

The Paper Trail: What permits do you need?

By Beth Knapp-Tyner
WildatHeartRehab@aol.com

Keeping up with all the rules, regulations, permits and licenses required to legally rehabilitate wildlife and possess education animals can be very confusing. Several government agencies may require applications, permits, approvals and inspections, and there is no “one-stop shopping” to tell you what you must have from each agency for each situation. It’s also a good idea to check with your county and/or city to find out if there are zoning restrictions about keeping wildlife on your property.

This leaves many rehabilitators/educators bewildered and overwhelmed trying to keep track of all the paperwork and requirements. It’s the same feeling many people experience when it comes to filing federal tax returns.

All of this is required to stay legal, in addition to keeping up with what you originally set out to do: care for wildlife and help the public.

Make copies of your permits and licenses and keep copies of them in your vehicle in case you’re traveling with animals and need to show them.

On the next page is a table listing the general requirements needed to rehabilitate different species of wildlife and the permits needed to possess them or use them in education programs in North Carolina.

Your North Carolina rehabilitation permit **MUST** specifically list general species classes for rehabilitation (small mammals, songbirds, raptors, etc.) for you to legally rehabilitate them. Only small mammals and reptiles require no further permits or licenses for rehabilitation purposes.

Migratory birds are governed by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. Without a federal migratory bird rehabilitation permit in addition to your North Carolina rehab permit; you are not allowed to rehabilitate songbirds, waterfowl or raptors (exceptions are noted in footnotes below table). This rule is stated in bold print on the North Carolina rehabilitation permits.

In putting this information and table together, I consulted with Daron Barnes, permits and planning supervisor of the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, and Michelle Outlaw of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Migratory Bird Permit Office in Atlanta.

“I would also stress that the possession of an educational permit is strictly for educational purposes only,” Barnes said. “We do not issue non-releasable permits (probably soon to be termed captivity permits) to possess wildlife for strictly long-term care or to have as a pet. If the animal can not be reintroduced

to the wild and is unfit for an educational animal, it needs to be humanely euthanized.”

Outlaw emphasized that rehabilitation will only be allowed for specific species for which the rehabilitators already has flight cages. The cages must meet NWRA minimum standards for size. For example, red-tailed hawks must have cages measuring 10x50x12.

“If the permitted rehabilitator does not have flight caging appropriate for the species, they must transfer those birds within 48 hours of receiving them.” Native mammals used for education programs require not only a possession/education permit from the state but also an USDA/APHIS Class “C” license if any donation (in-kind or cash), fee, promotion/advertisement for donations transpires in association with same or commerce is affected at all, according Barnes and to Rob Mitchell, inspection and licensing assistant for southeast region, USDA/APHIS.

*Includes \$10 application fee.

Species	NC State Rehab	Federal Rehab	Captivity/Possession for Education***
Mammals, excluding those listed separately	General rehabilitation with inclusion of “mammals” stated	N/A	State and USDA Class “C” license* Renewed annually ²
Raccoon, fox, skunk, bats	Not permitted	N/A	State and USDA Class “C” license* Renewed annually ²
White-tailed fawns	Special fawn permit	N/A	Not allowed
Bear	Not permitted	N/A	Not allowed
Reptiles	General rehab with inclusion of “reptiles” stated	N/A	State
Songbirds	General rehab with inclusion of “songbirds” stated**	Migratory bird rehabilitation permit ¹	State and federal permits ¹
Waterfowl, shorebirds	General rehab with inclusion of “waterfowl, shorebirds” stated**	Migratory bird rehab with inclusion or no exclusion of these type species ¹	State and federal permits ¹
Raptors Đ	General rehab with inclusion of “raptors” stated**	Migratory bird rehab with inclusion or no exclusion of “raptors” ¹	State and federal permits ¹
Dead specimens/parts mammals general (i.e. mounts, skins)	N/A	N/A	State salvage permit ¹
Dead specimens/parts migratory birds (mounts, skins, feathers, feet, wings, eggs, nests, etc.)	N/A	N/A	State salvage + federal possession (dead) permits ^{1, 3}

Although the list of what is required and the paperwork involved may seem daunting, reading and answering all the questions on applications is the best approach. You should carefully read your permits and addendums when you receive them.

The following table shows what permits are required for different species. If you have further questions, contact the proper authorities. Please read through the footnotes where noted under the table, to help clarify important points about different permits.

Species	NC State Rehab	Federal Rehab	Captivity/Possession for Education***	
Mammals, excluding those listed separately	General rehabilitation	N/A	State and USDA Class	
	Permit	Fee	Term	Reporting required
Raccoon, fox, skunk	NC Rehabilitation	N/A	Two(2) years	N/A
White-tailed fawn	Special Fawn Rehab	N/A	Annual	Year-end reports
Bear				
Reptiles	NC Captivity Permit	\$5	Annual	N/A
	NC Salvage Permit	\$5	Annual	Year-end reports; transfers
Songbirds	USFW Federal Rehabilitation	\$50	Five (5) years	Year-end reports
Waterfowl, shorebirds	USFW Possession/Ed Live	\$75	Three (3) years	Transfers/Acquisitions; year-end program reports
Raptors	USFW Possession/Ed Dead	\$75	Three (3) years	Transfers/Acquisitions
Dead specimens/p mammals general mounts, skins)	USFW Salvage Permit (birds)	\$75	Three (3) years	Year-end reports
Dead specimens/p migratory birds (n skins, feathers, fec wings, eggs, nests	*USDA/APHIS Class "C" license (1-5)	\$40	Annual	N/A
	*USDA/APHIS Class "C" license (6-25)	\$85	Annual	N/A

*USDA Class "C" (in-kind or cash)

**A state rehab permit which includes birds does not allow rehabilitation of birds, WITHOUT a Federal permit ALSO! You MUST have BOTH to legally rehabilitate migratory birds. The following bird species are exempt from the rules above and do NOT require permits to rehabilitate or

possess: starlings, English house sparrows and some pigeons. The following species of pigeons require permits: pigeon, band-tailed, Columba fasciata, Plain, Columba inornata red-billed, Columba flavirostris, Scaly-napped, Columba squamosa, White-crowned, Columba leucocephala.

***Captivity/possession permits are issued for non-releasable wildlife used for educational purposes only. Permits will not be issued to keep wildlife as “pets.”

¹ There is a fee for this permit and annual reporting required.

² There are fees involved, annual reporting & USDA on-site inspection.

³ For migratory bird specimens: Federal possession permit only allows specimens from a rehabilitator (for example) to be transferred. The collecting of specimens from the wild (i.e. road kill), requires a *separate* salvage permit. Specimens must be lawfully obtained before a possession permit is issued or amended.

ⓓ The minimum standards recommended for flight cages are required for each species one wishes to rehab and/or possess. Species allowed to care for will be limited to those for which appropriate cage size is in place. (i.e. red-tailed hawks will require the rehabber have a 10'x50'x12' flight) Species allowed to rehab will be stated on permits. Otherwise these species can only be held for 48 hours before transfer to a permitted facility/rehabber.

Permit	Fee	Term	Reporting required
NC Rehabilitation	N/A	Two(2) years	N/A
Special Fawn Rehab	N/A	Annual	Year-end reports
NC Captivity Permit	\$5	Annual	N/A
NC Salvage Permit	\$5	Annual	Year-end reports; transfers
USFW Federal Rehabilitation	\$50	Five (5) years	Year-end reports
USFW Possession/Ed Live	\$75	Three (3) years	Transfers/Acquisitions; year-end program reports