

March 1, 2011

## Health care for wild things

What help is available for injured animals?

You find an injured cardinal struggling in the snow. After gently placing the bird in a box with some shredded paper towels (keeping it warm is crucial), the next step will depend on where you are.

### NORTHERN VIRGINIA

**The Wildlife Rescue League** operates a hotline (703-440-0800) that connects people with independent wildlife rehabilitators.

**The Wildlife Center of Virginia**, a wildlife hospital and training center, is at least two hours away, in Waynesboro.

### MARYLAND

**Friskys Wildlife and Primate Center and Rescue** in Woodstock accepts small native wildlife, domestic farm animals and primates.

**Second Chance Wildlife Center** in Gaithersburg accepts sick and injured wildlife, but because of a shortage of space, the center has had to limit the number of animals it accepts from the District.

### THE DISTRICT

Although many creatures live in the city's extensive parklands, Washington has no wildlife rehabilitation center.

The Washington Humane Society has a contract to run the District's **Animal Care and Control Facility**, which requires its officers to pick up sick and injured wildlife, but the law permits only licensed wildlife rehabilitators to care for wildlife after 24 hours in captivity. The DCAC has no rehabilitators on staff.

The city must either release your injured cardinal (if it can survive), euthanize it (requiring a permit from a licensed rehabilitator) or send it to a rehab center across state lines. Second Chance is the closest, an hour away.

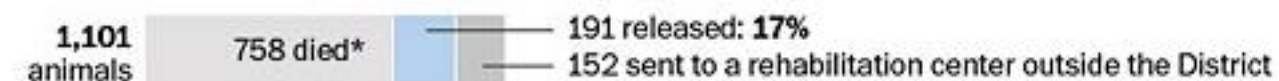
"Even if the District wanted to fund wildlife rehabilitation as part of its animal control program, the facilities at the D.C. animal shelter are so cramped and outdated that there would be no place there to house a wildlife care component," says Anne Lewis, president of **City Wildlife**.



### Rehab success

Being treated by a trained rehabilitator may increase the chances that a sick or injured animal can return to the wild.

**D.C Animal Control** (FY 2010) - No rehabilitator on staff



\* Includes animals dead on arrival

**Second Chance Wildlife Center** (2010) - Rehabilitator on staff



The nonprofit wants to open a wildlife rehab center in the District but faces a steep financial hurdle. Operating such a center would cost about \$300,000 a year, which would fund the space (probably in a warehouse) and the salaries of a staff of four to five, including two licensed rehabilitators.

"Volunteers will be critical to our success," says Lewis. "Fortunately, volunteering for wildlife is popular, and sometimes students can get credit for their services." The center would typically need six or seven volunteers working every day. Initially, the center would "accept all forms of native wildlife except deer [they require too much space] and rabies vector species" (foxes, raccoons, bats, skunks and coyotes), says Lewis, but many of those might be accepted after the center has been operating for several years.

"Each species has very specific handling and care requirements," she says, "and each animal has its own personality."

SOURCES: Jim Monsma, City Wildlife; Brittany Davis, Second Chance Wildlife Center