

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 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.

CAROLINA WATERFOWL RESCUE (CWR)

BY SANDI BUSH

Carolina Waterfowl Rescue, located in Indian Trail, NC, just outside of Charlotte, is fast becoming known as the "go to place" in the region for help with injured or abandoned ducks, geese, swans, and other water birds. From helping individuals who have found an injured or abandoned bird, to helping with major rescues due to weather, hoarding, or neglect, CWR is frequently in the news. This all volunteer-run group, headed by Director Jennifer Gordon, now intakes and helps more than 2000 birds a year. This is an amazing story given that just 2 years ago, birds were housed in volunteer garages, houses, and back yards. The group rented their first facility - an old turkey barn - in the fall of 2009, which provided a much greater ability to care for birds. From the hospital, to specially constructed baby pens, to "time out" areas for resident male sex offenders (sometimes the male/female ratios get skewed so we have to put the male ducks in time out - interestingly, this never happens to geese, just to ducks).

As with most rehabbers, spring is our busy season, with babies falling into storm drains, hatching in retention ponds with no exit, or courtyards, and of course we get lots of calls from concerned citizens about our area ducks and geese who for some reason, seem to love nesting in our busy parking lots and along side busy highways. And they don't just do this once of course, but every year we get the same calls about the same birds.

Our dream has always been to have a facility of our own, where we can help our birds but also provide training,



educational opportunities, and the ability to continue to grow. The old turkey barn is bursting at the seams. Just recently, a wonderful donor came forward with a proposal to buy us a place of our own, with enough land to really give our birds the space they need to heal and learn how to either go back to the wild, for our wild birds, or be prepared to go to a new home with one of our many adoptive families. That reality is now happening and we are in the midst of a major project to prepare our new home. We had hoped to be in our new place before babies arrived but with our very warm weather, babies are here very early.

Jennifer is working very hard to juggle all the responsibilities of keeping our current facility running while planning our new facility to include all those things we always hoped to have but never could, like multiple ponds, a garden, shelter for the birds from the heat of the summer, walking trails for visitors, and a good viewing area for prospective adoptive families to see birds available to go to new homes.

She keeps our Facebook page current ("friend" us! We love an audience!), while giving help and advice to people all around the country who need help with injured birds. She is also licensed to care for raptors, and while our local injured raptors go to the Carolina Raptor Center, we sometimes have an overnight guest or two awaiting transport.

We have a few residents, including Pringles (the Toulouse goose) and Marmalade (the rooster). Mr. T (our wild/domestic mixed male turkey who doesn't think he is a turkey as he is afraid of the lady turkeys) doesn't have his own Facebook page yet but we are sure it's coming. He is the current favorite of visitors as he just wants to follow you around and be petted.

What do we wish for? Patient drivers who allow birds to cross the street; fishermen and fisherwomen who don't leave their hooks and line around for birds to get tangled in; people to stop shooting Canada geese with BB guns and arrows; construction workers who clean up their trash so birds don't get tangled in plastic fences and plastic tape; and snapping turtles who would stop chomping on the feet of our birds.

Check us out on Facebook or our website at www.carolinawaterfowlrescue.com. If you are interested in volunteering or adopting, click the links on our website.

And of course, your donations are always welcome.

Sandi Bush has been a volunteer at **CWR** for three years. Although we hear that the description "wonder woman" would be a good title!