President’s Perspective:
With the holidays and a much needed rest behind us, we are all gearing up for another non-stop year of caring for the animals, educating, fielding phone calls, fund raising, transporting, and training potential volunteers. Although we do receive injured animals year-round, our busiest seasons are the spring and summer months when the majority of the babies are being born. A few exceptions are Hummingbirds, Cotton tail rabbits, Opossums and Squirrels. Some of these babies we get in as early as January!

So, in the future, if you are planning on trimming those trees or clearing the brush from the back yard …Please, do it well before December when these animals are seeking out nesting and den sites. Or wait until after an occupied nest has been vacated …so that they can raise their own families.

The society that we live in today is one that human beings have created. We have become very accustomed to and even demanding of quick fixes and instant gratification with our technology, global travel, internet access and even surgically altering our appearance - all of which are assessable for the right price. If we don’t like something, - we change it, throw it away or buy new.

That philosophy for some people applies to the wild animals who have learned to adapt their ways and have found humans and their establishments to be a resource in their struggle to survive. People will shoot, trap, relocate and poison them only because the animals are in their space or, on the other end of that spectrum, the kind-hearted will offer artificial sources of food - which in some cases does more harm than good. There are no quick fixes or price tags when it comes to the environment or the animals. It takes but a fraction of a second to change or destroy and centuries to repair. The animals still have to survive with the tools that mother nature gave them. It is up to us to at least allow them the space in which to do it.
Responsible + Realistic feeding of backyard wildlife.

With the devastating loss of natural habitat and urban sprawl, our back yards are becoming habitat to many species of animals - the animals that we invite in - and those that we don’t. Most of us have backyard bird feeders and enjoy the delicate nature of these little guys. But we are not prepared for the consequences of our actions within the animal world, especially a world changing as fast as ours where the animals are learning that we are a valuable resource. Birds are prey animals and seed is food to many other animals, some of which include rats, squirrels, opossums, raccoons, coyotes and hawks. If they don’t prey on small birds, they do prey on the smaller animals that do. In the wild, birds and mammals have to forage in many different locations for a variety of natural foods – nuts, seeds, berries and insects that will balance their diet. This foraging protects them from disease and predators by not creating larger than normal congregations in any one area, or on a regular basis, thus not being so predictable to a potential predator. A yard that offers natural vegetation is seasonal, so the birds and animals are forced into moving on and finding new foraging spots. All of these animals play a vital role within our ecosystem, which includes our back yards. It can be a symbionic relationship. Our back yards can be a window to a place of natural wonder for our enjoyment and the survival of some of our native wildlife who have been forced into co-habitation with us and can be of great benefit... if we just let them.

When it comes to which animals we want to share our yards with we can not be selective when by feeding one specie we are inadvertently inviting the rest of the animal kingdom in also.

By evaluating our own actions we can determine how we are contributing to undesirable wildlife in our yards. It is never acceptable to offer human food to wild animals as this creates an association with people that is always detrimental to the animal and becomes problematic for humans. These are wild animals and do not need hand-outs from humans to survive, only the space in which to do it.

Anna M. Reams
It was a beautiful spring day in 1995. I had recently retired and was enjoying the volunteer work at Habitat for Humanity. On this particular day, I was relaxing on my backyard patio and gazing at the expanse of lawn and surrounding shrubbery all meticulously manicured except for an old, dead almond tree which had fallen over in a storm the previous winter and I had not yet gotten around to removing. I began to think: I'm helping to build habitat for people, but what about habitat for wildlife? **If I was a bird or a butterfly, would I want to even visit this yard, much less live here? Is there food for birds and other critters?**

Except for some old walnut trees that provided some walnuts for the squirrels, the answer was “no”. Is there water for them to drink? No. Is there shelter to protect them from the weather or predators? Very little. Are there places for them to raise their young? Again, the answer was: very little. And I realized something else: our backyard was very boring!

I began to visualize what a habitat for wildlife would look like in our yard. It had separate “rooms” that were not visible until you got there with paths of natural material that led from room to room. It had dense foliage: tall trees, tall and short shrubs, ground cover, rock piles and brushpiles that provided shelter and places for critters to raise their young. It had plants that provided food in the form of seeds, nuts, berries, and nectar. And it had a variety of water sources, some running and some still. I drew up a plan based on my vision and over the next couple of years I had transformed our yard. Most of the lawn was gone (it had very little value for wildlife and consumed an enormous amount of energy and resources caring for it), replaced by most of the things I had visualized on that spring day. I added a dry stream bed, which not only added interest and sheltering rocks, but also collected rainwater and solved a drainage problem. The bug-ridden, fallen almond tree remained, providing food for woodpeckers, and some other larger dead trunks were left on some trees that provided hollows for nesting sites.

Flushed with a feeling of success, I turned my attention to our front yard. There, was a very large patch of Algerian ivy as well as lawn that got replaced by wildlife attracting shrubs, trees, perennials and vines. My wife’s beloved rose bushes remained, but no longer required pesticides because the birds that flock to our garden eat the aphids. I also began using more plants that are native to our region because they require very little water once established and very little food, in contrast to non-natives. In addition, native plants are more attractive to native wildlife (obviously!).

Our garden now looks very different than most of our neighbors’ gardens. It no longer looks meticulous. It requires much less maintenance and much less water and other resources. Most of the leaves that fall remain on the ground where they serve as mulch and hide bugs for insect-eating birds. Our old asphalt driveway has been replaced by the same material used for garden paths-decomposed granite. And, best of all, our more natural garden has attracted 45 species of birds (to date), butterflies, lizards, beneficial insects, the occasional possum and raccoon, in addition to the squirrels.

Fast forward to 2005. I have been volunteering with Wildlife Care of Ventura County for about 6 years now; I have had my yard certified by the National Wildlife Federation as a “Backyard Wildlife Habitat” and am volunteering as a BWH Steward, helping others transform their yards into spaces that are attractive to both humans and wildlife.

**As I wander through our garden now, I think that it is not only a habitat for wildlife, but that it, too, is a habitat for humanity, for what would my life be like if earth’s wild and beautiful creatures were not a part of it?**

Website Resources for native plants: 1) nwf.org/createhabitat 2) lacups.org 3) laspilitas.com 4) matiljanursery.com
An adult male Badger was admitted with a severe infection throughout the neck and head region, veterinarians placed drains in to keep the wound sites open and to promote draining. Most likely the bites were incurred from a coyote or a dog.

2 months later - here he is feeling and looking much better. Badgers are native to California residing in sage brush country and farm lands. They are born and bred in a burrow, are nocturnal and spend much of their time digging for rodents, rabbits and other small mammals.

ASSISTING INJURED WILDLIFE BABIES - not healthy ones -

Unlike human babies, wild babies are not constantly watched by their parents and spend large amounts of time alone. In many cases, wild babies should be left alone.

In the event you do find a baby bird or mammal, unless you know that the parents have been killed or it is obvious that the baby is injured, observe the animal and the area from a distance to make absolutely sure the parents are not around before you intervene. If you are unsure, please call our hotline for assistance. Once the baby is removed from the area and transported to a local veterinarian, animal control or rehabilitator, the resources available to us to return that baby, if he is healthy, are limited. It is our goal to keep the healthy babies with their parents which allows us to utilize our resources for the babies who really need our help.

Definitive signs of a problem are:

The baby is cold, lethargic, limping, hanging wing, blood or open wounds, constant vocalizing, or drastic behavior changes from what you would normally observe with in your backyard.

If any of these symptoms are evident, gently pick the baby up placing him in a box lined with a soft material; punch holes in the box for ventilation and place him in a warm, quiet spot away from all the household activity. And do not feed or offer water with the exception of a hummingbird which you can offer sugar water (1 part sugar to 4 parts water).

And contact a rehabilitator as soon as possible.

805-498-2794
Q. Readers’ Ask …
Why can’t I raise the baby myself?
He is eating and SEEMS fine

A. Rehabilitation is a very complex and specialized process involving the medical management and ultimate release of a healthy wild animal back into its natural habitat. It is a process of assessing the animal’s physiological and physical condition upon intake and addressing them in the order of their severity; then depending on the specie, age and condition it was presented in a specialized diet, frequency and duration is selected for that specific animal. Some babies are fed every 15 minutes to 2 hours throughout the day. Some animals are too compromised to eat.

Feeding regular food to an emaciated or dehydrated animal will do more harm and possibly kill the animal because the animal’s system is not able to assimilate the nutrients in a solid form.

Once the animal is self-sufficient … It is Hands OFF and he is introduced into an environment as closely resembling the one that he will have to survive in once he is released. During the weeks or months that he is in this environment, it is up to the rehabilitator to expose him to everything he would be learning from his parents in the wild – and limit his exposure to those things that can harm him……………. Predominately Humans.

Every year we get in mammals and birds that people have found and raised ….all with good intentions, but many times our own human emotions and needs overshadow what is in the best interest of the animal. And in raising these animals many things can and do go wrong and the animals are not releasable for various reasons - too habituated (used to people), feather damage, deformities from an improper diet - or worse yet, the animals we do not hear about that have been released … without the skills necessary to survive.

It is always the animal that suffers in situations such as these. When we receive them in these conditions our options are very few. The care and ultimate survival of these animals needs to be left in the hands of the professionals - if they are to have any chance at all.

If you would like to volunteer with a licensed organization in your area call:
California Department of Fish and Game
1-858-467-4201

FACT:
A) Opossums are the only marsupials in North America.
B) When Opossum babies are born they are the size of a rice crispy!
I was sixteen years old and a good friend of mine brought me a raccoon for my birthday from a local pet shop. It was legal in those days to own raccoons and they were easy to come by. The raccoon, aptly named “Trouble,” came into our lives and quickly turned them upside down. He was so cute and playful, but slowly he started biting the people around him, ultimately biting me so badly I had to go to the hospital. So, I understand when people tell me they would love to have a raccoon or a bobcat for a pet. The desire to be close to such beautiful wild animals gives us back a natural part of ourselves that is lost in our everyday lives.

There is great truth in the quote by Charles Lindburgh; “Real freedom lies in wildness”. Wild animals must rely on their instincts to survive. They must forage or hunt for food, protect their territory, raise their young and escape being killed by predators. In captivity, however, these instincts become dangerous and misplaced, especially as the animal matures. It has taken many thousands of years to domesticate dogs and cats. Wild animals raised as pets can not be “domesticated.”

They will not respond or react in the predictable ways of our beloved cats and dogs. They will return to their natural instincts and the results can be very painful. Most people are ill-equipped to deal with the dietary, social and behavioral requirements wild animals require. In the wild they spend so much of their time foraging and escaping predators, when kept in a cage they often become bored and neurotic. Many of the animals we receive at WCVC are orphaned babies people have tried to raise on their own. Often these babies suffer nutritionally due to an improper diet and are habituated or, in other words too used to people. Many of these animals will never be able to be rehabilitated or released. Zoos are often reluctant or unable to take in wild animals that have been kept as pets. They may harbor disease and because of un-predictability become a danger to their keepers. They may have been declawed and are unable to defend themselves from the other animals in the exhibit. Because of this, sometimes the animals are “turned loose” by their owners with no idea of how to survive in the wild.

The heartbreak of getting attached to an animal and having to give it up is the human cost of keeping wild animals as pets. There are many ways to be close to wild animals.

**CALIFORNIA STATE LAWS**

*It is unlawful to have in your possession any California native wild animal for longer than 48 hours without the proper State, Federal or USDA permits.*

*It is illegal to trap and relocate any wild mammal more than 2 miles from its original location.*

*It is a federal offense to take down or remove an active bird nest. Miigratory birds are protected under the migratory bird treaty act. A federal permit needs to be acquired, or wait until the babies have left the nest as fledglings - before removing the nest.*

Volunteer at your local rehabilitation center, donate to organizations that purchase land exclusively for the wild animals, take a hike in the hills and marvel at the beauty of a truly wild animal. Take that desire and use it in positive ways to help the animals that are surviving in the wild or right in our own backyards, who need us to be their champions... not their owners.

Jami LoVullo
American Humane Association
Animal Safety Representative
YES! I want to help WCVC assist native wild animals!

SHOP FOR WILDLIFE AT RALPHS!

HOW TO SIGN UP: Simply fill out the form and return by mail or email to squirrelmender@msn.com

Ralphs Card Number:

Name: ___________________________
Address: ________________________________________________________________
Phone Number: _________________________

A portion of your shopping proceeds are donated to WCVC every time you shop through August 2005!

I WOULD LIKE TO DONATE FUNDS TO HELP FEED AND HOUSE INJURED AND ORPHANED WILDLIFE!

Your donation of $25.00 or more will entitle you to continue to receive our semi-annual newsletter! WCVC is a non-profit organization and all contributions are tax-deductible.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Other Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$15.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$25.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$35.00</td>
<td>$50.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$_________________</td>
<td>Other Amount</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_____ I would like to help care for wild birds or small mammals in my home.
_____ I would like to assist other rehabbers a few hours a week.
_____ I would enjoy transporting animals to local veterinarians or wildlife rehabilitators.
_____ I would like information on WCVC’s wildlife educational presentations. Meet your wild neighbors up close and personal!
_____ I would like information on a program for my area on Coyote awareness.

NAME: ___________________________
ADDRESS: ________________________________________________________________
PHONE NUMBER: _________________________

PLEASE MAIL TO:
Wildlife Care of Ventura County
P.O. Box 941476

SPECIAL FRIENDS OF WCVC
(Donations and in kind services of $250.00 or more)

Conejo Valley Veterinary Clinic
Bear Thompson, DVM
Audubon Society of W. Hollywood
June Yamaginurria
Robb Quint and Jerry Burns
Jack Edelstein
Linda Fowler
Verizon Foundation - Pat Katz
Lowell Novy, DVM
Thousand Oaks Rotary Club
The Los Angeles Zoo
Jean Marie Webster
Brandon Cangiano
Mark Hill
Jami LoVullo

WCVC is permitted through the State Department of Fish and Game, U.S. Fish and Wildlife and USDA.

SMALL WISHES

Nutros
Fishing Nets
Water Bottles
Critter Carriers
Dog Igloos
Gram Scales
Pedigree Dog Food
Heating Pads

BIG DREAMS

Leased Land
(Larger Release Enclosures)
Printing Costs (Up to $1,000)
Insurance For one Year ($850.00)
5,000 Business Cards ($150.00)
Newsletter ($600)
Although Siberian Tigers are not native to California, in light of recent events in the Simi Valley, Moorpark area in February and the outpouring of empathy, anger and division over the situation, we felt we needed to address it and hopefully educate on the seemingly endless plight of these magnificent animals.

We were very saddened by the turn of events and had hoped that the situation could have been handled differently. Whether they weigh 5 lbs or 400 lbs, wild animals raised as pets are still wild animals and by nature will remain wild and do not belong in captivity. California regulations and laws on the ownership of exotic wild animals is one of the strictest in the nation but obviously not strict enough.

This past year I had the experience of helping Chuck Traisi with the Fund for animals and thousands of volunteers care for at least 36 tigers in Colton, when the permittee of that facility was arrested for animal abuse + illegal breeding of tigers, (only two of many charges) he had a constant supply of cubs so the public could handle and take pictures with them. Chuck Traisi and many of these volunteers gave up two years of their lives to care for these tigers until facilities around the country could be found or built to take these animals in. It took two years!! There are no places left for these animals to go. Shelters are full to capacity of full grown wild animals that were purchased as babies, cute, cuddly and fashionable at the time ...but then they grew up. What happened in Moorpark to that Tiger was awful and not acceptable but just because none of us pulled the trigger does not mean our hands are clean. The problem does not lie with Fish and Game, it lies with legislation and the market of interest by the public to see these animals. As long as people pay money to see these exotic animals - someone will find a way to exploit them. But there are individual people and organizations out there doing something to change the status quo and fighting to pass laws that will prevent any one private person from owning an exotic wild animal. It is to late for this Tiger but the anger, empathy, and voice we found for this tiger needs to be used in an arena where it will be heard and used to help protect other tigers. So he won’t have died in vain. We all have our opinions but one thing is for sure these animals do not belong in cages or suburban backyards, one voice may appear to be lost in the crowd but many voices demand attention... as we have learned. So as we all look around for whose hand to slap in this no-win situation... perhaps we should check our own pockets - and ask ourselves, what have I done to prevent this from happening?

Get involved and **make your voice heard** contact your legislator, if we don’t speak out ...who will.

Savethetigers.com
api4animals.org    Photos from Tiger Rescue in Colton 2003