

NEW YORK STATE



WILDLIFE
REHABILITATION
COUNCIL

Release

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

NYSWRC Board Meetings

are open to everyone.
E-mail Kelly Martin, President

2017 NYSWRC Annual Conference
November 10 - 12, 2017
Holiday Inn, Binghamton

Registration forms may be downloaded from
our website: NYSWRC.org

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NYSWRC Seminar Keynote Speaker



Patricia Smith

Patricia Smith is a certified Compassion Fatigue Specialist with 20 years of training experience. As founder of the Compassion Fatigue Awareness Project (www.compassionfatigue.org), she writes, speaks and facilitates trainings nationwide in service of those who care for others. She has presented to

caregivers in numerous helping professions including social work, health care, law enforcement, chaplain services, suicide prevention, educators, among many others. She has authored several books and training materials for caregivers including the award-winning *To Weep for a Stranger: Compassion Fatigue in Caregiving*. She served as the Caregiving Expert for *Spry* magazine for several years. In September 2016, she presented a TEDx talk on the subject. Additionally, she was the 2012 and 2013 recipient of a writing fellowship at the Helen R. Whiteley Center in Friday Harbor, Washington, a scholarly research center sponsored by the University of Washington in Seattle.

Editor's note: We 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: wrrrch@aol.com and/or serwacki@canisius.edu.

Conference 2017—President's Note

'Start spreading the news ... you'll want to be a part of it' ... NYSWRC, NYSWRC!

Conference planning is going well, speakers are lined up along with their lectures, labs and workshops in each of their areas of expertise. We are ever so grateful to those speakers who agree to spend their time with us and to share their knowledge and experiences to help us do a better job at rehabilitating wildlife. This is still the height of our busy season and November (10th – 12th) seems far away. Now is the time to plan your get away to join us at the Annual NYSWRC Conference at the Holiday Inn in Binghamton. We are excited to launch an on-line registration option this year, but we are not forsaking the 'old timers' and snail mail is still an option. Labs and lectures start Friday morning and go through Sunday noonish. Those of you who are newbies should consider the Animal Basic Care course on Friday, and we encourage those with more experience to consider taking the Rabies Vector Species Course, also on Friday. The all-day session for licensed veterinarians and technicians will again be on Sunday. Please encourage your cooperating veterinarians to attend. It is a great opportunity for them to learn from their peers who routinely treat wild patients, and it is also a chance to become part of a supportive network that can be invaluable when faced with a new species with a different problem. The same can be said for us rehabbers – we need each other, we help each other, we teach each other, and we learn from each other. Conferences are one of the best venues for this to happen. There will be the usual fun activities as well, the primary one being Saturday's raffle and auction. This is a fund raiser for NYSWRC which offsets costs for our conferences. Please bring wonderful things to donate, and be ready to take a chance to win. Even if you opt not to attend the banquet, you can still bid on items and enter the raffle. Keep an eye on our website and Face Book page for updates concerning the conference, including any changes to the schedule. The NYSWRC Board of Directors is looking forward to seeing our old friends and we hope to make many new ones. See you in November!

Online Registration For NYSWRC Conference Now Available!

NYSWRC is happy to provide online registration for the 2017 conference. Simply go to our webpage: <http://nyswrc.org/annual-conference> where you will

find our tentative speaker schedule and all the information you need to register.

There are two buttons on the bottom of the page. One is for the hotel registration flyer. (Make sure to check out our amazing hotel package deals-You will receive 6 meals and two nights accommodation for \$262.12 per person in double occupancy rooms!) Please print this flyer and mail to the hotel to make your reservations.

The second button is to register and pay for the conference. Simply click the button and follow the directions on the form. This software allows you to sign up for all three days of conference, single days, the vet session on Sunday, workshops, labs and order your NYSWRC t-shirt. The full conference and single day general admission ticket prices include your membership fee. If you already renewed your membership for 2017, after you select the ticket there is blue text at the bottom of the section that says "Add discount code" (located above the ticket add-ons section). Click this text and enter in the code ILOVENYSWRC to receive your special membership conference pricing. If you are a student with a valid student ID you can enter in the discount code WILDEDUCATION to receive a student discount. You can also order commuter meals in the ticket add-on section if you are not staying at the hotel. Be sure to come to our banquet on Saturday for a night of fun, laughs, a raffle, silent auction, food and an opportunity to network!

Your conference registration also includes an interactive mobile app that will be released closer to the conference date. You will get an email when it is ready for you to download and sign into. Through this app you'll be able to:

- View the event agenda and plan your schedule.
- Plan ahead whom to meet at the event by browsing attendee profiles in advance.
- Send in-app messages and exchange contact information.
- Find attendees with common affiliations, education, shared networks and social profiles.
- Receive update notifications from organizers.
- Access agenda, GPS guidance, maps, and parking directions.

We look forward to seeing you at conference! If you have any questions about registering for the conference please reach out to Sue Heighling sheighling@verizon.net (716) 867-5841.



**The High Cost of Caring:
Compassion Fatigue in
Wildlife
Rehabilitation**
by
Patricia Smith
**Founder, Compassion Fatigue
Awareness Project**

Studies confirm that animal welfare workers and volunteers play host to high levels of compassion fatigue. Throughout the field of animal welfare, the struggle for caregivers to remain healthy and motivated continues to plague those devoted to the well-being of animals. And wildlife rehabilitators are no exception.

Compassion fatigue is a secondary traumatic stress syndrome affecting caregivers in all the helping professions. This includes physicians, nurses, chaplains, social workers, law enforcement – the list is endless. It comes as no surprise that animal welfare workers are among the hardest hit by this secondary traumatic syndrome due to the intense and emotional work they do with animals they cherish, domestic or wild.

According to the Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association (JAVMA), veterinarians can be the hardest hit with high levels of compassion fatigue, and are highly susceptible to depression and thoughts of suicide. This is due to many factors, including excessive expectations placed on their time, talents and resources. A recent article in *Mental Health Daily* extended the list of factors to include: high levels of responsibility, especially for business owners; no room for mistakes; long hours; high client demands; chronic emotional trauma on the job, severity of the workload; and unsuccessful outcomes leading to poor public opinion.

In general, the public doesn't appreciate the strain animal welfare work puts on wildlife rehabilitators, as well as shelter and rescue workers. The disconnect is almost entirely due to the public's lack of understanding about the field of animal rehabilitation and the high level of training, empathy and compassion it entails.

Leading traumatologist J. Eric Gentry, PhD, suggests those of us attracted to animal care often enter the field already compassion fatigued. A strong identification with the helpless, victimized animal is often the motivator. It is common for us to hail from a tradition of "other-directedness." Simply put, we were taught at an early age to care for the needs of others before caring for our own needs. This, combined with unresolved life traumas, can lead us to experience the debilitating

symptoms of compassion fatigue.

When wildlife rehabilitators focus on others, both animal and human, without practicing authentic, sustainable self-care daily, destructive behaviors associated with compassion fatigue can surface. Symptoms include: apathy; bottled up emotions; substance abuse; lack of personal hygiene practices; emotional outbursts; persistent physical ailments; sadness; flashbacks of traumatic events and recurring nightmares. Our overworked, stressed bodies are sending us a signal that self-care and healing is required.

Healing begins by employing such simple practices as: regular exercise; healthy eating habits; enjoyable social outings, interacting with a healthy support system that focuses on the positive; practicing some form of spirituality; and restful sleep.

Additionally, when the majority of wildlife rehabilitators who work together exhibit high levels of compassion fatigue, organizational compassion fatigue can set in. Symptoms include: chronic absenteeism, rising workers' compensation costs, high turnover rates, friction among employees, and a Them vs Us mentality between staff and management. Eventually, the bottom line is affected; donations and incoming revenue can be affected.

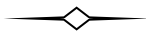
Fortunately, there are ways for wildlife rehabilitators to lower their compassion fatigue levels. Education is first and foremost. Compassion fatigue trainings can help workers learn how to recognize and manage the symptoms. Other ways rehabilitators can help themselves to heal and retain wellness include:

- Create a space for meditation or silence
- Debrief with colleagues following a traumatic event
- Employ on-the-spot practices to relieve stress
- Advocate for themselves and the animals they serve
- Take a lunch break and brief breaks throughout the workday
- Take the Professional Quality of Life Self-Test regularly (www.proqol.org)

While the effects of compassion fatigue are dismal, chances for recovery are not. Compassion fatigue is a term, not a disease. The associated symptoms are normal displays of chronic stress resulting from the caregiving work wildlife rehabilitators perform day in and day out.

If we sense we are suffering from compassion fatigue, chances are excellent we are. Our path to wellness begins with awareness. A heightened awareness can lead to insights regarding past traumas that are still affecting our lives and choices. Accepting the presence of compassion fatigue in our lives only serves to validate the fact that we are deeply caring individuals. Within the healing process is the truth that we don't have to make a choice. It is possible to practice healthy self-care while continuing to care for the animals we cherish.

Patricia Smith is the founder of the Compassion Fatigue Awareness Project (www.compassionfatigue.org) and a Certified Compassion Fatigue Specialist. She writes, speaks and facilitates workshops in service of those who care for others. Her books and other materials are available at www.healthycaregiving.com and Amazon.com.



The Frog's Den Veronica Serwacki



Illustration by Karen Moran

In this issue of Release, The Frog's Den is a continuation of the topic in the last quarterly publication that covered the use of environmentally friendly products considered safer for humans, animals and the environment. As Beverly Jones states in her article on

this subject: "The reason for using green products are many. They keep our water and air clean, they protect our wildlife, they are safe for our pets and family members and they give us the satisfaction of making a positive difference."

"reprinted with permission of Pfeiffer Nature Center"

Cleaning with Vinegar

Vinegar is a wonderful tool for cleaning! Make yourself an all-purpose vinegar solution by combining one part vinegar with one part water, **and mix in a spray bottle.** Use this to:

- Lightly spray down your shower and rub (then rinse or wipe clean) to help avoid the accumulation of hard water stains. Do the same in your sink! Clean your counter tops. Vinegar is good for general sanitation, because the acid content kills many types

Frog's Den continues on page 6

Can Wildlife Rehabilitators Really 'Do No Harm'?

Guest editorial by Renee Schott, DVM,
CWR

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Wildlife Rehabilitation 35(2)

As wildlife rehabilitators, we often aspire to the adage, "Above all, do no harm." This phrase, although of unknown origins and often misidentified as part of the Hippocratic Oath,¹ has been central to the education of human and veterinary medical students. With the ultimate goal of releasing animals back to the wild, wildlife rehabilitators know that "doing no harm" is the fastest way to reach this goal and is morally just. But is this a realistic goal?

All wildlife patients are stressed every minute they are in the care of the rehabilitator.

They are in an unfamiliar, enclosed, unnatural environment, hearing unnatural sounds (including our voices), smelling unnatural odors, and constantly seeing and being restrained by predators (the rehabilitators). These experiences evoke a parasympathetic, or "fight-or-flight," response in our patients. Parasympathetic stimulation causes a cascade of physiological processes that are intended to aid the patient in fight or flight, such as elimination of cloacal/rectal contents, sending blood away from the gut/kidneys/other organs and sending blood toward the heart and muscles, release of stress hormones such as cortisol and adrenaline, and the stopping of digestive processes.² Stress can kill but, if it doesn't, many other physiological effects are detrimental to the animal, such as impaired growth in young,³ impaired metabolism,⁴ impaired immune system,⁵ and slowed wound healing.⁶ Stress has dangerous consequences, but we can decrease stress for our patients and minimize the chance of negative outcomes.

Decrease stressors at all stages of rehabilitation.

Sight: Seeing predators (including us) is extremely stressful. Create visual barriers in cages and approach prey animals in a nonthreatening posture (eyes diverted, walking sideways). When faced with a panicking animal in an enclosed room, simply

shut the lights off for 5-10 minutes to calm its fight-or-flight response.

Visual enrichment: Our patients are used to spending 24/7 surrounded by natural objects and landscape. Enrich an animal's cage with natural items (branches, logs, leaves, dirt, etc.) to give it something productive to do and divert its attention away from stress triggers.

Hearing: Typical noises in a wildlife rehabilitation center (voices, objects clanking, doors slamming, etc.) are extremely unnatural and stressful for our patients. We can prevent our patients from being stressed by not talking in the wards and keeping startling noises to a minimum. Tools like white noise machines may also help drown out unnatural noise and reduce an animal's startle response.

Smell: Many species have an incredible sense of smell, and odors of perfumes or predators can be extremely stressful. This is why housing predators and prey species in the same room, despite visual barriers, is never ideal.

Taste: Although we may need to supplement diets with unnatural foods such as dog food, having natural food items in a patient's diet is important to improve nutrition and decrease stress.

Touch: Natural items in a patient's cage is not only good for normal visual stimulation but also for normal tactile stimulation.

Perform a thorough physical examination (PE) on admission.

This is paramount in decreasing the overall stress a patient endures while in rehabilitation for several reasons.

Decrease stress *during* your PE by not talking, choosing a quiet room, having all your tools/equipment ready, and keeping your "hands-on" time to less than 30 seconds by having a standard PE routine. A thorough PE must be balanced with the patient's stress level, which must be constantly monitored throughout the exam. Any sign of stress (increased respiratory rate, increased heart rate, open-mouth breathing, excessive vocalization, etc.) is grounds for pausing the exam.

Catching *all* injuries on admit means you can determine a prognosis as soon as possible. If a patient comes in with an injury that would render it nonreleasable but you miss it on the admit

examination, it will spend the last days of its life stressed until you find that injury. Euthanizing non-releasable patients on admission is one of the kindest things we can do for these patients.

Provide analgesia.

The rehabilitator also needs to keep in mind that all animals feel pain and most wildlife hide signs of pain in order to survive in the wild. Assume anything that would be painful to you would be painful to the animal and appropriate analgesics should be provided. Pain is stressful and contributes to the physiological cascade of events mentioned earlier.

Can we as wildlife rehabilitators truly do no harm when *all* of our patients are stressed and stress can cause impaired growth, slowed wound healing, immunodeficiency, and death? No, we are doing harm every day we have a wild animal in rehabilitation. Balancing stress with the probability of release is an ethical decision rehabilitators make on a daily basis. We hope that by minimizing stress we can minimize that harm and ultimately release our patient back into the wild, helping the ends to justify the means.

Renée Schott, DVM, CWR
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Introducing Wildlife Health Cornell

NYSWRC members of the board are forwarding the following information on behalf of Dr. Steven Osofsky, Professor of Wildlife Health & Health Policy at Cornell University. Dr. Osofsky announces the inaugural e-newsletter from the newly created *Wildlife Health Cornell*, a Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine Center of Excellence.

If you want to learn more about what Cornell University's College of Veterinary Medicine is doing to support wildlife health around the world, then please subscribe to this new quarterly *Wildlife Health Cornell* e-newsletter. *Wildlife Health Cornell* represents an unprecedented approach to the health challenges wild animals face here in the northeast U.S. and around the world - a comprehensive, science-based response by a team of the world's top wildlife health experts. *Wildlife Health Cornell* has grown out of a palpable sense of genuine urgency regarding the fate of our planet's wildlife, an increasing understanding of our own dependence on the planet's natural systems, and a recognition that it will take a new generation of colleagues to halt and reverse the trends we face.

To Learn more about *Wildlife Health Cornell* and for information on how to sign up to receive the e-newsletter, please contact Dr. Steve Osofsky at s.osofsky@cornell.edu.

Scholarships Available!

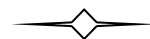
Scholarships to help offset the cost of attending the upcoming NYSWRC conference are available and will be awarded based on need. To apply, please send a letter, via email, requesting assistance. You must be a current member in order to apply. Please send requests to: Eileen Hagerman, Treasurer, at eileenhagerman@hotmail.com by October 1, 2017.

Frogs Den continued from Page 4

of bacteria (please note that sanitary is not the same as sterilization! Use other products if you must get something sterile!)

- Wash your windows! Wipe off any debris with a soft cloth, then spray your window with the vinegar solution, and dry using newspapers (yes really) for a streak-free clean!
- Put it in the rinse cycle of your dishwasher to help remove scaling and hard water stains.
- Put it in the rinse cycle of your washing machine! Vinegar naturally removes odors and softens clothing. Don't worry— there is no smell of vinegar afterward!
- Try it to scrub out coffee and tea cups with stubborn stains.

There are many other uses for vinegar as a general-purpose cleaner. Vinegar has replaced nearly every other cleaner under my sink!



NYSWRC Annual Meeting Announcement

The Annual Meeting of the Board of Directors and members of NYSWRC will take place on Saturday evening, Nov. 11, 2017 during the annual conference being held at the Holiday Inn, in Binghamton, New York.

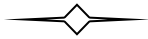
To serve as a director, you must be a member in good standing for at least one year, at least 18 years of age, a resident of New York, and be willing to serve for a term of three years. No member of the board of directors shall receive compensation for service as a director.

We are pleased to announce that Cheryl Hoople, Lauren Schultz-Eddings and Virginia Frati have agreed to continue their role on the board and have been nominated for re-election. Ellen Kalish is also considering running for re-election. Sadly Barbara Cole will be retiring from the board this year and will not be seeking re-election. We thank her for her excellent service to NYSWRC. Two candidates, Rebecca Pou and Jenny Topolski have been nominated for a position on the NYSWRC committee and their bios follow this meeting announcement on page 7.

Continued on next page

Nominations will also be accepted from the floor. While not necessary, it is helpful if you notify NYSWRC in advance if you plan to run from the floor so that ballots may be prepared.

Voting will take place at the Annual Meeting on Nov. 11, 2017. You must be a member to vote. Proxy voting is available upon request. Email your request to: Cheryl Hoople at hooplec@twc.com. Proxy conditions are outlined in the NYSWRC ByLaws 1.8h.



Rebecca Pou is a Class I New York State Licensed Wildlife Rehabilitator and an active rehabber at the Wild Bird Fund in Manhattan. Professionally, Rebecca is an archivist at the New York Academy of Medicine Library. She was recently

recognized by the American Library Association for her work in social media, being selected as one of Library Journal's 2017 Movers & Shakers and highlighted as a "Digital Developer." She created the successful international library social media campaign #ColorOurCollections, which provides the public with free coloring sheets based on historical images and affords libraries a way to bring their special collections to broader audiences. Her work with the campaign entailed communicating directly with over 200 institutions and, for the 2017 campaign, the development of the website colorourcollections.org. She is also a contributor to her institution's blog, frequently drawing on the library's rich natural history collections and writing about natural history topics. Her next piece will be on the New York State Natural History survey conducted in the 1830s, which resulted in a 22 volume set of reports and illustrations. Rebecca has demonstrated a creative approach to outreach and communication, and offers experience in writing, research, and social media. As a rehabber, her main interest is urban wildlife, but she hopes to become more engaged with issues facing rehabbers throughout the state by serving on the NYSWRC board.

Jenny Topolski is a Class II New York State Licensed Wildlife Rehabilitator, currently serving as treasurer of the Urban Utopia Wildlife board of directors, in NYC. Her full-time work is as an independent jeweler and small business owner of Topolski Jewelry. She is very

involved in the NYC small business community, where she has been a teacher for NYC's Small Business Services (teaching people how to start a small business with Etsy), served as a member of the 2016 Seller Advisory Board at Etsy Inc, and as a board member of the NY Handmade Collective for 3 years. Though no longer on the board of NYHC, she is still heavily involved in the group, including being the event director for the 2017 holiday markets. She has also been an advocate for micro-businesses, including 2 lobbying trips to meet with congressional and white house reps in Washington DC, and several meetings in NY.

Between her own business and her experience on the NY Handmade Collective, Jenny has extensive experience in finding sponsorship for events, PR and marketing, branding, social media, and event production. Her BFA in Illustration is also useful, as her design skills extend well beyond jewelry. She is skilled with web design and basic coding, as well as general graphics and layout.

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We look forward to
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**WILDLIFE
REHABILITATION
COUNCIL**

NYSWRC

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www.NYSWRC.org

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.

NYSWRC MEMBERS

Please check the address label on this issue of *RELEASE* to determine your current membership type. Your membership in the New York State Wildlife Rehabilitation Council (NYSWRC) expires on 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 one or both of the following:

Virginia Frati, *RELEASE*, 97 WILDWOOD ROAD, SAG HARBOR, NY 11963, wrwrch@aol.com

Veronica Serwacki, *RELEASE*, 175 Greenaway, Eggertsville, NY 14226, serwacki@canisius.edu

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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**

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ADDRESS: _____

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I prefer to receive the NYSWRC newsletter *Release* via _____ **regular mail, or via** _____ **email**

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