

Wildlife Rehabilitators Association of Rhode Island

The Wildlife Clinic of Rhode Island

Volunteer & Intern Handbook



Updated October 2019

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Welcome to WRARI and The Wildlife Clinic

Welcome!

WRARI and The Wildlife Clinic would like to welcome you to be an integral part of the Wildlife Clinic's daily operation and a partner in helping WRARI 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 manual has been prepared for you as a reference guide. It contains information regarding our policies & 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.

Wildlife Rehabilitation is a serious profession. There are strict laws and regulations that govern how we handle and care for wild animals. Caring for wildlife is not something intuitive, it is a learned profession; if you do not know what to do, seek assistance instead of guessing or acting without guidance. ***WRARI, in keeping with state and federal regulation, requires that you must be sufficiently trained and licensed to hold a position at the Wildlife Clinic.*** The rules we establish at WRARI are there for the benefit of the wild animals that depend on us for their second chance and subsequent long-term survival. ***It is important to always keep in mind the best interest of the animals you are here to help. Frequently we are called upon to make hard life and death decisions for the good of individual wild patients. We often need to examine if what we are doing is what is best for the animal, or more for our own emotional benefit.***

The Wildlife Clinic is not a zoo and 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 that 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.

Please read and understand WRARI's mission and goals to ensure that this is an organization in which you wish to play a role.

WRARI History, Mission and Goals

The Wildlife Rehabilitators Association of Rhode Island (WRARI) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that provides medical care to and aids in the rehabilitation of all species of injured and orphaned wild animals 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.

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 orphan mammals, worms for birds, other food supplies, pharmaceuticals and medical supplies, as well as provide veterinary care.

WRARI works hard to provide the best in rehabilitative care and treatment to Rhode Island's most priceless natural resource – its wildlife. We welcome you to join us in this mission.

WRARI Contact Information

The Wildlife Clinic of Rhode Island
2865 Tower Hill Road
Saunderstown RI 02874

Office: 401.294.6363
Email: RIwildliferehab@gmail.com
Website: RIwildliferehab.org

Kristin V. Fletcher
WRARI – Executive Director

Home: 401.293.5505 /
Cell: 401.465.2460
Email: kflet99502@aol.com

Chi Y. Chan, DVM
WRARI – Veterinarian

Cell: 401.368.9853
Email: mypoquitacat@gmail.com

Arianna Mouradjian
WRARI – Operations

Cell: 401.450.9550
Email: arianna.mouradjian@gmail.com

Meredith Bird, DVM
Veterinary Services of Wickford

Office: 401.294.9518

Other Important Numbers

R.I. D.E.M. Enforcement

Dispatch: 401.222.3070

Ocean State Veterinary Specialists

Hospital: 401.886.6787

R.I. D.E.M. Great Swamp Field Headquarters
277 Great Neck Road, West Kingston RI 02829

Office: 401.789.7481

Diane Brady (State Health Department)
Rabies testing reporting

Office: 401.222.7906
Fax: 401.222.2477

Wildlife Clinic Hours and Holiday Schedule

Hours of Operation:

Monday – Friday:	9:00am – 5:00pm (season); 9:00am – 4:00pm (off season)
Saturday:	9:00am – 2:00pm (season); 9:00am – 1:00pm (off season)
Sunday:	9:00am – 2:00pm (season); 9:00am – noon (off season)

Season: March 1 to October 31 of each year

Off-season: November 1 to February 28 of each year

Holidays:

Easter	Memorial Day	July 4	New Year's Day
Labor Day	Thanksgiving Day	Christmas Day (Christmas Eve 9:00am to 1:00pm)	

The clinic is closed to the public on holidays, but there will always be a minimum of one employee on staff to provide care to the animals on site.

Governing Laws and Regulations

Federal Laws

Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C 1531-1544).

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) was enacted in order to provide a mechanism through which programs could be developed by the federal government for the conservation of threatened and endangered plants and animals and the habitats in which they are found. The ESA prohibits any action by any person that causes a “taking” of any listed species and generally prohibits the interstate and foreign trade of listed species. It further prohibits the import or export of listed species for the purpose of commerce or trade.

The ESA does not prohibit the transport of an endangered species for the purpose of transporting it to a licensed rehabilitator. It is important to note however, that most states, including Rhode Island, prohibit the transport of animals (in general) across state lines. Additionally, animals listed under the ESA require additional reporting requirements.

Migratory Bird Treaty Act¹ (16 U.S.C. 703-712).

The provisions of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) generally provide that it is unlawful to “take” a species protected under the Act. A “taking” is defined in part as: pursue, take, capture, attempt to pursue, take, or capture, transport, or carry any of the species of birds protected under its provisions. The protections extend to the actual bird, any part, nest or egg of any such bird, or any product composed in whole or in part of any such bird. In general, the species of birds protected include only those native to the United States and do not include invasive or imported species. It is a federal crime to knowingly or unknowingly violate the provisions of the Act, and such violations include raising wild baby birds as pets or with the intent to release them, destroying nests or disturbing nesting birds, or collecting feathers, nests or eggs. The MBTA does however, provide for a permitting process, which allows individuals to transport and rehabilitate wild birds.

Individuals and Facilities seeking to rehabilitate birds must, pursuant to the MBTA, apply for a federal permit to do so. Additionally, those seeking to transport any birds protected under this Act also need a federal permit in order to do so. WRARI holds both state and federal permits for the rehabilitation of migratory birds.

Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (16 U.S.C. 668-668c).

The Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGEPA) essentially tracks the language of the MBTA, making the same actions unlawful, and applies it specifically to Bald and Golden Eagles, which are also protected under the MBTA. It appears that a permit allowing an individual to transport birds protected by the MBTA suffices to allow the transport of Bald and Golden Eagles pursuant to the BGEPA.

Individuals and facilities seeking to rehabilitate Bald and Golden Eagles must obtain special permits pursuant to the BGEPA in order to do so. At present, WRARI does not hold permits for the rehabilitation of

¹ The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has promulgated a complete list of protected species. That list can be found on the U.S.F.W.S website:<http://www.fws.gov/migratorybirds/RegulationsPolicies/mbta/mbtandx.html>

Bald and Golden Eagles. WRARI may provide temporary, stabilizing care to said species, but animals must be transferred upon stabilization to a properly licensed facility.

Marine Mammal Protection Act² (16 U.S.C 1361-1407).

The Marine Mammals Protection Act (MMPA) also tracks the language of the MBTA, making it the same actions unlawful as applied specifically to marine mammals³ – although under this Act the definition of “take” is somewhat more expansive. Pursuant to this Act, a person or agency must be specially licensed to transport and care for injured or orphaned marine mammals.

It is important to note that, at this time, only Mystic Aquarium, located in Mystic, Connecticut, has the required licenses necessary to transport and treat marine mammals. Their authority to do so covers the entire coastline of Rhode Island. Should you encounter a marine mammal that you believe to be in danger, you should immediately contact Mystic Aquarium’s Animal Rescue Hotline at (860) 572-5955 ext. 107. Remember to remain a safe distance from the animal and refrain from touching it.

Lacey Act of 1900 (16 U.S.C. 3371-3378).

The Lacey Act primarily prohibits trade in wildlife, fish, and plants that have been illegally taken, possessed, transported or sold. It underscores other federal, state, and foreign laws protecting wildlife by making it a separate offense to take, possess, transport, or sell wildlife that has been taken in violation of those laws. The act was in part designed to combat potential problems of the introduction of non-native, or exotic species of birds and animals into native ecosystems. Relevant to this training, this Act prohibits the transport of animals across state borders.

² Approximately 125 species are protected under the MMPA. A short list can be found on the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration website: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/species/mammals>.

State Regulations

Pursuant to the R.I. General Laws, the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (DEM) actively regulates wildlife rehabilitation. DEM promulgates and publishes the rules and regulations and the most recent rendition of the regulations can be found in their entirety by entering this link into your search engine:

<http://www.dem.ri.gov/pubs/regs/regs/fishwild/wrehab11.pdf>

The DEM rules and regulations are too long to include in this manual, but are hereby incorporated by reference – accordingly, as a volunteer/intern, it is your responsibility to read through the rules and regulations and familiarize yourself with them. We've highlighted certain rules below, however, this list is not meant to be exhaustive and it is still your responsibility to obtain and read the R.I. DEM regulations.

Rule 3.1

No person shall rehabilitate, handle, release or transport any wildlife, except as provided in parts 3.2, 3.5, and 5 of the rules and regulations without having first obtained the appropriate permit as designated in Part I of the regulations from the Department.

Rule 3.2

No person shall rehabilitate, handle, release or transport any wildlife other than the categories specifically set out in the permit, and in compliance with the state list. Persons may transport non-rabies vector species to rehabilitators, provided rehabilitator records name, address, and telephone number of said person. **Exception:** Rabies vector species transport must conform to conditions in Parts 1 and 5 and the RVS Handbook.

Rule 3.3

No person shall rehabilitate, handle, release or transport any species, as defined in these regulations as "Exotics."

Rule 3.4

There is no permit required for the rehabilitation, handling, release or transportation of the following species: mice, shrews, voles, moles, house sparrow, Rock Dove, and European Starling.

Rule 3.5

Veterinarians may provide emergency first aid to any member of an endangered or threatened species, without first obtaining a permit, provided that notification is given to the Division within 48 hours as to the species, nature of the injury/illness, location where the species was encountered, description of the service provided, and last location where the wildlife was seen. Such species shall be transferred to a licensed rehabilitator within 48 hours, or as soon as medically stable, with additional notice to the Division, to include notice after release, and/or euthanasia. Permittees must further comply with federal regulations. Licensed veterinarians may give emergency treatment without obtaining a rehabilitation permit, to the remainder of the non-rabies vector state listed species, providing that the species be transferred to permitted facility within 48 hours. Notification must be made to the Division within 48 hours of initial contact.

Rule 3.6

No person shall release any non-vector species rehabilitated wildlife at a location other than the point of origin, or in suitable habitat and season for that species within the boundary of Rhode Island except that no mammal, reptile, or amphibian shall be released onto any of the islands of Narragansett Bay or Block Island unless the animal in question originated from that location. Refer to Part 5 of the rules and regulations for release conditions of vector species.

Rule 3.10

Wildlife held under this permit shall not be owned, sold, offered for sale, purchased, bartered, offered for barter, tamed, neutered, used for propagation purposes or used to conduct commercial transactions of any nature.

Rule 5.2 – RVS Species

Only apparently healthy, orphaned young of the year (less than 10-weeks of age) **raccoons, foxes, skunks, and woodchucks, and bats** of any age are candidates for rehabilitation and only if no human or animal exposure has occurred, as determined by the Rhode Island Department of Health (DOH). Apparently healthy animals shall be those animals that show no signs of behavioral, neurological, or locomotive impairments. Young of the year raccoons, foxes, skunks, woodchucks, and bats that have wounds of unknown origin and adult raccoons, foxes, skunks, and woodchucks shall not be candidates for rehabilitation and must be euthanized.

Some of these laws can be confusing, so please do not hesitate to ask questions if you do not understand how these laws and regulations influence the operation of WRARI and govern the wildlife rehabilitation profession as a whole. Please also understand that working with animals, especially wild animals, can be both rewarding and emotionally draining – there may be times when your emotional response to a situation is at odds with the legal requirements that must be adhered to. In this circumstance, please understand that WRARI understands your position, but we must act in accordance with the laws and rules that govern us.

Licensing Regulations

As noted in a preceding section, only properly licensed individuals are permitted to perform actual animal handling. The following are the regulatory rules governing the licensing process for wildlife rehabilitators in Rhode Island. The full text (“Rules and Regulations Governing Wildlife Rehabilitation”) which include the regulations governing licensure can be found here:

<http://www.dem.ri.gov/pubs/regs/regs/fishwild/wrehab11.pdf>

1.1 Criteria -- Fish and Wildlife may issue an annual special Scientific Collectors Permit to rehabilitate native wildlife to persons meeting the criteria set forth in these regulations. Prior to permit issuance, Fish and Wildlife shall determine that the applicant has met the following requirements in the categories described below:

1.1.1 Level P-Sub-permittee:

- A. Sub-permittees must pass a written examination established by the Department. Following satisfactory completion of the State test, as delineated in 1.2.8, a person may qualify to assist any class of Level II permittees under the direct supervision of the permittee. Sub-permittees are strictly prohibited from handling raptors, or RVS species at any time. In addition, sub-permittees are strictly prohibited from handling any category of animals for which their supervising permittee has not been duly authorized to care for.
- B. Following the completion of not less than 25 hours of hands on activity and 6 hours of instructional training sufficient to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the permittee that the sub-permittee has sufficient skills knowledge, the permittee shall be considered for off-site approval.
- C. In order to be considered for offsite approval, the applicant must meet the following requirements:
 - 1A. Facility must meet or exceed the minimum standards and be inspected by the permittee on forms provided by and submitted to DEM prior to acceptance of any wildlife for rehabilitation.
 - 2B. The submission by the permittee of a written policy which shall include inter alia, the relationship to be maintained between the permittee and the sub-permittee, frequency and extent of inspection and continuing monitoring of the sub permittee. In no case shall the sub-permittee’s facilities not be inspected by the permittees less frequently than 1 month interval during the season for initial year and one visit per season for subsequent years and that the permittee submit a report on the progress of the sub-permittee on the form provided at 30 and 60 day intervals.

In addition to 1.1, Sub-permittees are restricted to pre-fledged songbirds and waterfowl and unweaned non-RVS small mammals.

Sub-permittees are permitted to temporarily house post weaned non RVS mammals for soft release only, restricted to the providing of food and water limited to a period not to exceed two weeks. Handling of soft release candidates strictly prohibited.

Sub-permittees must comply with all requirements set out in part 3.

1.1.2 Level I – Apprentice:

Authorized to receive, rehabilitate, transfer and release all wildlife in categories listed on the permit under the supervision of a Division approved sponsor and under conditions specified in the regulations. Applicants for licensure as Level 1 rehabilitators must present written letter of recommendation by Level II or IIA rehabilitator willing to serve as the applicant's sponsor/consultant during the first year of applicant's apprenticeship and must pass a written examination established by the Department and the IWRC. Apprentices must consult sponsor immediately after receiving any wildlife, as well as adhering to regulatory requirements. Level I permittees are not authorized to list sub-permittees on their permit.

1.1.3 Level II – Rehabilitator

Qualified persons are persons who were previously licensed as a Level II rehabilitator in Rhode Island or in another state having equivalent requirements and offering reciprocal privileges to licensed rehabilitators of this state, or who have currently held a Level I permit for 1 (one) year with a letter of recommendation from a Level II sponsor and having passed required examination, may apply for licensure by the Division as a Level II rehabilitator. Sub-permittees are permitted to assist under the direct supervision of Level II permittees. Level II permittees are directly responsible for the action of any sub-permittee acting under his /her permit. Level II permittees shall sponsor no more than 5 sub-permittees as an individual or 10 sub-permittees at an approved center.

1.1.4 Level II R - Persons meeting Level II requirements, having held a previous Level II R permit or with a letter of recommendation from a Level II R sponsor.

1.1.5 Level F - Qualified persons holding a valid Rhode Island General or Master class Falconer permit may obtain a permit restricted to raptors. Level R permit holders are required to adhere to all requirements set out in part 1.1 with the exception of the IWRC class.

1.1.6 Level T - Qualified persons are limited to the **transport only** of non-vector species native wildlife. Qualified persons shall be those holding transport permits in the past or individuals who have attended and successfully completed class in transporting wildlife, approved by the Division.

- 1.1.7 Level TX - Qualified persons are limited to the transport of non-vector species and rabies vector species. In addition to above transport requirements, Level TX permit holders must abide by the conditions in Part 3 of these rules and regulations and the requirements in the RVS Handbook and the State Rabies Protocol Manual.
- 1.1.8 Level II V - Restricted to veterinarians licensed in the State of Rhode Island.
- 1.1.9 Level II X - Qualification is limited to those persons meeting Level II requirements in addition to the conditions, requirements, and training as described in Part 5 and the referenced RVS Handbook and State Rabies Protocol Manual.
- 1.2 Application Requirements for All Categories -- The application shall include but not be limited to the following:
 - 1.2.1 Certification that the applicant is at least 18 years of age, and a resident of Rhode Island;
 - 1.2.3 Submission of letter of acceptance from sponsor as required
 - 1.2.4 Submission of letter from Rhode Island licensed and permitted veterinarian, agreeing to provide services at no cost to the state
 - 1.2.5 Provide description of education and experience
 - 1.2.6 Provide address and description of facility. Facility must meet or exceed minimum standards as defined and be available for inspection by the Department at any reasonable hour.
 - 1.2.7 Designate category of permitted native wildlife that the applicant wishes to rehabilitate (small mammals, small birds, reptiles, raptors, rabies vector species or all)
 - 1.2.8 Prior to licensure, first-time applicants and sub-permittees must receive a grade of 80 percent or higher on the open book written examination administered by the Department. First-time applicants, excluding sub-permittees, must also receive a grade of 70 percent or higher on the exam administered by the International Wildlife Rehabilitation Council's in the Basic Wildlife Rehabilitation Skills Seminar; veterinarians and general or master falconers are exempt.
 - 1.2.9 Submission of applicant's USFWS special purpose rehabilitation permit, if applicable, or application if pending. Federal permit is required prior to handling of any federally regulated species pursuant to 50 CFR Part 13 and 50 CFR 21.27.29
 - 1.2.10 Certification by applicant that no local ordinances prohibit the possession of wildlife and/or that the possession of wildlife does not violate any rental or real estate agreement at the facility where the applicant proposes to conduct wildlife rehabilitation. Applicant must also

submit letter of approval from employer if wildlife is to be temporarily housed at a work facility, to include address and description.

- 1.2.11 Certification from the applicant on application provided by the Division that all rehabilitation activities will comply with these regulations.
- 1.2.12 Certification of proof of Tetanus vaccine within last ten years, and additionally for rabies vector species, proof of rabies vaccination or report of antibody titer >0.5 IU checked at least every two years.
- 1.2.13 Certification that applicant has not been convicted of the violation of any provisions of these regulations, has not been convicted of or pleaded guilty to a Title 20 misdemeanor, or had his/her license to rehabilitate wildlife revoked or suspended within three years prior to application.

We understand that the above regulations can seem overwhelming, so we have included a brief synopsis of the licensing process below. In Rhode Island, there are two classifications for people licensed to care for wild animals - Sub-permittees and Rehabilitators:

Sub-Permittee License

The Sub-Permittee license allows the holder to raise certain healthy baby animals only. Species permitted include all mammals and baby birds (rehabilitation of birds requires an additional Federal Migratory Bird Permit). Sub-permittees are **strictly prohibited from raising RVS species and Raptors**. This license is a limited license and requires the Sub-permittee to work under the license, sponsorship and tutelage of a fully licensed Rehabilitator – it is important to note that the Sub-permittee is only licensed to care for those species that their Sponsoring Rehabilitator is licensed to care for. In addition, Sub-permittees are not permitted to take animals directly from the public and are not permitted to publicize their contact information for such purposes. Sub-Permittees are only allowed to intake animals from their sponsor, The Wildlife Clinic or another fully licensed rehabilitator only.

The formal requirements that must be met to obtain a Sub-permittee license are:

1. Sub-permittee Training Course (6 hours – Course is offered by WRARI twice per year in January & February)
2. 25 hours of hands-on Training (Can be done at The Wildlife Clinic or with a licensed rehabilitator)
3. Must take and pass a free, open-book examination administered by R.I.D.E.M.
4. Sponsorship by The Wildlife Clinic or a licensed rehabilitator
5. Documented Support of a Veterinarian (Generally provided by WRARI veterinarians)
6. Home-visit
 - Only needed if you intend to care for animals in your home, this is not needed if you intend to volunteer at the Wildlife Clinic only.
 - Conducted by your Sponsor
 - Must have a separate space to perform rehabilitation that is temperature controlled, includes a sink, and a way to keep pets and people away from your wild charges – most

sub-permittees use their basement or a separate bathroom. If you intend to care for animals until release, you must also have additional outdoor caging that meets the criteria outlined in the NWRA “Minimum Standards” 4th edition.

Each year, the Sponsoring Rehabilitator renews each of their Sub-permittees licenses with the R.I.D.E.M. This classification is intended for temporary use only because each Rehabilitator is permitted to have only a limited number of Sub-permittees working under their license and we do encourage sub-permittees to pursue their full rehabilitator’s license.

Rehabilitator’s License

Fully licensed Wildlife Rehabilitators are permitted to intake adult and baby, healthy and injured animals, although birds require an additional Federal Migratory Bird Permit. Rehabilitators are allowed to intake directly from the public and to publicize their information for this purpose. Upon completion of the formal legal requirements, individuals seeking this license are classified as “Level 1” rehabilitators for their first year. This means that these individuals must work as “apprentices” under the sponsorship and tutelage of a “Level 2” rehabilitator for their first year. Additionally, as with Sub-permittees, Level 1 rehabilitators are limited to caring for only those same species that their Sponsoring Rehabilitator is legally permitted to rehabilitate. Upon satisfactory completion of their first year, “Level 1” rehabilitators can apply to become “Level 2” rehabilitators – at which time said individuals would be considered fully licensed rehabilitators.

The formal requirements that must be met to obtain Rehabilitator’s License are:

1. “Basic Wildlife Rehabilitation Course” – Offered by the International Wildlife Rehabilitation Council (IWRC); only offered once per year in Rhode Island, usually in September; 2-day course.
2. Must take and pass an open-book examination administered by R.I.D.E.M.
3. Home Inspection
 - Conducted by R.I.D.E.M.
 - Must meet requirement outlined in the Rhode Island “Rules and Regulations Governing Wildlife Rehabilitation”
4. Sponsorship of a Level 2 rehabilitator
5. Documented support of a Veterinarian

Additional Notes

Level 1 rehabilitators, so long as they meet all other requirements, may rehabilitate Raptor species so long as such is permitted for their Sponsoring Rehabilitator.

Only Level 2X rehabilitators are permitted to rehabilitate RVS species, which includes skunks, red & grey foxes, raccoons, woodchucks and bats. To obtain this level of licensure, an individual must have their Rabies vaccinations. Only apparently healthy animals, less than 10 weeks of age, are candidates for rehabilitation, with the exception that rehabilitation of bats of any age is permissible.

It is important to note that animal handling is a learned skill and Wildlife Volunteers will be permitted to handle animals **only** as their license and skill level permit. Even in the event that a volunteer is properly licensed, individuals volunteering at the Wildlife Clinic will not be permitted to handle certain species or perform certain tasks unless they exhibit the aptitude and skill necessary to do so. Our Clinic Director, staff and volunteers will endeavor to work with you and help you develop your animal handling skills.

WRARI and the Wildlife Clinic Policies

Policy 1 – Minimum Requirements

You must be 18 years of age or older to volunteer at The Wildlife Clinic and all volunteers are required to:

- a. Complete our Volunteer Application Form
- b. Submit proof of current tetanus vaccine
- c. Attend a Clinic Orientation.
- d. Complete scheduled shadowing shifts with a Clinic Staff
- e. Attend trainings as offered

Volunteers are categorized based on their level of licensure and qualifications according to the following chart:

WRARI Clinic Volunteer Levels of Qualification

Qualification Level	Permit	Activities	Animals Inside	Animals outside
A	--	Cleaning/laundry Assist in Food Prep	Pigeon	Ducks/Geese
B	Subpermittee or Level I	Measure/Prepare meds Intake/donation paperwork	Ducks/geese Baby songbirds	Above + gulls
C	Subpermittee or Level I	Calculate Meds (staff to check)	Gulls Baby Squirrels	Squirrels/Opossums
D	Subperm 6mo+ or Level 1 for 3mo	Give oral meds, SQ fluid, IM/SQ injections to mammals and ducks/geese/gulls Intake Triage Answer phone	Adult mammals Injured Songbirds	Hawks/Owls (check with staff first on particular animals)
E	Level 1 for 1yr Level 2		Hawks/Owls Cormorants/Loons/Gannets	All non-RVS species
RVS	IIX	Need to be preapproved before handling RVS		

All volunteers will be notified of their qualification level and are required to complete the Volunteer Training Checklist in order to move into a higher level. 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.

Individuals under 18 years old may still volunteer, but such volunteer efforts will be outside of the Wildlife Clinic and revolve around fundraising efforts, educational presentations or event assistance.

Policy 2 – Visitors

The Wildlife Clinic is not a zoo and is not open to the public. WRARI strictly prohibits unauthorized visitors, and volunteers are expected to adhere to and uphold this policy. If you have friends, acquaintances or family members that are interested in WRARI and The Wildlife Clinic, they are welcome to volunteer in our program.

Policy 3 – Minimum Commitment & Volunteer Shifts

WRARI accepts volunteers to work at The Wildlife Clinic, located at 2865 Tower Hill Road, Saunderstown RI 02874. Due to the nature of our work and the training required to perform such work

properly, WRARI requires that interested volunteers commit to volunteer service for not less than three months and generally accepts 3-4 volunteers per available shift. Volunteer shifts run:

	During Season	During Off-Season
Monday – Friday:	<u>9 a.m. to 1 p.m.</u> or <u>1 p.m. to 5 p.m.</u>	<u>9 a.m. to 1 p.m.</u> or <u>1 p.m. to 4 p.m.</u>
Saturday:	<u>9 a.m. to 1 p.m.</u>	<u>9 a.m. to 1 p.m.</u>
Sunday:	<u>9 a.m. to 1 p.m.</u>	<u>9 a.m. to 1 p.m.</u>

Season: March 1 to October 31 of each year

Off-season: November 1 to February 28 of each year

WRARI asks 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. While the vast majority of people choose to volunteer at The Wildlife Clinic, WRARI also has need for 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. As this work can be outside of The Wildlife Clinic, you would not be subject to shift requirements.

Policy 4– Non-Discrimination Policy & Workplace Behavior

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

WRARI veterinarians are consultants who generously volunteer their time and expertise. Their advice and care plans are to be followed without exception. Any deviations from the established care plans MUST be discussed with the veterinarian prior to any changes made.

Policy 5 – Attendance and Absences

Once your volunteer application has been approved and you have set up a schedule with the Administrative Staff, WRARI expects that you will arrive on time for your designated shifts. WRARI relies on the work of our volunteers and repeated lateness is not accepted. Volunteers are required to provide at least 24 hours advanced notice of any absences, and we request that you notify us as soon as possible if you will be late for your shift.

Policy 6- Tetanus Vaccinations

All volunteers working in The Wildlife Clinic are required to have and provide proof of a tetanus vaccination. All of our patients are wild and as such have the propensity to bite and scratch – this requirement is necessary to ensure your safety. Exceptions will be made only for individuals unable to obtain a Tetanus vaccination for medical reasons and proof of such will be needed from your doctor.

Policy 7 – Animal Handling and Safety

Due to the regulations that govern WRARI's operations, actual animal handling is restricted to those individuals who are legally licensed as sub-permittees (young animals and birds) or rehabilitators, in accordance with the limits (if any) on their respective permits. Nonetheless, The Wildlife Clinic is a very work intensive and learning intensive environment and there is always plenty of non-handling work to be done. A more thorough list of duties is included in the next section of the manual.

There are some species of animals that may be handled without a permit, and we will allow volunteers to work with these animals where, upon assessment, the volunteer exhibits appropriate readiness and skill. We will also assist individuals interested in obtaining their sub-permittee or rehabilitators permit.

The following basic safety rules must be adhered to:

- Never handle an animal that you are not trained and licensed for or comfortable to assist. Safety first! Get help.
- Safety eye glasses or face shields are REQUIRED at all times when handling any seabirds (Loons, Grebes, Herons, Merganser ducks, Cormorants, etc.) These birds are aggressive and will use their beak to attack anything that is shiny (eyeballs).
- Wash your hands frequently, between exams or cage cleaning. Wildlife can carry diseases (zoonosis) AND you could be transferring diseases to other animals (fomite transmission). Gloves are available at all times at the Clinic.

Additionally, Volunteers not licensed for RVS MUST, at all times, refrain from handling any RVS species brought into the clinic by the public. Failure to ignore rules governing care of RVS species may lead to mandatory euthanasia of the animal and immediate termination. Any RVS related phone calls should be directed to a RVS licensed staff or RVS rehabilitators.

Note: Our patients are WILD and when handling any wild animals, there is always the risk of being bitten or scratched. If you are not prepared to shoulder the responsibility of this risk, to take proper safety precautions, and to protect the animals by protecting yourself, then working as a volunteer at The Wildlife Clinic may not be the right opportunity for you.

Policy 8 – Photography

Volunteers 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. Unfortunately, animals cannot be disturbed solely for photography purposes as this may lead to unnecessary stress for the animal. Volunteers are expected to request permission before photographing any animal.

Policy 9 – Skills Training Checklist

Each volunteer will be provided with a training checklist that will be checked off as the volunteer acquires each specific skill. Volunteers are NOT permitted to perform any skill, duty or task until they have been trained and that skill has been checked off by a Supervisor or Veterinarian.

Policy 10 – Dress Code

Due to the nature of our work, close-toed shoes and pants are required at all times for safety reasons. WRARI respectfully expects our employees and volunteers to refrain from wearing clothing that contains offensive language or pictures or exposes the mid-drift. Tank tops and shorts are not appropriate attire. The

public will see you as part of our organization, therefore, we expect you to dress appropriately and professionally. Keep in mind that when you work with animals you can expect to get dirty, so don't wear anything you don't want to get dirty, bleached or stained.

Policy 11 – Meals and Snacks

Volunteers are expected to eat prior to or after their shifts, or to limit eating to their break(s). There is a small refrigerator at The Wildlife Clinic that may be used for staff and volunteer use, however, due to the size, we ask that you limit the size of your snack containers and remove any containers when you end your shift for the day. Volunteers and staff may utilize the lobby for eating and drinking. No food or drink is allowed in the animal care area, no human food or drinks are allowed to be kept in the refrigerators in the animal care area.

Policy 12 – Cell Phones

Employees or volunteers are expected to limit their cell phone use while at the clinic. You may use your cell-phone for emergencies and during your break. We also expect that you will limit texting to a minimum or do so only during your breaks. If you need to make or receive a call, please go outside. We try to keep noise to a minimum as much as possible in order to avoid further stressing the animals. Picture taking of the wild patients in their cages and containers is strictly prohibited.

Policy 13 – Storage

Personal belongings may be stored in the staff and volunteer closet during shifts. WRARI is not responsible for any lost or stolen items.

Policy 14 – Drugs & Alcohol

Drugs and Alcohol are strictly prohibited from the premises at all times. In addition, all volunteers are expected to come to work clear-minded and able to work. If you are hung-over or unable to work because of intoxication or drug use, you will be subjected to disciplinary action. Volunteers that must be sent home from their shift due to intoxication will be permitted back to work for their next shift at the discretion of the Executive Director. A second offense will result in termination of your position.

Policy 15– Smoking

Smoking is strictly prohibited anywhere on premises - both inside the Wildlife Clinic and in the immediate area surrounding the clinic. Staff and volunteers are required to drive away from the clinic during breaks to smoke.

Policy 16 – Health Management Policy

WRARI requests that staff members or volunteers who have any food or animal allergies, or may need the use of an Epi-pen or inhaler, notify the 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.

All staff and volunteers should inform the Executive Director if they become pregnant. Certain diseases/parasites can cause stillbirth or miscarriage. Precautions should be taken to ensure the health of any pregnant woman. All health related information will be kept confidential as required by law.

Policy 17 – Rehabilitation and Fostering

Rhode Island has a remarkable number of domestic animal shelters and organizations that solely assist domestic species. However, The Wildlife Clinic is the ONLY facility available to assist all species of wildlife in the entire state. As such, it is our policy that staff and volunteers focus on providing quality care to wild species only on site.

Fostering of domestic species, while certainly commendable, is not allowed at the Wildlife Clinic. That being said, some domestic species are accepted for care (ex. banded pigeons, domestic ducks or geese, guinea hens, chickens) for stabilization and re-homing. We intake these animals on a limited case by case basis.

Personal Wildlife Rehab:

Since all of our volunteers must be licensed we understand if you want to rehabilitate animals at home as well. Our policies regarding personal care of wildlife are as followed:

1. First feeding is to be done at home, regardless of age (The first daily feeding for most baby animals must be done before 9am, therefor it is not appropriate to wait until 9am to feed).
2. Unless it is an emergency, transfer of care arrangements should be made as soon as possible and no less than 7 days prior to vacationing for any juvenile wildlife under rehab, to ensure care is available.

Domestic Animals:

1. Except for service animals, no dogs or cats of any age are allowed on site.
2. If any staff/volunteers/rehabilitators adopt any animals from the clinic (e.g. pigeons, chicks, ducklings, rats, etc), that person is responsible for all future veterinary care. It is at the WRARI veterinarians' discretion whether to assist, advise, or provide discounts on care.
3. No pet sitting is allowed on site. If any staff or volunteers are to assist others with pet sitting, all pets must be removed from clinic on the same day.
4. Any deviations from this policy require approval from the Executive Director.

Policy 18 - Rabies Vector Species (RVS)

The state of Rhode Island categorizes Raccoons, Skunks, Red & Grey Foxes, Woodchucks and all species of Bats as Rabies Vector Species (RVS). Rehabilitation of these animals is permissible only under the following conditions:

1. Only Level 2X rehabilitators who have received the Rabies pre-exposure vaccinations are legally permitted to care for Rabies Vector Species.
2. 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).
3. Raccoons, Red & Grey Foxes, Woodchucks and Skunks can only be taken into rehabilitation if they are 10 weeks of age or younger. Rehabilitation of adults of these species is prohibited. Bats of all ages can be taken in for rehabilitation.
4. 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. **NEVER TOUCH THESE SPECIES UNLESS LICENSED AND TRAINED TO DO SO! Failure to adhere to this policy will result in disciplinary action.**

Policy 19 – Veterinary Care

It is against the law for staff and volunteers, regardless of level of licensing, to perform any veterinary 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. Failure to adhere to this policy will result in disciplinary action.

Policy 20 – Intern/Extern 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 & Externs are also required to complete additional specific tasks & 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 WRARI needs 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.
2. **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 & Externs are not allowed to schedule hours when the 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.
3. All hours must be logged properly and completed before your internship 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.**
4. If there is anything additional that must be completed by your WRARI supervisor, you are required to provide that to your supervisor in a timely fashion.
5. If you must complete a project for your internship, you will be expected to meet all school and 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 & 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 (5 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 2 “homework” assignments which cover various topics important to the practice of wildlife rehabilitation.
4. On-site species identification, basic nutrition and housing exercises.

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.

Volunteer/Intern Duties and Responsibilities

Volunteer/Intern duties will often vary depending on what animals are already in care or are incoming to The Wildlife Clinic and what projects are in the works and need to be completed. In general, the core group of daily duties include:

- Cage cleaning and set-up
- Enrichment
- Formula & Diet preparation
- Pool cleaning
- Cleaning and organizing the Clinic
- Laundry
- Sweeping and mopping
- Washing dishes
- Assisting staff with animal treatment or therapies
- Garbage/Recycling disposal
- Various building projects
- Grounds maintenance/cleaning
- Special Projects

In addition, properly licensed volunteers and interns may, **with supervision**:

- Assist in feeding baby animals
- Assist in medicating animals
- Assist with gavage (tube) feeding animals
- Assist in administering rehydrating fluids
- Observe surgeries
- Assist with handling animals

Prohibited Activities

There are some duties and actions that volunteers and interns are **strictly prohibited** from doing. These duties include:

- Answering questions from the Press
- Answering the phone unless asked
- Petting or playing with any wild animals
- Perform intakes unless permitted by staff
- Caring for any animals you are not licensed to care for
- Handling raptors (Some licensed volunteers may qualify to handle raptors with training and where s/he exhibits aptitude for such handling. This will be assessed by the Animal Care Coordinator and lead Veterinarian on a case by case basis.)
- Handling, cleaning or caring for any RVS species (**ONLY** properly licensed Level 2X rehabilitators may assist with RVS care and answer questions relating to RVS species).

In any situation where you find yourself unsure of whether to do or not do something, ask us. We are more than happy to train and work with volunteers to ensure that your experience is fulfilling and rewarding.

The Wildlife Clinic

Operations Overview

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 clinic operates as a medical treatment and rehabilitation facility for all species, though some animals, babies and high stressed species in particular, will be sent to private rehabilitators for in-home, round-the-clock care or long-term rehabilitation.

The clinic is open seven days per week, although it is closed to the public on Sundays. Daily priority for the clinic's 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 two sections, the indoor facility and the outdoor caging. Per shift, staff and volunteers will be designated with either indoor or outdoor duties. These 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 animal's treatment history, feeding history, food requirements and other necessary information. The treatment sheet has pertinent information that our veterinarians will use to determine their recommended treatment plans, therefore, it is important that we record ANY unusual observations, accurate food consumption and fecal productions.

Most animals in indoor cages are removed from their cages and placed in temporary bins or carriers; outdoor animals remain in cages during the cleaning routine. It is your job as a volunteer to ensure that the animal's cage (including houses inside the cage) is cleaned of all excess food, newspaper or substrate, feces and dirty laundry and to rinse and refill any pools inside the cage. All food dishes are to be removed from the cage, leftover food emptied in the trash, and cleaned. Once you've cleaned the food dishes, you may prepare the necessary diet, and provide the food and fresh water to the animal you're working on. If medication needs to be administered to the animal, it will be noted on the form. If you have any questions or need assistance in administering the medication, ask an appropriate on-site staff person for help. Upon completion, indoor cages are to be covered with a curtain.

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 you have completed the care of an animal and recorded all related information, you may move on to the next.

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, so there are always animals and people coming and going from the clinic. Volunteers 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.

The Wildlife Clinic is small space with a big job and because of this, we have a lot of “stuff.” The 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 Clinic cannot function properly if important items are misplaced or are put away improperly.

Wildlife Clinic Procedures

Clinic Housekeeping

1. All syringes are to be disposed of properly in the designated sharps containers (This includes feeding syringes with no attached needles). Trash removal companies can refuse an entire dumpster of trash if syringes are found inside.
2. All supplies, medications, clean containers, dishes...etc., must be put away in their designated places.
3. The chlorhexidine bath (for sterilizing syringes and certain utensils) must be emptied at the end of each day. To sanitize, run syringes and utensils under hot water, making certain food or medication residues are rinsed. Pipe cleaners are available to remove any thick medications or hardened formulas.
4. All refrigerator interiors should be wiped down as needed and AT LEAST once weekly, and unusable or spoiled food supplies or outdated medications should be thrown away.
5. Trash must be emptied daily- sometimes twice daily in season- to minimize smell in clinic.
6. Playpens must be cleaned well and stored inside to avoid mice nesting in them. The larger pens are no longer available and availability is exceptionally limited. Adhere to daily checklists for further direction.
7. All tables/countertops should be wiped with disinfectant solution immediately after each treatment/procedure.
8. The clinic floor should be swept and mopped once a day. Kennelsol used for mopping the floor is a harsh disinfectant, and therefore, should not be used for food dishes. The mop bucket should be emptied outside.

Caging and Equipment

1. WRARI is a non-profit organization so our funds are very limited. Many of our cages and equipment have been donated so we ask that you please treat all WRARI property with great care to increase the length of use.
2. All small containers, netting materials, specialized PVC forms, bat huts, reptariums, etc., are the exclusive property of WRARI. No carriers or equipment should ever be removed from the premises without permission. With approval from the Executive Director, rehabilitators may borrow a certain item to provide care for a wild patient, with the express intention of returning that item when no longer needed.
3. Many of the outdoor cages at The Wildlife Clinic have double door safety entry systems to prevent the escape of wild patients who are not ready for release. Volunteers who are working in these enclosures must always close one door before opening the next to avoid premature release. Some cages do not have a double-door system so it is imperative to stay vigilant and avoid escapes by being aware of where the animal(s) is at all times and staying between the animal and the door. Many cages without a double-door system can still be closed from the inside or at the very least secured with a large rock or heavy dish.

Medications

The Wildlife Clinic maintains a variety of medications on site for the care of wild patients. Use of medications by volunteers is only permitted under the supervision of a staff member or veterinarian.

1. Medications that require refrigeration must be labeled with date mixed or expiration date, and noted as such. Any medications stored in the refrigerator with a short shelf life (most antibiotics) that lack an expiration date must be thrown out.
2. Volunteers should notify their supervisor when a medication is getting low so that the supply does not run out entirely.
3. Medication dosing and administration will be done only by those who have achieved the appropriate level in training and have demonstrated this ability.
4. Volunteers are not permitted to unilaterally make any changes to medications or care plans without the approval of their supervisor or a veterinarian.

Food Supplies

1. Since WRARI assists thousands of animals each year, a great deal of money is spent to provide food for all species we handle. To ensure that food supplies are utilized in a reasonable manner and in the best condition, reducing waste and storing expensive supplies in the best manner is imperative.
2. Staff and volunteers should follow the individual charts in preparing the proper amount of food offered each wild patient to ensure nothing is unnecessarily wasted.
3. When refilling dry food bins, empty and clean thoroughly to avoid spoiled/ stale food left in the bottom and insect infestation. Small amounts of food left in bin should be bagged and used first.
4. Any open cans of food, mixed formulas in the refrigerator must be labeled with the date they are opened or mixed.

Laundry

The Wildlife Clinic produces a lot of laundry and doing said laundry is a duty that both staff and volunteers are expected to perform daily. Laundry facilities are located in both the lower clinic space (in the utility room) and the top floor of the building. In order to keep our machines running smoothly, the following rules must be adhered to:

1. Four loads of laundry are permitted each day and priority is given to those items (i.e. reptarium covers, seabird nets, etc.) that we intend to keep long term. Any dirty laundry remaining at the end of the day after four loads have been done should be thrown away (do not throw away any long-term items).
 2. Each piece of laundry must be thoroughly shaken to remove debris (feces, old food, etc.).
 3. Our washers and dryers can only accommodate appropriate loads. Laundry left at the end of the day, excluding our long-term items, should be thrown away.
 4. Each load of laundry should receive the APPROPRIATE amount of detergent and bleach. Avoid pouring excessive amounts of each into the machines.
 5. The lint filter for the dryer must be cleaned with each load. Please check both before and after drying laundry to avoid a potential fire.
 6. Report any issues noted with the washers and/or dryers to staff immediately, who should then notify the Executive Director.
 7. All areas around the laundry facilities must be kept neat at all times. Keep floors swept, machines wiped clean of excess detergent, bleach, etc., and empty trash bins as necessary.
 8. Overly soiled or frayed linens should be disposed of in the trash.
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Special Topics in Wildlife Rehabilitation

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 are 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 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 (i.e. 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 restraint 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.
2. 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 restraint technique is the key to the safety of you and your patients.

3. Do not restrain any small mammals by holding onto its tail; a frightened animal will make all effort to get away. The only way to correct a degloved tail is to surgically amputate the entire tail.
4. 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 Wildlife Volunteer, 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.
3. 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) **Enrichment**⁴

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 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

⁴ 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.

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.

Closing

In closing, Wildlife Rehabilitators Association of Rhode Island is the sole organization in the state able to assist all species of native and non-native wildlife. WRARI handles thousands of injured and orphaned wild animals annually with little funding and a handful of dedicated and trained individuals. Through the efforts of these committed individuals, many wild lives are regained following trauma or illness. Regardless of your skill set or limited time to invest, WRARI welcomes your help in becoming part of the solution to help Rhode Island wildlife in distress.