



Friends of Wildlife NEWS

Summer 2009

OUR MISSION

Friends of Wildlife is an independent, non-profit 501(c)(3), volunteer organization dedicated to the emergency and extended care of orphaned or injured Michigan wildlife.

Our goal is to rehabilitate these animals in a professional manner which allows them to return to their natural habitat and continue their lives in the manner of that species, independent of humans.

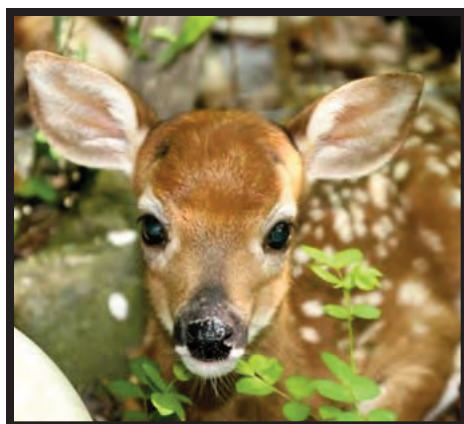
We are licensed by and have a close working relationship with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

In addition to wildlife rehabilitation, we are vitally interested in education and the broader aspects of protecting and restoring the natural habitat of the world we share.

Friends of Wildlife endorses the high standards set forth by the National Rehabilitators Association and the International Rehabilitators Council.

Does That Baby Really Need Help? When to Get Help and When to Leave them Alone

Each spring our rehabilitators are inundated with young animals who are in desperate need of help after being abandoned or orphaned. The sad fact is that many of those babies weren't



orphaned. They weren't abandoned. They needed nothing from us other than to be left alone.

Sadder is that those who take the time to care enough to stop and try and help the innocent young, would be heartbroken to learn that interfering with an animal who has not been orphaned lessens his chance of survival.

What follows is background information on common native Michigan wildlife and what to

look for when determining if that baby truly needs our help.

The Basics

Obviously the only sure way to know an animal has been orphaned is to see the dead mother nearby. Without that confirmation, the most common signs an animal will display after truly losing their mom include:

- Crying for more than a few hours
- Feces on the animal
- Clear signs of dehydration including tented skin, sunken eyes, and listlessness
- Fresh wounds
- Diarrhea
- Maggots
- The animal is lying on his side

If some of these signs are present, take the animal to a dark, warm, quiet place and wrap him in a blanket or towel and call us. **Do not attempt to feed the animal anything.** Please wait to hear from the rehabber first. (Every rehabber has a sad story of an animal who could have been saved except that the finder had offered the animal food or cow's milk when the

continued on page 3

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Rabbit	734-474-3632
Raccoon	734-670-2120
or	734-474-3463
Snake	616-789-1930
Squirrel	734-474-3453
Turtle	734-481-1812
Woodchuck	734-670-4317
General Info	734-913-9843

Letter from the Board of Directors

Another busy rehabilitation season is upon us. There is a lot of pressure on the rehabbers while they do their good work so please have patience with them if they do not return your calls immediately. This issue of the FOW Newsletter will focus on things you can do while you are waiting for that call and facts that will help you determine if what you have is really an animal in need.

We would like to welcome our new board members **Kim Poisson** and **Montatip Krishnamra**. New ideas and new energy is always a bonus to our group and we look forward to your work with us and the expertise you bring!

The Scrip program is working very well as a consistent fund raiser for FOW. If you are interested in participating in this program with local grocery stores, please contact any board member and we will facilitate getting you the Scrip cards.

We sincerely thank everyone who turned out for the Walk for Wildlife fundraiser in May, and want to let you know that we are planning another Walk for Wildlife in the Fall. Look for information on our website detailing date and time in the coming weeks.

The board is always thankful to you for your support and interest in wildlife. If you have any suggestions or comments, please contact us at 734-913-9843.

Michael B. Murphy
President, FOW Board

Keep Up with Us at
www.friendsofwildlife.net

Stop by our website at www.friendsofwildlife.net to check out the latest happenings. We are also adding a link to **PayPal** to make donations easier for you.

Thanks for caring!



continued from page 1

youngster wasn't warm enough, old enough, or healthy enough to digest it. Also, the only baby animals who can safely drink cow's milk are calves.)

A drip of water on your finger for the baby to lick off would be fine but that should be done quickly so that the animal can be left alone to reduce stress as much as possible.

Cottontails

Cottontail rabbits, which are born March through October, are often found in the center of yards. The mothers plan it that way because she knows most predators usually don't go into wide open spaces, and her peripheral vision when sitting a ways from the nest allows her a clear view of anything approaching her babies. Mom rabbit only goes to her nest when she is feeding her babies, usually only twice a day, generally at dusk and dawn and then only for five minutes at a time. Because of this, most people think the mother has abandoned the nest when they find it and never see the mom around. But it's important to be absolutely sure that the babies are truly orphaned before bringing them to any rehabilitator as 90% of the babies will die when taken from their nest.

The best way to check and see if the nest has been visited by mom is to mark the top of

it with thin twigs in the mark of a tic-tac-toe pattern and check after 24 HOURS (but not at dusk or dawn when she may be hesitant to nurse if she sees you there). If the twigs have been moved, mom has been there.

Cottontails are born furless with their eyes and ears closed. They are fully furred at one week of age. Their eyes open a few days later. In another week and a half they will wander away from the nest and be on their own. Because baby rabbits are only in the nest three weeks, it's not unusual to see a tiny one in your yard.



If something other than mom has gotten into the nest (your dog for example) try and rebuild it and check to see if any of the babies have any injuries.

If you have found a nest in your yard, accompany your dog outside if you know he's discovered it. Outdoor cats should wear a bell to alert wildlife, but it would be better for the wild animals and the cat to remain indoors. If you have to mow the lawn, put a laundry basket on top of the nest with a couple of bricks to hold it down until you're done.

Remember, the best thing you can do to help the cottontails in your yard is to leave the nest alone. Mom will take better care of her babies than the best rehabber ever could.

Fawns

Female deer, known as Does, give birth to their fawns in late May/early June. The doe then deliberately leaves her fawns alone to protect her infants. For the first two weeks, newborns have no scent and cannot be found by predators, unlike mom, whose scent may attract a predator to her baby.

The fawns have a wonderful camouflage - their natural spotted coloring - for their defense and it's normal for a fawn to "freeze" when approached. Even the best rehabbers have practically tripped over the fawn they've been told has been orphaned while looking for them in the woods.

The doe, while well hidden, is still nearby watching her baby. She will come back a couple times a day to feed her fawns, but she nurses quickly and it's unlikely you would ever see her. It breaks our hearts to know how often a fawn is picked up by a well-intentioned but ill-informed person and the doe is watching, helpless to what is happening to her baby.

It's important that the fawns be left alone. The doe will move them when she

*continued on
page 4*



continued from page 3

knows they're ready. If they are in harms way, it is OK for you to move them a few yards away from danger but then leave them alone. The doe can easily find her babies.

If you come across an infant fawn curled up like a cat sleeping, not crying, and no sign of a dead mother, you need to leave that baby alone.

On the rare occasions a fawn is truly orphaned, these signs will be obvious:

- Non stop crying
- Indentations above eyes
- Feces on rear
- Maggots
- Cuts or broken bones
- Cold mouth
- Unusually friendly toward people

Fox

There are two species of fox in Michigan, the Red and the Gray. The Red prefer meadow areas and the Gray favor woods. As with most wildlife, the kits are born in early spring. The vixen (female fox) chooses a hollow log, an empty woodchuck hole or a roadside culvert for the nursery. This nest site provides her young protection from predators, especially coyotes. The male fox helps with the rearing by bringing the vixen food while she nurses their young and keeps the kits warm. Then later in the kits development both parents teach them how to forage for food.



The foxes diet consists mainly of small rodents, moles and bugs . The benefits that foxes afford farmland, orchards and the general public is their consumption of these invasive pests. It is an absolute miss conception that fox eat cats, dogs or small children. They are very curious creatures but avoid contact with domestic animals and humans.

It is rare to see an infant fox out of the den. Most of the

vixen brought to us are because the den had been accidentally dug up during construction, killing one or both of the parents.

If you do find an infant fox, please contact FOW for further instructions.

Opossums

As North America's only marsupial, the opossum is

unique and widely misunderstood. They are important to the environment by keeping areas clean. If you're a garden-



er, you'll enjoy having a possum in your yard as slugs are a favorite food of theirs. They are generally non aggressive, playing

dead when confronted by predators. Sadly, though, many of these slow moving adults (with extremely poor eyesight) are killed on roads and by pet dogs and cats. Because a female carries her babies in her pouch, they are often found by passers-by when the pouch relaxes and they can easily crawl out.

It's important to make sure that the mother is truly dead before taking her babies. Though rare, we have been brought babies taken from the pouch of a possum who was just playing possum! Sadly, when mom woke, she quickly ran away (startling those who were burying her) without her babies.

It is safe to assume mom is truly dead if she is stiff and cold or with flies and maggots on her body. Because some babies choose to stay in the pouch while others crawl out and sit on her body, they are often left behind. When you are saving baby possums, check the inside of her pouch by just pulling it open like you would a shirt pocket, and look around and under her body.

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continued from page 4

Squirrels

The most common varieties of squirrels native to Michigan are the larger orange-brown fox squirrel and the grey squirrel, which may also



be seen with black fur. Both of these types of squirrels live in tree nests, and prefer nuts, seeds, and some vegetation. They generally have 3-4 babies per litter. Smaller red (pine) squirrels are also common in many neighborhoods and have 6-8 babies per litter. This variety of squirrel may attempt to nest in a car engine, dryer vent, or inside wall space. Call the squirrel help line for suggestions to encourage them to move out of the unwanted space. Please do not trap and remove adult squirrels unless you are absolutely positive there are no babies left behind! The mother does a much better job raising babies, and our volunteers get overwhelmed with young ones after high winds, thunderstorms, and other natural occurrences.

Baby squirrels may be placed back with mother up to 72 hours after falling from a nest. If a leaf nest has blown down after a storm or other event, it may take 4-6 hours for the mother to locate a new nest site and build a new nest.

Babies who seem lethargic and cold may recover some energy after being warmed to a normal body temperature of 103 degrees by providing a sock with uncooked rice in it heated in the microwave until it is warm to the touch.

Do not place babies outside unattended for long periods of time due to predators such as cats, dogs or birds. While waiting for a mother squirrel to retrieve babies, place the babies in an open container with a towel to snuggle with, as close to the original nest site as possible. Watch from a house or car window so the mother feels safe to approach. If an adult squirrel approaches a baby and does not attempt to take it to the nest, it's probably an unrelated squirrel. If she does not return by dusk, bring the babies inside and call the FOW squirrel help line.

The sure signs that a baby squirrel is in need of help are:

- Baby alone 2 hours or more, found after dusk, and no sign of mother
- No fur, eyes closed
- Severely dehydrated - fur 'tents' and seems extremely baggy
- Furred and eyes open, but screeching or approaching people without fear
- Bleeding, tipping, walking in circles
- Broken bones or uneven arm or leg movement
- Very little movement

Raccoons

Baby raccoons are born between March and June and the average litter size is four infants. Often juvenile raccoons will be out exploring without their mother. Though mom is nocturnal, the little ones are not until they are about 11 months old. If you find a kit, or several huddling together and hiding, or coming up to you out of curiosity, please don't think they need



help, and certainly don't feed them as this may attract predators who may harm them. They are beginning to explore their world while mother sleeps nearby. It may also be the time for mother to move to a new den, so some may just be waiting for her to come back as she can only carry one at a time. If the babies are removed, their mother will frantically search for them for a week to ten days. Other mother raccoons also adopt orphaned kits, so please, when possible, leave them be as no rehabber is as good as a mom.

Signs that raccoons truly need help are if they are cold or screaming, or

continued on page 6



continued from page 5

covered in feces or flies and maggots. Please check with a wildlife rehabilitator before removing them as raccoons are very susceptible to feline distemper, a type of parvo, and leptospirosis. Roundworm is also a concern so it's important to wear gloves when handling even baby raccoons.



Turtles

Spring and early summer is nesting season for turtles. The females tend to lay eggs during a drop in barometric pressure which usually precedes rain or a thunderstorm. They may dig several false nests before finally deciding on the perfect spot. Nesting can take anywhere between 12 and 24 hours. If you find a turtle on your property, assume she is nesting and keep children and pets away from the nesting site. She will find her way back to a water source after she is through laying her eggs. Turtles do not stay at the nesting site to incubate the eggs and, depending upon temperature, the eggs will hatch in 90 to 120 days.

Turtles frequently cross roads during the breeding season. If you find a turtle on the road, move it to the side in the direction it was going.



Although it may be tempting, do not remove a turtle from the wild to become a child's pet. It is illegal in Michigan to take turtles from their wild habitat. Observe them in their natural habitat. They can be a fascinating nature study for you and your children.

Woodchucks

A woodchuck, or groundhog as they sometimes are called, is the largest member of the squirrel family. They have one litter a year averaging four babies and are born March through May.

The babies are almost always hypothermic if they leave the den in search of their mom, so finding a baby out of the den is a sure sign that something has happened to the mother and the baby is truly in need of rehabilitation.

Woodchucks are one of our few true hibernators in the winter so they must adapt slowly to the changing climates in the springtime. Because they are "edge eaters," they often get hit by cars while looking for and eating fresh new vegetation along the roadsides. They are diurnal animals (active during the day) and are often blamed for undermining buildings. Actually, they dig straight down several feet and then tunnel to make a den.



Sometimes Doing Nothing is the Best Thing

By taking in a wild animal you could be depriving that baby his mother and a much better chance for survival.

Please remember what the signs of a truly needy animal are before removing him and then be sure to follow some simple rules:

- Never offer the baby food or water without first contacting a wildlife rehabilitator.
- Keep him in a safe, dark, warm environment until he can be transferred to the rehabilitator. His best chance for survival is to get to a knowledgeable person as soon as possible.
- Wear gloves, especially around raccoons, to protect yourself and the animal.

If you uncertain of what to do in any wildlife situation, please contact FOW and we will help guide you.

If you have a problem with an animal making her home somewhere you don't appreciate, please contact us for important advice on how to best handle the situation and how to move the animal humanely.

We appreciate concerned citizens very much as you play a very important part in helping animals in need. We invite you to join our organization and learn more about our work.

The Easy Way to Donate to FOW

The FOW scrip/community rewards program is in full-swing. You can donate to Friends of Wildlife whenever you shop at Kroger, Hiller's or Busch's. Those stores will then donate 5% of your total bill to FOW - without any extra money coming from you. Here's how it works:

Shopping at KROGER

There are two ways to connect your Kroger Plus card with FOW and you only need to do either of these two methods once. Visit www.krogercommunityrewards.com to connect your Kroger Plus card with FOW by using the FOW code number 82467 OR ask the scrip coordinator for a scan bar and give it to the cashier the next time you shop.

Shopping at HILLER'S and BUSCH'S

Obtain a scrip card from the scrip coordinator and scan it whenever you do your grocery shopping. These are reloadable, so you only need one card for all your future shopping.



If you have any questions, please contact the FOW Scrip Coordinator at tempiedell@chartermi.net or (734) 358-1917.

Long-time Volunteer Leaving

We would like to thank **Patti Roman** for her many years of service to FOW and for her dedication as coordinator for the opossum rescue and release along with writing and editing the Newsletter.

Patti and her family are moving to Florida in July and we wish them all well in the sunny south.

We know, however, that Patti is not through with her rehabilitation efforts and has already found a wildlife center to volunteer for in Florida. She is planning on continuing raising orphaned opossums and would also like to take part in manatee rescue.

Our best wishes to Patti and family. You will be missed!

Kim Poisson has gracefully accepted Patti's role as Opossum Coordinator for FOW and we thank her for her dedication to the animals and FOW!

Upcoming Events

Walk for Wildlife will take place at Hudson Mills Metropark this fall. Please check the website for further information. Also our new contact list is on our website and should be printed in this newsletter also. Look for information on future events on our web page call 734-913-9843.

Wish List

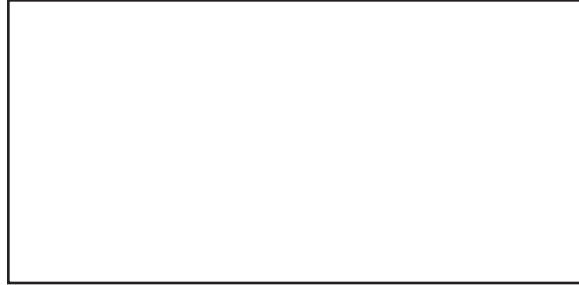
- Release sites on private land
- Heating pads
- Materials for building out door cages (wood, wire mesh, etc.)
- Volunteer help in building cages
- Any monetary donation to help with veterinary expenses and supplies

Can't Rehabilitate But Still Want to Help?

We often need individuals to help with non animal types of volunteering including building cages, helping staff our information table at fairs, sewing, serving on committees and envelope stuffing to name a few.

If you can help us out, please contact the number of the species of animal you would like to help or the general information line for FOW and leave a message at 734- 913-9843. Thank you!





Friends of Wildlife
P.O. Box 1505
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PLEASE HELP

Just as each species of animal needs special care in critical times of the year, the need for financial support is ongoing and constant. FOW is a 501(c)(3) **volunteer organization which operates entirely on donations from friends like you.** Each injured or orphaned animal needs special food, medicine and caring attention which costs money. In these difficult times, when so many are pinched and hurting, it's easy for forget our little wildlife friends. Please give what you can.

Please mail your check payable to **Friends of Wildlife** and mail to **P.O. Box 1505, Ann Arbor, MI 48106.** Also, check our website at www.friendsofwildlife.net to donate through **PayPal.** Donations are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law.



Thank you for your generosity!

Rabbit	\$ 25
Snake	\$ 30
Squirrel	\$ 35
Possum	\$ 35
Turtle	\$ 50
Woodchuck	\$ 65
Raccoon	\$ 125
Fox	\$ 150
Deer	\$ 300

The amounts listed above are approximate in raising an animal (or an entire litter) to date of release, though sometimes the expense is considerably more if any are seriously injured.