bunny napper!

For more discussion on this issue and to find a local wildlife rehabilitator, see:

<http://www.wildthingsanctuary.org>

I'd like to help Wild Things Sanctuary!

Enclosed is my tax-deductible gift of \$ _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

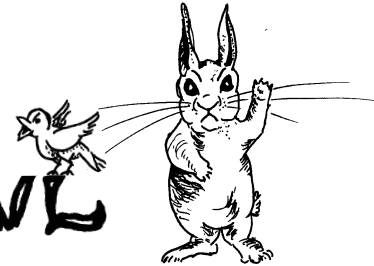
You can also donate with a credit card online at: www.wildthingsanctuary.org

Please make cheques payable to **Wild Things Sanctuary** and send to:
Wild Things Sanctuary, P.O. Box 713, Ithaca, NY 14851.





The Chirp, Chatter & Growl



Dear Wild Times,

It seems that every time I build a nice cozy nest for my babies a big scary monster thing comes and runs it over and many times my babies disappear. My bunny-in-laws tell me that I live too close to humans, but I like the area as it keeps coyotes and fox away from my babies. It would be perfect except for this big monster that sometimes comes along! What's going on?

Sincerely,

Mrs. Bunny Buncheon

Dear Mrs. Buncheon,

That scary monster is called a "lawn mower". People use it to keep their grass short. There are safeties to nesting near human houses, but lawn mowers and human pets can hurt wildlife like you. I ask all humans reading this to check the lawn before mowing it. If you find a nest of baby bunnies leave that area unmowed until the babies leave the nest (usually only takes a couple of weeks). If you disturb a nest, reassemble it and place it right back exactly where it was, putting the babies back inside the reassembled nest. The mother will find them and are not deterred by babies smelling like human hands. For more info see <http://www.wildthingssanctuary.org/what-to-do-if-you-find-an-injured-animal.html>.

Regards,

The Wild One

Dear Wild Times,

I am so angry! My wife and I were blessed with 3 gorgeous little nestlings this year. We worked around the clock to keep them fed, clean and warm. Finally it was time for them to fledge and learn how to fly. For the first few days they stayed mostly on the ground until their wings were strong enough to fly, and we continued to feed them. Well, wouldn't you know it, but one of those pesky humans came up, grabbed two of our babies and left with them!! There was nothing we could do. Why do humans do this??

Mr. Red Cardinal

Dear Mr. Cardinal,

A lot of humans don't know that fledgling birds have a few days before becoming good flyers where they are on the ground being looked after by their parents. Humans assume that the little birds have either been abandoned or are injured and cannot fly. The best thing humans can do is to keep an eye on these little fledglings and see if their parents are still around and feeding them: they usually are! During this time humans would also do birds a big favor to keep their pets indoors or carefully watched to avoid any baby bird fatalities. Hopefully your babies were brought to a trained wildlife rehabilitator and grew up healthy.

All the best,

The Wild One

Dear Wild Times,

I am writing on behalf of my poor sister who was killed with 13 babies in her pouch after an encounter with a roaring, blinding, giant creature. First off, these creatures are evil and so many of my family have been killed by them. What are they?? Secondly, many thanks to the smart, kind human, who found her babies still alive in her pouch and brought them somewhere where they could be cared for. Sometimes humans are pretty great!

Thanks!

Miss Petunia Opossum

Dear Miss Opossum,

Thanks for writing in! It sounds like your sister was killed by a car. Cars are deadly to wildlife. However, if humans drive considerably many wildlife/car accidents could be avoided. Humans: please drive more slowly and understand that a big, scary, headlight-blinding car will often cause a petrified animal to freeze in their tracks instead of running away. If you see an animal slow down to make sure you don't cause a fatality. And as Miss Opossum points out, if a mother opossum is killed, her babies may still be alive in her pouch and can be rescued.

We can all be Wildlife Heroes!

The Wild One

For more information on all of these topics, see
www.wildthingssanctuary.org or call Wild Things Sanctuary for advice:
(607) 200 4100

WILD THINGS SANCTUARY
P.O. BOX 713
ITHACA, NY 14850