



CENTER FOR WILDLIFE HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY

Since opening its doors in 1986, the Center for Wildlife has been the only public facility in southern Maine dedicated to the rehabilitation of sick, injured and orphaned wild animals. Our goal in the treatment of these animals is “Rescue, Rehabilitate and Release” – to return them to their natural habitats, giving them a second chance at life.

Over 1,700 animals are brought to the Center each year from communities throughout Maine, New Hampshire and Northern Massachusetts. They are brought or referred to the Center by veterinarians, game wardens, animal control officers, police and fire departments, animal welfare organizations such as humane shelters and the Audubon Society, and of course, concerned individuals who want to help.

Many of the animals that come to the Center are suffering from infection, illness, or injury. The causes and types of injury vary widely – perhaps a great blue heron became entangled in fishing lures, a red-tailed hawk was shot or poisoned, a gray squirrel was hit by a car, or a cottontail was injured by a cat. During the spring and summer months, the Center also receives an enormous influx of orphaned baby birds and mammals that must receive round-the-clock care to ensure their survival. Whatever the illness or injury, the Center for Wildlife provides the full range of diagnostic treatment and recovery activities needed to maximize each animal’s chance of returning to the wild.

Our goal here at the Center for Wildlife is to rehabilitate and release sick, injured or orphaned wild animals back in the wild. Although this may sound simple, there are many facets to it. Good diet, low stress, medical care, quiet, and respect are just a few of the many things that we have to monitor for this operation to be successful.

As with people in a hospital, the animals in our care need a quiet environment in which to recuperate from their injuries or to grow from a baby into a healthy wild animal. We minimize our handling and interaction with the animals so that they will grow up and remain wild. Interactions with us cause the animals stress. They see us as a predator no matter if they are a great horned owl or a tiny chipmunk. Prolonged peering at them, handling them, speaking loudly around them, or even the knowledge that we are around is not beneficial for the animals. Many times people will bring animals in and say, “They really seemed to enjoy me holding and comforting them, they sat so still!” The fact of the matter is, they were frozen in fear and were waiting for you to eat them! We need to remember that sometimes the best way to help the animals in our care is to keep our distance.

As for the babies, if we raise them as our own babies, they will grow up not knowing what they are. We raise babies with members of their species whenever possible to help aid them in learning their natural behavior. When you raise a baby squirrel up from a pinky and at 8 weeks old it wants nothing to do with you, congratulations, you have done a *wonderful* job. You have successfully raised a wild orphan.

The whole reason we do what we do is to be able to return these animals to the wild and give them the best chance to live out the life they were meant to live. We do right by the animals by keeping them wild. It is how we show them our love and respect.