



Volume 28, Number 2, Summer 2008

THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE NEW YORK STATE WILDLIFE REHABILITATION COUNCIL, INC.

Important Dates:

NYSWRC Board Meetings-open to all
Oct 25, Nov. 23, Dec. 14, 2008
E-mail Kelly (kmartink@midtel.net) for information about how to join us.

NYSWRC Annual Seminar, October 24-26, 2008
Grand Island, (Niagara Falls area) N.Y.

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President's Report

By Kelly Martin

It is not too late to get the word out to the public about what to do when finding a wild animal that may, or may not, be in need of assistance. Most of us are already feeding baby squirrels, cottontails, opossums, ducklings, and other little nestlings. Fawns will not be far behind with Memorial Day generally being the hallmark of the onset of the "Bambi Syndrome." It is a good time to hone our public relations skills to ward off the kidnapping of wild babies by a well-intentioned public often unaware of the natural history of our native wildlife. It is a tough balancing act to encourage caring about wildlife in the wild and to leave well enough alone when nature is functioning as it should. Despite our best efforts, some people will not listen to our words of wildlife wisdom. This year's orphan workload reflects an upswing in the cottontail population over the past few years. We have seen a resultant increase in the orphans as people got outside and began their seasonal yard work. Many of these nestlings should have been left in place and those of us caring for these challenging orphans curse those stubborn homeowners who refuse to leave them alone. I can't help but think that the cottontail orphans are not evenly distributed across the state. Anyone care to share?

Speaking of sharing, this is also the time we try to share the workload, network with our fellow

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Our NYSWRC Mission:

NYSWRC, Inc. is a not for profit membership organization dedicated to the education of wildlife rehabilitators, improvement of the field of wildlife rehabilitation, and the protection and preservation of the environment.

Editor's note:

I welcome your articles, poems, information, questions and artwork. We are pleased to print articles from our members, but caution each reader that NYSWRC is not responsible for the accuracy of the content or information provided, and does not necessarily endorse the policies proposed. Submissions should be sent to: nisseq@aol.com or to PO Box 62, Newcomb, NY 12852. **Thank you, Arleen Santonas for your beautiful artwork!**

President's Report, *continued*

rehabilitators and hope to do what is best for the animals in our care. This may mean taking those cursed cotton-tails, or pawning off those darling little songbirds with their demanding feeding schedule. It may mean giving up a species to someone else who can provide better care, better caging, or who has more experience with a given species. Or, it may mean offering the benefit of your experience to help someone else with a new species they wish to rehabilitate. There should be no room for egos and selfishness especially at this time of year. It is also good to know who has foster parent surrogates for those species for whom imprinting can be a concern. Many of us have education licenses/permits and utilize our permanent birds of prey for fostering as well as for education programs. NYSWRC board members can help direct you to people who have such birds. It is not hard to find the common hawks and owls in captivity. There are also people who house less common ones such as cooper's hawk, sharp-shinned hawk, broadwing hawk, northern harrier, or saw-whet owl, to name a few. We can also place orphans with adults of the same species undergoing rehabilitation. As an example, last year I used an adult Ruffed Grouse with a wing injury to foster an orphan with no injuries. This year we are going to use an adult woodcock with a wing injury to foster an orphan woodcock. I suppose the bottom line is that no rehabilitator is alone in their efforts and we should reach out whenever necessary to those who share our vocation to achieve our shared goal: the return of healthy animals to their natural lives and environment.

Drugs – What to Do With Them

By Barb Cole

Just when you thought it was safe to go back in the water... just as we gave up our coffee, and limited ingestion of our breakfast eggs, only to find out that maybe they weren't as bad for you as you thought, now we find that all those years we flushed old/unused medications down our plumbing we were, yet again, wrong!

PhRMA (the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America) recently signed a formal agreement with USF&WS (United States Fish and Wildlife Service) to cooperate on a program to educate the public on the dangers of improper disposal of medications, and the hazards to both humans and the natural environment that this problem has posed.

Recent news investigations have spotlighted this ever-increasing problem by reporting on the results of analyses of the public water supplies in a number of different municipalities across the country. These reports cite findings of a wide range of chemicals turning up in water supplies, including antibiotics (and we should all be aware of the dangers of increasing antibiotic resistances that are showing up,

Drugs, *continued*

both in human and animal medicine), heart medications, hormones, mood stabilizers, (like the increasingly popular Prozac) and endocrine disrupters. At this time, no one is addressing the problem of the excretion of these medications into our water supplies, but we can do something about disposal; and there are new instructions being made public to help.

First, you can ask for information at your pharmacy when you fill your prescriptions. Drugstores may accept unused or expired medications, and some states, towns or municipalities have, or will be instituting, programs to help out with safe disposal.

Second, just don't flush! (Sounds like a new bumper sticker doesn't it?) New directions instruct us to dilute liquid medications, and to crush and dissolve solids. Pour the resulting liquid into a sealable plastic bag. Then add kitty litter, sawdust, coffee grounds or any material that is unappealing to animals or children. (This is good news for rehabbers, who almost assuredly have a ready supply of nasty stuff to use for disposal.) Seal the plastic bag, or even double bag it, and put it in the trash. They also recommend removing all personal information from old medication containers.

This, of course, is not going to be a permanent solution, because landfills or incinerators have their own set of associated problems, but it will be a start.

Unfortunately, some of these medications are designed to be effective in minute doses, so even at the "parts per million" level, they may be able to affect our health and that of wildlife. There is not a great deal of research on the cumulative effect of very low dosages for the pharmaceuticals that are being found in water supplies, but a disturbing phenomenon discovered in aquatic species like fish and alligators, or shore birds like gulls, suggests that something very serious is happening.

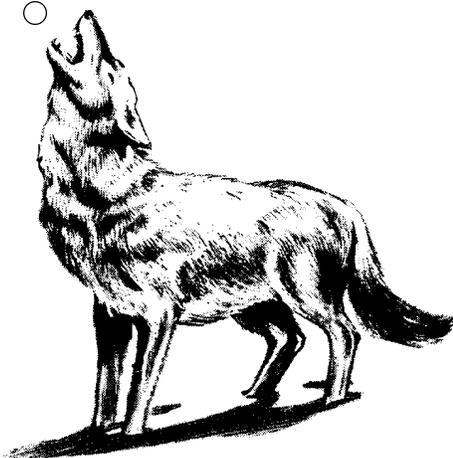
So "crush, don't flush!" Follow the recommendations of the SMARxT DISPOSAL program. If you would like more information you can contact the following web sites: <http://www.smarxtdisposal.net> or www.fws.gov



Arleen Santonas

We're Howling for You!

Join us at
NYSWRC's
Seminar 2008!



Educational Grants Available for Seminar 2008

NYSWRC is pleased to announce that several scholarships/grants will be available to assist our members and help them to attend the annual conference.

NYSWRC, through the generosity of Northern NY Audubon Society, is offering two (2) Cullman Scholarships to a rehabilitator living in the northern part of NY (Adirondacks, St. Lawrence or Champlain valleys). These awards are for **\$250.** each.

NYSWRC, through the generosity of Sally Sherman Foods, is offering **free registration and \$100. grants** for:

- 2 rehabilitators taking Rabies Vector Species Training
- 2 rehabilitators taking Oil Spill Training
- 2 people taking Animal Basic Care
- 2 members attending the full conference
- 2 vet techs attending the full conference

Previous scholarship/grant recipients may apply, but will be considered only after distribution to first time applicants.

To apply, please send a letter of request to:
Steven Freiman, Seminar Chair
PO Box 62, Newcomb, NY 12852

Contents of request letters will remain confidential. Indicate your interest and level of experience in wildlife rehabilitation and what you hope to gain from this seminar. You must be a member in good standing to apply. Application letters must be received by September 1, 2008. You will be notified in advance, and award checks will be distributed at the seminar.

Seminar 2008

The Holiday Inn Grand Island Resort and Conference Center is conveniently located near Niagara Falls, NY. This is north of Buffalo in the western part of the state. The hotel is located on the Niagara River and features lovely rooms plus an indoor pool, fitness center and golf across the street. This is our third time hosting the conference at this facility--because we like it so much! The food is great, the staff friendly, and the conference rooms work well for our classes. We hope you can join us this fall.



Your seminar registration flyer will arrive in the mail over the summer. You will also find information and forms on the NYSWRC.org website.

The 2008 seminar will feature:

Two and one-half days filled with classes and labs

“Wildlife Rehabilitation, the Next Generation”
a keynote presentation by John Satta

Specialized classes in:

- Raptors, Songbirds, Reptiles, Opossums, Fawns, Mustelids, Coyotes, Bears, etc.
- Medical Math, Wildlife Photography, Emergency Response, A Virtual Tour of Messinger Woods, Cage Enrichment, etc.

Labs will include:

- Fluid Therapy, Avian Necropsy, Mammal Necropsy, Wound Management, Reptile Physiology, Physical Therapy, Turtle Care, and Mammal Fractures

Full day classes:

- Rabies Vector Species Training
- Animal Basic Care
- Oil Spill Workshop
- Chemical Capture

Field Trip: A Visit to Hawk Creek Wildlife, Inc.

FUN, FUN, FUN - Halloween Costume Party and musical entertainment by Joel Thomas and band.

A Case of Squirrel Fibroma

By Nancy Kimball in collaboration with Lainie Angel

In April 2008, I got a call regarding a 6 week old male gray squirrel from Hudson Falls, NY which the finder described as having a tail injury. When the squirrel was handed over to me I discovered it was infested with fleas, which were jumping off the animal in all directions. Upon closer examination I discovered five symmetrical lesions (nodules) of various sizes on his body plus a lesion that encircled the middle of the tail. Otherwise the squirrel was alert, well nourished and feisty.



My highest priority was treating the flea problem by using an avian mite and lice spray, preferable because it has a low pyrethrin content. The fleas were so persistent that it took three treatments, several days apart to eliminate them. Next I wanted to have a diagnostic consultation on these strange looking growths and the infected tail, so brought the squirrel to my local veterinarian, Dr. Brian Landenberger. The tail lesion was debrided and Clavamox was prescribed to treat the infection, suspected to be Staph. The possibility that the body lesions were caused by the squirrel pox virus was discussed but could not be verified without laboratory analysis of a tissue sample.

I consulted with Barbara Bellens-Picon, a wildlife rehabilitator who has extensive experience with squirrels and the various diseases that can occur in these creatures. Lainie Angel e-mailed photos of my squirrel's lesions for comparison to squirrels with fibroma that Ms. Picon has treated. Although the growths on my squirrel appeared different, she pointed out that there can be variability in the external signs of the disease.

According to the literature, Squirrel Fibroma, a.k.a. Squirrel Pox, is a viral disease that causes multiple skin tumors over all aspects of the body and tail. These tumors (lesions) are raised, symmetrical and vary in size. In addition, the virus may spread systemically to organs such as the lungs, liver and kidneys. The suspected vector for the virus is arthropods such as mosquitoes or in this case, fleas. The disease is transmitted from one squirrel to another through the bite of an insect at which site a lesion may develop. There is no known cure or

vaccine for the pox virus. Treatment involves supportive care to increase immunities.

After a week of antibiotics the lesion on the tail had not improved. At the veterinarian's recommendation, the tail was amputated. A culture sample was taken from the tail and a tissue sample was taken by removing one of the five growths. Each was sent out for analysis. The histopathology report on the tissue sample confirmed Squirrel Fibroma and the bacterial culture from the tail revealed *Escherichia coli* and *Klebsiella pneumoniae* infections. Since Clavamox was listed as an appropriate antibiotic for these bacteria, treatment was to be continued for a total of three weeks.

Although I have four other gray squirrels of the same age, I quarantined this squirrel from the day I received him. Supportive care includes good nutrition (formula feedings, rodent block and occasional shelled walnuts), Bene-Bac to restore intestinal flora that can be destroyed by antibiotics, and daily flushing of the tail incision and body lesions with a dilute povidone-iodine solution. Since he has to be isolated I enriched his cage environment by adding a hammock, small stuffed animal, maple and oak tree branches, dry leaves and a piece of bone for gnawing. His cage is placed so he has visual but no physical contact with the other squirrels. Although Squirrel Fibroma is not considered to be zoonotic, I wear gloves when handling him.

My squirrel's future is uncertain. The tail amputation has healed without complications and the lack of a bushy tail will not prevent his release, provided the fibromas resolve. Reports from Michigan where Squirrel Pox is more common describe regression of the lesions and renewed hair growth as positive indicators of recovery. The lesions are still present on my squirrel and they have not changed in number, size or appearance in three weeks. He is partially weaned, eating solid food, is active and demonstrates all the usual "squirrelly" behavior for his age. Time will tell.

Note: Nancy and Lainie are NY State licensed rehabilitators and members of North Country Wild Care, . Lainie is a Licensed Veterinary Technician who works at Schroon River Animal Hospital for Brian Landenberger, DVM, the group's supporting vet and winner of NYSWRC's 2006 Veterinarian of the Year Award. Barbara Bellens-Picon is founder and director of The Squirrel Sanctuary.



Rehabilitator Profile: Marcia Kent

By Kelly Martin

NYSWRC is asking our members to share with us a recognition of someone in the field of wildlife rehabilitation that has done something significant as a wildlife rehabilitator. It does not have to be a long-term effort, but could be a one-time action, or something selfless done for an animal or a fellow rehabilitator. To kick this off I would like to offer the first profile.

When I first moved to the Albany area nearly eleven years ago, one of the first things I did was refer to my rehabilitator directory to see who was in my new network and to determine where they were located. Moving was a difficult task as I left behind in the Binghamton area a great network of seasoned rehabilitators and veterinarians, and I knew I would miss them terribly. Fortunately one rehabilitator in my new area was also experienced, willing to work with new people, and as the crow flies, not too far away from my new home. Let me introduce you to Marcia Kent.

Marcia will be turning 80 in October and has been caring for wildlife for over 40 years. She would not mind me mentioning her age, and to this day does whatever she can for wildlife in need. Granted, she does not take in too many animals herself these days, but she is available to answer calls and to refer people to the nearest or best rehabilitator, depending on the nature of the call. I actually knew of Marcia long before I met her. She worked for many years as a dispatcher for NYSDEC. In that capacity she was in a position to hear about animals in need, and she worked well with the officers in the field. Her husband, Ralph, also worked for DEC and his job was in the field as what in those days was referred to as a game warden/protector. Between the two of them and their respective jobs, many a wild animal was helped.

Unfortunately, Marcia lost Ralph a few years ago. She now lives alone with her big dog, Jake, and a parakeet in the Heidelberg's of Berne and is one of my nearest neighbors. Marcia does not drive and without Ralph depends on others to help her with appointments and shopping. Another rehabilitator, Michele Severer, and I welcome the chance to help Marcia when we can. In fact we have to fight with her to get her to let us help her. Stubborn, independent, and self-reliant are but a few of her more 'endearing' character traits. Caring, compassionate, honest, generous and selfless are the traits that compel us to consider her a friend beyond our shared love of wildlife. And she does love wildlife, in particular birds. Over the years she has cared for many different species of wild animals. She often tells us stories of her adventures in wildlife—all in her home on the hill. Bear cubs, woodchucks, opossums, squirrels, beavers, and fawns all benefited

from her caring hand. But it is the songbird species that captured her heart the most. And thank goodness for that! Many times we have transferred nestlings to Marcia. Since she did not drive and was home she was able to maintain the brutal feeding schedule. And, she was always happy to do it! Today Marcia will take in things temporarily for Michele or me, or take care of little things until they need outside caging. Her greatest service is answering the phone, proffering advice to the public and referring people to other rehabilitators. That alone makes our job much easier.

Forty years ago wildlife rehabilitation was much different than it is today. We know more now how to better care for wildlife: better diets, better caging, tools and equipment, greatly improved medical care. Thank goodness we had the Marcias in our past to pioneer our profession. They fought some of those difficult philosophical fights when wildlife rehabilitation was considered a waste of time, money and effort. People like Marcia had the courage of conviction and believed in the goodness of what they did. We stand on her shoulders, and to this day she does what she can to make what the rest of us do easier. It is hard for her these days as age takes its expected toll. But, all in all, she gets along pretty well. It is our hope that we can count on her help for a long time to come. She has dedicated her life to helping wildlife. We are so grateful for what she has done in the past and for what she still does today. She hates attention drawn to herself so she will cringe when she reads this. However, there is no one more deserving than Marcia of a great big THANK YOU.



Red foxes in the care of Molly Gallagher. Pictured here they were about 3 weeks old on April 18. They came in at 300+ grams, weaned almost instantly and have doubled in size since then.

NYS DEC Bat Rehab Project

by Amy Freiman

It has been an interesting experience for me and my fellow upstate RVS rehabilitators to work with DEC's Chris Ray this spring. Four of us were each given six little brown bats taken from the population of the New York bats with White Nose Syndrome. These bats were already "sick" and had left the hibernaculum or were removed from within the hibernating population. Each was banded, weighed, sexed and documented by DEC prior to distribution.

We were asked to care for them with just food (enriched meal worms) and water, plus good hygiene, warmth, humidity, etc. but no medications. Several of the bats died in the early phases of the project, but the rest improved, gained weight and prospered until their release.

The project was given tremendous help by both Leslie Sturgis and Amanda Lollar from Bat World Sanctuary. They suggested protocol, explained diet and care and were on-line with us during the project. Many thanks need to be expressed to these dedicated rehabilitators for their help with our New York bats.

What did we learn? We learned that the bats were all underweight, but why? A lot of the science is still being decided. The researchers do not have answers as to causes or possible solutions to the White Nose Syndrome problem at this time. The bats that died were sent to them in the hope that they will learn more from their necropsies. The living bats may yet provide answers if they make it back to their hibernaculum this fall. But, in the meantime, we gained valuable experience by caring for them.

I had very little experience with bats, and most of that was short term. I never realized how time consuming and intensive it could be to monitor six bats each day. In the beginning each was caught, identified, examined, weighed, and hand fed. It took about two hours to do this properly. Later, they were able to eat on their own and the time spent decreased considerably. It was a good thing, too, because the cleaning was taking longer. Bats can really produce a lot of scat! Meal worms escape and wander everywhere. Of course, if stepped on they leave a lovely black stain, but then, I complain easily.

I never got used to these gorgeous furry creatures flying all around me without ever hitting me. I always felt the need to duck! They were really good at avoiding me. Once in hand they were able to bite, so gloves were always necessary. As with any RVS animal, we always needed to be careful; yet they seemed such very sweet creatures I had to resist the urge to pet them. I was continually amazed at what they could do. They definitely each had a personality



that came through in their interactions. They "talked" to each other frequently. When released back into their flight cage, they chattered with each other in excited squeaks. Who knew they were so vocal? Eventually they seemed to understand that more food was arriving when I entered their room. They often scurried over to watch. What fun!

The bats were released on June 2nd. I sure want to thank DEC for allowing us to participate in their project. We may know more about the disease by the time seminar arrives and can share additional information with you then.

Notice: New Bat Formula

The Bat World Sanctuary organization no longer recommends the use of commercial pet or zoo milk replacement formulas of any kind for insectivorous bat pups. Please see the link below for a safe alternative for these pups. This recipe was developed by a PhD nutritional scientist in cooperation with Bat World Sanctuary.

Insectivorous Bat Milk Replacement Recipe

© Bat World Sanctuary, 2008

- 3.5 ounces (100 mls) fresh goats milk or Meyeneberg canned goats milk
- 2 scoops (8.6 g) [Similac Go & Grow, Milk-Based Powder](#)
- 1/2 tablespoon (7.5 mls) organic or [unrefined corn oil](#)

Use a small food storage container with a tight-fitting lid to mix and store. Add 3.5 ounces (100 mls) of fresh goats milk or reconstituted Meyeneberg canned goats milk to the container. Add 2 scoops (8.6 g) Similac Go & Grow Milk-Based Powder and 1/2 tablespoon (7.5 mls) organic or unrefined corn oil. Shake to mix thoroughly. Makes about 1/2 cup. Store in the refrigerator. Discard any unused formula after 24 hours. Wash container thoroughly and rinse well before mixing new batches of formula.

Calculated Nutrient values (As Is)

Energy 1.75 kcal/ml; Moisture 71.2%; Protein 4.4%; Fat 15.2%; Carbohydrate 11.1%; Calcium 0.24%; Phosphorus 0.15%; Vitamin A 3,740 IU/kg; Vitamin D 525 IU/kg

Calculated Nutrient values (Dry Wt)

Energy 6.60 kcal/g; Protein 15.2%; Fat 43.5%; Carbohydrate 38.6%; Calcium 0.82%; Phosphorus 0.51; Vitamin A 12,995 IU/kg; Vitamin D 1820 IU/kg

**How much wood would a woodchuck chuck ...
A case study in wildlife rehabilitation ethics.**

By Francis L. Belloni, PhD and Maggie Ciarcia, LWR

The Case

Ruth is asked by Linda, another rehabber, to accept transfer of a pair of woodchucks. Linda had received the woodchucks as orphaned babies several months before and they were now large enough to be moved to outdoor caging. Ruth has outdoor caging that would be ideal for allowing the woodchucks to acclimatize to outdoor conditions before their release, and she agrees to take the animals.

When Ruth arrives at Linda's house to pick up the woodchucks, she is shocked to find them in rather poor condition. Their fur is ragged, they seem to have rashes around their mouth and nose, and it appears that there are open sores on their feet and underbellies. The woodchucks are housed in a very small cage only slightly larger than a standard cat carrier, and the cage reeks of urine and feces.

Linda expresses her thanks to Ruth for taking the animals, saying that she has been feeling a bit overwhelmed lately. She has a large inventory of animals under her care, including several squirrels and rabbits, a clutch of baby bluebirds, and a family of three feral cats. On top of all that, one of her four children has had the chicken pox, and she has also been helping her parents move into a new apartment in a senior residence.

Ruth doesn't comment on the animals' condition, and instead of putting them into her outside cage, she keeps them indoors in a larger cage than they were in at Linda's. Both woodchucks are examined by Ruth's wildlife veterinarian and treated for severe urine burns. After a couple of weeks of care, including daily cage cleaning and an appropriate diet, the woodchucks' condition is much improved. Ruth moves them outside and after a period of time, releases them successfully.

1. Should Ruth have said anything to Linda when she saw the poor conditions the woodchucks were kept in? Should she say anything now?
2. Should Ruth take any other actions regarding Linda? If so, what actions?
3. Should Linda have accepted the woodchucks in the first place?

Summary

Ethics is the study of what is right and wrong from a moral standpoint. By analyzing practical cases for the underlying relevant ethical principles, the interests and obligations of the involved parties, and considering the likely consequences of the various actions that are contemplated, we aim to determine what one ought to do, what one ought not to do, or what one may do in various situations.¹

In this case, Ruth is trying to decide what her obligation is with regard to correcting what she perceives as poor rehabilitation practices on Linda's part. She is wrestling with the question of whether she is obliged to intervene in some way, or whether she is free to let the matter pass without any attempt to change Linda's rehabilitation practices. Ruth may be torn between what she perceives as a potential conflict between her interest in good care for future animals that might come into Linda's care and her interest in maintaining a cordial collegial relationship with Linda. With regard to Linda, we can ask whether she is failing to meet her obligation to provide adequate rehabilitative care for her animals and whether she is dealing adequately with her obvious conflict of commitment.

There are a number of reasons why it would be in Ruth's interest to try to correct Linda's deficiencies as a

rehabilitator. If done constructively, this could benefit Linda's interests as well. We further propose here that, in addition to acting in order to advance her own interests, Ruth has an obligation to intervene in some way. The obligation is based on the analogy of wildlife rehabilitation to a profession, which usually includes a self-policing responsibility. This obligation is limited and less formal than in legally recognized professions such as law or medicine, and is shared by all members of the wildlife rehabilitation community, not just Ruth.

Linda

Most, if not all wildlife rehabilitators can empathize with Linda's predicament. Rehabilitators usually have caregiver personalities and often find it difficult to say "no" when they are the "last hope" for injured or orphaned wildlife. Over-commitment of time or resources, however, can result in poor care for the animals, which can cause them further health problems, as in the case of these woodchucks. This violates the harm principle ("do no harm" or non-maleficence), which is a fundamental obligation for rehabilitators and all of us.

Linda needs to recognize her conflict of commitments. Her family commitments should take priority over her wildlife efforts and, short of being

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Ethics Case, continued

able to transfer care for one or more of her children to another rehabilitator, she should accept only as many animals as her time and resources are able to handle. Transferring the woodchucks to Ruth is an appropriate action in this respect, one she should have taken much sooner.

What would be an appropriate number of animals for Linda to rehabilitate at any one time? One of *RELEASE*'s readers suggested to us that, with four children, Linda should limit herself to one animal at a time or, at most, one family unit like the clutch of baby bluebirds. But, there is no simple mathematical formula that will be appropriate in all cases. How old and self-sufficient are the children? How experienced a rehabilitator is Linda? How organized is she? What special circumstances (such as a sick child, transitioning parents to new living quarters, etc.) are present at this time? What type of care do the animals in question need? Obviously, the "appropriate" number of animals that Linda (or any rehabilitator) can care for will depend on the answer to these various questions. Even for a given rehabber, the answer will vary as the situation varies. The only "rule of thumb" that should be followed is that rehabbers must not take in animals for which they cannot provide adequate housing, effort and care, given all their other family, work-related, personal and rehabilitation commitments. You must recognize your limitations and operate within them.

Ruth

Ruth readily recognizes at least two problems with the quality of care that Linda has been providing to the woodchucks. For one thing, the caging is too small. Minimum standards for housing have been published by the IWRC and NWRA², and Linda's caging is several times smaller than would be appropriate for a pair of juvenile woodchucks. For another, it appears that Linda has neglected some very basic husbandry (dirty cages) and medical care (ragged fur, urine burns, rashes, open sores) issues. This combination of poor care and inadequate housing can cause further harm to the animals in the rehabilitators care, as was apparently the case in the present scenario. The stress and restricted movement resulting from being housed in the small cages most likely caused these particular medical problems, as evidenced by their resolution when Ruth moved them to appropriately sized cages and followed the basic principle of daily cage cleaning. If Linda is truly culpable for these actions, this would be a violation of the harm principle.

What if anything, should Ruth say to Linda? What other actions should Ruth take? We imagine that most ethical rehabilitators would agree that Ruth should do something, but there might be considerable disagreement regarding what should be done. Some people might conclude that trying to "do" anything would be a waste of time. After we posed this case in a prior issue of *RELEASE*, we received several

suggestions that included saying nothing, saying something, reporting Linda to NYSWRC and the DEC, passing the word to stop referring animals to Linda, delivering a stern rebuke, providing her with larger cages, offering to take more animals from Linda, or checking with her on a regular basis to provide advice and support. All in all, a wide range of both positive and negative actions.

In situations like this, it is often helpful to sort through our interests and obligations. Ruth has an interest in having Linda as a reliable, competent rehabilitator within her "network" of rehabber colleagues. The reality is that there are more injured and orphaned animals than there are licensed wildlife rehabilitators. And so it is in everyone's best interest to expand, not contract, the size of the available network. Ruth might also be friends with Linda, aside from their shared rehabilitation connection, and, if so, she might well be interested in maintaining a cordial or friendly relationship with her. On the other hand, Linda's value to Ruth as a rehabilitation resource is proportional to her competence as a rehabilitator. Therefore, it is also in Ruth's interest for Linda to operate at an adequate level of skill and counter to Ruth's interests for Linda to continue to operate substantially below the acceptable standard of competence, as she has done with regard to the woodchucks care.

At this point Ruth might simply balance the benefits of having Linda as a reliable resource versus the burden of having to re-educate her in proper rehabilitation techniques. Her decision would be influenced to a great extent, by factors such as how much effort she is willing to put into this, how receptive she believes Linda will be, how often she anticipates she might refer animals to Linda, or how often she anticipates she might have to rescue animals from Linda's poor care in the future.

But the really interesting question raised by this case is whether or not Ruth has an *obligation* to act with regard to Linda's rehabilitation shortcomings. We argue that she is obliged to intervene in some way.

We draw an analogy to the "classic" professions, such as law, medicine, and teaching, which share certain key characteristics. Members of such professions are required to possess a base of specialized knowledge and must usually undergo some formalized licensing or certification procedure. Because of their valuable specialized knowledge and skill, they are afforded certain privileges not enjoyed by other members of society – e.g., the right to appear before a court, access to restricted medicines, confidentiality privileges, etc. Also, because their specialized knowledge makes it problematic for non-members to review the profession fairly, the members of the profession assume a major responsibility for self regulation. Wildlife rehabilitators share some of these characteristics. For example,

Continues on p. 9

Ethics Case, *continued*

although their training is much less extensive than law or medical school, wildlife rehabilitators do possess specialized knowledge, they continue to increase their knowledge through a lifetime of experiences and self study, and they are licensed. Only licensed rehabbers³, not the general public, can hold wildlife in their possession. NYSWRC, in its own literature, says that it is dedicated for promoting “professionalism” in the field of wildlife rehabilitation and among wildlife rehabilitators.⁴ Insofar as the wildlife rehabilitation community is like a profession, therefore, should it not exercise some level of self-regulation?

There is no formal process for peer review of wildlife rehabilitators that is analogous to self-regulatory peer review mechanisms in law, medicine, and other professions. For example, there is no rehabber credentialing board or rehabilitation practice review board. New York State’s approach to wildlife rehabilitation practice, however, has been to allow the wildlife rehabilitation practitioners to determine best practices, rather than dictate those practices through detailed laws or regulations. In effect, the state is challenging the rehab community to act like a profession. The community’s positive response to this challenge would be to work toward improving the standard of practice. The annual NYSWRC conference and the publication of this newsletter are good examples of such a positive response. On a more local or personal level Ruth could act to improve Linda’s performance as a rehabilitator.

Ruth’s preferred course of action would depend on many factors - her relationship with Linda (close friend or casual acquaintance, mentor or mentee, limited prior contact or long-standing collaboration, etc.), Linda’s experience as a rehabber, and Ruth’s assessment of the basis of Linda’s shortcomings. Ruth should draw on her people skills to choose the right way in which to approach Linda. If appropriate, Ruth might consider enlisting another rehabber with a close relationship with Linda who might be better able to approach her in a constructive, non-confrontational manner. The general goal would be to help Linda recognize the problems resulting from her rehabilitation practices, to understand the flaws in those practices, and to help her rectify those faulty practices.

Linda, if she aspires to be an ethical rehabilitator, also has an interest in providing appropriate and effective care for her animal patients. Why did she provide such sub-standard care to the woodchucks? Was it due to indifference? To lack of knowledge? To lack of physical resources and equipment? To well-intentioned, but ill-resulting over commitment? We propose that, except for the first reason, all these causes of Linda’s poor care could be corrected with the proper guidance and support from Ruth and other rehabilitators.

In the “real world,” these efforts might fail and Linda might resist all attempts, however gentle and constructive, to encourage her to adopt better practices. If she continues to provide inadequate care, the rehabilitation community should then make the negative response of restricting or limiting referrals to Linda and, if Linda’s performance is persistently and sufficiently egregious, reporting her to the DEC. Although the DEC has clear legal authority to revoke a wildlife rehabilitator’s license for cause, we think this should be considered as a last recourse, after attempts at collegial self-correction have failed. An exception to this rule – i.e. early DEC notification – would be appropriate in situations in which animal welfare is in immediate jeopardy.

¹ Belloni, F. and M. Ciarcia. Wildlife rehabilitation ethics. An illustrative case study. *RELEASE* Vol. 27 (4) Winter 2007

² Miller, EA (Ed.). Minimum Standards for Wildlife Rehabilitation. 3rd ed. (2000). IWRC and NWRRA.

³ Certain other licensed individuals may also possess wildlife. It is, nonetheless, a restricted privilege.

⁴ <http://www.nyswrc.org> Retrieved on May 31, 2008.

Thanks for the Feedback --Editor’s Note:

I asked Dr. Erica Miller to let me know what she thought of the oil cleaning with iron filings article we cited in the last issue. Here is her response:

“I read through most of this (okay, I did skim sections...don’t exactly have the time to read 200 pages right now), and here’s what I think:

I certainly have a better understanding of how this works now, and I find it interesting how the iron ‘absorbs’ the oil and then the magnet pulls it off. However, the author found that it takes 8-10 treatments to remove 99% of the oil...depending on the degree of oil, we can usually get 99% (or more) removed in 3-5 tubs, in a wash that takes less than an hour. It seems that 8-10 treatments would require as much or more handling than a normal wash. Also, I couldn’t find anywhere that the author addresses the application of the iron filings to the face, and how they can clean around the eyes & nares without the bird inhaling iron filings or getting them in the eyes. Detergent is easy to rinse from the eyes if it gets in there by accident, but I’m not convinced that the iron filings would remove so easily without damaging the cornea.

The author also states that “traditional” washing techniques are challenging because it is difficult to obtain detergents in some locations. Personally, I can’t imagine that it would be easier to find enough of the right type of iron particles and the correct magnet, than it is to find dish-washing detergent....

So, while I find the research interesting, I’m not sure it has much application for us.”

NYSWRC SEEKS VETERINARIAN OF THE YEAR, 2008

AWARD SELECTION CRITERIA

The "Veterinarian of the Year" award is presented to a veterinarian who has demonstrated outstanding qualities and skills that have contributed to a cooperative working relationship between the veterinary community and wildlife rehabilitators. When considering candidates for the "Veterinarian of the Year" award the Council recognizes and appreciates the efforts of all the veterinarians who have contributed their time and skills, frequently without charge, to wildlife rehabilitators across the state. The selection of the "Veterinarian of the Year" is based on the following criteria:

DEDICATION AND COMMITMENT: The Council recognizes that veterinarians are highly skilled animal health care professionals who must also manage a small business. When considering the dedication and commitment of a veterinarian, we recognize:

- the willingness of a veterinarian to provide the time to work with a wildlife rehabilitator and to share his or her knowledge and skills to improve wildlife health care
- the sincere interest of the veterinarian to provide professional services for wildlife often without compensation
- the professional demeanor of the veterinarian that fosters open dialogue and respect between a veterinarian and a wildlife rehabilitator

SKILLS: The Council recognizes that veterinarians are professionals who possess the critical skills that are required to treat an injured or sick wild animal for eventual release to the wild. When considering the SKILLS of a veterinarian we recognize:

- an ability by the veterinarian to apply their unique skills to wild patients
- a sincere desire by the veterinarian to listen to the wildlife rehabilitator and to learn about the wild patient so that he or she can render the best care
- a willingness by the veterinarian to share his or her knowledge with the wildlife rehabilitation community through participation as speakers in educational forums such as seminars and workshops
- a desire to learn more about wildlife and wildlife rehabilitation so that the veterinarian can enhance his or her skills
- contributions to the field of wildlife rehabilitation through the development of innovative wildlife health care techniques, by encouraging other veterinarians to 'volunteer' to support and work with local wildlife rehabilitators and by assisting with the professional development of wildlife rehabilitators

PEOPLE SKILLS: The Council recognizes that veterinary skills alone do not define a professional. When considering the PEOPLE SKILLS of a veterinarian, we recognize:

- the interaction between the veterinarian and his or her wild patient
- the confidence of the veterinarian that fosters a willingness to listen and learn
- the understanding by the veterinarian that he or she has a leadership role in the community and that this often entails acting for the 'greater good'

The commitment to provide care to wildlife not only involves contributions of time, money or expertise. It involves a great deal of compassion and heart fueled by a genuine interest in and concern for the welfare of animals in need regardless of their species.

If you would like to nominate your veterinarian please send us a letter of support using the above criteria. You may also include information relevant to your veterinarian's nomination such as: where they graduated from veterinary school, any wildlife experience obtained while in school, and any outside activities demonstrating an interest in wildlife. You may resubmit a letter from previous years. If selected, you will need to supply a photograph of the winner.

The deadline for this year's submissions is **July 25, 2008**. We will notify the wildlife rehabilitator and veterinarian within a few weeks of the selection. An award will be presented Saturday evening, October 25, at the Annual Seminar Banquet. The selected veterinarian will be welcome, as our guest, for the evening's festivities and will also receive a one year free subscription to *Release*. Please send your letters to the Council at:

**NYSWRC, Attention Veterinary Committee,
1170 State Road, Webster, NY 14580**

Previous winners:

Dr. Michael Bonda	Dr. Alison Hazel
Dr. Carl Tomascke	Dr. Basil Tangredi
Dr. Wendi Westrom	Dr. Carl Eisenhard
Dr. James Robinson	Dr. Laura Wade
Dr. Victor J. Dasaro	Dr. Brian Landenberg
Dr. Brian Hall	

Nominate your Veterinarian to join this prestigious list! Send your letter today.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE PRESENTS SLATE FOR ANNUAL ELECTION:

Five current NYSWRC Board Members are seeking re-election. NYSWRC board members volunteer their time to attend statewide meetings several times a year. NYSWRC board members present, discuss and lobby for current rehabilitation issues, write articles for *Release*, participate and present at the Annual Seminar, and are general watchdogs and ambassadors for wildlife rehabilitators in New York.

Nominations will be accepted from the floor at the time of voting during Seminar.

Those lucky NYSWRC members attending the conference will have the opportunity to vote in person and can disregard this proxy ballot. NYSWRC members who cannot make the conference, but wish to express their vote should fill out and return the proxy ballot presented here.

NYSWRC PROXY BALLOT

This form needs to be filled out by all NYSWRC members who are unable to attend the Annual Meeting which will be held on October 24, 2008 at the annual seminar at the Grand Island Hotel and Conference Center in Grand Island, NY.

In order to be eligible to vote you must be a member in good standing of the New York State Wildlife Rehabilitation Council, Inc. on, or before, October 15, 2008.

Using this form you may either submit your absentee vote at this time or may submit the Proxy permission for someone to vote in your place.

If not voting in person: Cut and return to NYSWRC

YOUR VOTE:

The following names have been submitted by the NYSWRC Nominating Committee for your consideration as members of the NYSWRC Board of Directors. Put an X by the names that you wish to vote for to fill the positions. Additional nominations will be accepted from the floor at the Annual Meeting. There are five (5) positions open at this time for the three year positions.

You may vote for all of these candidates or only those you choose to endorse.

Lainie Angel Barb Cole Steve Freiman Cheryl Hoople Rynda McCray

Signature of NYSWRC member casting these votes _____
Date _____

or.....PROXY

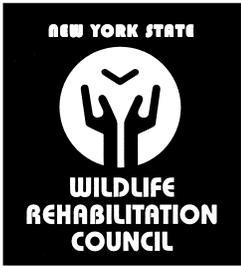
I, _____, being a member in good standing of the New York State Wildlife Rehabilitation Council during 2008, do hereby appoint _____ to vote on my behalf during the election of Board of Directors at the annual membership meeting. This proxy also entitles the above named person to vote in my absence on any council business presented at the 2008 meeting.

Signature _____ Date _____

Witness _____ Date _____

Please mail this form by Oct. 1, 2008 to:

Steven Freiman, Seminar Chair
PO Box 62, Newcomb, NY 12852



NYSWRC
P.O. Box 62
Newcomb, NY 12852



NYSWRC MEMBERS

Please check the address label on this issue of *RELEASE* to determine your current membership type and the date that you joined the Council. Your membership in the New York State Wildlife Rehabilitation Council (NYSWRC) expires one year from this date. To guarantee uninterrupted membership services please utilize the application below to renew your membership. We encourage you to share your issue of *RELEASE* with new rehabilitators and other interested persons.

RELEASE is the quarterly newsletter of the New York State Wildlife Rehabilitation Council, Inc. and is included with membership. Papers, photographs, illustrations and materials relating to wildlife rehabilitation are welcomed and encouraged. Please send materials to:

RELEASE, PO Box 62, Newcomb, NY 12852, Attention: Editor.
All materials are copyrighted, For permission to reprint portions, contact Editor.



NEW YORK STATE WILDLIFE REHABILITATION COUNCIL, INC. MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

_____ **NEW**

_____ **RENEWAL**

Complete all information below and make checks payable to: NYS Wildlife Rehabilitation Council, Inc. *Please print clearly.*

___ **GENERAL:** \$25.00

___ **HOUSEHOLD:** \$40.00

___ **ORGANIZATION:** \$50.00

NAME(S): _____

AFFILIATION: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY, STATE, ZIP: _____

PHONE home: (____) _____ **work:** (____) _____ **e-mail:** _____

Species handled: _____

Knowledge and skills willing to share: _____

Return form to: Jean Alden, NYSWRC Membership, 1850 N. Forest Rd, Williamsville, NY 14221