

# *Wildlife Rehabilitators of North Carolina*

## *Message from the President*



As we gear down from the busy baby season (I realize that some of you still have those late babies that you are taking care of) let's spread the word about our upcoming symposium (January isn't as far away as you think).

The symposium committee is busy working on figuring out the best place to stay as well as the logistics for this year's symposium. You wouldn't believe the amount of time and effort that it takes to make the symposium possible. If you'd like to help out with this monumental task, please let Jean Chamberlain know ([jchamberlain1@windstream.net](mailto:jchamberlain1@windstream.net)). Now is the time to start asking for donations for raffle items.

We haven't had any educational requests lately so if you know of a group (12 or more) of people who want to have our rehabilitation training classes come to them, find a place to hold the training on a Saturday and Sunday and then contact me ([wildlifeed2@aol.com](mailto:wildlifeed2@aol.com)) and we'll see what we can do.

Please don't forget to spread the word that WRNC offers Chimney Swift Tower Grants and Cage Building Grants. Please see the links on the front page of our website.

The board of WRNC is here to serve all NC rehabbers in any way that we can. Please don't hesitate to contact me with suggestions, comments, etc. ([wildlifeed2@aol.com](mailto:wildlifeed2@aol.com)).

We hope to see everyone at the 2015 symposium (January 24th and 25th).  
-Carla Johnson

Issue 56, Fall 2014



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# Wanted

Possumwood Acres Wildlife Sanctuary in Hubert, NC is in search of rehabilitator who is in possession of a baby purple martin, or knows of any “late leavers” in the area. PAWS received a VERY late baby, who is still begging for food, has missed his migration and needs a friend. If you or anyone you know can help point PAWS in the right direction, please contact Toni O’Neil, at 910-326-6432, or e mail her at, PossumwoodAcres@ec.rr.com.

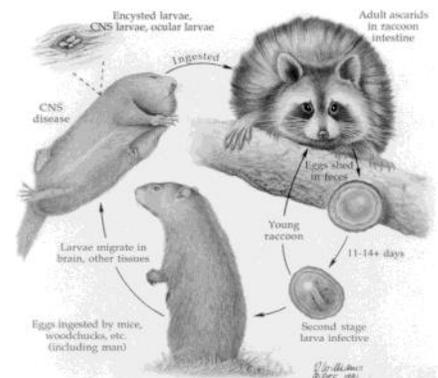


Photo From: Purple Martin Roost

-The Editors

## How Much Do You Know About Baylis?

Wildlife disease researchers at the University of Georgia request that you participate in a research study to assess the understanding of *Baylisascaris procyonis* (raccoon roundworm) among persons who have contact with wildlife. In addition, use of preventive measures (glove use, hand washing, raccoon treatment) will be assessed. Any person over the age of 18 who has contact with wildlife (wildlife rehabilitator or animal care provider) is eligible to partici-



Oxford Journals

pate. Even if you do not rehabilitate raccoons, researchers are very interested in having all persons with wildlife contact or contact with cages/feces/feeders to participate. Please fill



Photo By: Larry Sosebee

out a short survey, estimated to take only about 10-15 minutes; all responses are anonymous. Please note, this survey is distinct from the study on prevalence of antibodies to *B. procyonis* in wildlife rehabilitators, thus you are eligible and encouraged to participate in this survey. To access the survey: [ugeorgia.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_cN5zJHhNNa9poDr](https://survey.uga.edu/SE/?SID=SV_cN5zJHhNNa9poDr).

-The Editors

## Possum Come A-Knockin’

Several years ago, for reasons unknown to us, we had an influx of possums in our house. These were not ones I had in rehab. In fact I had just released 2 juveniles and came home to, “Mom! There’s a possum on the dryer!” Confused, I mentally tabulated the number of possums I released and was sure that I had no more. But it’s hard to argue with your son when a juvenile opossum is staring at you from the top of the dryer. So we made another run to the release sight only to come home and see two more on the washer. Off we went again.



Photo By: Larry Sosebee

The next day my husband cleaned off the shelving above the washer and dryer, and there, nestled in the turkey roaster, was the rest of the family. We looked for possible means of entry and sealed off what we could. But that wasn’t enough.

Fast forward 2 years. The children were in college and we were empty nesters. It was 3:00 am and the house was blissfully quiet--until the piano started playing. Carrying a baseball bat, I cautiously and with great trepidation went downstairs to investigate the music. Nothing. Same scenario the next night except the pieces were a little longer and much more discordant.

I reasoned that a mouse wouldn’t weigh enough to depress the piano keys, which left a rat, or God forbid, another possum! After 3 days I finally caught a glimpse of the possum as he shot into my son’s empty room and burrowed his way under the covers. We empty nesters now had a nest and it was a smelly one at that! I didn’t have time to catch him before I left for work and he escaped us one last time. The night of his fourth performance we were ready with a net, a towel, gloves and a cat carrier. His musical career ended as abruptly as it started. And we were back to empty nesters!

-Sue Heritage



Photo By: Larry Sosebee

# Rehabilitation Alaska Style

Last July I had the opportunity to travel to Alaska through the Road's Scholar Program. We spent a week in Denali National Park and a week in Moose Pass, about an hour from Seward. These were two very different experiences. In Denali we were able to observe and learn about wildlife in the area through guided hikes and classes. We saw moose, caribou, dahl sheep, red fox, eagles and grizzly bears, plus an assortment of smaller birds, but it was all through camera lenses and binoculars. It was very exciting until a moose cow plunked herself down in front of our bus while she leisurely chewed on willow branches. Everything moves slower in Alaska.



Photo By: Calxib.com

As a wildlife rehabilitator, it was exciting to visit Sea Life Center in Seward. It is Alaska's only rehab center for marine animals. Who knew that fertile sea lion cows had daily vaginal swabs and ultrasounds? (Do you picture fins up in stirrups?) Who knew that you could give a fish, whose eggs were rotten in utero, a hysterectomy because she wasn't stimulated to lay her eggs? Who knew that baby walrus had a volunteer just to cuddle with them, hours and hours a day?

It was absolutely amazing to watch the keepers lure the seals and sea lions into a small exam cage where they could draw blood and examine the animals without the need for anesthesia. The intent is to release as many animals as they can, but they are also a research facility and keep many animals for that purpose.. They have several vets, staff and volunteers on duty. It is a very impressive facility with years of research behind it.

I am proud to have my mammal fixes with squirrels and possums and love raising baby birds...but really? Wouldn't you like to cuddle a baby walrus?

-Sue Heritage

## Congratulations!

On August 22nd, Michelle Richards and her husband Donald welcomed a new edition to their family; Amani Grace. This beautiful, healthy baby girl weighed in at 8 lbs. 3 oz. Michelle is a WRNC board member and resides in Jacksonville, NC. Congratulations Michelle and Donald!



Photo By: The Richards Family

-Linda Bergman-Althouse

# Remembering Beth Knapp-Tyner



Sadly, the wildlife community has suffered another great loss. Beth Knapp-Tyner lost her battle with cancer on August 12.

Beth began her wildlife endeavors in 2001. Throughout her wildlife career she held state, federal, fawn and educational permits, was a member of NWRC, IWRC, ARC and of course WRNC where she served on the Board of Directors from 2002 until 2011.

Beth was the founder of Wild at Heart Wildlife Rehabilitation in Polk County and was a strong believer in networking and continuing education. She taught many classes, wrote educational papers on everything from fawns to beavers and held educational programs to encourage preservation and tolerance.



Beth was much more than just a rehabber, she was a wonderful mentor to countless fellow rehabbers, myself included. No matter how busy she was, she always made time to share her knowledge and experience with me and so many others. On the occasions that I found myself at a loss with an animal, be it fawns, otters or more re-

cently beavers, Beth was always more than happy to spend as much time as necessary coaching and educating. Even as she fought her health battle, she still took the time on the phone to teach me Beaver 101. I cannot even begin to imagine the number of fellow rehabbers that she mentored over the years. I for one feel fortunate to have received the benefits of her knowledge and expertise.



Photos for this article were shared from Beth's FB page



Beth was also a very accomplished hot glass artist and taught classes in this arena as well. She was extremely talented and incorporated her passion for wildlife into many of her beautiful glasswork pieces.

Deepest sympathy goes out to her wonderful husband Dan, her daughters Ashley and Courtney, as well as the rest of her family and her closest friends.

-Michelle Ray

# Bear Encounters on the Rise

With recent bear sightings on the rise in more populated areas of the state, the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission wants to remind the public that people can co-exist peacefully with bears by following basic safety guidelines.

-Never feed a black bear — intentionally or unintentionally.

Bears are opportunistic feeders and will eat just about anything. Bears are particularly attracted to human garbage, pet food, and other human-associated foods like bird seed. For this reason, if a bear is in the area, people should remove bird feeders and hummingbird feeders.

-Secure bags of trash inside cans stored in a garage, shed or other secure area

-Place trash outside as late as possible, on trash pick-up days — not the night before

-Remove leftover food as well as empty bowls, if feeding pets outdoors

-Clean all food and grease from barbeque grills after each use. Bears are attracted to food odors and may investigate.

Black bears, by nature, are not aggressive, yet they can inspire fear, anxiety, and fascination, in people who encounter them unexpectedly.

May, June and July are the times when bears start showing up in more populated areas where they're not normally seen, according to Colleen Olfenbittel, black bear biologist with the Commission. These young bears, called transient bears, are usually young males who have spent their first year and a half with the adult female bear and suddenly find themselves pushed away as the female begins breeding again.

“While they may appear to be wandering aimlessly around, they are not necessarily lost,” Olfenbittel said. “Most are simply exploring their new surroundings and will move on, particularly if they are left alone and there is no food around.”



Photo By: Michelle Ray

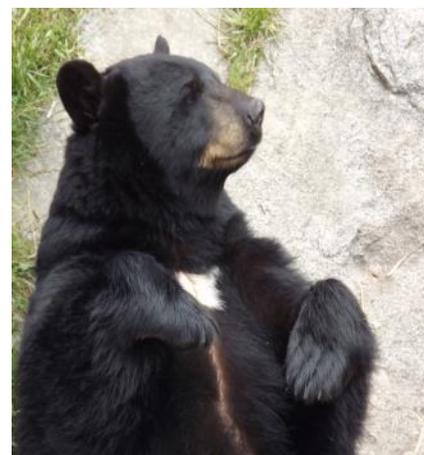


Photo By: Michelle Ray

## Bear Encounters Cont.

When the Wildlife Commission receives a report of a transient bear in an area, staff assesses the situation to determine if the bear poses a threat to public safety or property, or if the bear is significantly threatened. In almost all cases, the Wildlife Commission advises that the best approach is a hands-off approach, allowing the bear to leave on its own.

Trust me, the bear is more scared of you than you are of it,” Olfenbuttel said. “If you haven’t left food accessible to the bear, and if you leave the bear alone, then you can view it from a safe distance and it likely will move away on its own.”

While bears are making more frequent appearances in central North Carolina, the vast majority of bears live in the mountains and coastal regions of the state where human-bear interactions are common and people in these areas are learning to prevent bear conflicts by securing food and following other advice to coexist with bears.

“If the bear is already eating from your bird feeder, garbage can or pet food bowl, let the bear finish eating, and after the bear leaves, clean the area,” Olfenbuttel said. “Then, bring all food and attractants into a secure location. For residents who have ongoing problems with bears, removing any and all foods from properties is critical to minimizing conflicts.”

Additionally, residents can:

- Sprinkle ammonia or other strong disinfectants on garbage cans to make the odor and taste of food undesirable
- Install electric fencing, which will protect bee hives, dumpsters, gardens, compost piles and other potential food sources
- Talk to neighbors to ensure everyone in the community is learning about co-existing with bears and working together to prevent conflicts between bears and humans



Photo By: Michelle Ray

“No matter where you are or where you live, if you encounter a bear, the most important thing to do is leave the bear alone. Don’t try to feed it or chase it off — we can’t stress this enough,” Olfenbuttel said. “Crowds of people can unnerve a bear, perhaps causing it to act defensively.”

-From the NCWRC Website (Edited for Space)

# We Love Wrens

We love the little wrens! This year we can say that, but last year it was a different story. Trying to raise newborn wrens can be difficult because they tend to dehydrate easily. Unfortunately, their life style of building nests in tucked away places also contributes to the problem. We have had nests of babies brought in on the brink of death because they were found several days after the nest was moved or the parents were killed and the people never knew a nest was there. This year, nests were found in a motorcycle tail pipe, truck engine, car grill, charcoal grill and boat trailer just to name a few.



Photo By: Toni O'Neil

The first thing we do is rehydrate with oral LRS (about .1 cc) every 10-15 minutes until they respond. Then we increase to .2 cc's and begin to add a taste of FONS (Formula for Nestling Songbirds) for calories, and begin spacing it out to every 15-20 minutes. The FONS mixture is continued for several hours and gradually a little more is added. Hopefully by evening they are up to  $\frac{3}{4}$  strength FONS. We found that leaving them on this diluted mixture (now with water instead of LRS on day 3) kept them rehydrated but did not "clog" them up. There is nothing worse than watching their little systems shut down as their intestines stop emptying and they begin to get impacted.

Last year we lost over half of the baby wrens, and even half of the week-old babies that came in severely dehydrated. We also lost a lot to aspiration pneumonia from trying to force fluids/food. Now we make them gape for us. This can be triggered by tapping their beaks with the syringe tip, tapping the crab box or incubator (getting them used to auditory cues), and by jiggling the nest. By making them gape, we prevent getting anything down their glottis (airway). Sometimes it takes going 25 minutes instead of every 20 minutes for a feeding, and then dropping back down to the correct time after they have learned.

This year we were not able to purchase the dried egg whites that we normally use when making up the FONS. So we cut back on the amount that we normally use by 50% to make up for the missing protein, we added more baby food chicken in broth to our FONS mixture. We continued at  $\frac{3}{4}$  strength diluted for the first 2 weeks and then gradually brought it up to full strength. It worked!



Photo By: Toni O'Neil

## We Love Wrens Cont.

The babies developed well, gaining steady weight, full feathering and did not dehydrate. All 33 survived this season. We also feed drowned mealworms (dipped in FONS as they get older) along with the diluted FONS and tiny bits of soaked Hill's Kitten Chow. They also enjoy grated No-Melt Peanut Butter Suet. To keep them from taking a bath in it, we provide a shallow dish of Chinchilla dust powder, as well as a small water bowl for drinking. To get them to start eating on their own, use live wax worms. Start very small and gradually increase the size.



Photo By: Toni O'Neil

Taking into account their natural history of hiding in crevices, we set up their housing with this in mind. They start in a small crab box partially draped on one end. Then they graduate into a 10 gallon aquarium with a ceiling hammock. We also put a paper towel skirt in their nest basket and let it hang down to the ground, so they can hide. The older birds set examples for the younger ones, and will often feed them. Having different age groups together helps the younger sets learn how to eat on their own faster. Any injured adults are also added to the mix. Their calm behavior helps settle the adult down quickly, and prevents stress. The next step is a small plastic mesh Fledgie cage. We also provide places for them to sit inside, including small wicker baskets or parakeet tents tied to the cage. Add hollow logs, toilet paper tubes, cut out tissue boxes, etc.

The Fledgie cage is not predator proof so we put it outside only during the day for the first week or so. During this time the birds are fed through the mesh about every hour or so, then every two hours, etc., until they stop coming to the side of the cage to be fed. Wrens wean much faster than other songbirds. Once they stop begging for food, we keep their fledgie cage outside but protected inside a larger pre-release cage for the last week. Then they are released and food is placed outside until they stop returning for it. Of course, if they continue to return, we make sure they always have a food supply available to them.

It may sound like a lot of work, but it really is no more than for other songbirds. The really big difference is feeding them the diluted FONS for the first two weeks, and their unique housing set up. Raising wrens is a joy, and they are such a delight to watch as they grow and develop. I'm so glad this baby bird season was such a success for our wrens!

-Toni O'Neil

# The Woods Ghost

Very few and far between do we admit Bobcats to the Outer Banks Wildlife Shelter in Newport, NC because they are extremely elusive, secretive and avoid all human contact. Although it is a rarity to see a Bobcat in Eastern North Carolina, they are present in the coastal plains, as well as throughout the state. They are the only wild cat found in North Carolina. Every time a Bobcat has been admitted to the shelter over the years (the instances can be counted on one hand), a run in with a vehicle during the dead of night has been the cause of injury. The last Bobcat admitted suffered a broken leg when struck by a pickup truck on



Free File Submission Photo

a back road in a low land area of our coast. Fortunately, the compassionate driver, who had heavy work gloves in his cab, managed amid hissing, growling, biting, scratching and squirming, to put him in his truck bed under a secured tarp and transported the injured cat to our shelter. A Bobcat isn't a relatively large animal, but it is a fierce fighter. His stay in intensive care was quite the challenge. Isolation in a huge metal enclosure was the only way to go for this beautiful, solitary animal to keep him and everybody else safe. Despite looking like your cat, Fluffy, who curls up on your lap while you watch television, this fur ball, who is twice as big as your chubbiest domestic house cat, is not okay with being handled by humans, so safety issues are paramount when treating a Bobcat.

The Bobcat gets its name from the short tail it sports which is usually less than 5 inches. Its light brown to reddish brown fur is extremely gorgeous, dense and soft. Their round face is topped with pointed, tufted ears, and the Bobcat's hind legs are longer than its front legs, which gives them that "Cheetah" like bobbing run when chasing down prey. Their paws have four toes each with retractable, razor sharp claws. They have four large and very sharp canine teeth and behind the canines, more



Free File Submission Photo

sharp cutting teeth. They have forward facing yellow eyes with black elongated pupils. Like all cats, they use their whiskers like fingertips and can feel prey in complete darkness. Bobcats are gifted runners, climbers and swimmers. They are excellent hunters with superior vision, hearing and a good sense of smell. Their night vision is exceptional.

# The Woods Ghost Continued

You might be thinking, with all that going on, how do they get hit by cars? It's a timing thing.

Nicknames abound for the Bobcat to include "ol' spitfire," "lightning," "woods ghost" and "tiger cat" which all speak to their stealth abilities as focused and ferocious hunters. Bobcats are carnivores that favor rabbits, rodents, raccoons, opossums, birds and snakes for their dining pleasure, although they have been known, although rare, to take down an adult deer and occa-



Free File Submission Photo

sionally farm animals, too. They can be active during the day but prefer to hunt at night. They will also roll in, chew on and ingest fresh vegetation. Although Bobcats are solitary, males will seek out a mate when they sexually mature, which is between one and two years of age. Mating takes place usually in late winter and two to four kittens will be born in the May time frame. Kittens are furred but blind at birth. Their eyes open in 3 – 10 days. By 4 weeks they start exploring beyond the den and by 7–8 weeks of age, they are weaned. Life expectancy for males is 3–4 years and 4–5 years for females. Ten year longevity is the highest to be recorded for a Bobcat in the wild. In captivity, they may live more than 30 years.

Although the Bobcat prefers woodlands, it has adapted well to our state's coastal region. Due to habitat restoration occurring throughout our state, Bobcat populations have grown over the past 50 years, and with this growth, wildlife rehabilitators who take in Bobcats should anticipate admitting more injured or orphaned "tiger cats" in the future. Bobcats are fascinating wildlife, and if you have the opportunity to see an uninjured Bobcat in the wild, consider it an honor and feel privileged to be among the few that ever has or ever will!

-Linda Bergman Althouse

Check out Linda Bergman-Althouse...Wild Side at [lbergman1althouse.wordpress.com](http://lbergman1althouse.wordpress.com), where Linda writes about every animal imaginable. It is a wonderful site that is full of great information, as well as entertaining, well written stories about just about any creature you could possibly come across.

# Water Witch

Not often do the volunteers and staff at the Outer Banks Wildlife Shelter in Newport, NC get their hands on a Pied-Billed Grebe, but it happened not too long ago. Grebes are extremely elusive and won't be found on land unless something has gone wrong. When someone with a compassionate heart found the petite Grebe scooting along the ground, it was thought at the time that the water bird must have a broken leg or two. So, the rescuer scooped him up and transported the short-billed, wide-eyed critter to the shelter.



Photo By: Linda Bregman-Althouse

Our examination revealed no injuries to wings or legs and no presence of toxins or illness. Although Grebes rarely fly, when they do, it's usually at night. So, because the small Grebe wasn't talking, our educated theory evolved that during flight on a rainy night, an attempted landing on a shiny spot he misidentified as a body of water caused him to belly flop onto wet pavement. Fortunately for him, it was a landing instead of a dive, so although jarring, he survived the mistake but found himself displaced. We decided the best treatment plan would be observation, plenty of good food, water play and Rest & Recuperation so he could recover from the shock and trauma of the predicament he found himself in.

The Pied-Billed Grebe, also known as American dabchick, Devil-diver, Dive-dapper and Water Witch, as well as a few other names, are excellent freshwater swimmers and divers, but they don't walk very well on land because their feet are far back on their body, similar to the Loon. They can run for a short distance on water, but on land they are not stable and will fall over. PB Grebes are small and stocky with a short neck, compared to other water or marsh birds. They measure between 12 – 15 inches in length and weigh only 9 to 20 ounces. Their wingspan extends from 18 – 24 inches. Their chicken-like bill is short, blunt and light gray. The PB Grebe is mainly brown with a darker brown head and back, which serves as excellent camouflage in the marshes where they live. In the summer the bill sports a black band and their throat area looks much darker, almost black. Grebe feathers are dense, soft and waterproof. They have the ability to pull their feathers tightly against their body to manage buoyancy as necessary. If danger lurks, they will dive, subtly – no big splash, basically just sink like a gator, up to 20 feet rather than fly to avoid predators.

## Water Witch Cont.

PB Grebes will stay under water for about 30 seconds while moving to a safer location. They often swim low in the water anyway, exposing only their head and neck watching for potential threats. During breeding season, the Pied-Billed Grebe couple, who have courted by singing to each other or together, will use a variety of plant material and twigs to build floating nests on the surface of the water. The nests are built close to shore but far enough away to protect them from a predator attack, which might show up in the form of a dog, cat, raccoon or human. They lay up to two sets of bluish-white eggs each year, numbering 3 to 10 per clutch. Incubation takes about 23 days and both parents oblige, although the female will take over the responsibility toward the end of the incubation period. If the parents have to leave the nest unattended, they will cover all the eggs with nesting material to protect them from predators while they are away. As soon as the youngsters hatch, they are able to swim, although not well and will climb onto a parent's back for much of their travels until they are skillful enough to dive, hunt and swim like Mom and Pop. Both parents raise the young and will even dive for food with young ones clinging to them. Pied-Billed Grebes prefer to dine on aquatic invertebrates, such as crayfish, snails, leeches and insects but will also feed on small fish, frogs and tadpoles. Their stout, thick bill enables them to crush crustaceans like mussels. They sometimes add plants to their diet, too. An interesting and not well known fact about the "Water Witch" is they have a tendency to eat their own feathers and also feed them to their hatchlings. It's believed that this odd diet choice assists in the formation of pellets containing indigestible material that can be expelled and to reduce vulnerability to gastric parasites. The greatest threat to the Pied-Billed Grebe is habitat loss. They need wetlands, and wetlands are being lost to draining and filling for residential use. Grebes are shy and very sensitive to disturbances. Even the waves from boats can destroy nests and cause frightened PB Grebes to abandon their nests. Grebes have been declared endangered or threatened in many states, although they haven't made the list in North Carolina yet. Our Pied-Billed Grebe was a cooperative cutie and did very well in our care. He is now swimming and diving marsh waters near our coast. Dive on little Water Witch!! Dive on!



Photo By: Linda Bergman-Althouse

-Linda Bergman-Althouse

# Overwintering Eastern Box Turtles

Box turtles come into rehab for many reasons. Because of their very slow metabolism it often takes them many months to recover from illness or injuries. For this reason many need to stay in rehabber care throughout the winter months. It is normally in the turtles best interest, usually due to low weight for size or wound care that they do not hibernate in care. Close monitoring is necessary and if they hibernate they may not wake up in the spring. As with all animals in care, proper food, water and housing is necessary to maintain them on a road to good health. There are requirements when keeping them over the winter.



Photo By: Larry Sosebee



Photo By: Michelle Ray

First, we do not want them to think it is wintertime. Generally they will fatten up in the wild so they are prepared for the long nap ahead. The natural changes in daylight hours trigger them to get busy finding a good place to bury in for the winter. When housing them in rehab care you must consider that they will need additional daylight so as to keep them active and feeding well throughout the winter months. Be sure to provide UVB/UVA lighting at least 10 hours a day. This is easiest to do with an inexpensive timer on the light fixture. Secondly, we do not want them to get to cold, in the wild cooler days and nights will trigger their need to hunker down for the winter. Providing them with a heat lamp (60 watt is usually sufficient in a small enclosure.) I actually prefer the ceramic heat emitters. These are more expensive but tend to last a lot longer. When using heat lamps be sure to get the ones for night time use as well so the turtles will not have the day/night confusion. They do need to rest and a daylight bulb makes it difficult for them to have proper sleep cycles.

And lastly, hydration. Normally box turtles will get most of their moisture intake from their diet, however they do like to soak in a mud puddle and get drinks after it rains. In care it is important to soak them in a tub of room temp water once a week for about 20 minutes, of course soaking will depend on wound care restrictions per individual needs. As all rehabbers should know, a well hydrated animal, no matter the species, will eat better.



Photo By: Michelle Ray

-Bonnie Graham

# Working Efficiently With Your Veterinarian

Having worked as a veterinary technician for ten years and being a veterinary hospital administrator for another ten years, I am fortunate to have a leg up when it comes to veterinary services for the wildlife in my care. A good relationship with your veterinarian is of the utmost importance when it comes to wildlife rehabilitation.

However, rehabilitators should keep in mind that most vets do not specialize in wildlife. Therefore, it is imperative that you and your vet work together in order to provide the best care for the wildlife

you take in. Treating wildlife may also present certain liabilities for veterinarians, as most technicians do not typically practice wildlife restraint and the safety of the vet staff is crucial.

While there is no doubt that your veterinarian possesses medical knowledge that you likely do not, there is a great deal of information that you, as a wildlife rehabilitator possess that you cannot expect your vet to automatically know. Dietary, husbandry and other species specific information for wildlife is not something that your vet may be familiar with, and can be very important in helping your vet put the pieces together to help form a diagnosis. Also, most in-house lab machines do not have lab “normals” for wildlife. Be prepared to provide this information if you are having labs done. Knowing the anesthetic requirements for different animals is also helpful. For example, your veterinarian may not know that anesthetizing a box turtle with isoflurane alone could take all week.

Oftentimes small animal veterinarians deals primarily with cats and dogs, so they may not know what is, and what is not normal behavior or even care requirements for wildlife species. As a rehabber, it is up to you to establish a good line of communication with your vet so that the two of you can work together using the knowledge you both possess to provide the best medical care possible for your critters.

While veterinarians are a must for all wildlife rehabbers and are a great resource for information, keep in mind that you are too. Working together and diligently sharing information is the best way for you both to learn from each others experience.



Photo By: Michelle Ray



Photo By: Michelle Ray

-Michelle Ray