

Wildlife in Crisis Times

THE NEWSLETTER FOR WILDLIFE IN CRISIS, INC., WESTON, CT • VOL. 2, NO. 1 • Winter, 2000

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Wildlife in Crisis under threat from development

Wildlife in Crisis is currently facing a crisis of its own, one that threatens our very existence. Our quiet woodland setting, which is vital for our recuperating wildlife, is under serious threat from an impending residential development.

A subdivision is planned for a woodland area behind our facility, and we have realized we must try to create a buffer of undeveloped land between the planned housing development and our pre-release pens.

The absolute minimum buffer needed to retain our facility's integrity requires the purchase of two building lots which directly border our wildlife rehabilitation facility. Each of the two-acre lots is priced at \$175,000.

We plan to purchase the lots outright, and keep the land undeveloped in perpetuity.

One of the planned lots cuts directly along the edge of our rehabilitation compound, and the construction of a house there would make our continued

rehabilitation of wildlife highly problematic, if not impossible.

Discussions on donation of the lots by the developer have stalled, and it's up to us to raise the money we need ourselves. We are quite literally in a race against the clock to protect our facility. We have a good start on reaching our fund-raising goal, but we're only part way there.

This four acre plot is well worth saving in its own right. The main feature

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Red-tailed hawk rescued and released



Fledging red tailed hawk—Found in June in Weston on the roadside by a passing motorist after being hit by a car. An examination and X-rays revealed that she had a severe head injury and a broken wing. After three months of intensive care at Wildlife in Crisis she was released on private property near where she was found. Prevention tip: Drive at a reasonable speed, especially during spring and summer months when baby wild animals are beginning to emerge from their nest sites. Always be aware of animals crossing the road, for your safety and theirs.

The past year was our busiest ever!

Phew! 1999 was our busiest "baby season" ever! In this issue we will introduce you to some of our success stories. The continued loss of valuable natural habitats combined with the worst drought of the century made the summer of 1999 a difficult one for wildlife. Although the drought has passed, its long-term effects linger on. The acorns, beechnuts, berries and seeds which normally sustain wildlife throughout the winter months are scarce. This is having a significant impact on the animals who depend on these foods to survive.

Deer, turkeys, raccoons, rodents and songbirds are having a tough winter, as are the coyotes, fox and raptors who prey upon these animals. Many bird species that normally spend the winter here in the Northeast have migrated south. At WIC we are seeing more birds than ever at our bird-feeders due to the short supply of natural food sources.

Natural disasters such as droughts should make us all realize how vulnerable we all are to the forces of mother nature. So this winter, when deer nibble on your prized rhododendron or raccoons wander in through your cat/doggy door let's remember that they are simply looking for food. With so little habitat to go around these days we need to be more tolerant than ever of those who live around us.

This past year, we had a heartening number of successful rescues and rehabilitations. Here are just a few stories from the 1999 season:

●**Skunk with its head caught in dumpster:** During the summer, we received a frantic call from a woman in Redding regarding a skunk who had apparently gotten his head caught in a hole in the bottom of a large dumpster. Wild animals like skunks are attracted

(Continued on Page 3)



We had an unusual number of owls requiring rescue and rehabilitation this year in Weston, which concerns us. Increased residential development is encroaching on the deep woods habitat enjoyed by great-horned owls like this one. Also, several of the owls were suffering from a bacterial infection that made it difficult for them to digest food. This handsome fellow suffered from a head injury and severe emaciation, but was eventually released.

Habitat loss accelerated by suburban sprawl

In Connecticut over the past five years, more than 70,000 acres of cropland and forest has been lost to residential or commercial development. In neighboring New York state, the figure is over 500,000 acres. During the 1990s, development occurred at roughly double the rate of the 1980s. Nationwide, 160 acres an hour are being developed.

This new hyperdevelopment is linked to several factors. The U.S. economy is booming, and more peo-

ple than ever are leaving the cities for greener fields (greener, at least, until the condos and strip malls go up). More significantly, the U.S. population has almost doubled from 1950 to 2000 (from 150 million to over 270 million).

Rapid, unbridled growth is becoming a source for concern to community planners everywhere. Most worrisome, this hyperdevelopment often takes the form of "sprawl."

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WILDLIFE IN CRISIS, P.O. BOX 1246, WESTON, CT 06883

N E W S P A P E R



Success Stories from 1999; rescues and rehabs

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to the aroma of left-over food in garbage receptacles, and rescue of trapped skunks and raccoons from dumpsters has by dint of necessity, become one of our specialties.

When we arrived we saw the poor little guy struggling with all his might to remove his head from this metal contraction. All he managed to do through his struggling was to literally dig himself into a hole. We applied olive oil to his neck on the inside of the dumpster and out. Then we gently slipped his little head through the hole, freeing him from his predicament. He scampered away without looking back. We can



only hope that this won't happen to him again. *Prevention tip:* Keep tops of dumpsters closed at all times and eliminate access to the top of dumpsters. Keep the grasping holes at the bottom of the dumpster plugged with rubber plugs that are removed at the time of pick up and dumping.

●**Raccoon with peanut butter jar stuck on head:** A homeowner in Ridgefield spotted a raccoon in her yard, stumbling around with its head stuck in a peanut butter jar. The woman made dozens of fruitless calls to police, veterinarians, humane societies and other agencies, until she reached us. We immediately responded with net in hand. The first thing we noticed was that this was a nursing female who had babies waiting for her somewhere. Since the jar was so tightly wedged on the raccoon's head it took a few minutes of gently twisting back and forth, but once she was free the raccoon darted off back towards



her den to care for her hungry babies. Stopping part way up a nearby tree she glanced back at us as if to say "Thank you ever so much." This hungry mother raccoon was only trying to get the remnants of the peanut butter at the bottom of the jar. We responded just in time; within another half hour or so the raccoon would have succumbed to asphyxiation. *Prevention tip:* Wash recyclable containers well with soap and water before placing in recycling bin. Don't litter and if you see litter pick it up and dispose of it properly. Keep garbage cans inside your garage or shed and have your garbage collectors take them out. Or purchase or build a hinged container to place garbage cans and recyclables in. Certain peanut butter jars (Peter Pan) and yogurt containers (Yoplait) pose the greatest danger to wild animals like raccoons and skunks due to their narrow tops and wider bottoms.

●**Fledgling great horned owl:** A large young owl was spotted by a Weston homeowner one Sunday this past June. The owl did not fly away when approached and no parent birds were seen in the vicinity. When we arrived, the owl made an attempt to fly but was too weak to get aloft. The owl was taken to our facility and was found to be suffering from shock, a severe bacterial infection, emaciation



and dehydration. After two months of intensive care and time spent in a large flight cage where he gained the necessary strength, muscle tone and ability to find food on his own, he was released in the deep woods. Since then, he has been spotted on several occasions, and appears to be doing very well!

●**Baby bluebirds whose parents were killed by a neighborhood cat:** A family in Darien had made it a family project to build and install a bluebird house on their property. They did everything right: they placed the house in a small field on their property, mounted it on a "predator proof" pole, and planted various berry bushes to provide a natural food source to attract birds. Spring came and so did a pair of bluebirds who busily built their nest

and meticulously cared for their nestlings flying here and there finding insects to feed their young. One day the family noticed a neighbor's black cat sitting beside the bluebird box tossing the brilliantly colored father bluebird in the air. They ran outside, but it was too late, the cat had severely injured the father bluebird who died moments later. Two days later the mother bluebird disappeared, there was no activity at the box all day and the family heard the hungry babies chirping for their parents. WIC removed the dehydrated babies from their warm, little nest and they were brought back to WIC's facility. Once rehydrated the little nestlings were fed every half hour for several weeks until they learned to eat and find food on their own. They were released, and we



can only hope that they don't suffer the same fate as their parents. *Prevention tip:* Millions of songbirds are killed each year by domestic house cats. Each year WIC receives hundreds of calls regarding wild animals that have been mauled by cats. This is having a significant impact on bird populations throughout the world. The northeastern United States is the primary nesting ground for many species of threatened songbirds. There is a very simple solution to this problem—keep your cats indoors! It is safer for them as well as for vulnerable wildlife. When cats are outdoors they kill animals all day and night. This is what cats do whether they are well fed or not. Please respect your neighbors and wildlife and keep your cats indoors.

●**Fawn caught in a fence:** One busy day in June WIC received a call from a distraught man who discovered a small fawn that was caught in a fence lined with deer netting. The fawn had injured his back while struggling to free his rear legs from the netting. The fawn was brought to WIC for rehabilitation. There were no broken bones but the fawn was unable to use his hind quarters. We decided to give him a chance since spinal injuries given time often do heal. He was kept indoors in a small playpen to minimize his movement for three weeks. He slowly regained his strength and was placed in our outdoor pen with the



other fawns for several months and was released with other fawns. *Prevention Tip:* Avoid using deer netting, which can capture and kill songbirds and small mammals as well. Also, alert your neighbors to this peril.

●**Orphaned baby raccoons in hollow tree:** A Fairfield Animal Control Officer brought an extremely dehydrated newborn baby raccoon to our facility late one evening after a homeowner witnessed it falling from a hollow tree. Knowing that there is never "just one," we went to the location where the homeowner said she had heard crying for days. Sure enough, the cries led us to a hole in an old maple tree about 75 feet high. The local fire department couldn't help, so a brave WIC volunteer climbed an extension ladder and found a tiny hole with the babies deep inside. The hole was too small for a hand to fit in, so it took a while to reach them, but one by one they were lowered to safety— a



grand total of 6 baby coons! They were bathed, placed in an incubator and bottle-fed the appropriate formula for several months, after which they were placed in a large outdoor pen with many other orphaned raccoons, who were all released for a second chance at life as wild animals in September. These raccoons were lucky. Thousands of baby raccoons die from exposure and starvation each year when their mothers are trapped

and "relocated" or killed by homeowners or wildlife exterminators, leaving the helpless babies behind to die a slow painful death. Unlike the offspring of most species, baby raccoons can go without nourishment for several weeks before dying.

Prevention tip: Never trap wild animals, especially in springtime. Even "humane" traps are not humane when they cause baby animals to be orphaned. Baby wild animals like raccoons are born helpless with their eyes closed. They instinctually know to remain inside the safety of their den for several months until they are ready to venture out with mom in search of food. Mother raccoons take meticulous care of their babies, leaving the den only for brief periods to feed. Baby raccoons seen alone and chattering have usually been without their mother for days. If you see one baby raccoon look around for others, there's never just one! *Note:* Prior to handling any wild animals, always wear heavy gloves.

●**"Rescued" baby red fox:** A well intentioned hiker in New Milford saw a cute little red fox kit standing alone in a field, assumed it was an orphan and brought it home with her. When



the little fox spent the entire night yipping and crying and refused to eat she called us. We explained to the woman that the little fox she rescued was just exploring around its den when she came upon him. We attempted to find the sight where he was found, allowing him to yip and yell in hopes of attracting his mother and father, but unfortunately couldn't find the den site. So we brought him back to WIC's facility and placed him with another red fox orphan (rescued from a sewer drain) who was thrilled with the company. Both of the little foxes grew into beautiful, healthy adults and were released once they proved to us that they could hunt and find food on their own. *Note:* At WIC we simply set a bowl of birdseed inside of our fox pen before the fox are ready to be released.

(Continued on page 4)

MARKETPLACE Cat Enclosure Kit

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For only \$229.95 the kit includes:

- ◆ Approx. 6' x 6' x 6' play area
- ◆ Solid redwood & 2" x 3" galvanized wire
- ◆ Three sides (the house is the fourth side), a completely enclosed wire roof and a door
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- ◆ Some assembly required

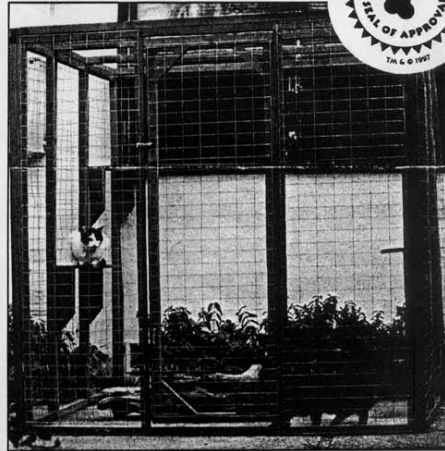
Also Available:

- ◆ Additional panels - \$19.95/ea. 3 panels needed for each 2' of length or for a 4th side
- ◆ Additional shelves - \$12.95/ea.
- ◆ Height extensions - 9 extensions are required for the basic kit 12"=\$8.95, 18"=\$9.95, 24"=\$10.95
- ◆ Screen cat door - \$25.95

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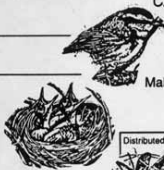
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Suburban sprawl is contributing to massive habitat loss

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The inclination toward sprawl has never been more evident than in the last 20 years. Of all the land developed in the United States throughout its history, almost 1/6 was developed in the decade 1982-1992.

Fortunately, many communities are taking advantage of these prosperous times to develop creative responses to the problem of sprawl, and state and federal agencies are beginning to offer support. On the national level, Federal land acquisition funding has doubled for fiscal 2000, to \$400 million. In addition, there will be \$40 million in matching grants for states under the Land & Water Conservation Fund, and another \$30 million for the Forest Legacy Preservation program.

UConn, in conjunction with the state, now offers a wonderful seminar on land use planning, designed specifically for municipal officials. Called

"NEMO" (an acronym that stands for Non-point Education for Municipal Officials) this program can provide a wealth of information to town planners. One NEMO program links land-use decisions to water quality; another program quantifies the economic benefits that open space can provide to communities.

The NEMO seminars can help broaden the debate beyond simple aesthetics. Certainly open space is pretty to look at, but in today's world there has to be an economic imperative to keep it undeveloped. Issues like non-point source pollution, storm run-off and overall water quality can provide a point-of-departure for debate.

Through the framework of NEMO, it is also possible to overcome the common perception that open space is non-productive. Studies across New England have confirmed that open space has a positive economic contri-

bution when contrasted with uncontrolled single-family home development. Suburban single-family homes very often do not pay enough tax revenue to cover the public services they receive. In contrast, open space requires little or no service, and costs towns very little in comparison. In addition, property values next to open space increase, adding to overall property tax revenue.

With the right information at hand, a community can make educated decisions about preserving open space and quality of life.

What can you do in your town? NEMO can send a land use expert to your community to present a seminar to townspeople and elected leaders. They can discuss issues of water quality and open space planning. For information, contact the NEMO Project, Tel: (860) 345-4511; or on the web at www.canr.uconn.edu/ces/nemo.

Lending a helping hand to winter wildlife

■ Provide fresh water daily for birds and other wildlife. Use an electric de-icer for bird baths and rubber bowls on ground for deer, squirrels, turkeys, etc. If you have a pond on your property, invest in a bubbler to keep part of the pond unfrozen. Waterfowl will be especially appreciative.

■ Be sure to place feeders for birds and other wildlife at least 50 feet away from your house. This will help to prevent birds from flying into your windows on the way to your feeders (hawk silhouette templates made from black contact paper can be affixed to large plate-glass windows to prevent this from happening—call Wildlife in Crisis for details). If feeders are closer than 50 feet, rodents attracted by the free food are more likely to seek entry into your house.

■ Plant trees and bushes that provide natural sources of food and shelter for native wildlife. High-bush and low-bush blueberry, holly bushes, viburnum, elderberry, black raspberry, crabapple trees, hemlock, white pine, cedar and dogwood are a few examples of the many natural enhancements to your garden that can benefit wildlife. Always use native plantings in your garden, they will last longer and need less care than exotic species. Use hardy grass seed in your lawn and if space allows, let part of your lawn remain a natural field with native grasses. There are many books available on the subject of gardening for wildlife. The Connecticut DEP offers such a book specifically designed for Connecticut's wildlife. Call (860)675-8130 to order "Backyard Wildlife."

■ Feeding. Black oil sunflower is a good universal seed for songbirds and cracked corn is an adequate supplemental feed for turkeys, deer, squirrels and waterfowl. Small birds and mammals will benefit from suet during cold winter months (But use wire or wood suet holders, not mesh bags which many birds, squirrels and chipmunks get entangled in). If you do opt to feed the birds, please realize that they will become dependent on this food source. They will use valuable energy coming to the feeders each day so it is important to feed without interruption.

■ Use non-motorized garden maintenance equipment year-round. Motorized lawnmowers, chain saws and leaf blowers (my personal pet peeve) cause great disturbance to wildlife, as well as contributing significantly to the noise and air pollution which effects us all.

■ Use environmentally friendly alternatives to anti-freeze. Thousands of pets and wild animals die each year from ingesting the sweet-tasting green antifreeze that sometimes leaks from our automobiles. Conventional antifreeze contains ethylene glycol, a highly toxic compound that attacks the kidneys once ingested. A simple solution is to use the environmentally friendly propylene glycol (brand name "Sierra"). Considered to be less hazardous to animals and humans, Sierra anti-freeze coolant is available at auto supply and hardware stores. For further information about this product call (800)289-7234.

■ Instead of using rock salt (sodium chloride) to melt ice use potassium chloride (one brand name is "safe step"). Safer anti-freeze and de-icing salts are not only better for the environment and wildlife, but using these products could save the lives of children and pets.



This is the best case scenario. An animal that was brought to us as a frightened, malnourished infant is released as a healthy sub-adult into suitable habitat. The band-aid approach? perhaps. But we can't just forget the individual components of the environmental puzzle. And, when someone calls having found a litter of baby raccoons, who else is going to take them? We will continue to rescue and rehabilitate animals of any species (even the populous and sometimes unpopular ones like raccoons).



Wildlife Gallery



(Above, left) A handful of baby bunnies, found this past summer after a cat had killed their mother. A few short weeks later (Above, center) this litter of bunnies practically breaks the sound barrier as they rocket out of their cardboard box, into a lovely meadow in Redding, CT. (Above, right) One of the newly-released rabbits, checking out his new surroundings.



(LEFT) A Wildlife in Crisis volunteer ascends a ladder in search of crying animal babies heard by passersby. As it turns out, it was a litter of baby raccoons, whose mother was trapped and removed by a neighbor. (ABOVE) You've heard of a pride of lions, this is a "jumble" of six baby raccoons pressing themselves into the smallest space possible as they fearfully regard their new environment. Fortunately, the robust adaptability of this species almost guarantees a successful eventual release. See page six, for a last look at one of these little guys.



Feeding songbirds can be labor-intensive, with syringes full of formula every half hour. Luckily this fledgling prairie warbler was a great eater.



This handsome (though extremely noisy) young flicker was released in Weston following rehabilitation.



Female deer that are killed on the road in the spring always leave orphaned fawns behind (see story, page 3)





Wildlife in Crisis under threat from development

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of the land is a knoll covered with hemlocks, much favored by the local wild turkey clan, and at least one family of owls. A family of fox has denned on the property in past years, and the numerous ledges and rock outcroppings provide nooks ideal for many species of small mammals.

The property is also part of the extended watershed of the Saugatuck River, with a seasonal stream and vernal pools that provide ideal spawning grounds for amphibians.

In addition, the lots border the Nature Conservancy's 1800-acre Devil's Den Preserve, and this land will help provide an additional buffer for that valuable sanctuary.

We realize that buying this land will be a big step, but we believe that the long-term benefit will make it worthwhile. Over the past ten years, we've grown by leaps and bounds, expanding our wildlife rescue and rehabilitation services from Weston to surrounding communities throughout

Connecticut. We want to preserve our facility as a lifeline for orphaned and injured wild animals, and a resource for the people who find them and bring them to us.

Overall, we're a very healthy organization. Our wildlife rescue and rehab operations are in fine shape, and we served more animal patients than ever before this past year. Our level of volunteer assistance is at an all-time high, and we have built strong links with the community.

Our member supporters have been generous over the years, sending the contributions that purchase the animal feed and veterinary supplies that keep us in operation. As a result, literally thousands of wild animals have received a new lease on life. From great-horned owls to flying squirrels, these creatures wouldn't be alive without the generosity of our donors.

In addition to saving wildlife, we are committed to preserving habitat. Ironically, the first habitat we have to

preserve is practically our own backyard. Injured wild animals require quiet and seclusion during recovery, and this is something we will no longer be able to guarantee if the development goes forward.

Once we can protect the two lots behind us from development, our future will be secure. Our other flank is securely anchored on the boundary of the Nature Conservancy Preserve. With the addition of a four-acre buffer zone, we are confident that we can do our work here indefinitely.

You can help! We're now seeking donations to help purchase these two lots, because we believe that acquiring these four acres will be the keystone for building our future. We are seeking individual donations, as well as grants for the purpose of this acquisition.

On behalf of the animals, we thank you in advance.

For further information, call 203-544-9913 or e-mail to wildlifeincrisis@snet.net.

Letter from the president

Dear supporters and volunteers,

Thank you for helping us to do what we do. Your support has been indispensable, given that 1999 was our busiest year ever. We saw dramatic increases in the numbers of injured and orphaned birds and mammals reported to us, and we believe this is directly related to the increased tempo of residential and commercial development in our area.

Case in point: Great Horned Owls have been rare visitors to our facility over the past ten years. They need deep woods habitat to breed, and they are very retiring, so people don't see them very often. This year, we rescued and rehabilitated not one but three young great horned owls. All were found in areas where new subdivisions are cutting into areas of mature second growth forest. To me, this was a wake-up call.

I have come to believe that the most important thing that we can do for wildlife is to preserve their natural habitats, hence the creation of the Wildlife in Crisis Land Trust. And by preserving land in its undeveloped state, we increase quality of life not only for wildlife, but for people as well.

We are going to continue to rescue and rehabilitate injured and orphaned wildlife of every species. That's our expertise, and it's a service that is important, given the fact that no other public or private groups fulfill this function. But we're also going to address the root causes of the increased traffic we're seeing through this facility, and those root causes include habitat loss. Thanks again for your support. I can't tell you how much it means to me when I see a wild animal that would have died released healthy and whole back into the natural world. I'm heartened that so many people care enough to bring us animals that they find, and that you, our supporters, care enough to help us continue this work.

With hope,

Dara McDonough-Reid

One of our favorite letters from 1999

THANK YOU



Lucifer

Dear Dara Mc Donough,

Thank you very much for helping the bat we found outside, we all hope he lives. We were so happy when you said you would try to help him. We named him Lucifer (short for *Myotis lucifugus* his Latin name.) Thank you again and again and again.

From, all the children
in the Upper Elementary
of the Montessori School



WIC receives grant to publish wildlife manual

Thanks to the generosity of the Fairfield County Foundation, WIC will be publishing a manual entitled "Simple and Effective Solutions to Common Wildlife Problems." Wildlife/human conflicts are increasing in Connecticut, as residential and commercial development proceed apace. The purpose of this manual is to provide information to the public on how to effectively deal with injured, orphaned and "nuisance" wildlife problems. To address that, we will be distributing this manual to veterinarians, police departments, humane societies and nature centers free-of-charge. These are the public service groups that most often receive the initial call about a wildlife problem. It is our hope that this quick-reference manual will help answer common questions and quickly resolve problems involving wildlife. By distributing this manual to each township in the state, we will help citizens address wildlife issues in a rational, cost-effective and humane fashion. We intend to have this manual published by spring 2000. It will be available for individual purchase for \$25. Make checks payable to Wildlife in Crisis, and request "wildlife manual."



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The past year was a busy one, with numerous successful rescues/rehabs

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Field mice are attracted to the seed, providing the fox with the opportunity to hunt on its own. We can tell from remains left in the cage and from stool samples whether the fox is successful. **Prevention Tip:** Unlike baby raccoons, baby fox are cared for by both parents and young kits will often explore their territory immediately outside their den. If you see a baby fox (young red fox look like little, grey kittens), stand back and observe the situation before attempting to rescue the kit. Most likely you'll see the kit quickly disappear into its den if given the chance.

● **Baby flying squirrels orphaned when "their" tree was cut down:** WIC received the call about four baby flying squirrels with their eyes still closed who miraculously survived a 70 foot fall when the tree that they were "safely" nestled in was swiftly cut down with a chainsaw. Their



mother was crushed by the weight of the tree, but the babies were protected by the small hollow that their mother had carefully chosen for them. They had a few nicks and scrapes, but were otherwise sound. We fed them a replacement formula and after 3 months of nursing and weaning they were released at WIC's facility in hopes that they would never again have to encounter a chain saw. **Prevention Tip:** Unless trees pose a real threat to your safety please leave them standing. Aside from being the filters and lungs of our planet, trees (especially those with hollows) provide vital food and shelter for a variety of birds and mammals. Rather than cutting down the whole tree often trimming dead branches or cabling is all that is required. Find a sympathetic tree surgeon rather than a land clearing service if you must have a tree diagnosed, and please save tree cutting and limb trimming for the months of October-February.

● **Deer trapped in a dry well:** We received a strange call from a woman who was renting a house near the Norwalk river, reporting that a deer had fallen into a well on her property. WIC responded and found a large doe weighing several hundred pounds trapped about 20 feet down in an old

underground pumphouse. The doe had walked across a rotted trapdoor, which collapsed, tumbling the animal into a square underground room about 10 feet by 10 feet occupied by a large, rusty pump. WIC volunteers and a DEP Conservation Officer sedated the doe, and then hoisted her out to safety.



She was very stressed out and a little bruised, but no worse for the wear. **Prevention tip:** Open holes in the ground on your property pose a significant danger to wildlife and humans alike. Keep old wells securely and permanently covered. Other obstacles include window wells, which skunks often fall into due to their poor eyesight. Place plastic window well covers over opening.

● **Ruby-Crowned Kinglet:** This sweet little bird was found this September in Bethel with a broken leg and was brought to the Bethel Veterinary hospital. The compassionate staff at Bethel Veterinary hospital sent him to us for rehabilitation. His fragile leg was carefully and swiftly set and he was placed in a very quiet area at WIC. Little birds like this one often die from pure stress in these situations, so we kept contact to a minimum and hoped the leg was healing under the tiny bandage.



We knew that keeping him for too long would increase his chance of dying from stress, we removed the bandage after only two weeks. Bird legs heal very quickly and thankfully this leg healed well. We released him and watched in awe as he flew off.

● **Fawn orphaned when his mother was hit by a car (see photo, pg. 5):** In June, we received a call from a concerned Westport homeowner regard-

ing a newborn fawn that was lying still under foliage up against her house. Since 99 percent of the "fawn calls" we receive do not involve orphans, we explained to the caller that does only return to their fawns a few times a day. And that if there is any activity in the area the doe will not return until after dark when things settle down and she can move her fawn to a safer area under cover of darkness. Fawns instinctually lie still and wait for their mothers to come to them for the first 7 days after birth. Knowing this, we asked the homeowner to see if any deer had recently been hit by cars nearby. Unfortunately we received a call back a few minutes later saying that she had found a dead lactating doe on the road near her house. WIC rescued the fawn and placed him in our intensive care ward for a few days, after which he was placed in WIC's deer pen with 15 other orphaned fawns. Once outside, our fawns are fed via a bottle rack in order to eliminate human contact with the fawns. They are given natural foods and when they

are fully weaned they are released in September.

The anecdotes recounted above reflect just a few of our wildlife encounters of this past year. Hundreds of mammals, birds and reptiles passed through our facility this year. Not all of the stories had happy endings, but that is the nature of what we do. We are seeing ever more patients, and we know this is because we are living in an ecosystem that has fallen out of balance. Every day, the suburbs advance farther into what was once farmland or wooded country. Wild animals now run a gauntlet of chainsaws, leafblowers, dogs, cats and cars. Networks of bisecting roads and subdivisions are replacing the intricate biodiversity which is vital to existence—both ours and theirs.

There is a silent war going on, and the casualties in the short term are the injured and orphaned wild animals that we see every day. In the long-term, continued habitat loss will have a detrimental effect on the quality of all our lives, and those of our children.

Land Trust Formed

We have started our own land trust as a complement to our wildlife rescue operations, because we believe that the preservation of open space provides a wonderful service to wildlife and future generations of people.

Land donated to Wildlife in Crisis will remain as open space in perpetuity, providing crucial habitat for native wildlife. Landowners receive tax credits for all land donated to Wildlife in Crisis, which is a non-profit, tax-exempt organization.

Overdevelopment negatively affects water quality and overall quality of life for people and animals. We have come to believe that wildlife rescue and rehabilitation, while worthy pursuits, only serve as band-aids to this larger problem. The only long term solution is to work harder to preserve our ever-diminishing natural habitats. Let's all do what we can to support open space preservation in our towns!

For information on our land trust activities, contact Dara Reid via e-mail at wildlifeincrisis@snet.net or at tel: (203)544-9913.

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