Wildlife Care of Ventura County

A WILD ANIMAL REHABILITATION AND RELEASE ORGANIZATION

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KEEP IT WILD!

RESCUE - REHABILITATE - RELEASE

WILDLIFE CARE of VENTURA COUNTY

The organization was founded in 1994, is a non-profit all volunteer organization holding permits through the California Department of Fish and Game. United States Fish and Wildlife and USDA.

The organization rehabilitates all native wildlife with the exception of bear, mountain lion and deer.

Our volunteers specialize in one or more species and operate as a team of dedicated and highly trained individuals.

We work very closely with veterinarians who provide medical care, x-rays, surgery and humane euthanasia when necessary.

Beyond the immediate benefits of helping wildlife in need. WCVC provides a valuable service to the entire community by making help accessible to those who find wildlife in distress.

Our mission is to rescue, rehabilitate and release, as well as educate the public on how to coexist with our wild neighbors.

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North American Raccoons
The procyonid family

Young raccoon was admitted with severe bite wounds and lacerations to the neck resulting in the loss of the pinna portion of his ear. He was attacked by a larger male raccoon.

North American Rccoon, the procyonid family takes its name from its most famous member, the raccoon. The name derives from the Algonquin word “arakunem” meaning, “he washes with his hands.” But wash they do not. The familiar dipping of objects into water is only observed in captivity, when raccoons cannot pursue the normal aquatic prey-seeking behavior they perform in their natural habitat. This results in a damming of energy, which the intelligent animal expends in performing natural behaviors. The sense of touch probably is of the greatest importance to the raccoon in its food-gathering activities and is thought to be more sensitive than that of humans.

The raccoon is an intelligent, methodical, and inquisitive animal with very well developed tactile and olfactory senses. A raccoon hand has ten times as many nerve endings as a human hand, and their rear ankles rotate nearly 180 degrees like that of a squirrel.

Raccoons prefer woods near water, but they adapt well to human presence and are common in cities. Young raccoons “twitter” like young birds when disturbed in the nest. Most adult procyonids produce a variety of snarls, growls, whines, screams and barks. Most of these calls have little carrying power. Being mainly arboreal, young procyonids are born in tree dens when they’re available. If tree dens are scarce, raccoons use old buildings, attics, chimneys, basements, crawl spaces or dens in the ground.

They are classified as carnivores, but most are omnivorous-eating numerous types of insects, crayfish, crabs, fishes, amphibians, reptiles, birds, small mammals, and a variety of fruits, nuts, roots, and young plants. They vary their food habits with the season, the locality and abundance.

But living in close proximity to humans, their diets are no longer just acorns and crayfish and insects and bark.
but also pet food, food left by humans in parks or garbage cans and in compost piles. Raccoons do not necessarily hunt for food but will chase and grab small rodents .

Mating and Family Life

Mating season in North America is from January to March. Males become restless and will travel great distances seeking a receptive female. Males may mate with several females, but each female will only mate with one male. Mated pairs may remain together for a time. Females are able to breed at 10 months of age. Males are able to breed after the first year, although because of competition from older males, do not usually get the opportunity to breed for the first two years. (Evans, 1985)

If the female does not become pregnant during the first estrus, or something happens to her offspring she can come into season again four months later and have a litter of one to six (usually three or four). When their mother is absent, the kits instinctively become silent and still. The mother may have two or more nest sites, and may move the kits if one site becomes threatened or uninhabitable. After a few weeks, she may begin bringing bits of food home for the kits to explore. At about five weeks the young begin to leave the nest, and when they are ten weeks old they regularly accompany the mother on hunting expeditions.

Humans and Willdlife

Reuniting Families

In the event that young raccoons have been found without their mother, every possible attempt should be made to reunite the healthy young with their healthy mother. Raccoons are very attached to their young and have good memories; they will return to the place they were separated for several nights in an attempt to find them.

They recognize their babies' voices and scent, and will not be put off by the smell of the humans' touch. If the babies have been without food for an extended period of time, they will need supportive care and probably medical treatment. Once stabilized, however, they may be able to be reunited with their mother.

The babies can be left in a cardboard box or partially opened kennel (with a heat source, if necessary) in a protected area where the mother will be most likely to look for them. The box or kennel should be placed in the area after dark, and left there untouched until right before dawn. Unless they are cold or hungry the babies are not likely to crawl away from a secure warm nest. After dawn the rescuer should check the box, and if the babies are still there, take them back into rehab for the day of feeding and care until the following night, when the procedure should be repeated. After three nights, it becomes less likely that the mother will return, and the animals should be considered orphaned.

Orphaned raccoons

Human / Wildlife Conflict Issues

In general, people tend to be on one side of the fence or the other in their attitudes toward raccoons. Problems occur when half the people in a neighborhood are feeding raccoons for the pleasure of seeing them come close while the other neighbors are trapping the animals and calling pest control companies to eliminate them or relocate them. Relocation of wildlife is not a solution and illegal in some cities.The animals relocated will most likely die in their attempts to re-establish a territory in their search for food, water and shelter. This is especially true if it is a mother with babies if she is too stressed she will just abandon the babies. It is never a good idea to feed the raccoons that wonder into our yards as they are very adept and capable at finding their own food.

By our offering them artificial food we are desensitizing them to humans and establishments and we are teaching them that it is a place to get food and there is nothing to fear, so when this artificial supply of food disappears they become destructive in their search.

California State Regulations

In California, all wildlife is considered property of the state. Individuals are not permitted to keep wild animals as pets. Hunters, trappers and rehabilitators are all licensed by the State of California, and the California Department of Fish and Game (CDF & G) is the government agency responsible for monitoring how wild animals are treated.

The Virginia Opossum
North Americas ONLY Marsupial ...

This little opossum was rescued from the pouch of her mother still attached to a teat, the mother was hit by a car

The Virginia Opossum

North America's only marsupial. A marsupial is an animal with a pouch, like a kangaroo or a koala. The opossum has been around for at least 70 million years and is one of Earth's oldest surviving mammals! The name 'opossum' was first used in western culture by Captain John Smith in 1608. It comes from the Algonquin name 'apasum', which means 'white animal.'

The opossum is about the size of a large house cat. Its tail is prehensile. A prehensile tail is adapted for grasping and wrapping around things like tree limbs. The opossum can hang from its tail for a short time. Some people think opossums hang from their tails and sleep. They don't. Their tails aren't strong enough to hold them for that long! The opossum has opposable hallux. A hallux is like a thumb. The opossum's "thumbs" are on its rear feet. The hallux helps it grasp branches when it climbs.

Life Cycle

A Virginia opossum female may have as many as 25 babies, but she usually will have between eight to ten. The reason opossums have so many babies is to insure that some of them survive. Like most marsupials, opossums are very small when they are born - about the size of a navy bean.

The babies climb up the mother's fur and into her pouch where they find a teat. Some babies will not find their way to the pouch and will die. If they make it to the pouch, only babies who find one of the thirteen teats will survive. They will stay in the pouch attached to a teat for 55-60 days. Then they will move out of the pouch and spend another four to six weeks on their mother's back. They are self sufficient when they are about 6-8 inches long not including the tail. And are weaned when they fall off of the mothers back..she will not return to pick them up. Opossums can have multiple litters a year.

Diet

The Virginia opossum is nocturnal and uses its keen sense of smell to locate food.Their eye sight is very poor. It is omnivorous and eats just about anything, including lots of different plants and animals over ripened fruits, insects, snails and small rodents, garbage and carrion. Because so much carrion is road kill, opossums are often killed by cars while looking for food on the road.

Also One Of The Most Misunderstood

Opossum trapped in a have a hart trap and suffered severe damage to his jaw trying to chew his way out.

Young self sufficient Opossum

Behavior

The Virginia opossum has many behavioral adaptations it uses to survive. Solitary and nocturnal; usually slow moving; when frightened and unable to flee, may fall into a shock like state but, in reality, they are gentle and placid -- they prefer to avoid all confrontations and wish to be left alone.

When threatened, it will exhibit behaviors like running, growling, belching, urinating and even defecating. Sometimes it will "play 'possum." and roll over, become stiff, drool, and its breathing will become slow and shallow. This coma-like state can last up to four hours. Some predators will think the opossum is dead and go away.Or humans will place them in the trash only to return a few hours later and discover they are very much alive.

Few live beyond 1 year of age in the environment; can live up to 5 years in captivity. Killed by many predators; human (and cars), dogs, cats, owls, and larger wildlife. Opossums present a far lower health risk to humans than dogs and cats! Because of their low body temperature they have a naturaly high level of immunity to most diseases.They are more resistant to rabies than many other mammals.

What to do if you encounter an opossum?
Nothing! Nothing! Nothing!

Just watch and enjoy one of nature's most harmless and beneficial wildlife species right in your own backyard as they wander through, eliminating various pests as they go on their nightly excursions.

On the other hand, if one has chosen your garage, attic, or other structure as it's temporary quarters. There are relatively simple - means to get them to leave for more suitable spots in your area. Pick up all the food, leave the lights on in the garage, play music, and leave an exit open, make the environment uncomfortable for them and they will leave.This all needs to be done after dark as they are nocturnal.

Never resort to trapping an Opossum. Trapping is never a solution and once the animal is removed another animal will move in to fill the void. A Have a Hart trap is not humane for an Opossum. In one night of trying to get out of the trap he will harm himself , their snouts are so narrow they fit through the wires of the Have a hart trap and their teeth get caught and they struggle and chew to get free. Sometimes damaging the actual jaw bone. And they are in a rehabilitation facility for months .

Creating a Backyard Wildlife Habitat

Backyard Habitat

Basic elements needed for creating a wildlife habitat in your yard. Wildlife need just about the same things that we humans need for survival: food, water, shelter and places to raise young. Of course we humans have some additional requirements…. like our morning latte.

First then, is food. Plants are the best source of food for (non-predatory) animals. They provide seeds, nuts, berries, nectar, foliage, and attract insects which are also part of the diet of many critters. Since critters may forage for food in specific locations (on the ground, in low shrubs and flowers, in tall brush and trees), it's wise to have food sources in all those locales. By providing a diverse plant community in your garden, you are most likely to achieve a balanced ecosystem that will sustain itself. Plant sources can be supplemented with feeders of various types. Bird feeders should be cleaned regularly, placed where predators can be observed approaching and close to protective shelter should escape be needed.

Critters need water for drinking and bathing. Water sources can vary between the very simple and the very complex, depending on your preferences, location and budget. A shallow dish or hollow rock sitting on a stump or hung in a tree is easily provided. Bird baths and water fountains require a bit more effort. Birds will come to still water, but are especially drawn to dripping or moving water. Birds need only about ¾" deep water, so if your water container is deep, adding some rocks will provide a standing surface for short-legged birds. Water will need to be changed at intervals so that it is clean. Chlorox can be used to eliminate algae build up. More elaborate water features include streams and ponds, either natural (if you're lucky!) or man-made. These, of course, require more expense and care.

With any source of water, care must be taken to avoid providing a breeding ground for mosquitoes, the carriers of West Nile Virus and other diseases. Mosquitoes can't breed in moving water. With still water during mosquito season, changing it often, adding fish, or mosquito dunks (a larvicide which does not harm other animals, available at garden nurseries) will eliminate the problem.

So, to borrow from a baseball phrase,- feed and water them and they will come!

Alan Pollack, M.D.
Wildlife Habitat Steward
National Wildlife Federation

Trapping and Relocation of Wildlife…. Anything but Humane

Many people while opposed to the use of pesticides and other poisons, steel jaw traps and shooting to kill native wildlife, think that the most humane alternative in dealing with this "nuisance" wildlife is to use the live traps. These traps are purchased by well meaning individuals who do not want to harm the wildlife, but don't want them in their area either.

Studies have shown that many of the relocated animals do not survive in their new habitat. Most mammals and birds are territorial. Therefore by dumping it into another animals territory, It has to fight and compete with the resident animal for a limited supply of food and nesting sites. In almost all cases it is the new comer that loses… many dyeing from infection from bite wounds and others getting killed by cars in an attempt to return to their original territory. Many relocated animals become nomads, traveling endlessly on the brink of starvation looking for available space to feed and sleep. Most habitat areas are already providing sustenance for as many creatures as can be supported by the limited food and living space. A foreign raccoon, opossum or skunk doesn't stand a chance of assimilating into the area.

Relocated raccoons have been tracked well over 100 miles from their release sites, unable to settle into any familiar territory for very long. Almost half of all trapped and relocated raccoons die with in the first three months.(Canadian Study)

Just keep in mind that whether we make an effort to intentionally invite them in or not, raccoons, skunks and opossums are common visiters to our backyards. Like much of our native wildlife, they often go completely unnoticed because they are nocturnal. Viewed from a distance and not fed by humans, these wild animals will help keep your yard free of pests. All wildlife are beneficial and can benefit from what our yards offer naturally.

Please Help! Your tax deductible donation goes directly to the rehabilitation and release of the wild animals in our care. It is extremely expensive to care for injured and orphaned wild animals. We are only able to provide this service because of generous donations like yours. **We greatly appreciate your help!**

WAYS YOU CAN HELP.....

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Transporters
Cash donations

Gift Cards:
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Laundry soap
Disposable gloves
Welding gloves
Paper towels
Sponges
Bleach
Potted Plants
Astro turf (perches)

Food Supplies:
Science Diet Puppy
Pedigree dog food
Cat food (kibble)
Nuts & Seeds
Wild bird seed
Pigeon seed
Monkey Chow (zupreem)
Baby Food (Beef)
Pedialyte
Esbilac
(puppy formula)
KMR
(kitten formula)
Exact (hand feeding baby formula)

Orphaned baby tree squirrel

Your donation of $25.00 or more will entitle you to continue to receive our semi-annual newsletter.

WCVC is a non-profit and all volunteer organization and all contributions are tax-deductible.

$25.00 _____ $35.00 _____
$50.00 _____ $100.00 _____
$_____ Other Amount

JOIN OUR TEAM and be a part of the solution!
_____ 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 within my work route from local agencies to rehabilitators.

NAME: _____
ADDRESS: _____
_____
PHONE NUMBER: _____

Please mail to: **WCVC**
P.O.BOX 941476
SIMI VALLEY CA 93065

Thank you to everyone who continue to support our efforts!

Center Supplies:
Shade Cloth
Digital video camera
Laser printer
20' - 22' foot construction trailer

Medical Supplies:
Vetwrap
Stainless forceps
Q tips
Cotton tipped applicators
Gauze 2 x 2
Cast padding
Tape

Sutures:
5-0 Vicryl Rapide synthetic absorbable
4-0 PDS *II synthetic absorbable
Syringes:(sterile)
Insulin ½ cc + 1cc
1cc, 3cc, 10cc, 20cc, 35, 60

Needles: (sterile)
27g, 26g3/8, 25g 5/8, 22g, 20g
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Lactated Ringers
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Neosporin
Non steroid eye ointment
Gentamicin ophthalmic drops
Injectable Baytril 100mg/ml
Baytril 22.7 mg/ml inj. + tabs
Panacur paste or granules
Injectable Ivermectin
Bactrim
Metacam Oral suspension

To make a tax deductible donation please call:

Simi Valley 805-581-3911
or
Burbank 818-571-9833

Wildlife Care of Ventura County
PO Box 941476
Simi Valley CA 93065

THANK -YOU FRIENDS OF WCVC FOR ALL YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT!

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Karen Kamaka King
Al Butler

If you have found an injured or orphaned wild animal:

- Keep them warm, dark, and quiet
- Do not feed or offer the animal water
- Call a Rehabilitator

805-498-2794

STATE AND FEDERALLY PERMITTED - ALL VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATION