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DELAWARE COUNCIL OF WILDLIFE REHABILITATORS & EDUCATORS

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DCWRE NEWS

Delaware Council of Wildlife Rehabilitators and Educators

How do rehabbers keep wild animals in their care cool during the summer?

Wild animals get heat stroke and die from exposure just as people do. In the wild they have strategies for keeping cool. It's important for wildlife rehabilitators to ensure the animals in their care can find ways to avoid dangerously high body temperatures. Long time DCWRE wildlife rehabber Cathy Martin offered tips on how to help your patients 'beat the heat':

***Use Ice*:** Put ice cubes in watering bowls
Freeze bits of fruit inside ice cubes (for species that eat fruit)
Freeze bottles of water to put inside cages for animals to lean against

***Use Water*:** Spritz all surfaces in their cages (spray down box turtles pens daily)
Provide bowls of water large enough for the animal to sit in

***Use Shade*:** Provide areas with leaved branches, logs with holes, or potted plants
Cover small area of cage with a tarp; ensure there is still ample air flow

Some Ways Wild Animals Stay Cool

- Reptiles hide in shaded areas during the day
- Birds flutter their wings
- Mammals shed fur or burrow under ground
- They sit in pools of water or wallow in the mud
- They seek out cool rocks to lie on by a stream



Nocturnal animals, such as the Virginia Opossum are most active when air temperatures are usually lower during a 24-hr period

DCWRE Members: Consider volunteering for an upcoming event!

Event	Date	Location
Coast Day	October 6 11am - 3pm	University of Delaware Lewes Campus
Blackbird Creek Fall Festival	October 19 10am - 4 pm	DNEER - Blackbird Creek Reserve, Townsend

Turtles in Trouble—Navigating the Nesting Season — What You Can Do to Help

Five of Delaware's 11 freshwater and terrestrial turtle species are of conservation concern, and protecting their nests and eggs is very important for keeping them from vanishing from Delaware.

Many turtles are brought to wildlife rehabilitators during May and June, a time of year when they are looking for sites to nest and lay their eggs. During their travels they get hit by cars or mowers, or collected by well meaning people.

They look for a nest site with favorable (easy to dig into) substrate, suitable temperatures, and concealment. Depending on the species, some will nest within a few feet of open water, while others will travel > 1,000 feet away from open water to nest.



Painted Turtle laying eggs on June 15 under a picnic table in Felton, DE



Predator Guard example

Females dig a flask-shaped cavity and slowly deposit between 4 to 50 eggs, depending on the species. Most turtle eggs are an oval shape, but snapping turtles have round eggs and look like a ping pong ball. The number of days before hatching varies by species but a general rule of thumb is 60 to 100 days.

After laying eggs, the female carefully covers the nest using the dirt (or sand if it is a diamondback terrapin) and tamps it down to remove signs of her activity. Why is this important? Many predators, such as raccoons, skunks, and foxes, would like nothing more than finding a nest of turtle eggs for a tasty meal.

The sites they choose for nesting are not always in ideal places. They may nest in a driveway, under a parked vehicle, or in a vegetable garden. Delaware has many developed areas and it's not uncommon for a turtle to nest in a residential yard.

What if a turtle nests in your yard?

- DO NOT interfere with a turtle that is laying eggs
- DO NOT move the eggs—changing the orientation of the eggs kills the embryos
- MARK the location with a flag
- ADD a predator guard: 2ft square of wire (2"x 2" mesh) laid over the nest; weigh down the corners with bricks, rocks or use tent pegs. This prevents predators from digging and allows the babies to crawl out of the openings once they hatch.

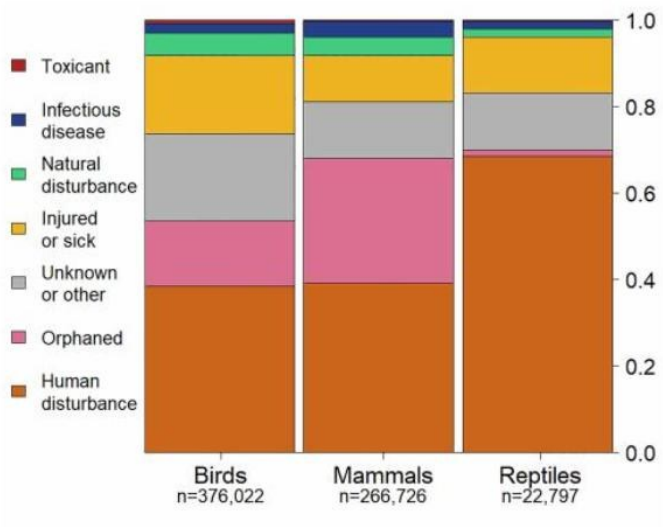
For More Predator Guard Designs:

- Turtle Nests and Nest Protection – Ontario Turtle Conservation Centre
- How To Make A Turtle Nest Protector Cage | The Land Between (youtube.com)
- Make A Nest Protector (thinkturtle.ca)

The Importance of Keeping Up-to-Date Records on Rehabilitated Wildlife

A study published in the Journal of Biological Conservation showed how wildlife admissions and rehabilitation success data can be used to find important trends. Researchers from Boston University and the Wildlife Center of VA collected and analyzed nearly 700,000 data records from 94 wildlife rehabilitation centers in the U.S. and Canada, spanning 1945-2021. They discovered the most frequent causes of admission to a center were attributed to "human disturbance" at 39.8% (see graph). Orphaned wildlife constituted 20% of admissions, although whether this category included those orphaned from human disturbance was not clear. A sizable proportion of cases were due to unknown causes (n = 15%).

Variation in causes of admission to a rehabilitation center existed between taxonomy groups, with reptiles admitted from 'human disturbance' at a greater percentage than birds or mammals (see graph). Another interesting discovery: a higher volume of cases occurred up to one week after extreme weather events compared to the week before, and this effect has been increasing in the past decade. However, in these data the observed trend was only statistically significant in areas most susceptible to coastal natural disasters.



Alas, there is hope! The study reported that rehabilitators were able to successfully release an average of one-third (1/3) of all individuals they received, independent of taxonomy group. The work that rehabilitators do is clearly important to the understanding, identification, and management of threats to wildlife.

Citation: Miller, T.A., K. Pierce, E.E. Clark Jr., and R.B. Primack. Wildlife rehabilitation records reveal impacts of anthropogenic activities on wildlife health. Biological Conservation 286 (2023) 110295.

LEGISLATION TO WATCH:

H.R. 7999: Wildlife Rescue, Rehabilitation, and Restoration Act of 2024
(*introduced 4/15/24*)

- To direct the Secretary of the Interior to encourage and incentivize rescue, rehabilitation, and appropriate reintroduction of threatened and endangered animals by establishing a Wildlife Confiscations Network, and for other purposes.

Link: All Info - H.R.7999 - 118th Congress (2023-2024): Wildlife Rescue, Rehabilitation, and Congress.gov | Library of Congress

DELAWARE COUNCIL OF WILDLIFE REHABILITATORS & EDUCATORS

Dedicated to the Care of Native Wildlife through Rehabilitation, Education, and Community Engagement

www.dewildliferescue.com

https://www.facebook.com/dewildliferescue/

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