



# NEWSLETTER FOR WILDLIFE REHABILITATORS OF NORTH CAROLINA

Volume 24

June 2006

A quarterly newsletter produced by the Wildlife Rehabilitators of North Carolina. WRNC's mission is to share information and knowledge about wildlife rehabilitation for the benefit of native wildlife. For comments or questions, write to: WRNC, 2542 Weymoth Rd, Winston-Salem, NC 27103.

*Brenda Hiles and Sally Davis, editors*

## Finch Eye Treatment: At What Cost?

By **Bobby Schopler, DVM, PhD**

First described in 1994, "finch eye" (*Mycoplasma gallisepticum* or MG) is a contagious disease that primarily affects the house finch but has been reported in other finches, downy woodpeckers and occasionally other species. It is a treatable disease, but as of yet, has not been proven to be a curable disease. I have worked as the director of a couple of wildlife rehabilitation centers during the past 19 years and have had to wrestle with the question of the ethics of treating and releasing birds with this disease. As a veterinarian I took an oath "to use my scientific knowledge and skills for the benefit of society through

### Inside

#### **Case studies:**

It's mid-August and ducks are turning up dead. What's going on?

**On the Web:** Need information? Try these web sites.

**Professionalism:** As a wildlife rehabilitator you're used to working with 'wild' animals, but working with the 'human' animal takes a different skill set. Strive to improve your interactions with the public and your fellow rehabbers.

#### **A Wing and a Prayer:**

Flycatchers can be a challenge and a thrill for the rehabilitator.

protection of animal health, the relief of animal suffering, the conservation of livestock resources, the promotion of public health and the advancement of medical knowledge. " I have practiced for 20 years using the Hippocratic principle of "above all, do no harm."

With these ideals to guide me I conclude that it is my responsibility as a rehabilitator and veterinarian not to treat house

finches with *Mycoplasma gallisepticum*, but to euthanize them instead. Here are my reasons:

1. *Mycoplasma gallisepticum* is highly contagious and can be spread within a rehabilitation facility. A blue jay contracted the disease after being housed in a cage formerly holding house finches with MG.

2. The disease has been heavily studied in poultry and is considered incurable, though there are a couple of short-term studies that demonstrate finches being cleared of the disease after prolonged treatment.

The disease can be dormant for a prolonged period and then recur.

3. I feel that treating these birds puts other birds at risk for several reasons.

- It puts infected birds in proximity (within a rehabilitator's facility) to species they might not otherwise contact with the po-

**This disease often results in a miserable death in the wild. Rather than risk submitting countless birds to this death, I choose to humanely euthanize birds brought to our hospital suffering from this disease.**

tential of infecting species not usually exposed.

- Treatment could easily create carriers of the disease who appear healthy but later infect other birds.
- Treating a disease with antibiotics runs the risk of starting a new strain of the infection that is resistant to current therapy.

4. This disease often results in a miserable death in the wild. Rather than risk submitting countless birds to this death, I choose to humanely

euthanize birds brought to our hospital suffering from this disease.

This disease gives me an opportunity to educate the public about bird feeders as well. Bird feeders – also known as cat feeders -- may play a role in spreading finch eye disease. When an infected bird feeds from a feeder, particularly tube feeders with small openings, the beak may wipe infectious material that can then transfer to the next bird to feed.

Generally bird feeders cause birds to cluster abnormally and increase the risk for disease transmission and for depredation. For people who really want to maintain a bird feeder I recommend cleaning at least on a weekly basis from November through February especially if they are seeing infected birds. The use of bleach diluted 10 to 1 with water is effective in disinfecting the bird feeder if all organic material

is washed off prior to disinfecting. The bleach should dry completely before adding food. Some believe that helping the sick bird that comes to the rehabilitation clinic is more important than the potential risk of infecting others, either during the treatment procedure at the clinic, or after the release in the wild. They may never realize the damage they do.

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## Ask WRNC

**Q:** I am familiar with Beth Golic's paper which suggests using Stonyfield Farms Organic yogurt as a probiotic instead of commercially available probiotics, because yogurt contains more strains of live, "good bacteria." I am also familiar with the MacDiet and know that yogurt is one of the ingredients. So, obviously it is safe to use yogurt in at least some young songbirds. Would it be safe to use small amounts of yogurt in all avian species, or are there some that won't tolerate the lactose?



*Submitted by Jennifer Gordon*

**A:** *From Janine Pearlman, Ph.D, wildlife nutrition consultant, Alexander, Ariz.:*

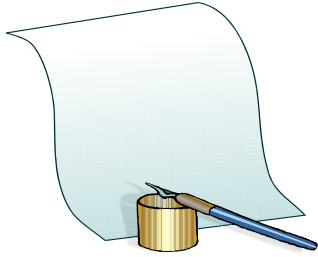
"There is a wealth of literature documenting efficacy, in avians, of bacterial species used in human probiotics. The addition of 5% yogurt to hand-rearing formulas is a standard of care in avian rehabilitation, used by many skilled rehabilitators for thousands of birds yearly. Like many other rehabbers, I have used it for hundreds of individuals, of dozens of avian species, over many years, with no problems. On the contrary, I've found that the incidence of infectious enteritis in gavaged birds has diminished to zero.

This is consistent with results in literally hundreds of peer-reviewed articles on many additional species, both avian and mammalian. Since all young birds must colonize their gut with autochthonous (endemic) microbes and seem to benefit from probiotics as they do so, I don't know of any avian species that wouldn't benefit from the addition of yogurt to food.

Osmotic diarrhea due to lactose doesn't occur until it is present at high levels -- many times higher than the levels found in diets containing 5% yogurt. Yogurt has been found in numerous studies to be a much more reliable source of live bacteria than any other type of probiotic supplement."

## MEETING MINUTES

# WRNC to Reach out to Veterinarians



The board met by conference call on Saturday, May 20, 2006. Discussion continued on the topic of membership, including ways to attract new members, retain existing members and encourage lapsed members to return. The discussion focused primarily on the activities of the Veterinary Education Committee. Work is under way on a letter to veterinarians that introduces them to WRNC and provides them with some key resources about wildlife rehabilitation, including tools to educate the public on this topic and guidance for interacting with their local wildlife rehabilitators. Outputs from this committee's work will include information sections on the website and a poster or brochure to accompany the aforementioned letter. The committee seeks a person interested in design to help them with their work. Interested people should contact Mathias Engelmann.

The Rabies Vector Species committee continues to prepare its communication plan for working with WRC commissioners on this complex subject. And there were a few changes to the composition of some other WRNC committees. Nina Fischesser and Vicki Fisk have joined the Federal Permit for Birds committee.

New business included discussion about the need to provide the WRNC membership with clarification of the regulations concerning possession and education permits for wildlife. Beth Knapp-Tyner will seek a legal interpretation of the Class C license from the USDA for people who have education animals.

WRNC will be advertising education opportunities on the WRC website. This is agreed to in principle, and Jean Chamberlain is working out the details of the process for timely updates with WRC.

Rehabilitators in South Carolina are forming a state organization using WRNC as their model. WRNC looks forward to helping them and promoting exchange between the two organizations. Plans for South Carolina may include a symposium, and as we did with Virginia this past year, there is the opportunity to exchange speakers resulting in a richer experience at each state's symposium.

Beth Knapp-Tyner, treasurer, presented the financial report. The organization is in good financial standing with the raffle money supporting the cage grants, an emergency fund of \$2,000 set aside for response to natural disasters and our education classes running at a less-than-expected deficit.

### **New Web Feature: Brochures**

WRNC is setting up a brochure section on its website. Members can download brochures and use them for communicating with the public. The first contribution by Jennifer Gordon deals with feeding wild ducks.

Members of the Website Contribution Committee are Linda Bergman and Carla Johnson. Contributions may be sent to Linda at [lbergman@ec.rr.com](mailto:lbergman@ec.rr.com) or to Carla at [cmjohnso@wfubmc.edu](mailto:cmjohnso@wfubmc.edu)

-- Sally Davis, secretary

## **BEGINNER BASICS**

# Keep it Clean!

By Jean Chamberlain  
[jchamberlain1@alltel.net](mailto:jchamberlain1@alltel.net)

We must take precautions to prevent the spread of disease between the animals in our care and to avoid catching diseases from the animals ourselves. Here are some things you can do to reduce the risk:

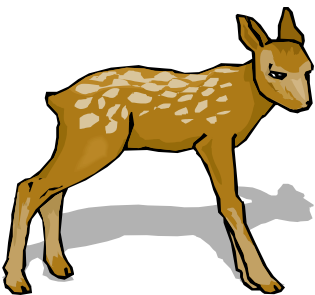
1. Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water before and after handling an animal. Regular soap is fine. Antibacterial soap is not recommended because of the risk of creating resistant bacteria.
2. Use separate implements for each litter you feed.
3. Clean food and water bowls every day, and clean equipment after each use. Clean cages regularly and use disinfectant before they are used for another animal.
4. Handle animals with care; wear gloves. Take precautions to avoid being bitten and avoid contact with body fluids. Wear gloves when handling birds to protect the integrity of their feathers.
5. Wash rehab laundry separate from the family laundry, and if possible, in a different machine. Laundry used for animals should be washed twice. The first time run it through without soap to remove fecal matter, food droppings and other solids. In the second wash, add soap and/or bleach. Bleach is ineffective as a disinfectant if the laundry contains particles of proteins, food or feces.
6. Wash bowls, buckets and feeding equipment separately from family dishes and eating utensils, somewhere other than in the kitchen.
7. Don't shake bedding, dirty papers and soiled rags indoors. The aerosols contained in the laundry can spread disease spores that may be inhaled. Wash or dispose of soiled articles quickly. Don't pile or collect them in areas used by your family.



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### **State Lists Fawn Rehabbers**

The North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission lists all fawn rehabbers licensed by the state on its web site. To access the list, go to [www.ncwildlife.org](http://www.ncwildlife.org). On the left side of the screen, go to the link "Coexisting with Wildlife." Click on "Contact a Wildlife Rehabber," where you will find a link to fawn rehabbers.



### **Wanted: Graphic artist**

The Continuing Education for Veterinary Education committee is seeking a person with graphics experience and interest to help design a brochure or poster. For more information, contact Engelmann, Mathias [mathiasengelmann@carolinaraptorcenter.org](mailto:mathiasengelmann@carolinaraptorcenter.org) or (704)875-6521, ext. 111.

# Disaster's over. What now?

## Part 3

By Elizabeth Hanrahan

[eh11@earthlink.net](mailto:eh11@earthlink.net)

**T**he response to a disaster depends largely on whether it is a rapidly or slowly developing emergency. Tornadoes, hazardous material incidents or fire may occur with little warning. When a “warning” or “watch” alert is issued, begin implementing the disaster plan immediately. Recovery from the impact will probably be the most difficult aspect of the disaster.

The facility will frequently be receiving orphaned or injured wildlife almost immediately. It will be operating at less than 100 percent. Staff and/or volunteers may not be available. The entire community may be disrupted, adding to the burden.

Begin recovery by assessing the disaster's impact on the facility, wildlife and the community.

Quickly determine the extent of the damage and what immediate steps can be taken to minimize damage and to protect people, property and animals in rehabilitation. Make safety repairs immediately.

**Check all animals on site.** If there are injuries give appropriate first aid, and get veterinary treatment as soon as possible.

**Survey the facility.** Is there damage? How extensive is it? Can all or part of the building/cages be used safely with simple repairs? Are there dangers from collapsing walls or roofs? Are there damaged electrical lines? Is there electricity and water? If in doubt, contact experts to do assessments.

Safety is the key. You can not care for the wildlife entrusted to you if you are injured or become ill. Any animal rescues should be done with safety as a top priority.

**Determine accessibility of the property.** Can the volunteers and the public get to the facility? Are downed trees or floodwaters blocking roads? Will the animals need to be evacuated to a safer and more accessible location?

**Check equipment, supplies and meds.** What survived the disaster, and how severe is the damage to equipment and supplies? Did animal feed and bedding get wet or contaminated?

**Keep a record of the assessment.** Make written assessments of the building, its contents and caging. Photograph the damage. Match photos with the inventory photos taken before the disaster.

### WRNC Emergency Disaster Fund

WRNC has set aside \$2,000 to help members in the event of a natural disaster.

The money can be used to buy cardboard crates, supplies, including formula, and for gasoline to transport animals.

The group also helps find rehabbers to take displaced animals.

The committee overseeing the fund can vote on a case-by-case basis on requests that don't meet all the criteria.

**Notify outside agencies** about the wildlife rehabilitation facility's status. If assistance of any kind is needed, the sooner outside groups are called, the faster help will arrive. Each county has an emergency management office. Rehabbers also can call animal control agencies, the animal shelter, the local Humane Society and feral cat organizations, all of which may be able to provide supplies. Anticipate the need for supplies or equipment because it may take days for supplies to arrive, especially if the disaster impacts a large area.

**Begin to rebuild.** If damage to the wildlife rehabilitation facility or the community is extensive, the process of rebuilding may take a long time. Once the assessment is completed and emergency repairs are done, a plan should be developed for the long-term repair or rebuilding. The plan should identify what areas need to be repaired or rebuilt immediately and those areas that can wait until resources are more readily available.

Consider the impact of a disaster on the wildlife rehabilitators and wildlife in neighboring areas. Other rehabilitation facilities may have received requests to receive animals evacuated from impacted communities in other areas. This can create a ripple effect if the host rehab facilities are unprepared.

It is important to review the facility disaster plan on a regular basis; at least annually.

## Case study: Flash flood

It had been a wet spring. Rain totals for the month were 9 inches and it was only April 17. On April 29, a low settled over the area and brought another 6 inches of rain during the night.

It was beginning to flood. Water in the yard was up to the ankles of the wildlife rehabilitator. It was raining hard and the forecast called for heavy rain with up to 6 more inches anticipated.

By 8 a.m. the water was still rising; reaching the first step into the house; almost 6 inches deep. By 9 a.m. the water was 18 inches and rose to 3 feet deep – twice- with each rising tide.

The wildlife rehabilitator did the following:

- Moved 18 baby ducklings, two common loons, a mallard pair, and two goslings in wildlife rehabilitation into a storage building on 4-foot stilts.
  - Moved four terns into separate carriers and brought them into the house in an unused bathroom.
  - Moved everything off the floor in the clinic area
  - Moved all records and supplies into the house
  - Unplugged freezer, refrigerator and all electrics in the clinic
- Put new, unpacked, chest freezer (which had been delivered the previous day) on 2-foot blocks outside the clinic.

Things she learned from the experience:

- Freezers on 2-foot blocks can float a mile away.
  - Freezers that float will still work when they dry out
  - Remember to take water/food dishes for the animals moved to safety
  - Take stacks of newspapers and trash bags to clean cages of animals moved quickly
- Keep at least one case of bleach in stock at all times to clean after a flood.

**Finally, get involved with the local emergency management team in your community.** Each county in North Carolina has an emergency management director and team. If the emergency management team in your area does not have an animal or wildlife component, ask to become a part of the group. Work with other wildlife rehabilitation and humane organizations in your area to develop a community animal disaster plan. Through such planning and cooperation, wildlife rehabilitation and animal facilities can alleviate problems in their community when disaster strikes.

## Case Study: What Would You Do?

The weather had been warm for mid-winter. A dusting of snow was forecast for evening. When the wildlife rehabilitator awoke at 5 a.m. 14 inches of snow was on the ground and it was still coming down. The Weather Channel reported that the temperature was 21 degrees and would continue to drop throughout the day. Then the power went off. There were six birds in outside cages and seven squirrels in pre-release cages.

Two days later the power was still off, the snow had frozen, the pipes were frozen.

What is the best way for the wildlife rehabilitator to handle this situation? .Send your answers to Elizabeth Hanrahan at [eh11@earthlink.net](mailto:eh11@earthlink.net). Please put "case study" in the subject line. Winners will receive raffle tickets for the symposium and will be announced in the next newsletter.

The wildlife rehabilitator did the following:

- ◆ \_\_\_\_\_
- ◆ \_\_\_\_\_
- ◆ \_\_\_\_\_

Things the you might have learned from the experience:

- ◆ \_\_\_\_\_
- ◆ \_\_\_\_\_
- ◆ \_\_\_\_\_

## Pearls of Wisdom

Use a baby wipe warmer to keep baby mammals, especially "pinkies," warm. The warmer made by Dex works best because it heats from the top. Keep an eye on warmers that heat from the bottom because if babies crawl under their bedding, the surface could become too warm.



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## TRAINING

### **Carolina Raptor Center**

**Aug. 26 – 27.** The seminar will include segments on handling, diet, housing, eye exams, release criteria, wounds and sutures.



**March 4-5, 2007.** Identification, anatomy, physical exam, basic hematology, basic parasitology, treatments, bandages.

### **Basic and Advanced Wildlife Rehabilitation**

**May 1- June 12:** Toni O'Neill is teaching a basic rehabilitation course through the Continuing Education Department at Coastal Carolina Community College in Jacksonville.

**June 26 – Aug. 2:** Advanced Wildlife Rehabilitation course at Coastal Carolina Community College.

Classes for basic and advanced training will be held from 6-9 p.m. on Mondays and Wednesday. For more information, call 910-938-6294

### **IWRC**

**Oct. 7-8: Basic Wildlife Rehabilitation** in Kingston, R.I.

The organization will hold its first International Education Symposium Jan. 18-22 in Dallas, Texas. For more information, go to: [www.iwrc-online.org/training/calendar.cfm](http://www.iwrc-online.org/training/calendar.cfm)

## **The Professional Wildlife Rehabilitator**

**By Linda Bergman**

As practicing wildlife rehabilitators we routinely come into contact with other wildlife personnel, conservationists, educators, naturalists, researchers, veterinarians, people from zoos and humane societies, as well as many local citizens interested in assisting and improving a wild animal's assurance of survival in the wild (or in some cases, the 'semi-wild'). How we receive and interact with fellow field professionals and the heartfelt people lending an orphaned, injured or diseased wild animal their time and helping hands demonstrate our personal ethics, conduct and professionalism, which in turn determines how successful we will be as a wildlife rehabilitator. When a caring and compassionate person finds an orphaned or injured wild animal, they don't just look the other way. Somehow, no matter what it takes, they find us. I think we can all agree that encouraging and supporting proactive behavior and compassion in humans toward all life brings out the finest aspects of humanity. Fostering that involvement is one of our responsibilities as a professional wildlife rehabilitator. BUT to be the professional you aspire to be, you must take that first step and decide:

### **"I AM A PROFESSIONAL."**

Professionalism, in a nutshell, is an attitude that relates to your performance in a job or chosen profession. To be a professional implies that you are a person who is well trained, good at your job and can be depended upon. Simply doing a job over and over does not make us a professional. Professionalism means being true to your chosen profession or passion and trying to excel in every task related to that interest, which will require the continual pursuit and acquisition of accurate knowledge and many times, it simply means doing what is appropriate.

How you look, talk, write, act and work indicate whether you are a professional or an amateur. Your professionalism (credibility and integrity) is silently evaluated and assessed within minutes (or even seconds) of initial contact with others: a human transporter and those standing by or a caller; basically any individual you come in contact with in your role of wildlife rehabili-

tator. We know how to care for wild animals. It's what we do. But it's the interpersonal skills that may falter at times, such as being less than pleasant with people or using less than good manners. Something as simple as hygiene could also hinder our acceptance as a professional. For example, most of us love working with baby squirrels; we just shouldn't smell like one. The positive or negative experience you initially create has a powerful influence over future human interactions with distressed wildlife and how other wildlife rehabilitators will be perceived.

True professionalism often takes the courage to care about what you do. Rehabbers who take pride in themselves and their rehabilitation efforts earn greater respect in the community and from their fellow rehabbers.

Professionalism is for everyone, no matter the position, be it volunteer, staff member or an independent rehabilitator. Too many people tend to believe that amateur work or cutting corners is normal and accepted, and possibly that people don't expect too much from wildlife rehabilitators anyway, but those misconceptions may lead to tarnishing a good reputation that has taken you or a fellow rehabber years to build. Don't let your reputation or the reputations' of other rehabilitators suffer by settling for amateur status. Know the difference between amateur and professional presentation. Most of us will probably recognize something on the amateur list below where we can use improvement and possibly are working on.

<b>Amateur</b>	<b>Professional</b>
An <b>amateur</b> skips the learning process whenever possible.	A <b>professional</b> learns every aspect of the job.
An <b>amateur</b> has not acquired appropriate knowledge but tries to fake it.	A <b>professional</b> does not share information he/she does not know to be true / accurate.
An <b>amateur</b> assumes what others need and want, which is rude, condescending and abrupt.	A <b>professional</b> carefully discovers what is needed and wanted in a courteous and respectful manner.
An <b>amateur</b> is sloppy in appearance and speech.	A <b>professional</b> looks, speaks and dresses like a professional.
An <b>amateur</b> has a messy, confused or dirty work area.	A <b>professional</b> keeps the work area clean and orderly.
An <b>amateur</b> is confused and distracted.	A <b>professional</b> is focused and clear-headed.
An <b>amateur</b> ignores or hides mistakes.	A <b>professional</b> does not let mistakes slide by.
An <b>amateur</b> tries to get out of difficult work.	A <b>professional</b> jumps into difficult tasks.
An <b>amateur</b> gets upset and assumes the worst.	A <b>professional</b> remains levelheaded and optimistic.
An <b>amateur</b> is sloppy with money or accounts	A <b>professional</b> handles money and accounts very carefully
An <b>amateur</b> uses lower emotional tones: anger, hostility, resentment, fear, victim.	A <b>professional</b> uses higher emotional tones: Enthusiasm, cheerfulness, interest, contentment.
An <b>amateur</b> gives up at the first opportunity.	A <b>professional</b> persists until the task or goal is achieved or completed.
An <b>amateur</b> produces just enough to get by.	A <b>professional</b> produces more than expected.
An <b>amateur</b> has an uncertain future.	A <b>professional</b> has a promising future.

“You may ask, why should I care what others think? Isn't the 'wild' animal the most important aspect of wildlife rehabilitation?”

Although our focus is strongly tied to the welfare of the wild animal, we shouldn't neglect the human animals who support our endeavors. And keep in mind, the human transporter is injured too, or they would not have stopped what they were doing that day to tend to a distressed wild animal. For them to entrust that animal to your care, knowing in good faith it will receive the attention it needs, is an honor we should not take lightly. Your focus in the community should always be two-fold; education and wildlife rehabilitation. Extending professionalism helps *'educate, soothe and heal'* the human animal who cared so much.

The benefits you reap from building a professional bridge are abundant, giving you a great return for your investment:



- Good will that encourages cooperation and partnership
- Reputation as a respected organization and individual in the community
- Community awareness that emphasizes compassion
- Free and positive advertising by word of mouth
- Donations because people give when their caring nature is encouraged
- Continued financial assistance

Feel free to add other benefits to this list

#### SPOTLIGHT

## Carolina Wild Care

By Vicki Fisk

**W**hen asked to write an article about Carolina Wild Care, I was told I could include anything special or unique about the organization. My first thought was: other than the facts, what can I say? Like all other rehabilitation organizations, we rehab animals!

So, here are the facts.

CWC is a nonprofit organization in northwest Charlotte. I founded it in 2002 after rehabilitating small mammals, about 200 a year, since 1997. In the spring of 2002 I received a federal permit to rehabilitate migratory birds. That same year, two talented and experienced rehabilitators, Nancy DeVries and Chandra Combs, helped create Carolina Wild Care. They are an invaluable asset, and they help me maintain a measure of sanity.

We've increased our associated rehabilitators from three to 10 since 2002. We have expanded from one outside aviary to five and from one outside release cage for squirrels to three. We hope to add another squirrel cage this year. We have several prerelease cages for opossums and plan to add more.

CWC admits at least 500 birds and more than 250 mammals every year.

Many rehabilitators have helped us over the years. They've encouraged us, shared ideas and information, provided cages and accepted birds when there was no room at the inn.

Although CWC is a 501(c)3 organization, we are not an organization in the usual sense. We are a network of rehabilitators that comes together to do what we love doing: rehabbing animals!

We did not want to be encumbered with the usual trappings of an organization. We have no members, no dues, no meetings and no committees. Each rehabilitator associated with CWC is welcome to use the name for tax purposes. Rehabilitators are responsible for providing their own supplies. They can purchase them from local vets, manufacturers or at cost from me because I usually have a large supply at home.

Our primary goal is to provide excellent care to every animal. We follow standard procedures and techniques. Each rehabilitator associated with Carolina Wild Care believes strongly in continuing education. CWC provides a series of classes during the year taught by experts and experienced rehabilitators. By attending symposiums, reading publications, networking, using the internet and working with vets, we each keep abreast of new techniques in rehabilitation. We exchange information and ideas.

Our approach to recruiting rehabilitators also sets us apart. We don't solicit or advertise. New rehabilitators either call us or have brought an animal in for care. Recruits are required to volunteer for at least one "baby" season with an experienced rehabilitator before taking basic training classes. This system gives the volunteer first-hand experience while providing training by an experienced rehabilitator. The volunteer can then make an educated decision about whether to make the commitment of time and money to attend basic training classes. It works: all of the individuals who have attended the classes are still active rehabilitators.

We encourage our rehabbers to contact their local vets, who in turn make referrals directly to the rehabber. But many calls – about 30-40 a day during busy season --

#### LEARNING OPPORTUNITY

If anyone wants to learn more about birds, needs to complete an internship, or is trying to meet new federal guidelines, give me a call. I'm willing to provide internship opportunities. From May through September, I always have plenty of birds!

come to me. Because most of the rehabilitators have outside jobs, I act as the triage center and clearinghouse, caring for the animal until it can be transferred to another rehabilitator.

The directors of the Biology and Zoology Departments of Central Piedmont Community College in Charlotte last year asked if they could include CWC in their Service Learning Program. Students are required to put in a set number of hours for which they are given a grade. The students shadow me and help in many capacities, including feeding and cleaning. In return, they learn about wildlife and earn college credit. The students are enthusiastic and interested in wildlife, and CWC is honored to be part of the program.

Is there something that makes Carolina Wild Care unique?

Yes -- the people!

The rehabilitators who provide consistent, outstanding care for the animals and still possess the ability to have fun, laugh at the absurd situations we all encounter, and who maintain the sheer joy of rehabilitating are what makes Carolina Wild Care special.

We are all of like mind: not necessarily best friends but on the same page. We are a team in the truest sense of the word. Each of us is able to look beyond ourselves, assume the best of each other, and cut each other some slack when times are stressful. Each of us feels strongly that if we are doing something incorrectly, if our methods can be improved, or if we simply forget something, we want someone to tell us. We want to be given the opportunity to change and improve.

My motto has been: keep it simple, grow slow, keep the joy and provide outstanding care for each and every animal that comes into care.

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# Up in the air: Rehabilitating Flycatchers

By Elizabeth Hanrahan  
[Eh11@earthlink.net](mailto:Eh11@earthlink.net)

**T**he rehabilitation of flycatchers and related birds that feed on the wing provides a thrilling experience for everyone: the birds, the wildlife rehabilitator and those who can get a glimpse of the activities involved.

Five species of flycatchers are common to eastern North Carolina: eastern wood-pewee (*contropus virens*), eastern phoebe (*sayornis phoebe*), acadian flycatcher (*empidonax virescens*), great crested flycatcher (*myiarchus crinitus*), and eastern kingbird (*tyrannus tyrannus*).

All nestlings have a yellow-orange mouth. As they mature, a small crest will develop on the head. When they fledge, small bristles appear around the beak. These bristle-fringed bills act as an aerial vacuum cleaner, sweeping in insects during flight. Most flycatchers, pewees and phoebes have ligaments connecting the upper and lower jaws that act as springs to snap the gaped jaw shut when an insect is snared.

Hatchling and nestling flycatchers are reared in much the same way as most passerine songbirds. Standard diets, such as the Mac Diet, the FoNS (Formula for Nestling Songbirds) Diet, or other balanced diets, work well with one tablespoon of dried/roasted insects added to each recipe. Roasted mealworms and wax worms are available from companies that sell feeder insects.

The Mac or FoNS diets can be mixed, put into small containers and frozen. Be sure to add yogurt or Bird Beni Bac -- a lactobacillus bacteria ointment form -- to the thawed mixture. When hand feeding juveniles, keep the bristles around the beak clean and free from formula droppings. Supplement the hand feeding formula with mealworms and other feeder insects.

Feed the babies at 15-minute to half-hour intervals during daylight hours. Most flycatchers fledge in 13 to 19 days. Then work begins! Flycatchers and other birds that eat on the wing must "train" to catch insects. Other species, such as the night jays, can be conditioned to gape for worms or insects while they are in wildlife rehabilitation. All flycatchers' diets should also be supplemented with insects while they're learning to catch them on their own. When the juvenile flycatchers fledge and begin to fly, they will "attend to" (watch with interest) flying insects. At this point, introduce fruit flies and/or house flies to their environment. Continue to hand feed the birds. At times they will accidentally capture a fruit fly or house fly. Insects treated with vitamins form the majority of the diet shortly before hand-feeding is discontinued. Offer live mealworms, soaked, roasted wax worms, and house flies to the birds. The juvenile flycatchers need to fly to the insect, hover and grab it from the tweezers.



Photos by Elizabeth Hanrahan

**Kingbirds eat a FoNS diet with fruit flies and roasted mealworms.**

They perfect this skill within a day. Monitor weight daily to be sure they have the appropriate energy intake.

Insects are introduced into the environment in various ways:

1. Meal worms are raised or purchased and fed.
2. Roasted wax worms and roasted mealworms are purchased. These insects are soaked in vitamin/mineral enriched water prior to feeding. This softens the insects and improves the nutritional content.
3. Fruit flies can be raised or purchased from Carolina Biological Supply <https://www2.carolina.com/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/StoreCatalogDisplay?storeId=10151&catalogId=10101&langId=-1>
4. Attract fruit flies by placing ripe fruit, bananas, plums, sliced oranges or figs around the flight cage.

House flies and green head flies will be attracted to meat/fish scraps. This results in a great source of fly larvae, a favorite with birds.

When the flycatchers are “catching” insects from tweezers they often feel that they are old enough to leave the aviary. Because the parent flycatchers continue to feed and supplement the juveniles for up to thirty days post fledging a “soft release” is required.

Open a door or hatch to the aviary to allow the juveniles to venture into the great outdoors. At this point they come and go for several days They assert their independence quickly and soon choose to live outside. Feeding should be supplemented by placing fruit at a specific location to attract flies and by providing water. The environment in much of North Carolina is rich with mosquitoes, flies, dragon flies, butterflies and moths for aerial training.

Provide supplemental feeding at regular intervals 5 to 8 times during daylight hours. Use tweezers to offer an assortment of insects -- mealworms, soaked roasted wax worms and dried flies.

Wildlife rehabilitators who become familiar with the calls of the each species, will know when the birds want to be fed. At this time, offer the insects. Gradually the birds will require fewer feedings. You will notice that they are catching insects independently from the environment. Depending on the species, it may take 2 to 5 weeks before the flycatchers are completely independent. And, until they migrate in the fall, you will know they are around by their call.

Because it takes so long for the flycatchers to become independent feeders, do not take them to a remote location for release. These birds must have a long training period to learn and perfect their skills of hovering, pouncing and capturing their prey on the wing.



**Fruit hangs throughout the cage to attract fruit flies. This encourages the fledged birds to begin to hunt and capture fruit flies. It also improves their motor skills. The hole in the enclosure allows for “soft release;” juvenile birds can come and go as needed**



**A released kingbird “captures” worms from rehabilitator.**

# Test Your Diagnostic Skills



## Case Study: Ducks are dropping. Do you know why?

In mid-August a wildlife rehabilitator receives calls about ducks in the park that can't walk. She arrives to find three mallards sitting in a shallow mud puddle. She also finds several dead ducks in the area. Crows and gulls are feeding on the bread the public has thrown out to feed the ducks.

That week the wildlife rehabilitator rescues 64 ducks from the park.  
Questions for Case:

1. What clues do you have to help you determine the clinical problem?
2. What is causing the ducks in the park to die?
3. What is your treatment plan for the ducks/geese?

For the answer, see <http://www.ncwildliferehab.org/newsletter/vol24/casestudy.html>.

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### CORRECTION

Vicki Fisk and Nina Fischesser are also members of the Federal Permit for Birds Committee. Their names were omitted in the last newsletter. Other members of the committee are: Alicia Cawlfild, Jean Chamberlain, Jennifer Gordon, Elizabeth Hanrahan, Toni O'Neil and Nimette Soli.

## Mother and child reunion

So you have a squirrel that you know would be better off with its mother. What do you do?

It is sometimes possible to reunite juveniles with their mother. For gray squirrels, nail a shoe box without the lid onto the nest tree trunk or hang a basket next to the trunk. Use a tube sock fill with dried rice or beans, knot the end and heat in the microwave. This will provide supplemental heat so the juvenile doesn't develop pneumonia from exposure. Place the sock in one end of the box. The juvenile can move toward it if cold and away from it if hot. Go inside, take kids, dogs and cats with you. If mom has not reclaimed her baby within an hour, it will need rehab care.

-- Pat Isaacs



By Elizabeth L. Hanrahan

Enrichment opportunities involve more than branches, perches, mirrors, and mouse-fishsicles. Workshops and journals often address the issue of providing enrichment in wildlife rehabilitation. Here are six exceptional web sites that provide more than 6,000 ideas for wild-life in rehabilitation. You can also get ideas to make simple equipment.

In addition to any caveat regarding material from the internet, I warn you: have lots of time and lots of paper and printer cartridges.

**1. Australasian Society of Zoo Keepers** link contains manuals, husbandry ideas, and ideas on enrichment. Although many of the animals listed are indigenous to Australia, the site contains good ideas for husbandry and enrichment for birds, mammals, reptiles, and turtles. <http://www.aszk.org.au/Contents%20Page.htm>

**2. Animal Enrichment Program – Disney’s Animal Kingdom Theme Park** web site contains the course materials for a class taught at *Disney’s Animal Kingdom® Theme Park*. Although the web site is designed so you can jump around to various topics listed in the table of contents, they suggest you read the contents in the order in which it is presented because each section builds upon the previous one. Hot links to various tables and images are imbedded in the text. Though not directly related to the issues of enrichment in Wildlife Rehabilitation, there are some great ideas. And, you can extrapolate some information to “train” the animals in your care for release. <http://www.animalenrichment.org/>

**3.** The mission of the **Fort Worth, Texas, Zoo’s “Enrichment Online”** site is to provide professional animal managers, both in zoo and laboratory settings, a comprehensive resource for incorporating enrichment into the care and husbandry of captive animals.” Click on the “Browse” link and get ideas for almost any kind of wildlife. The site also includes a resource link. This site is so good that I printed more than 20 pages of ideas for providing enrichment for wildlife. <http://www.enrichmentonline.org/aboutus/index.asp>

**4.** The introduction to the **Toronto Zoo’s Enrichment** site states that: “Animals are said to have optimal welfare when: 1) they have control over their environment, and 2) they have opportunities for exploration and play.” The home page shows animals at play: Click on the “resources” link and find articles on behavior and enrichment. The link on that page will connect you to more than 25 web sites for other zoos, additional articles and other materials. This site will keep you busy next winter. [http://www.torontozoo.com/meet\\_animals/enrichment/](http://www.torontozoo.com/meet_animals/enrichment/)



**5.** Go to the **ZooLex Zoo Design Organization** when you are housebound or want to print at least two reams of enrichment ideas! To make searching simple they have a table with ideas/links to desirable behaviors and activities such as foraging, play, climbing, locomotion on the ground, exploratory behavior, anti-predator behavior and wallowing. Down the left side of the table is a list of various species including mammals, reptiles, birds, and more. <http://www.zoolex.org/publication/lozano/thesis/sect5.html>

**6.** “**Birds just want to Have Fun**” is a “shopping” site. However, there are some good ideas for things that the wildlife rehabilitator can replicate and make at a very low cost. <http://www.birdsjustwannahavefun.com/>

I have printed enough material from the six sites to fill a four-inch notebook. There are some terrific ideas for you and the animals in your care. Or, if you are really a glutton for punishment, you can Google “animal enrichment.”

*Do you have a favorite web site? Let us know. Send web addresses to [bhiles919@earthlink.net](mailto:bhiles919@earthlink.net).*

#### BOOK CORNER

“**Rats: Observations on the History & Habitat of the City’s Most Unwanted Inhabitants**”

By Robert Sullivan

250 pages

Bloomsbury

**R**ats. People shudder at the mere mention of them. They are spoken of in terms of a threat, a “problem,” something to be rid of. In short, they are a symbol of all that we fear.

But rats are a lot like man. When they arrive in a new land, they push out the native species. They thrive on our garbage. The presence of rats, in short, is an indicator of the presence of man.

That’s the argument Robert Sullivan makes in “Rats: Observations on the History & Habitat of the City’s Most Unwanted Inhabitants.”

“I think of rats as our mirror species, reversed but similar, thriving or suffering in the very cities where we do the same,” he writes.

The city referred to in the title is New York, which has a long, contentious history with *Rattus norvegicus*, also known as the Norway or brown rat. The first brown rats in the New World probably arrived aboard ships that docked in New York Harbor. They quickly made themselves at home and have been under attack ever since, from the illegal rat fights of the 1800s to the tenants’ rights marches of the 1960s in which dead rats were presented to city officials to bolster the argument for better housing.

Sullivan’s qualifications for writing a book about rats is his lifelong interest in the topic and the fact he was living in New York City, where he had no shortage of subjects to study.



Sullivan observes the rats in their world: a dank, cobblestone alley in the theater district, a few blocks from New York Harbor on one side and Wall Street on the other.

He delves into almost every aspect of rat lore: from the garbage strikes of the 1960s to experiments conducted by Japan during World War II to reintroduce bubonic plague.

Many of the stories are the stuff of urban legends; they just happen to be true. Such is the case with what Sullivan calls the great rat skirmish of 1979 in which a woman was attacked by a pack of rats near the alley where Sullivan has set up shop. Witnesses said rats swarmed the woman. One climbed her leg and bit her. A man made a futile effort to scare them away by waving his jacket but the rats began to climb his coat. The woman finally got to her car, but the rats climbed on top of it. She drove away screaming.

The story of rats is also the story of the people who try to eradicate them. Sullivan talks to the top people in the field, from city rat catchers to the CEOs of multi-million exterminating companies, some of who have achieved almost mythic stature.

The war between man and rats at times reaches epic proportions. Riker's Island was the scene of one of longest-running battles, which spanned more than 30 years.

One of the first designated garbage dumps in the city, rats from all over the city headed to Riker's Island for the food, including the vegetables in the prison garden and the pigs on the prison farm. One reason for rats' bad reputation is their presence at nearly every disaster, including the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. Rats infiltrated the many restaurants buried under tons of rubble that had once been the World Trade Center. They cleaned out an entire cookie store. Rescuers found thousands of rat tracks in the dust from the towers.

Rats are like us in many ways, including their need to touch things. Biologists call it thigmophilic, *touch loving*. They touch things as they travel -- curbs, walls, ceilings -- and by doing so develop "a muscle memory" of routes. Exterminators say that if buildings were suddenly to disappear, the rat would still run the same routes, as though the walls were still standing.

In the end, perhaps it's the traits rats share with humans that we find so disturbing.

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## What's New?

Let us know what's going on in your part of the state. Send news to [bhiles919@earthlink.net](mailto:bhiles919@earthlink.net)



### From the editor's desk

This newsletter is your tool for reaching everyone else in WRNC. Please feel free to submit comments, corrections, announcements and submissions for future newsletters to Brenda Hiles at [bhiles919@earthlink.net](mailto:bhiles919@earthlink.net) or Sally Davis at [wekaterrapin@hotmail.com](mailto:wekaterrapin@hotmail.com).

**The next editorial deadline is Aug. 7.**