

R.O.C.K. - Rehabbers Offer Care and Kindness

Wildlife Rehabilitators are aware of the many perils facing individual wild animals in their daily existence. Some can be avoided by personal steps that we can take - others need to be dealt with through education or lobbying efforts.

Wildlife rehabilitators are **licensed by state game agencies, yet they are given no other support,** and

they are **not allowed to charge for their "services."** Sadly, animals often come to the attention of rehabbers when they are found by people who either don't want them near their house or don't know how to help them. When the DEC's, DNR's or police are called, they normally recommend killing or letting the animals die; and most veterinarians cannot take time from their busy schedules.

DON'T ASSUME "IT" IS "ROADKILL"

BY E.M. FAY

As one of our more numerous wild neighbors, squirrels are often, sadly, one of the most frequent casualties of the speedy driving habits of us humans. Along with skunks and possums, dead squirrels by the side of our increasingly busy roadways are a common sight. Many, and perhaps most of these deaths could be avoided if people would merely slow down a bit, and keep a watchful eye on the sides of the road for anyone about to cross. However, even the most cautious driver may occasionally have no chance to avoid a sudden darting out by an animal.

While driving around country roads in upstate New York, I have seen many near-misses between squirrel and car, and have been thankful when my own slower-than-average speed saved the lives of various animals. One day, as I saw a squirrel in the path of a car coming in the opposite direction I tried to flag the driver to slow down, but was unsuccessful, and the squirrel received a glancing blow. As he lay in the road, injured, I knew there were only seconds before another car would crush him completely, so I took a chance, put on my emergency flashers, and got out to move him to the grassy verge.

The squirrel was definitely injured, but had enough strength to thrash about - although he could not walk or run away. Hoping he could be saved, I dashed home - luckily I lived close by - and called the nearest wildlife rehabilitator that I knew: **Ellen Kalish**, of the wonderful wild bird sanctuary, Ravensbeard, in Saugerties.

Although Ellen is a renowned bird specialist, with considerable experience rehabilitating raptors, in particular, she is widely knowledgeable, and she agreed to keep our little friend to see if she could do anything for him.

Wildlife Watch Binocular Assoc. Editor, Eileen Fay, said, "This so suits the work that wildlife rehabilitators do: "

If I can stop one heart from breaking,
I shall not live in vain;
If I can ease one life the aching,
Or cool one pain,
Or help one fainting robin
Unto his nest again,
I shall not live in vain.

Emily Dickinson

Ellen determined that the squirrel had some injury to his mouth, which made it difficult for him to eat, and perhaps some other skeletal injuries, but he might recuperate. After a couple of weeks of tender care and feeding, Mr. Squirrel was sufficiently recovered to be released back into his old neighborhood. And boy, was he ready! He had been very unhappy about being in a cage, even though it was well set up for his comfort.

With a photographer friend, Ellen brought her recovered patient to a spot near where he had been hit. Of course, we put the cage in a natural area as far from the roadway as possible, so he would not rush back into traffic in a panic after being released. When we opened the door, he seemed confused at

first, not realizing he could go. But after a little coaxing, he finally got the message, clambered out and ran off into the bushes near a stream. We hoped that he recognized his native area and found his way home fairly quickly.

Needless to say, we felt good about the outcome, and could but hope that he would not get himself into a pickle in the future.

Anyone witnessing such an incident as that above should realize that it is not *always* hopeless when an animal is hit by a car. Be observant as you drive, and if you do see an animal injured, call your local rehabber immediately to report it (a list is available at www.wildwatch.org). If you can do so without endangering yourself, move him or her out of the roadway.

As formidable a danger as our automobiles are to wildlife, once in a while, if we are lucky, we may be able to save an injured individual. For their own sakes, and the sake of their dependant families, it is certainly worth a try.

Please support rehabilitators such as **Ravensbeard**. www.ravensbeard.org

Wildlife Watch thanks **Eileen Fay**, our Assoc. Editor, **Ellen Kalish** of **Ravensbeard**, and **Lynda Keyes** photographer!



Wildlife Watch fields hundreds of calls in the spring and summer. We pass information to people who are in remote areas of the country without help or facilities nearby or unattainable at the time they call. We connect them with rehabilitators who are nearby, and within a certain radius we help to rescue and transport animals to veterinarians or rehabbers.

Please help this service to grow by contributing to Wildlife Watch.

Join Wildlife Watch

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