**WILDLIFE REFERENCE SHEET**

***Compiled by Robyn Graboski - Licensed Wildlife* *Rehabilitator***  
**If you have a wild animal that needs help call ASAP (don't e-mail)!**   
***Phone:  (814) 692-0004***  
[Pennsylvania Licensed Rehabilitators listed at www.pawr.com](http://pawr.com/)  
[Printable list & map of Licensed Wildlife Rehabilitators in PA (pdf format)](http://wildaboutanimals.net/pdfs/PArehablist.pdf)

This reference sheet was compiled to assist people that receive calls about distressed wildlife. The information compiled was primarily designed to help determine if a baby animal or bird needs attention during "the baby season", and what to do once it is determined an animal or bird needs help.

**Important Note!**

**UNDER PA GAME COMMISSION REGULATIONS AND THE U.S. DEPT. OF THE INTERIOR, FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE, IT IS ILLEGAL FOR AN UNLICENSED INDIVIDUAL TO POSSESS A NATIVE WILD ANIMAL.**

*It is important to contact the proper authorities, such as a wildlife rehabilitator or the Game Commission, as soon as possible for assistance. Not just because it is illegal to possess a wild animal, but because many animals need attention immediately.*

***I just found a wild animal that needs help.  What do I do?***

**Don’t endanger yourself!**  If you come across a dangerous wild animal, call the PA Game Commission or a wildlife rehabilitator for assistance.

**Contain the animal *if possible*** but don't handle with bare hands. (See more info below on catching a wild animal)

Place the animal in a small covered box in a warm quiet place. Use paper towels or a soft cloth for bedding.

***Once an animal is contained, do not handle it!***

**If an animal is hard to catch…maybe it doesn’t need our help...not sure...call for advice.**

Don’t keep a wild animal overnight or any longer than necessary. **In many cases**, a wild animal that can be caught is in serious condition. Babies must be placed in an incubator ASAP. **If you’re not sure if an animal needs help, call someone for assistance.**

**Do not offer any food or water (especially milk)**. The animals health status should be evaluated first.

A bird or small animal can be placed in a small box with soft cloth on the bottom. Make sure the box is covered. Placing a recycling bin over an animal is an effective way to contain an animal. Don’t endanger yourself. If you come across a dangerous animal, call the Game Commission or a licensed wildlife rehabilitator for advice or assistance.

In most cases, a wild animal that allows you to walk right up to it and pick it up is in serious condition. There are exceptions such as fledgling birds. Fledgling birds go through a normal process where they emerge from the nest before they can fly. The fledgling will then spend a few days on the ground, learning to fly, while the parents are still caring for it.  However, if you are concerned about a wild animal, call someone for assistance as soon as possible.  Many baby birds need to eat every 1/2 hour or every hour.

***How do I determine if a wild animal needs help?***

**MAMMALS**

**Baby Rabbits:**

A young rabbit is on its own if the fur is fluffy, the ears are standing, and it is the size of a man's fist. In some cases it can be put back where you found it. If it was brought in by a dog or a cat, it is probably injured (although it may not appear to be) and needs to have special medical attention. Although possible, rabbits are unlikely to contract rabies.

**Moving a Rabbit Nest:**

Moving a rabbit's nest is not recommended.  There has been minimal success with moving a nest and the mother finding it.  If you can wait 1-2 weeks, the babies will usually be gone and you can continue with your plans.  If you must move the nest, try to place it close to the original spot.

**If A Rabbit Nest is Disturbed or Moved:**

Replace all of the fur inside the nest and cover the nest well with dry grass. The mother may return to care for her young.  The mother will not reject the babies if you handle them.  There has been good success with placing rabbits back in the nest and the mother returning later and taking care of her young.

**Monitoring a disturbed or moved rabbit nest:**

Before moving the babies from the nest, check to see if the mother rabbit returns.  Chances are you won't actually see the mother returning because she usually feeds her babies during the night.  Check the babies bellies before and after an evening has past. Their bellies should be full in the morning.  Also, place a couple strands of string over the nest to see if the nest was disturbed.  These are indications that the mother was there.  If at all possible, it is best to let the mother rabbit raise her babies.  Rabbits are hard to raise!

**Adult Rabbits:**

If you can get near an adult rabbit, something is wrong.  Use a net, box method or sheet method or for catching and transporting adult rabbits. Adult rabbits sometimes kick frantically when handled, even when they are seriously injured and can break their backs in the process.

**Baby Raccoons and Foxes (Rabies vectors in PA):**

These babies often play in the woods under their mothers' care. Before disturbing them, observe from a distance to see if the mother is indeed watching over them. It's best to leave them alone unless there is an obvious problem. If the mother has been killed, the babies may wander out of the den because they are hungry. They may be crying (but not always), look weak or sickly. In this case, the babies need attention.  Orphaned babies will come out during the day and wander looking for food.  This is a sign of a hungry orphan.  **Don't pick these animals up with your bare hands because of the concern of rabies. These animals are the most common rabies vector in PA!**

**Baby Skunks (Rabies vectors in PA):**

If baby skunks are out during the day, they have been orphaned. The mother would never allow her babies to wonder out of the burrow. However, mom will take older babies out for walks during the night. Sometimes an individual will get separated from the group during these walks. This baby is orphaned also, unless it can be re-united with the group. If the mother has been killed, the babies may wander out of the den because they are hungry. They may (but not always) look weak or sickly. In this case, the babies need attention. Babies typically don't spray until they are older. Always aim their posterior away from you just in case they do spray. **Don't pick these animals up with your bare hands because of the concern of rabies. These animals are known to contract rabies!**

**Adult Raccoons, Skunks and Foxes (Rabies vectors in PA):**

**These animals are very dangerous and should only be handled by professionals.** It is recommended to call either a wildlife rehabilitator or the Game Commission (or your local Fish and Game) for assistance.

**Baby Squirrels:**

If a baby is found, it probably needs attention. If a baby is seen on the ground, it probably fell out of a tree and most likely has a concussion. If the mother has been killed, the babies may wander out of the nest because they are hungry. These animals are unlikely to contract rabies.

**Chipmunks:**

It is very unusual to find a baby. If one is found, it probably needs special attention. If the mother is killed, the babies may wander out of the nest because they are hungry. These animals are unlikely to contract rabies.

**Groundhogs (Rabies vectors in PA):**

It is very unusual to find a baby. If one is found, it probably needs special attention. If the mother is killed, the babies may wander out of the burrow because they are hungry. Sometimes, the babies are washed out of the burrow during a rain storm. Although rare, these animals have been found to contract rabies.

**Baby Opossums:**

These animals are on their own when they are about 8-10 inches long (not including the tail). If one is found smaller than 8-10 inches it probably needs attention. Orphaned babies are often found near a dead mother, especially alongside roads. These animals rarely contract rabies.

**Baby Bats (Rabies vectors in PA):**

Bat pups are usually found in July and early August. Many times bat pups will fall out of trees or housing during a storm. Also, bat pups are found in buildings when they have wandered from the colony. Babies that are furred look very much like the adults except they are slightly smaller, and do not fly well. **Don't pick these animals up with your bare hands because of the concern of rabies. Bats are a known to contract rabies.  Currently, in PA wildlife rehabilitators are not allowed to accept or rehabilitate bats because of the disease** [**white nose syndrome**](http://www.fws.gov/whitenosesyndrome/)**.  People in PA that find bats should contact the Pennsylvania Game Commission either by phone or** [**web site**](http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt?open=514&objID=615133&mode=2)**.**

**Adult Bats (Rabies vectors in PA):**

Bats found inside the house other than July are not babies and can "sometimes" be released directly outside. When bats are trapped in side a building, they can't find anything to eat or drink and can become very compromised, especially in the winter months. **Don't pick these animals up with your bare hands because of the concern of rabies. Bats are a known to contract rabies.  Currently, in PA wildlife rehabilitators are not allowed to accept or rehabilitate bats because of the disease** [**white nose syndrome**](http://www.fws.gov/whitenosesyndrome/)**.  People in PA that find bats should contact the Pennsylvania Game Commission either by phone or** [**web site**](http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt?open=514&objID=615133&mode=2)**.**

**Bear and Bobcats:**

**These animals can be very dangerous and should only be handled by professionals.** It is recommended to call the Game Commission (or your local Fish and Game) for assistance. Even babies can be dangerous. If the babies are newborn or they don't have their eyes open, they can be taken directly to a rehabilitator if it is certain the mother is not returning. Otherwise, it is best to call the Game Commission. They are much better equipped to handle these animals and take them to the proper facility.

**Fawns:**

Fawns are often found lying quietly in a field. If you find one and it is not crying, leave it there and check back in 12-24 hours. If it is injured or crying, then it needs special attention.

**Adult Deer:**

**These animals can be very dangerous and should only be handled by professionals.** It is recommended to call the Game Commission (or your local Fish and Game) for assistance.

**BIRDS**

The saying, "If you handle baby birds, the mother will reject them" is NOT TRUE!

**Feathered Song Birds or Fledglings:**

Baby birds are often seen fully feathered but trying to fly, with the parents nearby. These are fledglings. If they look bright and alert, it is best to leave them alone. If possible, keep cats and dogs away from the area for a few days. During this time the birds will learn to fly. The parents will continue to care for them even though they are on the ground. If you are not sure if the parents are nearby and you are concerned, you may put the bird in a nearby bush or on a tree branch and observe from inside the house for a few hours. If the mother sees you in the yard she will not come near.

**Nestling Song Birds (partially feathered):**

If the baby bird is bright, alert, and opening its mouth for food, you can put it back in the nest. If it is not gaping (opening its mouth for food) or is cold it may need special attention. In addition, if a bird is injured, it needs help and cannot be placed back in the nest. Birds that are cat caught are usually injured although they may not appear to be. If a bird is featherless, it needs heat. Holding a featherless baby bird in your hand will warm it effectively. Since  baby birds need to eat every 1/2 hour or hour, it is important to contact a rehabilitator as soon as possible for instructions if it cannot be put back in the nest or the mother is gone.

**Pigeons or Doves:**

If baby doves are found on the ground it is usually difficult to find the nest to put them back. Doves make very poor nests which get blown down easily. Pigeons usually don't make nests. Juvenile pigeons are fully feathered and very docile, and rely on their parents for a long time. If you're not sure the bird needs attention, call a rehabilitator.

**Adult Birds:**

If an adult bird can be caught, probably something is wrong and it needs help. Birds and Rabies: Rabies has been produced in birds experimentally, however, it has never been found in wild bird populations.

**CATCHING AN ANIMAL**

There are three common methods you can use to catch wild animals, the box method, the sheet method and using a net. The techniques vary slightly for birds or mammals, so see the notes for each below.

**Box Method:**

Carefully place a box over the animal, then slide a piece of cardboard underneath the box to contain the animal, being careful not to injure the animal in the process. A suitable box would be a recycling bin with holes in the bottom. Then bricks (or another heavy object) can be placed on the top of the box until help arrives. A plastic bowl could be used for a smaller animal such as a bat.

**Sheet method:**

Carefully throw a sheet/blanket or heavy towel over the animal. The sheet can be brought up around the animal and tied together to contain the animal for transport if a box is not handy. Or the animal and the sheet can also be placed directly inside a cardboard box. Be careful not to leave a sheet or blanket on top of a bird because it may over heat.  Always wear leather gloves with dangerous animals.

**Birds:**

Small song birds, can sometimes just be picked up. For hard to catch birds or larger birds, use either the box/ sheet method or a net. If the sheet method is used, place the bird in a cardboard box, then unwrap the bird as soon as possible so the bird doesn't overheat. Birds can overheat very easily and die from being wrapped up too long, especially in warm weather. They can also overheat in your hands, so don't hold an adult bird in your hands for any longer than necessary. If you need to use a net to catch the bird, use extreme caution because it may damage the feathers. A very effective carrying case for "small birds" is a cardboard box or a paper bag with paper towels on the bottom and the top folded down. If you're catching a raptor or a bird of prey, use leather gloves in addition to a towel or sheet to protect yourself from the bird's talons. Do not keep a bird of any kind wrapped in a blanket or any type of material for long periods of time. It is "not" recommended to put wild birds in wire cages because the cages may damage their feathers.

**Mammals:**

Mammals can be caught using either the box method, sheet/blanket method or by using a net.  Call a professional to catch injured "adult" mammals because they can be dangerous.   It is recommended that you not to pick up any mammals, with your bare hands. They may bite you out of fear. Baby rabbits may be picked up with your bare hands, but should be placed directly into a cardboard box for transport. Be extremely careful when capturing adult rabbits. Adult rabbits will sometimes kick frantically when handled, even when they are seriously injured, and can break their backs in the process. Bats should never be picked up with your bare hands. Use gloves or a heavy towel to pick up a bat. You can also scoop it into a cottage cheese container or a shoe box. Put the container or box under the bat and gently scoop the bat into the container with the lid. Poke very small holes into the lid with a pencil. Please remember that some bats can squeeze through a 1/2" space. To prevent you from being bitten, the box method is recommended for adult mammals; however, proceed with caution. If the animal is unable to move or shows signs of severe injury, use the box method.  Keep the animal as still as possible while moving it. Nets can also be used to catch mammals. Remember that it is not recommended to pick up any mammal, especially adults, with your bare hands.

***Once the animal has been contained*   
\*\*\*DO NOT HANDLE IT\*\*\***