



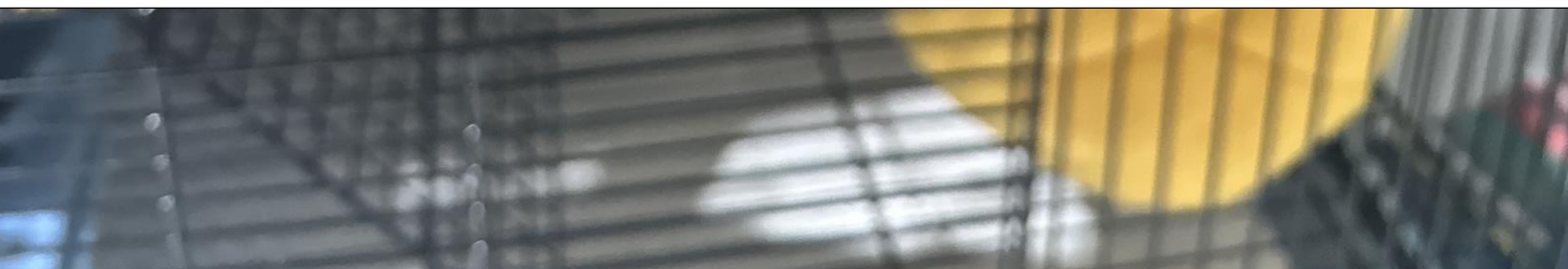
**WILDLIFE
CLINIC** of
RHODE
ISLAND

BECOMING A WILDLIFE REHABILITATOR IN RHODE ISLAND

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO LICENSING, TRAINING, AND GETTING STARTED

SUB-PERMITTEE • LEVEL 1 APPRENTICE • LEVEL 2 • LEVEL 2X

This guide summarizes the licensing pathway. RIDEM controls permit issuance and interpretation.



BECOMING A WILDLIFE REHABILITATOR IN RI

The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (“DEM”) is the Rhode Island state agency responsible for administering the state’s Wildlife Rehabilitation Permit Program and for establishing and enforcing the rules and regulations that govern wildlife rehabilitation in Rhode Island.

Rhode Island offers two distinct pathways into wildlife rehabilitation: the **Sub-Permittee pathway** and the **Full Wildlife Rehabilitator pathway**. Both require formal training, a DEM examination, sponsorship by a Level 2, 2X, or 2V wildlife rehabilitator, veterinary support, and compliance with limits on the species and types of care you may provide. The key difference is the scope of responsibility and independence each pathway allows. In Rhode Island, individuals may become permitted as in-home wildlife rehabilitators, assist on site at the Wildlife Clinic of Rhode Island (“WCRI”) or another permitted facility, or do both.

Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, *Rules and Regulations Governing Wildlife Rehabilitation*, 250-RICR-60-00-1 (effective July 28, 2026) (the “Regulations”).

DEM also publishes a downloadable applicant guide. Search “RIDEM becoming a wildlife rehabilitator” for the current version.



SUB-PERMITTEE

Work under the permit and guidance of a fully licensed sponsoring rehabilitator to care for certain species of baby mammals and birds, as well as reptiles and amphibians of any age. This pathway offers a supportive, hands-on way to build practical rehabilitation skills while helping wildlife in a closely mentored setting.



BEST FIT FOR

Those who want to begin with closely mentored, hands-on care of baby mammals and birds, reptiles, and amphibians while building the practical skills and confidence needed to help wildlife responsibly.



CORE PATHWAY

- 6 hours of approved classroom training.
- WCRI’s Neonate Wildlife Care course fulfills this requirement.
- RIDEM written exam: 80% or higher
- Sponsorship of a Level 2, 2X, or 2V supervising permittee
- Support of a RI licensed veterinarian
- Facility approval if seeking to work as an in-home rehabber
- Documented Tetanus vaccination
- RIDEM application



KEY LIMITS

- No direct intake from the public
- No raptors, RVS, or euthanasia
- Only pre-weaned small mammals, pre-fledged songbirds and waterfowl, reptiles, and amphibians – within the Sponsoring Rehabilitators permit authorizations.
- Cannot sponsor others
- Migratory bird care requires separate federal licensure



LEVEL 1 APPRENTICE

The first step toward becoming a fully licensed wildlife rehabilitator, with the opportunity to care for all permissible species. During the apprenticeship term (9 month minimum), work under the license and mentorship of a Level 2 wildlife rehabilitator to learn foundational rehabilitation skills, apply them in practice, and develop sound judgment through a structured mentor-mentee relationship. Upon completion, you may apply for Level 2 status and full licensure.



BEST FIT FOR

Those who want to build experience caring for a broader range of species, issues and age groups, including individuals whose long-term goals include raptor rehabilitation or qualifying for the Level 2X designation required for RVS care.



CORE PATHWAY

- IWRC’s Foundations course, or WCRI’s Introduction to Wildlife Rehabilitation course, or other DEM-approved equivalent.
- RIDEM written exam: 80% or higher
- Sponsorship of a Level 2, 2X or 2V supervising permittee
- Support of a RI licensed veterinarian
- Facility approval if seeking to work as an in-home rehabber
- Documented Tetanus vaccination,
- RIDEM application and fee



KEY LIMITS

- No RVS (requires Level 2X licensure, RVS specific training, and Pre-exposure Rabies vaccinations); only species/categories listed on the permit
- Migratory bird care requires separate federal licensure
- Level 1 Apprentices cannot sponsor sub-permittees



The Sub-Permittee pathway is a stand-alone option and is not a prerequisite to the Full Wildlife Rehabilitator pathway. After successfully completing your Level 1 apprenticeship, you may apply for a Level 2 Wildlife Rehabilitation Permit and full licensure. However, a prospective sponsor may require prior clinic work, practical experience, or demonstrated competency before agreeing to sponsor a Level 1 applicant.

The Level 2X designation is available only after you have completed at least one full rehabilitation cycle - no fewer than nine months - as a Level 2 wildlife rehabilitator.

Choose the path that fits your goals and preferred level of independence.

IMPORTANT THINGS TO CONSIDER

✓ Decide whether you want to rehabilitate wildlife at WCRI, in your home, at another permitted facility where you work or volunteer, in your own dedicated facility, or through a combination of these settings.	✓ Make sure everyone in your household understands the commitment and that pets can be kept completely separate from wildlife and rehabilitation spaces
✓ Consider whether you are prepared for the emotional side of wildlife rehabilitation, including difficult decisions, loss, euthanasia, and the need to set healthy limits when you can't take on another animal. Having a support system and realistic expectations can make this work more sustainable.	✓ Completing the requisite class is an important first step, but sponsorship, permitting, patient placement, and – if you choose to pursue it – participation in WCRI's network will also depend on availability, fit and completion of the remaining requirements.
✓ Verify that wildlife rehabilitation is permitted at your proposed location by checking applicable zoning and local ordinances, and if you rent, that your landlord or lease allows wildlife rehabilitation activities.	✓ Be realistic about your availability during peak baby season and about the cost of caging, food, sanitation, transport, and supplies.

THE SUB-PERMITTEE PATHWAY

A sub-permittee works under a sponsoring Level 2, 2X, or 2V permittee. The permit is tied to that relationship and does not create independent intake authority.

Rhode Island Rules and Regulations Governing Wildlife Rehabilitation, 250-RICR-60-00-1, § 1.12.6.



A Sub-Permittee permit is a stand-alone, limited permit focused primarily on the care of certain healthy orphaned baby animals. Sub-Permittees work under the permit and supervision of a sponsoring Level 2, 2X, or 2V rehabilitator, may care only for species authorized under the sponsor's permit, and do not operate as independent wildlife rehabilitators. This pathway is not a prerequisite to the Full Wildlife Rehabilitator pathway. However, many people choose to begin as a Sub-Permittee because it offers a structured way to build practical experience in baby-animal care under close mentorship before progressing to more complex rehabilitation cases.

Applicant Eligibility

- Must be at least 18 years old.
- Resident of RI, or the facility where your activities will occur is located within RI.
- Access to an approved rehabilitation space, either in your home or through the permitted facility where you will perform your rehabilitation work.
- No convictions for, or admissions to, violating Rhode Island wildlife laws or regulations, and no suspension or revocation of a Special Scientific Collector's Permit to rehabilitate wildlife within the 3 years preceding your application.
- No local ordinances prohibit wildlife rehabilitation at your proposed location, and the possession of wildlife for rehabilitation does not violate any applicable rental, lease, or real estate agreement.

Step-by-Step

1. **Complete the required six hours of classroom training.** WCRI's DEM-approved **Neonate Wildlife Care** course fulfills this requirement and is specifically designed to introduce new rehabilitators to neonate care within the broader practice of wildlife rehabilitation. The course helps participants understand how early-life interventions affect individual animals and shape ethical standards, clinical judgment, and the professional decision-making expected of wildlife rehabilitators and aspiring practitioners.
2. **Take and achieve a score of eighty percent (80%) or higher on the DEM-administered Sub-Permittee examination.** The exam can be scheduled directly with DEM Fish & Wildlife. Under DEM's current testing process, it is offered free of charge and consists of 50 true-or-false and multiple-choice questions.
3. **Secure a Sponsoring Rehabilitator.** Your sponsor must hold a valid Rhode Island Level 2, 2X, or 2V permit. Choose a sponsor whose permit authorizes the species you hope to rehabilitate, because a Sub-Permittee's scope is limited to the species and authorizations listed on the sponsor's permit. WCRI may help qualified applicants connect with a sponsoring rehabilitator within our network, depending on mentor availability, program capacity, and fit.
4. **Secure the support of a RI licensed veterinarian.** All individuals seeking to become wildlife rehabilitators in Rhode Island are required to secure the support of a RI licensed veterinarian able to provide adequate veterinary care to the animals you may take in. For applicants interested in partnering with WCRI, the

required veterinary support may be available through WCRI's veterinarian, subject to our program requirements.

5. **Facility Requirements.** If you will rehabilitate wildlife in your home or another facility, the space must meet DEM's facility standards. Applicants working only at an already approved facility do not need a separate home facility for that work. The requirements are set forth in the Rhode Island Rules and Regulations Governing Wildlife Rehabilitation, 250-RICR-60-00-1, § 1.13.
6. **Apply for your permit.** Sub-Permittees must submit a short application to DEM. Applications can be obtained by contacting DEM using the information on page 12. There is no fee to apply for a Sub-Permittee permit.

Permit Limitations

Sub-Permittees are:

- Restricted to working with pre-fledged songbirds, pre-fledged waterfowl, reptiles, amphibians, and pre-weaned, small mammals excluding RVS. Sub-permittees may not work with raptors or RVS.
- Not permitted to accept wildlife directly from the public. All animals must be admitted through the sponsoring permittee or another properly permitted Rhode Island rehabilitator.
- Not permitted to euthanize animals in their care. Euthanasia must be performed by a properly licensed RI permittee in accordance with the Regulations or a licensed veterinarian. All euthanasia is required to be performed in accordance with AVMA guidelines.
- Required to work closely with their sponsoring mentor.
- Not permitted to work with or possess wildlife that their sponsoring mentor is not authorized to rehabilitate.

All permitted wildlife rehabilitators in Rhode Island must maintain required intake records and submit the previous season's rehabilitation records to DEM as part of renewal, where applicable. For animals cared for by a Sub-Permittee, the sponsoring permittee is responsible for including those records in the sponsor's submission to DEM.

THE FULL WILDLIFE REHABILITATOR PATHWAY

This pathway prepares individuals to provide permitted care for the broadest range of wildlife species, ages, and rehabilitation needs.

Rhode Island Rules and Regulations Governing Wildlife Rehabilitation, 250-RICR-60-00-1, § 1.12.4 (“Level 1”); § 1.12.1 (“Level 2”); § 1.12.2 (“Level 2X”); and § 1.12.3 (“Level 2V”)



The Full Wildlife Rehabilitator pathway is designed for individuals who intend to operate more independently and care for a wider range of wildlife, including juvenile and adult animals that may be injured or ill. Applicants begin as Level 1 Apprentice rehabilitators under the sponsorship and guidance of a Level 2, 2X, or 2V rehabilitator. The sponsor agrees to serve for one calendar year. After holding a Level 1 permit for at least nine months immediately preceding the application year, and with the sponsor’s recommendation and DEM approval, the applicant may advance to Level 2 status.



Applicant Eligibility

- Must be at least 18 years old.
- Resident of RI, or the facility where your activities will occur is located within RI.
- Access to an approved rehabilitation space, either in your home or through the permitted facility where you will perform your rehabilitation work.
- No convictions for, or admissions to, violating Rhode Island wildlife laws or regulations, and no suspension or revocation of a Special Scientific Collector’s Permit to rehabilitate wildlife within the 3 years preceding your application.
- No local ordinances prohibit wildlife rehabilitation at your proposed location, and the possession of wildlife for rehabilitation does not violate any applicable rental, lease, or real estate agreement.

Step-by-Step

1. **Complete the required classroom training.** [IWRC’s Foundations of Wildlife Rehabilitation course](#) and WCRI’s [DEM-approved Introduction to Wildlife Rehabilitation course](#) both fulfill this requirement.
2. **Take and achieve a score of eighty percent (80%) or higher on the DEM-administered Level 1 examination.** The exam can be scheduled directly with DEM Fish & Wildlife. Under DEM’s current testing process, it is offered free of charge and consists of 100 true-or-false and multiple-choice questions.
3. **Secure a Sponsoring Rehabilitator.** As a Level 1 Apprentice, you must provide a written agreement from a currently permitted Level 2, 2X, or 2V rehabilitator who is willing to sponsor you for one calendar year. Choose a sponsor whose permit authorizes the species you hope to rehabilitate, because your scope will be limited to the species and authorizations listed on the sponsor’s permit. WCRI may help qualified

applicants connect with a sponsoring rehabilitator within our network, depending on mentor availability, program capacity, and fit.

4. **Secure the support of a RI licensed veterinarian.** All individuals seeking to become wildlife rehabilitators in Rhode Island are required to secure the support of a RI licensed veterinarian able to provide adequate veterinary care to the animals you may take in. For applicants interested in partnering with WCRI, the required veterinary support may be available through WCRI's veterinarian, subject to our program requirements.
5. **Facility Requirements.** If you will rehabilitate wildlife in your home or another facility, the space must meet DEM's facility standards. Applicants working only at an already approved facility do not need a separate home facility for that work. The requirements are set forth in the Rhode Island Rules and Regulations Governing Wildlife Rehabilitation, 250-RICR-60-00-1, § 1.13.
6. **Apply for your permit.** Permit applications are available from DEM at the following URL:
<https://dem.ri.gov/sites/g/files/xkgbur861/files/2026-01/wildlife-rehabilitation-permit-application.pdf>
Because forms and administrative procedures may change, confirm that you are using DEM's current application before submitting.
There is a \$25.00 application fee, which must be submitted with your application.

Permit Limitations

Level 1 Apprentice Wildlife Rehabilitators are:

- Restricted to working with only those species authorized by the permit of their sponsoring mentor, excluding RVS animals.
- Permitted to euthanize animals in their care. Euthanasia must be performed in accordance with AVMA guidelines.
- Required to work closely with their sponsoring mentor and notify them immediately after independently receiving any wildlife.
- Not permitted to work with or possess wildlife that their sponsoring mentor is not authorized to rehabilitate.
- Not authorized to sponsor sub-permittees or other Level 1 apprentices.

All permitted wildlife rehabilitators in Rhode Island must maintain required intake records and submit the previous season's rehabilitation records to DEM as part of renewal, where applicable. Level 1 Apprentices are responsible for maintaining and submitting their own required records.

All permits expire January 31 of the year following issuance and must be renewed. Species authority remains limited to the categories listed by DEM on the permit.

LEVEL 2

Level 2 rehabilitators may be authorized to care for amphibians, reptiles, mammals other than RVS, non-migratory birds, and migratory birds when separately authorized under a federal Migratory Bird Rehabilitation Permit.

Rhode Island Rules and Regulations Governing Wildlife Rehabilitation, 250-RICR-60-00-1, § 1.12.1 ("Level 2")



Level 2 Wildlife Rehabilitators are fully permitted general rehabilitators who may operate without an apprenticeship sponsor. They may independently receive and rehabilitate wildlife within the species categories and activities authorized on their DEM permits. Independence, however, should not be confused with practicing in isolation. Wildlife rehabilitation is an evolving field, and responsible rehabilitators continue learning, consult experienced colleagues and veterinarians, and seek assistance or transfer patients when a case exceeds their knowledge, facilities, resources, or lawful authority.

Level 2 rehabilitators must maintain the active cooperation of a Rhode Island-licensed veterinarian who can provide consultation and appropriate veterinary services. Loss of required veterinary cooperation may place the permit at risk, and updated veterinary-support documentation is required as part of the renewal process.

What Level 2 Rehabilitators May Do

Subject to the specific authorizations listed on their permits, Level 2 rehabilitators may:

- Receive wildlife directly from the public.
- Possess and rehabilitate amphibians, reptiles, non-RVS mammals, non-migratory birds, and migratory birds when separately authorized by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
- Assess, stabilize, house, rehabilitate, transport, transfer, release, or appropriately euthanize wildlife within their legal authority and professional competence.
- Transfer patients to another permittee or facility holding comparable authority for the species involved.
- Supervise up to seven Sub-Permittees, at the discretion of DEM.
- Sponsor up to three Level 1 Apprentices.
- Apply for the specialized Level 2X designation if they intend to rehabilitate Rabies Vector Species and meet the additional requirements.

A Level 2 permit is not blanket authority. Rehabilitators remain limited to the species and categories listed on their permits. Migratory birds require a separate federal permit, RVS require Level 2X authority, and Rhode Island prohibits the rehabilitation of certain species, including mute swans, American black bears, and moose.

A wildlife rehabilitation permit also does not authorize the independent practice of veterinary medicine.

Professional Responsibilities

Level 2 status carries responsibility not only for individual patients, but also for the quality, safety, and integrity of the rehabilitator's overall practice. Level 2 rehabilitators should:

- Accept only the species and number of patients they can care for safely and competently.

- Maintain secure, sanitary, species-appropriate facilities and appropriate separation from domestic animals, the public, and incompatible wildlife.
- Maintain complete intake, treatment, transfer, release, euthanasia, and disposition records.
- Renew their permits annually and submit required intake records and supporting documentation.
- Maintain clear veterinary protocols and seek timely veterinary involvement when a patient's condition requires medical diagnosis, treatment, controlled medication, surgery, or other licensed care.
- Use current, evidence-informed rehabilitation practices and participate in continuing education.
- Evaluate patients objectively for release, transfer, placement, or humane euthanasia, placing animal welfare above personal attachment.
- Release animals promptly once they meet applicable release standards and select release sites consistent with legal, biological, and welfare requirements.
- Maintain effective biosecurity, personal-protection, sanitation, emergency, and escape-prevention practices.

Level 2 rehabilitators may supervise up to seven Sub-Permittees and sponsor up to three Level 1 Apprentices, but they are not required to do so. Those who choose to sponsor Apprentices or supervise Sub-Permittees assume additional leadership responsibilities. They should provide clear instruction, remain reasonably available for consultation, monitor the quality of care being provided, address concerns promptly, and create meaningful opportunities for developing wildlife rehabilitators to build competence and sound judgment. Level 2 permittees are legally responsible for the rehabilitation activities of the Sub-Permittees under their supervision. Sponsorship of Level 1 Apprentices carries separate mentoring and endorsement responsibilities.

Step-by-Step

- 1. Complete your Level 1 Apprenticeship & apply for your Level 2 permit.** A Level 1 sponsor agrees to serve for one calendar year. However, a Level 1 permittee may qualify to apply for Level 2 after holding the Level 1 permit for at least nine months immediately preceding the application year and obtaining a letter of recommendation from the sponsor. Applications are submitted during the annual renewal cycle and are due to DEM by January 31. You will also need continued veterinary support. Permit applications are available at the following URL:

<https://dem.ri.gov/sites/g/files/xkgbur861/files/2026-01/wildlife-rehabilitation-permit-application.pdf>

Because forms and administrative procedures may change, confirm that you are using DEM's current application before submitting.

There is a \$25.00 application fee, which must be submitted with your application.

Level 2 wildlife rehabilitators may choose to have their contact information included on DEM's public list of permitted rehabilitators and may accept wildlife directly from the public within the scope of their permits. With that authority comes responsibility to assess capacity honestly and accept only the species and number of patients they can care for safely and competently. Maintaining appropriate limits is essential to protecting animal welfare and preserving the rehabilitator's own mental, physical, and financial well-being.

- 2. Maintain the support of a RI licensed veterinarian.** As previously noted, all individuals seeking to become wildlife rehabilitators in Rhode Island are required to secure and maintain the support of a RI licensed veterinarian able to provide adequate veterinary care to the animals you may take in.
- 3. Facility Requirements.** If you will rehabilitate wildlife in your home or another facility, the space must meet DEM's facility standards. Applicants working only at an already approved facility do not need a separate home facility for that work. The requirements are set forth in the Rhode Island Rules and Regulations Governing Wildlife Rehabilitation, 250-RICR-60-00-1, § 1.13.

REQUIRED TO WORK WITH RVS ANIMALS

LEVEL 2X

Individuals who hold a Level 2 permit and want to rehabilitate Rabies Vector Species may apply for the optional Level 2X designation. In Rhode Island, RVS include woodchucks, all species of bats, and members of the order Carnivora, including raccoons, striped skunks, red and gray foxes, fishers, long- and short-tailed weasels, mink, otters, bobcats, coyotes, and bears. American black bears, however, remain prohibited from rehabilitation under Rhode Island law. Level 2X is required only for rehabilitators who intend to work with RVS; it is not a required next step for every Level 2 rehabilitator.

Rhode Island Rules and Regulations Governing Wildlife Rehabilitation, 250-RICR-60-00-1, § 1.12.2 (“Level 2X”)

A Level 2X permit expands the authority of a qualified Level 2 wildlife rehabilitator to include the rehabilitation of rabies vector species. This work involves heightened public-health and safety risks, so Level 2X rehabilitators must maintain a current rabies vaccination and demonstrate an adequate rabies antibody titer, with updated titer results submitted at least every two years. They must also have an approved facility that meets additional isolation, security, double-caging, handling, sanitation, and warning-sign requirements designed to prevent escapes, unauthorized access, and contact between RVS animals, people, domestic animals, and other wildlife.

Level 2X rehabilitators are responsible for the capture, restraint, transport, intake, care, and disposition of RVS and must follow RI’s specialized rabies protocols, including immediate coordination with the RI Department of Health at intake and after any potential exposure. Only apparently healthy bats of any age and other juvenile RVS estimated to be 10 weeks old or younger may be considered, and only after the Department of Health determines that no human or animal exposure occurred. RVS showing behavioral, locomotive, or neurological impairment, or wounds of unknown origin, are not rehabilitation candidates. Members of the public, Sub-Permittees, and Level 1 Apprentices may not handle, transport, possess, or otherwise have contact with RVS. Level 2X therefore requires specialized preparation, appropriate facilities, disciplined safety practices, and close compliance with public-health requirements.

RESERVED FOR LICENSED VETERINARIANS

LEVEL 2V

The Level 2V designation provides Rhode Island–licensed veterinarians with a specialized pathway to rehabilitate wildlife under the state permitting system. It recognizes their existing professional qualifications while preserving the operational, public-health, and wildlife-care requirements applicable to permitted rehabilitators.

Rhode Island Rules and Regulations Governing Wildlife Rehabilitation, 250-RICR-60-00-1, § 1.12.3 (“Level 2V”)

A Level 2V permit is available only to veterinarians licensed in Rhode Island and exempts applicants from certain standard training, examination, and apprenticeship requirements that apply to other rehabilitation pathways. Subject to all other applicable state and federal requirements, Level 2V permittees may be authorized to rehabilitate amphibians, reptiles, mammals, including rabies vector species, and both migratory and non-migratory birds, provided the appropriate U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service permit is maintained for migratory birds. They may euthanize wildlife that are injured, sick, orphaned, or unlikely to function normally or survive after release. A Level 2V rehabilitator may also supervise up to seven Sub-Permittees and sponsor up to three Level 1 Apprentices. They are legally responsible for the rehabilitation activities of Sub-Permittees under their supervision. Neither Sub-Permittees nor Apprentices may be directed or permitted to handle, transport, possess, or otherwise have contact with rabies vector species.

FEDERAL LAWS & REQUIREMENTS

A Rhode Island wildlife rehabilitation permit grants authority under **state law only**. Rhode Island wildlife rehabilitators must follow both state and federal wildlife laws. A state rehabilitation permit covers care authorized by Rhode Island, but some species, particularly migratory birds, eagles, endangered species, and marine mammals, are also protected under federal law and may require additional permits, approvals, or coordination with the appropriate federal agency.

The **Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA)** applies to most native bird species and generally requires a federal Migratory Bird Rehabilitation Permit to take, transport, or temporarily possess covered birds for rehabilitation. Bald and golden eagles receive additional protection under the **Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act**, while federally threatened and endangered species are covered by the **Endangered Species Act**. The **Lacey Act** also applies when wildlife is transported or possessed in violation of state or federal law, including across state lines. Marine mammals, such as seals, dolphins, and whales, are protected under the **Marine Mammal Protection Act** and may be handled or rehabilitated only by organizations authorized through NOAA Fisheries' marine mammal response network. Sea turtles are protected under separate federal authorities and may be handled or rehabilitated only by authorized sea turtle response organizations. A Rhode Island wildlife rehabilitation permit does not authorize the care of marine mammals or sea turtles.

CURRENT DEM PROCESS • FREE & OPEN BOOK

PASSING YOUR EXAM

Both Level 1 Apprentice and Sub-Permittee applicants must pass a written examination administered by the DEM's Division of Fish & Wildlife. A score of **80% or higher** is required. The examination is intended to confirm that applicants understand the laws, responsibilities, care standards, and basic decision-making principles involved in safely rehabilitating wildlife.

Under DEM's current testing process, the Sub-Permittee exam consists of 50 multiple-choice and true-or-false questions, while the Level 1 examination consists of 100 multiple-choice and true-or-false questions, with up to two hours allowed for completion. Questions are drawn from the approved wildlife rehabilitation course materials, the Rhode Island Wildlife Rehabilitation Manual distributed directly by DEM, and the state's wildlife rehabilitation regulations. Applicants should be prepared to answer questions about appropriate housing and nutrition, safe handling, disease prevention, recordkeeping, release standards, permit limitations, and when an animal's care must be referred or elevated. Exam format and study materials may change, so confirm the current requirements for your pathway with DEM before testing.

For the best preparation, read the regulations carefully, become familiar with the responsibilities attached to the permit you are seeking, and use your training materials to understand why particular care, safety, and legal requirements exist. Pay special attention to species restrictions, facility standards, veterinary involvement, permitted activities, reporting requirements, and the rules governing transport, transfer, and release. Applicants who don't pass on their first attempt may take the exam again after waiting at least seven days. After an unsuccessful second attempt, the applicant must wait at least fourteen days before testing again. Any additional waiting period is determined by DEM Fish & Wildlife. **Don't be deterred** if you don't pass on the first (or even second) try! It's simply an opportunity to revisit the material and strengthen the knowledge needed to begin rehabilitating wildlife responsibly.

FACILITIES CHECKLIST

When considering whether you'd like to rehabilitate wildlife in your home or another facility, think about how your space would work day to day. It should be separate from people and pets, easy to keep clean, safe and dry, protected from weather and escape, and have natural light, appropriate housing, secure storage, and a separate sink for cleaning. You'll also need enough room to keep animals apart when necessary based on their species, age, condition, or stage of care. WCRI maintains a DEM-approved facility checklist, which is included in our training manuals and can also be shared with interested applicants.

It is also worth thinking honestly about how wildlife care will fit into your household and routine. Animals may need frequent feedings, daily cleaning, laundry, food preparation, and care early in the morning or late at night, and some species can be noisy, messy, or produce strong odors. Other members of the household should understand and support the commitment, and the space may need to remain dedicated to wildlife during the busiest parts of the season. A facility does not need to be elaborate, but it does need to be practical, dependable, and realistic for the type and number of animals you plan to care for.

Sub-Permittee facilities are inspected by the sponsoring permittee, who submits the inspection report to DEM. Level 1 Apprentice facilities are inspected by DEM staff before permit issuance.

TRAINING, QUESTIONS, AND WHERE TO GO NEXT

NEXT STEPS & CONTACTS

WCRI can help you understand the pathways, register for available courses, and explore practical training opportunities.

- WCRI course offerings and practical learning opportunities depend on scheduling, space, and program capacity.
- DEM Fish & Wildlife controls examinations, permit decisions, and official interpretation of Rhode Island requirements.

1

VIEW WCRI COURSES



See current course dates and registration on the WCRI Wildlife Rehabilitation Training page.

2

CONTACT WCRI

Olivia Harrington
WCRI Community Engagement
& Programs Director
oharrington@riwildliferehab.org
(401) 294-6363

3

CONTACT RIDEM



Exam scheduling, permit questions, official interpretation, and application submission
DEM.DFW@dem.ri.gov
Sarah.Riley@dem.ri.gov
(401) 789-0281

No matter which pathway you choose, **Rhode Island's** wildlife needs you.

Our state needs more **trained wildlife rehabilitators**—whether you plan to assist at the **Wildlife Clinic** or provide approved care **from home**.

Wildlife patients require care at many different ages and developmental stages, which means there are meaningful ways to contribute across a range of schedules and availability. Join a **dedicated community** of wildlife professionals working together to ensure injured and orphaned animals receive the **right care, at the right time**.

