



VOLUNTEER & INTERN HANDBOOK

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WELCOME

The Wildlife Rehabilitators Association of Rhode Island (WRARI) d/b/a The Wildlife Clinic of Rhode Island (the “Wildlife Clinic”) welcomes you to become an integral part of its daily operation and a partner in helping The Wildlife Clinic succeed in saving wild lives. You will make a significant difference for wildlife and have a positive impact on your community and our environment. No matter what role you play, you will be an essential part of this organization’s growth and purpose.

Regardless of the position you have accepted, your decision to participate must be made with the full understanding of the commitment and responsibility it demands, as well as the risks associated with working with and around wild animals. This handbook has been prepared for you as a reference guide. It contains information regarding our policies and procedures, the duties you may perform, and how to perform your duties safely and effectively. Please read it carefully so you will be well equipped to become part of the team that provides quality care to the animals at the clinic. Volunteers interested in working hands-on with wild animals, must be properly permitted as required by state and federal laws. We will assist you in obtaining the proper permitting.

The Wildlife Clinic is not a zoo and it is not open to the public, although the public is welcome to bring injured or orphaned animals to us. It is essential that our wild patients, once admitted, are not exposed to humans any more than necessary, as this can cause unnecessary stress and may impede their recovery and even cause death. As wildlife care-givers, you will be expected to respect the nature and needs of our wild patients in order to minimize their stress and maximize the possibility of healing and recovery.

MISSION STATEMENT

WRARI d/b/a The Wildlife Clinic of Rhode Island is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that provides veterinary care and rehabilitation of all species of injured and orphaned wild animals (with the exception of sea-turtles and marine mammals) within the state of Rhode Island. WRARI operates and oversees The Wildlife Clinic of Rhode Island, the only clinic of its kind able to legally handle all wild species in Rhode Island, and undertakes the ongoing training and support of most of the state's licensed rehabilitators and sub-permittees in order to provide quality and humane care to injured and orphaned wildlife, with the goal of release back into the environment.

WRARI was formed in 1993 for the purpose of providing education for and fostering communication among the wildlife rehabilitation community and the public in Rhode Island. WRARI assists established rehabilitators in learning more about the captive care of wild animals while also providing training for people who wish to become rehabilitators. In addition, we are presently developing educational programs for the public with a focus on helping to create an increased awareness of the needs of wildlife in our state. With the support of our community, animal enthusiasts and concerned citizens, WRARI also raises necessary funds in order to help purchase supplies and services for rehabilitators such as milk replacers for orphaned mammals, worms for birds, pharmaceuticals and medical supplies, as well as to provide veterinary care.

WRARI & The Wildlife Clinic work hard to provide the best in rehabilitative care and treatment to Rhode Island's most priceless natural resource - its wildlife. We are excited for you to join us in this mission.

1. OPEN DOOR POLICY

At the Wildlife Clinic, all volunteers and interns are encouraged to bring questions, suggestions, and concerns to the attention of their supervisor or the Executive Director. Every volunteer and intern has the right to request a meeting with the Executive Director and Operations Director in order to discuss any concerns they may have. In our continuing efforts to improve our organization, careful consideration will be given to each matter. The Wildlife Clinic encourages volunteer involvement and participation in idea sharing and problem solving.

2. CONTACT INFORMATION

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3. DOCUMENT STORAGE, RETENTION & DESTRUCTION POLICY

The Wildlife Clinic is committed to efficient and secure document management. Physical and electronic documents will be stored securely, with access control measures in place. We will categorize documents for retention based on legal requirements and operational needs, and maintain a schedule for review. Documents marked for destruction will be securely disposed of, with records kept for auditing purposes. Compliance with applicable laws and regulations will be ensured, including the implementation of legal holds when

necessary. All personnel will receive training on this policy, which will be reviewed annually for updates and communicated to all stakeholders.

4. VOLUNTEER VETERINARIANS

The Wildlife Clinic's veterinary team is composed of both volunteer veterinarians and those whom we employ. The practice of veterinary medicine without a veterinary license is against the law, and it is not permissible for any non-veterinarian (including veterinary technicians, staff, volunteers, and interns), regardless of level of wildlife rehabilitation licensing or level of training, to perform procedures or prescribe medications (e.g. antibiotics, anti-inflammatories, etc.) without explicit direction from an overseeing veterinarian.

Established veterinary protocols may be initiated for stabilization of new patients when a veterinarian is unavailable, however, the patient must be rechecked by the next on-site veterinarian or discussed with one of the Wildlife Clinic veterinarians within 24 hours. For specialized species (e.g. adult RVS, coyotes, bobcats, porcupines, beavers, deer, etc.) or if the presenting injury does not fall within the scope of existing protocols, a veterinarian must be contacted for further direction if not on site. If no veterinarian is available by phone, please contact the Director of Operations for further guidance.

Humane euthanasia is only to be performed under the direction of a licensed veterinarian and/or as outlined in Euthanasia Guidelines for emergency cases.

To promote the learning process, questions regarding specific care and medical plans are always encouraged. However, changes to any and all veterinarian established medical care plans – other than scheduled changes or completion of medication and/or treatment courses already outlined – are expressly forbidden by anyone other than a member of the Wildlife Clinic veterinary team. Questions, concerns, and/or suggestions relative to these plans must be addressed to the prescribing veterinarian first, and if they are unavailable, to the veterinarian working that day.

All veterinarians are expected to work together as a team. **It is critically important that the animal care staff and animal care volunteers are able to work to consistent standards and protocols.** To this end:

- a. Any conflicts or disagreements which may arise between any veterinarians should be addressed first amongst the impacted veterinarians, and if resolution is not forthcoming, then to the Wildlife Clinic's lead veterinarian. If further conflict

resolution is necessary, matters should be brought to the Executive Director and/or the Operations Director; and

- b. Any conflicts or disagreements that may arise between a veterinarian and a member of the staff or another volunteer should be first addressed to the Wildlife Clinic's lead veterinarian, and if further conflict resolution is necessary, matters should be addressed to the Executive Director and/or the Operations Director.

No disciplinary action may be taken unless in strict accordance with the policies and procedures outlined within this Volunteer/Intern Handbook.

5. GENERAL POLICIES & PRACTICES

Background

Checks

The Wildlife Clinic of Rhode Island reserves the right to conduct background checks, including criminal history and sex offender registry checks, on employees, volunteers, interns, and program participants, as permitted by law. Participation in Wildlife Clinic programs may be contingent upon the completion and results of such checks.

A. MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS & QUALIFICATION LEVELS

For all general animal care related volunteer opportunities, you must be 18 years of age or older and all volunteers are required to:

- a. Complete the Volunteer & Intern Application Form.
- b. Submit proof of current tetanus vaccine (Exceptions will be made only for individuals unable to obtain a Tetanus vaccination for medical reasons and proof of such will be required).
- c. Review the Training Supplement set forth in Appendix C of this handbook.
- d. Attend a Wildlife Clinic orientation.
- e. Complete scheduled shadowing shifts with a Wildlife Clinic staff member.

Volunteers are categorized from A to D, based on their level of licensure and qualifications. Qualification levels are cascading, so if you are categorized as a D, you can do all of the things listed under C, B and A. All volunteers will be notified of their qualification level and are required to complete the Volunteer Skills Training Checklist which we will provide to, and review with, you on your first day. The purpose of this checklist is to allow you (and us) to keep track of your progress and help you develop your skills efficiently. All volunteers must complete all of the the skills designated for each level before graduating to the next level. Volunteers are not permitted to perform any skill, duty or task until they

have been fully trained, shown proficiency, and that skill has been checked off by a supervising staff member or veterinarian. A volunteer’s current qualification level will dictate the type of wild patients they are allowed to safely handle. For the safety of staff, volunteers and our wild patients, volunteers who attempt to handle species not allowed under their qualification level may be dismissed.

The Wildlife Clinic is in the process of implementing a youth program to allow individuals under 18 years old to assist in a variety of capacities including some animal care, although direct animal care opportunities will be limited in accordance with state and federal laws.

B. MINIMUM COMMITMENT & VOLUNTEER SHIFTS

WRARI accepts volunteers and interns to work at The Wildlife Clinic of RI, located at 2865 Tower Hill Road, Saunderstown RI 02874. Due to the nature of our work and the significant training required to perform such work properly, WRARI requires that interested volunteers commit to volunteer service for **not less than three months**. Volunteer shifts run:

Monday – Friday: 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. or 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.
Saturday: 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Sunday: 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

During our busy season, May 1 through August 31, the Wildlife Clinic expands its hours, and additional hours and opportunities are available.

September	1	through	April	30
Monday	through	Friday:	9:00 a.m.	– 5:00 p.m.
Saturday and Sunday: 9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.				
May	1	through	August	31
Daily: 8:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m.				

We ask each volunteer to commit to a particular shift on a specific day. We are happy to work with you to alter the day of your service in the event that your circumstances change and you wish to remain working as a volunteer, however, shift changes are subject to availability. WRARI is also willing to work with you to provide some flexibility with the above shift schedule – however, this is dependent on several factors and is considered on a case-by-case basis.

Following the start of your volunteer or intern position and setting up a schedule with our Volunteer Coordinator, it is expected that all volunteers and interns will arrive on time for their designated shifts. Advanced notice of any absence or tardiness for a shift is required, and a supervisor must be notified.

While the vast majority of people choose to volunteer at the Wildlife Clinic, we also need volunteers in other capacities, including but not limited to: fundraising, event planning, facilities maintenance, social media, and public outreach and education. Please speak with our Executive Director if you wish to volunteer in any of these capacities. Since this work can be outside of The Wildlife Clinic, you would not be subject to shift requirements

C. INTERN SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS

The primary purpose of intern/externships is to provide practical, real-world work experience to interested candidates. Our interns and externs are incorporated into our general volunteer program and are expected to adhere to the same guidelines and policies. However, interns and externs are also required to complete additional specific tasks and goals as part of our Intern/Externship Curriculum.

1. **School requirements:** It is your responsibility to notify us and provide us a copy of all of the specific requirements of your internship prior to beginning your hours. If we need to complete certain paperwork for your school or professor, YOU must be aware of this and ensure that it has been done.
2. **Hour Requirements:** You are expected to know how many hours you need to complete and the date by which you need to complete them. You are expected to contact us in a timely fashion – we cannot accommodate individuals who wait until the last minute and wish to squeeze all of their hours into one week. This is also not acceptable, professional behavior.
3. **School credits:** For students receiving credit from school, you must complete ALL of your required hours within the timeframe allotted by your class or school. You are expected to plan your schedule accordingly. Interns and externs are not allowed to schedule hours when the Wildlife Clinic is not open. From time to time, we may have fundraising events or other volunteer opportunities with which you can assist to pick-up additional hours.
4. All hours must be logged properly and completed before your internship/externship ends. If you have any hourly log sheets that must be signed by your supervisor, you must provide them to said supervisor at the **end of each shift or week**.
5. If there is anything additional that must be completed by your supervisor, you are required to provide that to your supervisor in a timely manner.

6. If you must complete a project for your internship, you will be expected to meet all school and Wildlife Clinic deadlines, to perform your project professionally, and to bring said project to full completion.

Intern/Extern Curriculum

In order to become a wildlife rehabilitator, individuals must meet certain requirements as defined by the laws of their specific state. Accordingly, because internships and externships are intended to provide individuals with professional, real-world experience, you will be required to meet some of these same requirements and learning objectives. In addition to adhering to the guidelines of our general volunteer program, all interns and externs will be **required** to complete the following by the end of their intern/externship:

1. Study the Sub-permittee Manual on site (3-5 hours) or take the Sub-permittee class (6 hours).
2. Take and pass the Sub-permittee exam administered by RI DEM. This is a free, 50 question (multiple-choice), open book exam. You can schedule the test during your internship hours.
3. Complete and pass the Intern Assignment which covers various topics important to the practice of wildlife rehabilitation.
4. Completion of the Volunteer Skills checklist to the pre-determined level of completion. Our Volunteer Training Specialist will work with each intern and extern to determine what skill level should be met by the completion of your internship/externship.

By the end of your internship or externship, it is our intent that you have obtained an appreciation for the profession of Wildlife Rehabilitation and the complexities of working with wildlife. Our goal is to provide you with identifiable and articulable skills that will enhance your viability as a candidate in your future career opportunities.

D. INSURANCE

The Wildlife Clinic carries all necessary insurances, and our in-clinic volunteers are included as a stated addition to our general accident/liability policy.

E. CODE OF CONDUCT

The Wildlife Clinic expects all persons involved in the organization to adhere to a high standard of conduct. This includes treating all coworkers, volunteers, patrons, and wildlife with respect, integrity, and professionalism at all times. Volunteers and interns should conduct themselves professionally in the workplace. This includes refraining from disruptive behavior, offensive language, and harassment. Volunteers and interns should avoid situations that may create conflict of interest with the Wildlife Clinic's mission or financial interests. Full disclosure of any potential conflicts is required. Any violation of Wildlife Clinic policies or partaking in inappropriate activities may result in disciplinary action.

Inappropriate activities include, but are not limited to, the following:

- a. Violation of any organization rule or policy.
- b. Negligence which endangers the life or safety of another person, or wild animal being rehabilitated within the clinic.
- c. Treating any person or animal with disrespect.
- d. Inappropriate handling or treatment of any animal being treated in the Wildlife Clinic.
- e. Being under the influence of any controlled substance and/or alcohol while at work and/or the use, possession, or sale of a controlled substance while on Wildlife Clinic property, except for those medications that have been prescribed by a physician which do not impair work performance.
- f. Unauthorized possession of firearms, weapons, or explosives in the workplace.
- g. Engaging in criminal conduct or acts of violence, or making threats of violence while on Wildlife Clinic property.
- h. Theft or unauthorized possession of Wildlife Clinic property or the property of any employee or volunteer.
- i. Any act of harassment, sexual or racial; telling sexist or racist jokes; making racial or ethnic slurs.
- j. Partaking in any form of discrimination within the Wildlife Clinic or any Wildlife Clinic programs. No employee may discriminate on the basis of race, sex, color, gender identity, creed, national origin, age, marital status, handicap, sexual preference, genetic information, or political affiliation.

A note on veterinary care:

As previously noted, the practice of veterinary medicine without a veterinary license is against the law, and it is not permissible for any non-veterinarian

(including veterinary technicians, staff, volunteers, and interns), regardless of level of wildlife rehabilitation licensing or level of training, to perform procedures or prescribe medications (e.g. antibiotics, anti-inflammatories, etc.) without explicit direction from an overseeing veterinarian.

Established veterinary protocols may be initiated for stabilization of new patients when a veterinarian is unavailable, however, the patient must be rechecked by the next on-site veterinarian or discussed with one of the Wildlife Clinic veterinarians within 24 hours. For specialized species (e.g. adult RVS, coyotes, bobcats, porcupines, beavers, deer, etc.) or if the presenting injury does not fall within the scope of existing protocols, a veterinarian must be contacted for further direction if not on site. If no veterinarian is available by phone, please contact the Director of Operations for further guidance. Only licensed veterinarians are permitted to perform veterinary care and procedures.

To promote the learning process, questions regarding specific care and medical plans are always welcome. However, changes to any and all veterinarian established medical care plans – other than scheduled changes or completion of medication courses already outlined – are expressly forbidden. Questions, concerns, suggestions relative to these plans must be addressed to the ordering Veterinarian.

All volunteers and interns must abide by these standards of conduct. These examples are not all inclusive and Wildlife Clinic directors/supervisors should be used as a resource for additional details when needed. Discharge decisions will be based on an assessment of all relevant factors.

F. RABIES VECTOR SPECIES (RVS)

The state of Rhode Island categorizes all species that fall within the order Carnivora*, Woodchucks and all species of Bats as Rabies Vector Species (RVS). Rehabilitation of these animals is permissible only under the following conditions:

- a. Only Level 2X rehabilitators who have received the Rabies pre-exposure vaccinations are legally permitted to care for Rabies Vector Species.
- b. No exposure has occurred (the state conservatively defines this as any human skin to RVS fur contact; in the case of a domestic animal/RVS interaction the health department must be contacted for permission to rehabilitate).

- c. Under the current regulatory framework, the rehabilitation of adult Raccoons, Foxes, Woodchucks, and Skunks is prohibited (there is no age prohibition on the other RVS species). There are some situations where we can seek approval from RIDEM to assist adults of these species and we evaluate those instances on a case-by-case basis.
- d. All RVS brought in for care must be reported to the RI Department of Health.

All care and recordkeeping of rabies vector species are limited to appropriately licensed individuals. Inappropriate handling of these species may result in euthanasia of the animal as required by the RI Department of Health Department. **Volunteers and interns are not permitted to handle any RVS species unless properly licensed and trained to do so. Failure to adhere to this policy will result in disciplinary action.**

*In Rhode Island, the order Carnivora includes: Bobcats, coyotes, red & grey foxes, raccoons, striped skunks, mink, fisher, long & short tailed weasels, river otter, and bears (the rehabilitation of bears is prohibited).

G. EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

The Wildlife Clinic is an inclusive organization and does not discriminate on the basis of race, gender, nationality, age, marital status, or sexual orientation. We actively promote a tolerant and comfortable working environment. Volunteers and interns are expected to uphold this policy and failure to do so will result in disciplinary action and may lead to termination of your position. The Wildlife Clinic fosters a culture of respect and we expect our employees, volunteers and interns to behave professionally and courteously toward one another, patrons, and members of the public at all times. In the event that you have a conflict with another staff member or volunteer, you should promptly report it to your immediate supervisor, or Executive Director

H. AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and applicable Rhode Island state law, The Wildlife Clinic does not unlawfully discriminate against qualified applicants, volunteers and interns who can perform the essential functions of their duties. The Wildlife Clinic will comply with federal and state law and any regulation that provides a person with disabilities greater protection than the ADA. In accordance with the law, the Wildlife Clinic will provide such applicants, volunteers and interns with reasonable accommodations in order to allow the individual or applicant to perform the essential

functions of the position. Any volunteer or intern who requires an accommodation should contact the Executive Director to request such accommodations and should be prepared to discuss what type of accommodation is needed to perform the duties of the position. Following the request, The Wildlife Clinic will make every effort to implement an accommodation that is reasonable and will not pose an undue hardship.

I. SERVICE ANIMALS

Service animals that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities are permitted within The Wildlife Clinic. It is expected that each disabled person using a personal assistance animal is solely liable for any damage done to persons, premises, or facilities by the personal assistance animal. Service animals are working animals, not pets. Animals whose sole function is to provide emotional support, well-being, comfort or companionship, do not qualify as service animals under ADA and therefore are not permitted on Wildlife Clinic property.

When it is not obvious what services an animal provides, only limited inquiries may be made. Employees may ask (a) Is the service animal required because of a disability? Or (b) What work or task has the service animal been trained to perform? Employees may not ask about a person's disability, require medical documentation, require a special identification card or training documentation for the service animal, or ask that the service animal demonstrate its ability to perform the work or task.

All service animals must be harnessed, leashed, or tethered, unless these devices interfere with the service animals work or the individual's disability prevents using these devices. A person with a disability may not be asked to remove their service animal from the premises unless (a) that service animal is out of control and the person does not take effective action to gain control or (b) the service animal is not housebroken. **For the avoidance of doubt, if a service animal becomes a threat to wildlife in care, employees of the Wildlife Clinic may permissibly ask that the service animal be removed.** The care and supervision of a service animal is solely the responsibility of its owner. In a case that the owner is unable to care for the service animal, the owner must arrange for a third party to provide care during that time period.

J. HEALTH MANAGEMENT POLICY

WRARI requests that volunteers & interns who have any food or animal allergies, or may need the use of an Epi-pen or inhaler; or become pregnant (certain diseases and parasites can cause stillbirth or miscarriage); or have other health concerns that may put

them at risk, or may require other precautions be taken during service, to notify the Chief Operating Officer and Executive Director prior to the commencement of your service. Due to the nature of our work, WRARI has no way of guaranteeing that our workplace or the foods and feeds we work with will be free from any allergens or other issues that may be specifically hazardous to you. The purpose of this policy is only to ensure your individual safety and **all health related information will be kept strictly confidential as required by law.**

K. WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION

All Wildlife Clinic volunteers and interns have the right and responsibility to report any concerns they may have regarding patient care and/or any violation of any rule, regulation, standard, or statute committed by the organization to their supervisor and/or the Executive Director. A “reporting individual” is one who, in good faith, reported a suspected act of misconduct in accordance with this policy, or provided to a law enforcement officer any truthful information relating to the commission or possible commission of a federal offense. The person making such reports or concerns will not face any retribution for their action and the Wildlife Clinic will consider any reprisal against a reporting individual an act of misconduct subject to disciplinary action.

L. HARASSMENT-FREE WORKPLACE

The Wildlife Clinic is committed to maintaining a work environment in which all employees and volunteers feel safe and can devote their full attention and best efforts to providing quality care to all wildlife patients. The Wildlife Clinic strictly prohibits harassment in any form, including but not limited to sexual harassment, bullying, and verbal or physical abuse. Any type of harassment within the Wildlife Clinic will be considered a serious offense and can result in immediate termination. Employees, volunteers and interns are expected to report, by way of the Wildlife Clinic’s Accident/Incident Report Form set forth in Appendix A of this handbook, any instances of harassment promptly. Following the report, the Wildlife Clinic will promptly and thoroughly investigate all complaints of harassment and take appropriate corrective action if necessary.

Employees, volunteers and interns may not perform, participate or engage in any investigation of a harassment complaint made by the employee, volunteer or intern on behalf of themselves beyond the extent necessary to articulate the nature of the complaint and provide any follow-up as may be required by management.

M. CONFLICT OF INTEREST & CODE OF ETHICS

Employees, consultants, interns, externs and volunteers of the Wildlife Clinic are expected to maintain the highest ethical standards in the conduct of organization affairs. Each employee, volunteer and intern will conduct business with integrity and comply with all applicable laws in a manner that excludes considerations of personal advantage or gain. The Wildlife Clinic conducts business ethically and avoids conflicts of interest and all persons involved in the organization's operation have an equal obligation to avoid conflicts of interest. It is expected that employees, volunteers, and interns, report any conflicts of interest to their supervisor or the Executive Director immediately.

In the course of business, situations may arise in which a staff member may have or appear to have a conflict of interest. Conflicts are defined as situations that exist when a staff member or their immediate family (parents, spouse, children, brother, sister, and spouses of the same degree) owns or receives benefit from the relationship or potential relationship of the business/profits. Such conflicts include but are not limited to:

- a. Serving as a Director, Officer, Consultant, or in a managerial or technical capacity with an outside enterprise which does or is seeking to do business with the Wildlife Clinic.
- b. Any other arrangements or circumstances, including family or other relationships, which may dissuade the employee, volunteers, or intern, from acting in the best interest of the Wildlife Clinic.
- c. Unethical practices for marketing, admission, transfer and billing by the organization.
- d. Volunteer receives purchase inducements (gifts, premiums, money, goods, or services) from vendors that benefit the employee personally or are unauthorized or questionable in nature.
- e. Volunteers may not accept, on their own behalf, an honorarium for speaking or teaching assignments in which they represent the Wildlife Clinic. If received, it must be turned over to the organization.
- f. Members of the Wildlife Clinic Board of Directors ("Board") are not eligible for employment within the organization. Former members of the Board are eligible for employment following their resignation from the Board.
- g. When the Board votes and a Board member has a vested interest in the vote (e.g., it is their organization, they have family members involved... etc.), that Board member is to leave the room during the entire discussion where conflict may arise while the vote occurs.

- h. The Wildlife Clinic expects all volunteers and interns to adhere to relevant policies, procedures, and law while conducting business and to refrain from any illegal, dishonest, or unethical conduct.

Failure to comply with the Wildlife Clinic's code of ethics could lead to disciplinary action, including possible termination of volunteer position or internship.

N. NON- EMPLOYEE CATEGORIES

At the Wildlife Clinic, non-employee categories are considered independent consultants, consultants/service providers, volunteers, interns and externs.

a. INDEPENDENT CONSULTANT

A person who receives compensation for professional or technical services at an agreed upon fee paid by the Wildlife Clinic, who is engaged as a third-party contractor for specified services and is NOT a Wildlife Clinic employee. All special independent consultants are required to follow Wildlife Clinic policies and procedures when working with the organization's staff and clients and must show proof of liability insurance and certification proving the ability to conduct the services outlined in the contract.

b. CONSULTANT/SERVICE PROVIDERS

A person or company that provides the Wildlife Clinic with a particular service(s) required to meet the objectives of the organization. Consultants/Service Providers will be oriented to the Wildlife Clinic's expectations of conduct and will provide proper documentation of time that will be maintained by the Consultant. Failure to complete and submit the required documentation may result in non-payment. All contracts and work agreements for the Consultants will be forwarded and approved by the Executive Director.

c. VOLUNTEERS

An unpaid person who is trained to assist in implementing ongoing program activities on a regular basis under the supervision of a staff member. Volunteers are not paid employees and are therefore not eligible for benefits. When performing work at the Wildlife Clinic, all volunteers are required to adhere to all

Wildlife Clinic policies and procedures, file personal information for identification purposes (name, address, and telephone number), observe established work hours, and complete time and attendance records.

d. **INTERNS & EXTERNS**

A paid and/or unpaid person placed within the Wildlife Clinic from a local college/university and/or preparatory or certification program who is receiving training on a regular basis under the supervision of a staff member. Interns and externs are required to abide by all Wildlife Clinic policies and procedures while training at the Wildlife Clinic. Program agreements with educational institutions providing for internships and/or externships will be subject to the prior approval of the organization's Directors.

O. REPORTING PROCEDURES / ACCIDENT & INCIDENT REPORTING

Any individual, regardless of position, who has a complaint of, or who witnesses, harassment or bullying within The Wildlife Clinic by anyone, has the responsibility to immediately bring the matter to the Executive Director. Once a complaint has been made, the Executive Director will initiate an investigation into the incident, while making every reasonable effort to conduct all proceedings in a manner that will protect the confidentiality of all parties. The investigation may include, but is not limited to, written statements from both parties, witness interviews, obtaining witness declarations, review of documentation, and on-site investigation. If it is concluded that discrimination, harassment, or retaliation has occurred, a determination will be made as to the appropriate corrective action. Any form of retaliation against individuals who report unwelcome conduct is prohibited within the Wildlife Clinic. If an employee, volunteer or intern feels as if they have been subjected to any such retaliation, they should immediately report it in the same manner in which they would report any claim of harassment.

In the event of an accident or incident, Volunteers and Interns should immediately discuss the matter with an employee to determine whether an accident/incident report is necessary, and work with the employee to complete the form if necessary. Employees are required to report any accidents and/or incidents immediately to their supervisor and/or the Executive Director. Accidents and incidents can include, but are not limited to, any acts involving any persons (i) on the premises of the Wildlife Clinic, or (ii) offsite but representing the Wildlife Clinic in an official or authorized capacity, and which (i) result in injury or illness, (ii) is illegal, (iii) is an act of crime or violence; or (iv) engages any acts

which violates our Code of Conduct, Code of Ethics, anti-discrimination policy, anti-harassment policy or any other policy as may be set forth in this handbook.

Additionally, incidents involving actions or activities of licensed wildlife rehabilitators supported by the Wildlife Clinic which violate our veterinary and animal care related standards should also be reported.

This policy ensures that all accidents and incidents are documented and investigated thoroughly to prevent future occurrences. Employees must provide, by submitting a formal Accident/Incident Reporting Form (a copy of which is set forth in Appendix A of this handbook), detailed information about the accident, including the date, time, location, and any witnesses present. It is crucial to follow this policy to maintain a safe work environment for all employees.

Employees, volunteers and interns, should also report “near misses” or “close calls” under this accident/incident reporting policy. Even if an accident or incident did not result in any injuries or damages, reporting near misses can help us identify potential hazards and prevent future incidents. By reporting all incidents, no matter how minor, we can continuously improve our safety measures and create a safer work environment for everyone.

Failure to comply with the accident/incident reporting policy may result in disciplinary action, as it is essential for the safety and well-being of all employees, volunteers and interns. By not reporting accidents or incidents, employees, volunteers and interns may put themselves and their colleagues at risk, as well as jeopardize the Wildlife Clinic’s compliance with legal requirements. It is crucial for everyone to take this policy seriously and report any accident and incidents promptly. All information provided pursuant to an accident/incident report will be kept confidential to the extent possible, with only those individuals involved in the investigation having access to the details. We understand the sensitivity of these matters and strive to protect the privacy of all employees involved in reporting accidents or incidents.

P. PHOTOGRAPHY & SOCIAL MEDIA

Volunteers and interns are permitted to take pictures under certain conditions and the flash must be off in almost all circumstances. Animals may be photographed only when they have been taken out of their cage for daily cleaning or are already being handled for treatment. In order to limit the stress of our wild patients, and with limited exceptions to

be determined and authorized by the Executive Director and/or Chief Operating Officer, animals cannot be disturbed solely for photography purposes. It is required that all volunteers and interns seek approval from supervisors before posting anything related to the Wildlife Clinic and our patients to social media

Q. DRESS CODE

Due to the nature of our work, closed toed shoes and pants are required at all times for safety reasons. The Wildlife Clinic respectfully expects our employees, volunteers and interns to refrain from wearing clothing that contains offensive language and/or pictures or exposes the mid-drift. Tank tops and shorts are not appropriate attire for working in this environment. The public will see you as part of our organization, therefore, we expect all employees, volunteers and interns to dress appropriately and professionally. Keep in mind that when working with animals, you should expect to get dirty, so do not wear anything you do not want dirtied, bleached, or stained.

R. WORKPLACE SAFETY

Due to the regulations that govern the Wildlife Clinic's operation, actual animal handling is restricted to those individuals who are legally licensed as sub-permittees or rehabilitators, in accordance with the limits (if any) on their respective permits.

The following basic rules must be adhered to:

- Never handle an animal that you are not trained and licensed for or comfortable to assist
- Safety eyeglasses or face shields are REQUIRED at all times when handling any seabirds (loons, grebes, herons, cormorants, etc.). These birds are aggressive and will use their beaks to attack.
- Wash your hands frequently, between exams or cage cleaning. Wildlife can carry diseases and you could transfer diseases to other animals. Gloves are always available at the Wildlife Clinic.

Additionally, any volunteer or intern not licensed to care for Rabies Vector Species (RVS) MUST, at all times, refrain from handling RVS species brought into the Wildlife Clinic. All RVS animals must be reported to the RI Department of Health ("DOH") within 48 hours of intake. The state requires euthanasia of any RVS mammal where an "exposure" has occurred (the DOH will issue a decision on exposure once they receive the report and

complete their investigation) and failure to adhere to rules governing care of RVS species may lead to mandatory euthanasia of the animal, and disciplinary action.

PREGNANCY-RELATED WORKPLACE SAFETY

The Wildlife Clinic recognizes that certain duties performed in veterinary and wildlife care settings may present additional considerations for those who are pregnant, may become pregnant, or have declared pregnancy to the organization. Such considerations may include, but are not limited to, exposure to radiographic procedures, anesthetic gases, chemicals, certain medications, infectious agents, animal handling injuries, and physical strain.

Volunteers, interns and externs are encouraged, but not required, to notify either the Executive Director, Medical Director, Chief Operating Officer or HR if they wish to discuss duties or accommodations related to pregnancy. Volunteers, interns, and externs who have concerns regarding exposure during pregnancy should consult their medical provider.

Physical Demands & Labor Intensity

a. Physical Requirements

Certain positions and volunteer roles at the Wildlife Clinic of Rhode Island involve physical activity, including but not limited to standing for extended periods, bending, reaching, lifting, and carrying equipment or animals. Individuals may be required to lift and move items weighing up to approximately 40 pounds, with or without reasonable accommodation. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions of a role, consistent with applicable law.

- b. Air conditioning is not available in all areas of the Wildlife Clinic and cannot be guaranteed in every workspace. Staff, interns, and volunteers are expected to work safely and professionally within the environmental conditions of their assigned areas. Individuals who are unable to tolerate work in areas without air conditioning may not be assigned to those areas, and assignment decisions will remain subject to operational needs and management discretion.

S. VISITOR POLICY

The Wildlife Clinic is not open to the public and strictly prohibits unauthorized visitors, and employees are expected to adhere to and uphold this policy. If a volunteer or intern has friends, acquaintances or family members that are interested in visiting the Wildlife Clinic, such volunteer or intern may submit a request to the Executive Director to allow such visitation. **No visitation shall be permitted without prior authorization.**

T. MEALS AND SNACKS

Volunteers and interns may utilize the main kitchen and dining area for eating and drinking. We have a refrigerator available for use in our main kitchen, but we ask that you remove any containers/food when you end your shift for the day. No food or drink is allowed in any of the animal care areas, and no human food or drinks are allowed to be kept in the refrigerators in the animal care areas.

U. CELL PHONES, EAR BUDS AND HEAD PHONES

Employees, volunteers and interns are expected to limit their cell phone use while at the Wildlife Clinic. We need you to be engaged in the work you are doing, so excessive texting and cell phone use is discouraged. If you need to make or receive a call, we ask that you do so outside of the animal care area as we try to keep noise to a minimum as much as possible in order to avoid further stressing the animals. **We also expect that all volunteers and interns will refrain from wearing ear buds or headphones while performing their duties.**

V. STORAGE

Personal belongings may be stored in the designated volunteer cubby and storage area during shifts. The Wildlife Clinic is not responsible for any lost or stolen items.

W. GIFTS & GRATUITIES

All Wildlife Clinic employees, volunteers and interns are strictly prohibited from accepting any gifts, money and/or gratuities from patrons; or from persons or organizations engaged in, or proposing to engage in business with the Wildlife Clinic

X. HOLIDAYS

The Wildlife Clinic observes the following holidays and hours may vary as indicated on these days. Volunteers & Interns are welcomed to assist on holidays but should verify schedules ahead of time.

- New Year's Day – January 1st (HALF DAY)

- Memorial Day – Last Monday in May (EARLY CLOSE IF POSSIBLE)
- Juneteenth – June 19th (EARLY CLOSE IF POSSIBLE)
- Independence Day – July 4th (EARLY CLOSE IF POSSIBLE)
- Victory Day – 2nd Monday in August (EARLY CLOSE IF POSSIBLE)
- Labor Day – 1st Monday in September (HALF DAY)
- Indigenous Peoples Day – 2nd Monday in October (HALF DAY)
- Veteran's Day – November 11th (HALF DAY)
- Thanksgiving Day – 4th Thursday in November (HALF DAY)
- Christmas Day – December 25th (HALF DAY)

The Wildlife Clinic also observes a half day on the eve of Thanksgiving, as well as on Christmas Eve, and New Year's Eve.

Y. EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENT

The Wildlife Clinic's Expense & Reimbursement Policy is set forth in Appendix B of this Handbook. In the event Personnel receives a reimbursement by way of a written check from the Wildlife Clinic, Personnel have the responsibility to deposit or cash such check **within 30 days** of receipt of such check. **Failure to deposit or cash such check within the allotted window shall result in the forfeiture of the reimbursement.**

Z. SMOKING

Smoking is strictly prohibited on premises - both inside the Wildlife Clinic and in the immediate area surrounding the Wildlife Clinic.

6. RESIGNATION, DISCIPLINARY ACTION & TERMINATION POLICY

The Wildlife Clinic values the contributions of our volunteers and interns and strives to maintain a positive, enriching and productive environment. However, if a volunteer or intern repeatedly fails to adhere to our established policies, demonstrates unsatisfactory performance, or engages in misconduct, their volunteer status may be terminated after a documented review process, including verbal and written warnings, as deemed appropriate by the Volunteer Coordinator and Executive Director.

Accountability Process

Immediate**Concerns:**

Unsafe handling, repeated no-shows, or disregard for clinic policies may result in immediate removal from in-clinic shifts.

Goal:

Supportive accountability that protects animal welfare, staff safety, and the volunteer experience.

- a. **First Occurrence:** Friendly reminder and review of expectations
- b. **Second Occurrence:** One-on-one discussion; may include retraining
- c. **Third Occurrence:** Reassessment of volunteer fit; alternative roles (events, outreach, transport) may be offered.

7. WCRI EDUCATION ANIMALS

The Wildlife Clinic maintains permanent resident Education Animals (EAs) pursuant to applicable state and federal permits. The care, handling, housing, and use of these animals are governed by the Wildlife Clinic's Education Animal protocols, and each animal is managed under an Individual Animal Management Program (IAMP). All personnel and authorized volunteers working with Education Animals must comply strictly with the applicable IAMP, the Education Animal Manual, all posted standard operating procedures, and any training protocols in effect.

Each EA may also be in a particular phase of training at any given time. Training activities are governed by animal-specific training plans and protocols. Volunteers and interns are welcome to express interest in participating in the care and training of Education Animals; however, such participation is not guaranteed and will be permitted only when consistent with the individual animal's training plan, current training phase, welfare needs, and the Wildlife Clinic's operational judgment. Where an animal is in a phase of training that does not support the involvement of additional individuals, no expansion of that animal's care or training team will occur. This may be particularly important for certain species, including Odin, our Great Horned Owl ambassador, where consistency in handlers may be critical to successful training and animal welfare.

8. MEDIA RELEASE OPT-OUT POLICY

The Wildlife Clinic may create or use photographs, video, audio, or other media depicting its operations, events, programs, trainings, educational activities, and related mission-

based work for educational, promotional, fundraising, archival, and other official purposes. This policy applies to activities conducted at the Wildlife Clinic of Rhode Island, satellite locations, off-site programming, events, and any other Wildlife Clinic-related activities and/or operations. **Volunteers may appear in such media either directly or incidentally.**

Volunteer participation with the Wildlife Clinic constitutes acknowledgment of and consent to the possibility of such media capture and use, **unless the volunteer has submitted a written opt-out request to the Wildlife Clinic in advance.** Volunteers who **do not** wish to be included in Wildlife Clinic media must notify the Wildlife Clinic in writing through the designated opt-out process. The Wildlife Clinic will make reasonable efforts to honor opt-out requests, but cannot guarantee that a volunteer will never appear incidentally in background, group, candid, or public-event media.

All media created, collected, or used by the Wildlife Clinic remains subject to the Wildlife Clinic's sole discretion and may be used in furtherance of its mission and operations, consistent with applicable law.

Appendix A: Accident/Incident Report Form

Accident/Incident Report



Please complete this form in its entirety. Please be sure to obtain all necessary signatures. Upon completion, and within 24 hours after the accident/incident, submit to all parties noted in the COPIES section below.

STATUS														
☐	VOLUNTEER				☐	VISITOR				☐	INTERN			
☐	EMPLOYEE (IN ADDITION TO THIS FORM, AN EMPLOYER'S FIRST REPORT OF INJURY MUST ALSO BE SUBMITTED)													
DATE OF INCIDENT					DAY OF WEEK				TIME OF DAY		CIRCLE ONE	AM	PM	
DATE OF NOTIFICATION						LOCATION								
REPORTED BY									TITLE					
CATEGORY														
NAME OF PERSON(S) TO WHOM INCIDENT OCCURRED														
CHECK ALL THAT APPLY														
☐	FALLS		☐	FIRE OR SAFETY HAZARD		☐	INGESTION		☐	THREAT		☐	BURN/SCALD	
☐	AWOL		☐	DISEASE EXPOSURE		☐	ANIMAL INJURY		☐	INJURY TO OTHERS		☐	INJURY TO SELF	
☐	LOST/DAMAGED PROPERTY			☐	OTHER (EXPLAIN)									
WAS THERE A MEDICAL EXAMINATION AFTER THE INCIDENT?									☐	YES		☐	NO	
WAS THERE BLOOD PRESENT?									☐	YES		☐	NO	
IF YES, EXPLAIN:														

DEVICE/EQUIPMENT ISSUE

VEHICLE

DID INCIDENT INVOLVE/AFFECT INDIVIDUAL IN ANY
WAY

YES

NO

IF YES, EXPLAIN:

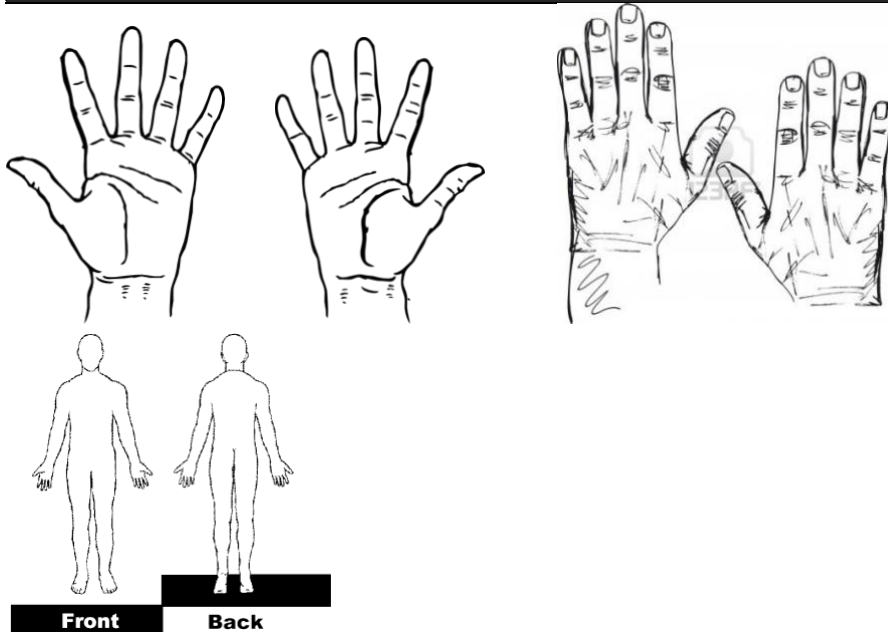
INCIDENT DESCRIPTION

DESCRIBE THE INCIDENT (BE AS SPECIFIC AS POSSIBLE. PLEASE INCLUDE ACTIONS TAKEN INCLUDING PERTINENT DATA SUCH AS AGE, HEALTH HISTORY, ETC. AND WITNESS(ES) WHEN APPROPRIATE TO EXPLAIN AGENCY'S UNDERSTANDING OF THE EVENT AT THIS TIME):

ACTION/RECOMMENDATIONS

ACTION TAKEN/RECOMMENDATIONS:

PLEASE USE THE DIAGRAM(S) BELOW TO INDICATE THE AREA AFFECTED BY THE INJURY



IN SUMMARY

IS NEW ENGINEERING/WORK PRACTICE NEEDED TO MINIMIZE CHANCE OF RECURRENCE?

YES

NO

DESCRIBE REMEDIAL ACTION:

DATE REMEDIAL ACTION INSTITUTED

COPIES: PLEASE MAKE COPIES OF THIS FORM AND SUBMIT TO THE FOLLOWING INDIVIDUALS:

COPY TO SUPERVISOR (NAME)		COPY TO EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR (NAME)	
REPORTED BY (PRINTED NAME)		DATE	
REPORTED BY (SIGNATURE)		DATE	

THIS FORM MUST BE COMPLETED AND SUBMITTED TO YOUR SUPERVISOR WITHIN 24 HOURS OF ACCIDENT/INCIDENT.

IF THE ACCIDENT/INJURY INVOLVES AN EMPLOYEE, THE FIRST REPORT OF INJURY FORM MUST BE COMPLETED AND SUBMITTED WITH THE ACCIDENT/INCIDENT FORM.

SUPERVISOR'S SIGNATURE

DATE

Appendix B:

Wildlife Clinic Expense & Reimbursement Policy

1. Purpose

The Wildlife Clinic recognizes that board members, officers, employees, and volunteers (“Personnel”) of the Wildlife Clinic may be required to travel or incur other expenses from time to time to conduct organizational business and to further the mission of the Wildlife Clinic. The purpose of this Policy is to ensure that (a) adequate cost controls are in place, (b) travel and other expenditures are appropriate, and (c) to provide a uniform and consistent approach for the timely reimbursement of authorized expenses incurred by Personnel. It is the policy of the Wildlife Clinic to reimburse only reasonable and necessary expenses actually incurred by Personnel, and all such expenses must be pre-approved by the Executive Director or Operations Director.

When incurring business expenses, the Wildlife Clinic expects Personnel to:

- Exercise discretion and good business judgment with respect to those expenses.
- Be cost conscious and spend the Wildlife Clinic’s money as carefully and judiciously as the individual would spend their own funds.
- Report expenses, supported by required documentation, as they were actually spent.

2. Reimbursement by Check

In the event Personnel receives a reimbursement by way of a written check from the Wildlife Clinic, Personnel have the responsibility to deposit or cash such check **within 30 days** of receipt of such check. **Failure to deposit or cash such check within the allotted window shall result in the forfeiture of the reimbursement.**

3. Purchase Orders

All purchases made by Personnel for or on behalf of the Wildlife Clinic must be pre-approved by way of a Purchase Order submitted in a timely fashion to the Wildlife Clinic Executive Director, Office Manager, or Director of Operations, and Personnel are responsible for submitting proper receipts with all Purchase Orders in accordance with the Receipts policy outlined in Section 4 below.

4. Expense Report

Expenses will not be reimbursed unless the individual requesting reimbursement submits a written Expense Report. The Expense Report, which shall be submitted at least monthly or within two weeks of the completion of travel, if travel expense reimbursement is requested, must include:

- The individual’s name,
- If reimbursement for travel is requested, the date, origin, destination and purpose of the trip, including a description of each Wildlife Clinic-related activity during the trip,
- The name and affiliation of all people for whom expenses are claimed (i.e., people on whom money is spent in order to conduct the Wildlife Clinic’s business), and
- An itemized list of all expenses for which reimbursement is requested.

5. Receipts

Receipts are required for all expenditures expected to be reimbursed by the Wildlife Clinic, including, but not limited to, airfare and hotel charges. No expense will be reimbursed to Personnel

unless the individual requesting reimbursement submits with the Purchase Order and/or Expense Report (as applicable), all written receipts from each vendor (not a credit card receipt or statement) showing the vendor's name, a description of the services provided (if not otherwise obvious), the date, and the total expenses, including tips (if applicable).

Appendix C: Training Supplement

The Wildlife Clinic - Operations Overview

The Wildlife Clinic is **meticulously organized** so that we can maximize the efficiency of our work. Everything has a place and all places are labeled, including laundry bins. Volunteers are expected to learn and **strictly adhere to** the organization scheme of the Wildlife Clinic. The Wildlife Clinic cannot function properly if important items are misplaced or are put away improperly.

The Wildlife Clinic acts as the central hub of WRARI and wildlife rehabilitation in RI by providing intake of many wild patients, and offering on site veterinary care, training and provisions to licensed wildlife rehabilitators across the state. The Wildlife Clinic is a veterinary hospital and rehabilitation facility for all species, though some animals, babies and high stress species in particular, will be sent to private rehabilitators for in-home, round-the-clock care or long-term rehabilitation.

We are open seven days per week, 365 days per year. Daily priority for our animal care staff is the medical and rehabilitative care for each wild patient on site. These tasks must be done in an efficient and timely manner as some wild patients require multiple tube feedings or doses of medications over an eight-hour period. When undertaking daily duties, we divide the Wildlife Clinic into sections, and per shift, staff and volunteers will be designated to work in particular sections as their licensure and skill level permits. These assignments are subject to change, as needed.

Each animal, inside and outside, has a clipboard containing their intake form and their treatment sheet. The treatment sheet will inform you as to the patient's treatment history, feeding history, food requirements and other necessary information. The treatment sheet has pertinent information that our veterinarians use to determine their recommended treatment plans, therefore, it is important that we record accurate food consumption and fecal productions, and ANY unusual observations. It is imperative that you make the necessary notations on each treatment sheet before moving onto the next animal or cage. You must completely finish working on one animal (and the animal must be back in its cage) before moving on to any other task, to avoid confusion.

Once all of the animals have been cleaned and treated for the day, clinic support duties can be done. There is no way to predict how busy or quiet we may be on a given day and we intake patients all day. Volunteers and interns are asked to perform duties as they

need to be done in an organized fashion to prevent a backlog of work at the end of the day. The ultimate daily goal is to complete all feedings by noon (except nocturnal animals), and all support tasks required each day (laundry, dishes, general clinic upkeep) by the close of the day.

Wildlife Rehabilitation – Special Topics

Wildlife Rehabilitation is a profession that encompasses a broad set of skills and topics, including technical medical knowledge, diagnostics, biological and ecological knowledge and understanding. Understanding the animals you're working with is a complex task, and requires you to know the specific species' ecology, biological and nutritional requirements, appropriate restraint techniques, and special care and handling while the animals recover. Information gathering and ongoing research are a large part of good rehabilitation practices.

Topic 1: Safety and Proper Animal Restraint

Wild animals can inflict serious injuries to the human handler, especially when frightened or injured. **The first concern when dealing with wild animals should be the safety of human beings.** The two most fundamental questions that should be considered when selecting a restraint and capture technique:

- 1) Will it be safe for the person who is going to handle the animal?
 - a) Are you qualified to handle this species?
 - b) How familiar are you with the species to be handled?
 - c) Are you wearing the appropriate personal protective equipment (e.g., gloves, protective goggles...etc.) and can you carry out the technique to properly restrain the animal without getting yourself or people around you hurt?
- 2) Does it provide maximums safety for the animal without further compromising its existing injuries?
 - a) Do you know the proper technique to safely and efficiently capture this species?
 - b) Do you have a plan in place and all the safety equipment prepared?
 - c) Do you have an appropriate containment carrier to safely restrain or temporarily hold the animal while the cage is being clean?
 - d) Do you have all material in place (e.g., wound care bandaging or tube feeding) prior to capturing the patient for its treatment?

Animals feel less stressed when confined in a small, quiet and dark area. You can reduce an animal's visual communication with its environment by placing a dark pillow case, towel or sheet over the container/carrier. **Talking to the animal or petting them does not calm your patient; it only adds unnecessary stimuli contributing to additional stress.**

Therefore, handle the animal as quickly and calmly as possible during examination, treatment or wound care.

It is best to learn proper restrain techniques from a veterinarian, a Wildlife Clinic staff, or an experience licensed rehabilitator who is familiar with the species to be handled. For the purpose of this manual, we are only going to discuss general guidelines.

1. All animals can bite or scratch if given the opportunity while they are being restrained. It is important to know which is/are the most likely “weapon(s)” to be used against you.

Use of gloves is always a good idea. However, thick gloves can decrease your tactile sense and may result in an animal being squeezed to the point of suffocation. Also, **do not be over-confident that a thick pair of gloves will adequately protect you from injuries inflicted from a frightened animal.** Your wild patients are more likely to hurt you without hesitation. Proper restrain technique is the key to the safety of you and your patients.

2. Do not restrain any small mammal by holding onto its tail; a frightened animal will make all effort to get away and you may deglove the tail. The only way to correct a degloved tail is to surgically amputate the entire tail.
3. Birds breathe with a bellows type of respiration that necessitates movement of the keel or sternum forward and down for inspiration and backward and up for expiration. Any restraint procedure that interferes with such movement will quickly produce suffocation.

Topic 2: Stress

Restraining even a well tamed pet can be stressful. The stress level is drastically amplified when it is a wild animal, especially one that has sustained an injury or illness. Knowing how to properly restrain an animal will help to reduce pain and distress, and therefore, minimize stress.

Species vary in their perception of a threat and how they process the information received to evoke a physiologic response. A stressor is any stimulus that elicits a biological response when perceived by an animal.

- 1) **Somatic stressors** (stimulation of the physical senses) include temperature changes, strange sights, unfamiliar sounds and touches, or odors, thirst, and hunger. It is becoming more and more important to recognize that stimulation of visual and auditory senses have a marked bearing on accumulative stress. **Therefore, it is important that we are conscientious about making noises or carrying on conversations next to animal cages.**
- 2) **Psychological stressors** include anxiety, fright, terror, anger, rage, and frustration. Closely allied are behavioral stressors, including overcrowding, lack of social contact, unfamiliar surroundings, transport, and lack of appropriate foods.
- 3) **Miscellaneous stressors** include malnutrition, toxins, parasites, infectious agents, burns, surgery, and drugs.

Talking to the animal or petting them does not calm your patient; it only adds unnecessary stimuli contributing to additional stress. Therefore, handle the animal as quickly and calmly as possible for initial examination or subsequent wound care.

When an animal is in distress (the initial injury, as well as the fight or flight response to environmental factors), the hypothalamus, a tiny region at the base the brain, sets off an alarm in the body. Through a combination of nerve and hormonal signals, this system prompts the adrenal glands to release a surge of hormones, including adrenaline and cortisol.

Adrenaline increases heart rate, elevates blood pressure and boosts energy supplies. Cortisol, the primary stress hormone, increases sugars (glucose) in the bloodstream, enhances the brain's use of glucose and increases the availability of substances that repair tissues. However, cortisol also curbs functions that would be nonessential or detrimental in a fight-or-flight situation. Many of the effects of stress are functional, leaving no definitive lesion to mark their presence. Beyond adding negative physiological effects, stress also inhibits the body's ability to heal. Because the animals in our clinic are already ill or injured, it is imperative to keep their stress to a minimum so that they can heal from their already existing ailments.

Nonetheless, it is known that tissues and organs are weakened by prolonged insult, lowering resistance to disease. Stress can be a silent killer. Classic lesions are lymphoid tissue atrophy, adrenal cortical hyperplasia, and gastrointestinal ulceration. Though the actual cause of

death of an injured animal may be pneumonia, parasitism, or starvation, stress may have paved the way for development of these terminal ailments.

Topic 3: Capture Myopathy

One of the most important considerations to be aware of and actively seek to prevent is a condition known as Capture Myopathy (CM), which can occur at two major points in rehabilitation: first, the initial capture of the injured animal in order to bring it into rehab; and second, captivity of the animal during the rehabilitation process.

Capture Myopathy, or Shock Disease, is a condition observed in wild animals that have been captured or handled. The condition is **usually lethal and stress has been identified as the single most determining factor**, exacerbated by muscle exertion. CM is a non-infectious disease of wild and domestic animals in which muscle damage results from extreme exertion, struggle, or stress.

Capture Myopathy is an important cause of death in wild animals that are handled by humans, and people working with wildlife must take great care to prevent it. CM can occur naturally when prey animals are attempting to avoid predation, but **it is usually caused by humans**. This is because animals are adapted to escape from predators, but are not adapted to struggle for long periods of time in man-made restraints. CM occurs when animals overexert themselves (struggling in a trap for example) so much that physiological imbalances develop and result in severe muscle damage. Hotter temperatures and repeated chemical immobilization increase the risk of animals suffering from CM.

Clinical signs vary depending on the species and the cause of exertion; the method of capture and restraint plays a major role in the occurrence of CM. CM may result in sudden death, or clinical signs may develop hours, days, or up to two months following capture. Early clinical signs include elevated respiratory rate, heart rate, and body temperature. Body temperature increases during exertion and higher temperatures are often associated with death due to CM. Other clinical signs include depression, lack of response to stimuli, loss of coordination, weakness, muscle stiffness, tremors, muscle paralysis, recumbency, shock, and at times death.

Relevant to WRARI's work and your service as a volunteer or intern, the most likely avenue through which one of our wild patients might suffer from capture myopathy, would be under the following circumstances:

1. Chasing the animal around its cage or enclosure trying to capture it. This is something you NEVER want to do. If you cannot capture the animal on your first try it is often best to back off and ask for help. Chasing an animal for even 20 or 30 seconds can exacerbate stress and traumatize the animal.
2. Accidentally releasing the animal into the Clinic. This is something that we take very seriously and actively seek to prevent. It most often occurs and is a problem for small birds, as they will fly frantically around the clinic looking for a safe place to hide while people chase them with nets. In this case, if the bird cannot be caught within the first minute of release, it may be better to back off and let the bird relax before attempting to capture it again. An experience staff member should direct recapture efforts.

During the initial capture of the animal where it was found. WRARI does not generally have people

to go and retrieve animals and you, as a volunteer, will not be required to do so. However, if you volunteer to go onsite to capture an injured wild animal, it must be done with skill and caution – simply chasing the animal until it tires is never the right course of action as it may induce Capture Myopathy thereby exacerbating the already existing injuries or may cause death.

Topic 4: Rehabilitation of Injured or Orphaned Animals at the clinic

When caring for wild animals in captivity the main considerations that need to be accounted for each and every day are the cleanliness of the animal's enclosure, whether the animal has been provided with enough enrichment, and whether the animal's condition is improving, declining or if new problems are developing.

a) Cleanliness

It is important to remember that keeping a wild animal in captivity makes the animal entirely dependent upon you for its quality of life, food, water, and housing needs. This is a significant responsibility and failure to uphold this responsibility can result in the animal's decline, may cause the animal to become non-releasable and may even cause death. You must remember that a dirty enclosure will lead to a dirty animal; an animal's feathers or fur are the only thing that protect it from the elements and if compromised, can cause the animal to suffer or die from exposure and/or starvation.

Every day, enclosures and any carriers or houses provided, must be cleaned of ALL feces, old food, dirty substrate and dirty laundry. Dishes must be washed with soap and water to remove debris and bacteria. Dirty laundry must be replaced with clean laundry once the enclosure & houses are clean. All pools must be emptied, hosed out and refilled with clear, fresh water.

Once you've completed an animal enclosure, ask yourself:

1. Are the cage, house, linens and enrichment tools, thoroughly cleaned and clear of all fecal and food matter?
2. Have pools been emptied, hosed out and refilled with clear, clean water?
3. Have you replaced the dirty linens with clean linens?
4. Does the animal have fresh food and water?
5. Has the animal received the necessary medications?

If your answer to each of the above questions is YES, then you have completed the cleaning process for the animal and you should take the time to record all pertinent findings in the treatment sheet. It serves as the medical record and will influence our veterinarian's decision regarding the animal's course of care.

b) Planning

Captive care of wild animals requires extensive monitoring of the animal's condition. While the goal of wildlife rehabilitation is to treat the animal for whatever the cause of admission, you must always be cautious to actively prevent and avoid causing further damage to the animal while it is in captivity. For example: Raptors require specific types of perches because their talons are very long and curve inward toward the center of their feet. If you were to place a raptor on a regular terry cloth bath towel, the talons would very likely tangle in the small loops of the threads. This can cause the bird to become stressed, struggle and tangle itself further into the towel, and could eventually cause additional injury to the bird. The same concern applies to mammals that can get their claws tangled up in a towel and easily break a finger or limb.

c) Enrichment¹

Some of our patients may stay at the clinic for an extended period of time for its course of rehabilitation. Environmental enrichment, or behavioral enrichment, is an extremely

¹ Information adapted from: Shepherdson, D.J. (1998) "Tracing the path of environmental enrichment in zoos" in Shepherdson, D.J., Mellen, J.D. and Hutchins, M. (1998) *Second Nature – Environmental Enrichment for Captive Animals*, 1st Edition, Smithsonian Institution Press, London, UK, pp. 1 – 12

important aspect of any captive animal management program, especially for juvenile animals hand-raised by rehabilitators. It is an animal husbandry principle that focuses on the quality of captive animal care by identifying and providing the environmental stimuli necessary for the animal's optimal psychological and physiological wellbeing. The goal of environmental enrichment is to improve or maintain an animal's physical and psychological health by increasing the range or number of species-specific behaviors, increasing positive utilization of the captive environment, preventing or reducing the frequency of abnormal behaviors, and increasing the individual's ability to cope with the challenges of captivity.

Any stimulus that evokes an animal's interest in a positive way can be considered enriching, including natural and artificial objects, scents, novel foods, and different methods of preparing foods (for example, frozen in ice). Most enrichment stimuli can be divided into six groups:

- **Sensory:** stimulating animals' senses: visual, olfactory, auditory, tactile, and taste.
- **Feeding:** making feeding more challenging. Different methods of food presentation encourage animals to investigate, manipulate and work for their food as they would in non-captive environments.
- **Manipulation:** providing items that can be manipulated by the paws, feet, tail, horns, head, mouth, etc. This promotes investigatory behavior and exploratory play.
- **Environmental:** enhancing the animals' captive habitat with opportunities that change or add complexity to the environment.
- **Social:** providing the opportunity to interact with other animals, either conspecifics or interspecifics.
- **Puzzles:** requiring an animal to solve simple problems to access food or other rewards.

The ultimate goal of environmental enrichment in wildlife rehabilitation is to provide our wild patients with activities that reduce stresses inherent in captivity and increase their chances at speedy recovery and release.

Topic 5: Euthanasia

Euthanasia is the act of inducing a painless death using humane techniques. The decision to euthanize an animal is often difficult. Although each case is unique, the Rhode Island regulations covering wildlife rehabilitation establish general considerations and criteria for euthanasia of wildlife. The Rhode Island regulations require that any animal that is unable to

be released back into the wild must be euthanized humanely. State and Federal laws provide limited exceptions to this rule, and will permit some animals to be kept captive for educational purposes. This is a limited exception and permits issued under these laws require keepers to comply with several strict requirements.

To say that death is a kinder alternative to life for a wild animal may seem counterintuitive, however, due to the nature of wild animals, most lack the disposition to live a captive life. Many people expect that non-releasable animals can simply be sent to a “sanctuary.” This is an unrealistic expectation for several reasons:

1. Sanctuaries that provide for the captive care of animals are expensive to maintain and are most often non-profit organizations with extremely limited budgets and no way to provide for financial stability. What few sanctuaries may exist are almost always at capacity and may not be able to ensure the long-term quality of life for a particular animal. Moreover, many wild animals, when faced with a life of captivity will shut down- they will not eat, bathe or interact with their environment. They will simply “give up” until death.
2. Wild animals are WILD and most simply cannot thrive in captive environments. These are beings that have lived a life of absolute freedom – with no restrictions on how far they can fly or how fast they can run. To take an animal that has lived absolute freedom and put it in a captive environment (often with some disability that has rendered it non-releasable) is much like taking a human who is claustrophobic and putting them in a tiny room for the rest of their lives and expecting them to live and thrive.
3. Humans are predators and most wild animals FEAR being in close proximity to humans. To keep wild animals in close proximity to humans is to keep them in a near constant state of fear that will cause constant stress for the duration of their captivity.

Euthanasia is unfortunately a common reality in the Wildlife Rehabilitation profession and you will encounter this during your time as a Wildlife Volunteer. WRARI makes every effort to give each animal that comes to us a full and fair opportunity for recovery but it is not always possible to save every animal that comes to us, and you must consider whether this is something that you will be able to handle. Euthanasia is often looked upon as another form of release.
