



The challenges of wildlife rehabilitation

There is an excitement when we think about our wild native neighbors. When we see one in need, we want to reach out and help. Too often our hearts jump into action without engaging our brains. This can be dangerous for both the wild animal and the human.

To paraphrase the wise words of a recent good Samaritan rescuer “it is intimidating at best when considering how to care for a wild animal. They are in better hands with professionals.”

There are many factors to consider and if you reside in an area where professional wildlife rehabilitators operate, please contact them right away. As the common phrase states ‘please do not try this at home’; please heed that advice. Minutes matter when there has been any type of trauma, including being orphaned. The wrong housing, temperature, food, time intervals, medications, rehydration are all reasons for demise.

Wildlife rehabilitation is determining the mystery of why this animal is requiring care. It is about love and loss and educating our neighbors. It is caring without coddling. It is wonderful, and wage less, interesting, frustrating, illegal without permits, rewarding, exciting, demanding, heartbreaking, busy, intense, thrilling, tiring yet invigorating. It requires patience, lots of cleaning, knowledge, attention to detail at all times, & networking with 5,000 professionals. It is NOT searching the internet for ‘how to’.



When you find a wild animal – thank you for reaching out with your heart. Now engage your brain and remember AHWF. Be aware of your surroundings and the animals you would normally see. Hesitate before you approach any wild animal. Watch for signs of distress. Follow through with appropriate actions. Do not search the internet on ‘how to care for a wild animal’. Successful long term survival depends on appropriate actions made by the rescuer.

You cannot learn experience by spending a few minutes reading an online article. Wildlife rehabilitation is perpetually being behind the 8 ball. There are so many areas to pay attention to and there is not the benefit of having the patient tell you neither what they are feeling nor the ability to run assorted medical tests. The most heartbreaking experience as a professional rehabilitator is when a rescuer finds a wild animal in need and despite their heartfelt efforts they fail to contact the professionals right away. The wild animal is in greater distress due to the time delay from initial trauma and improper care. The saddest moment is when an animal dies and you know you did everything you could but still feel there could have been more if you had gotten it sooner.