



Is Wildlife Rehabilitation a Hobby?

Many people get the idea of a Wildlife Rehabber being just a backyard hobbyist, playing with animals that are “cute and cuddly” in their spare time.

It’s hard to get the recognition as a true professional when you are a wildlife rehabber, but once someone has “tasted” the life of a rehabber, they will quickly realize the work involved and the experience, knowledge, and resources required to treat and care for the multitude of different patients and injuries encountered.

Our Executive Director, DaLyn Marthaler, is also our Wildlife Specialist. Her vast knowledge of her specialty started out as a “labor of love” for the “sick and injured” and turned her drive for learning into a dedication to the WRCNU Mission that is found only in a true professional who performs at the top of their profession.

*“Through wildlife rehabilitation and education,
we will empower the community to engage
in conservation and responsible stewardship
of wildlife and habitat.”*

Wildlife Rehabilitation is not taking an injured bird or other animal, placing it in a cage with a bowl of seed/food and a dish of water and hoping for the best.

Every patient is different, every BIRD, is different. All wildlife dietary needs are specialized and so to recover properly, they must be given nutritious foods that are most like those they will consume in the wild—not hamburger, milk, cheese, bread, expired foods, etc.

*WRCNU's single largest budget item is Animal Food: specialty foods: insects, fruits, vegetables, various "milk supplements", nuts, frozen "whole animal" foods, fish, quality seed, etc.
(in 2019 WRCNU spent almost \$80,000 on food)*

First, you must determine the species; every animal has different needs; of the 465 bird species found in Utah, which ones eat seed? If they eat seed, what type of seed do they need? Alternatively, are they fish eaters, birds of prey, insectivores, etc.?

Next, you must figure out “the why” of the animal in your care. Why is it here? What is wrong with it? What is the best course of treatment to return this animal to the wild?

Wildlife Rehabbers must have extensive knowledge of species identification, anatomy, dietary needs, medication, sutures, bandaging and splinting, interpretation of x-rays, diagnostics, fluid therapy, and neonatal care. They must successfully treat a wide variety of animal injuries including broken bones, head trauma, poisonings, domestic animal attacks, lacerations, electrocutions, frostbite, burns, oil, parasites, and a wide variety of diseases and other injuries.

Another unique requirement is knowledge of HOW to interact with these animals in a manner that will promote healing without creating stress (stress kills) or an animal that is now dependent on humans.

A rehabber must know how to treat a patient and ensure that it does not become imprinted on humans; that it will be truly wild and remain wary of humans and other animals (cats/dogs/predators) rather than wanting to approach them. Besides improper diet, this area of knowledge is the second biggest problem rehabbers face when inexperienced “rescuers” decide to take on the care and treatment of the animal they “saved”.

All of these areas of expertise are why Wildlife Rehabilitation requires that anyone treating wild animals must have federal permits for all native avian species and most often, states also require permits for all species of wildlife (avian and otherwise) within their boundaries.

Once treated and presumably recovered, how do you determine when it can be released? Can it move freely like other members of its species? Fly and or run, without restriction or disability? Can it find food, hunt, and evade capture by predators. Where should it be released—dry desert, wetlands, high elevation, low meadow lands ...?

WRCNU fulfills all state and federal regulatory requirements for management of all migratory bird species and Utah’s small mammals. WRCNU holds permits for Wildlife Rehabilitation as well as use of non-releasable “Ambassador Animals” for public education, including live eagle exhibition.

Wildlife rehabilitation, means working 365 days a year—unless you are a big enough organization to staff many shifts/workers.

WRCNU is not there yet—that is where public support & funding comes in; WRCNU is public donation funded, no state or federal support is provided for wildlife rehabilitation.

In the “off-season”, a rehabber will put in 6-8 hours a day to ensure the patients in their care are fed, medicated, and their caging is cleaned. They remain open daily for those hundreds of off-season patients that show up late summer to early spring. During the “heavy season”, what we call “Baby Season” (April-September) a rehabber is likely to spend their days working 11-13 hrs a day—either season, it is year round work, weekends and holidays are always included in this schedule.

Wildlife Rehabilitation IS a true profession, with dedicated professionals often giving up their personal lives for a cause/mission that is bigger than they are—fixing what are often human impacted animals and educating the public in order to reduce those impacts.

CAN WE HAVE YOUR SUPPORT?