Fall/Early Winter 2025

Editor: E. Stetzar

DELAWARE COUNCIL OF WILDLIFE REHABILITATORS & EDUCATORS

LICENSED IN THE STATE OF DELAWARE

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DCWRE NEWS

Teamwork and Compassion in the Wildlife Rehab Community

When a long-time wildlife rehabilitator from another Delaware organization fell ill and needed help caring for her animals at the end of August, the wildlife rehabilitation community stepped up in an extraordinary way. Over 100 animals — mostly squirrels — from her facility were transferred to just a handful of rehabilitators with the Delaware Council of Wildlife Rehabilitators and Educators (DCWRE) and Voice for the Voiceless.

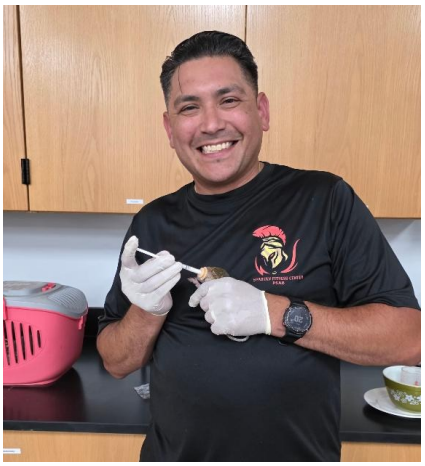
All these animals were housed and cared for at the personal residences of a few licensed rehabilitators, their sub-permittees and apprentices. Luckily, DCWRE had several newly trained volunteers to assist with the squirrels *(see photos below and story on page 4*). They spent countless hours feeding the animals, keeping them warm, tending to their wounds, cleaning cages, and ensuring they had proper housing as they grew or healed. All the while, these same rehabbers continued to receive additional injured and orphaned wildlife from unrelated incidents throughout the state.

This need to care for a large number of animals in a short period of time illustrated the incredible teamwork amongst wildlife rehabilitators, and the real power there is when you have dedicated volunteers. But, it also proved what most in this community already knew - DCWRE needs a facility. A dedicated facility, where injured and orphaned wildlife can receive the best possible housing and care, and that plays a crucial role in educating the public on how to reduce human-animal conflicts.



Rehabilitator Jean Taylor teaches feeding techniques to trainees on August 26, just days before DCWRE received a large influx of squirrels.

DCWRE member Gene hones his feeding skills with a 4-week old squirrel



'Squirrel Rehab Training' story on Page 4

'SAVE THE DATES'

- **January 15, 2026** DCWRE Members Meeting - Please Plan to Attend!
  Details will be sent via email

- **December 5 - 7, 2025**, PA Wildlife Rehab Conference,
  Ramada Inn Conference Center, State College PA
  $50 DCWRE education assistance available to members that attend

DCWRE EDUCATION, AWARENESS, AND ACTION - Tonyea Mead

Late summer and early fall are always a busy time for DCWRE—it's festival and presentation season! This year was no exception, as members traveled across Delaware sharing educational displays, animal hides, photos, bat houses, and even a live turtle. New this year was the addition of DCWRE T-shirts and hats available for sale.

The season kicked off on **August 9** with a presentation at **Prime Hook National Wildlife Refuge** titled *"Bats from Around the World."* The presentation covered bat taxonomy, anatomy, diet, reproduction, and diseases that affect both bats and humans. Attendees also learned fun bat facts, how to attract bats to their yards, and how to build bat houses.

Next came **Coast Day** at the **University of Delaware in Lewes** on **October 3**. It was a perfect fall day, drawing a crowd of over 7,000 visitors! DCWRE participated in the event's scavenger hunt, giving attendees a chance to stop by the table, ask questions about wildlife, and learn more about the organization's work.

On **October 18**, DCWRE attended the **Blackbird Festival**, where a special guest—a box turtle—captured visitors' attention. The turtle, cared for by **Cathy Martin**, suffers from metabolic bone disease caused by a lack of natural sunlight. Visitors learned how this condition flattened the turtle's shell and affects his ability to chew, requiring Cathy's help with feeding. This display underscored how critical wildlife education is to DCWRE's mission. Families and children were especially engaged, asking questions and showing enthusiasm for Delaware's wild creatures.



Blackbird Festival attendees visit the DCWRE display tent

Finally, on **October 27**, the **Peninsula Homeowners Association** in Millsboro invited **MaryAnn Yingst** and **Tonyea Mead** to present on "Halloween Wildlife: Bats, Ravens, Crows, and Vultures." MaryAnn, a member of Tri-State Bird Rescue, shared fascinating facts about the intelligence of crows and ravens—such as how crows avoid fields where they've previously been shot and how ravens drop pebbles into cups to raise water levels. Tonyea discussed the ecological importance of bats and introduced an intriguing fact: vampire bat saliva is being developed into a medicine called *Draculin*, which may help stroke victims.

Since bats are a popular topic during the Halloween season, **thirty Kent County Girl Scouts** wrapped up the fall outreach with a fun and educational bat presentation on **November 6**, complete with hands-on activities.

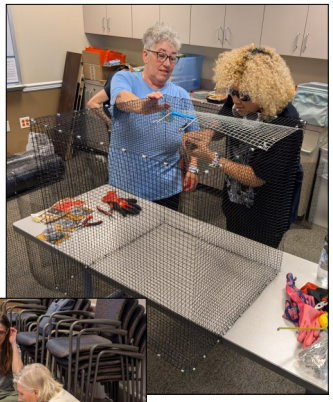
DCWRE AND DELAWARE MASTER NATURALISTS - A GROWING PARTNERSHIP

DCWRE and the Delaware Master Naturalist program (DMN; administered through the University of Delaware Cooperative Extension) have a lot in common. Both groups focus on the natural world, its flora and fauna. Both groups have a growing membership of dedicated volunteers. It just makes perfect sense to team up and share expertise, knowledge, resources, and provide opportunities for members to grow and learn.

On September 12, DMN volunteers pitched in at nearly a moments notice when DCWRE was in desperate need to make cages for orphaned squirrels that were going to soon outgrow their housing. DMN and DCWRE volunteers worked side by side, measuring, cutting, and crimping wire to create 4' x 6' cages appropriate for 7 -10 week old squirrels. DCWRE Member **Jon Baker** generously donated materials for the cage making - another example of a volunteer dedicated to helping wildlife.

On October 18, DCWRE's Jean Taylor trained DMN members about rehabilitating Delaware's native wildlife at their annual "Jamboree". This full day event gathers DMNs from around the state for training and networking. Speakers from environmental focused groups, such as Jean, join in to inspire DMN and to connect volunteers with others so they can work towards the conservation of Delaware's Natural History.

As the relationship grows, DCWRE hopes to become a Local Organizing Partner (LOP) and work along with DMN in setting up projects for volunteers.





DMN and DCWRE volunteers construct cages for housing squirrels

HEALTH NEWS

RABBIT HEMORRHAGIC DISEASE VIRUS (RHDV)

RHDV is a highly contagious virus that infects Lagomorphs (rabbits, hares, and pikas). Some strains are known to cause up to 100% mortality if contracted. Treatment is limited and there is no known cure. Most cases are observed in domestic rabbits because wild rabbits that contract the virus are generally found dead.

The virus is transmitted by DIRECT CONTACT between infected rabbits, an infected carcass, or animal product (i.e., domestic rabbit parts or wool, caging, bedding). Insects, scavengers, and predators can also transmit the virus.

***NEVER** let one of your wild cottontail rabbit patients come into contact with a domestic rabbit.*

Rabbits with the most acute form of the infection have no clinical symptoms and will collapse and die within 12-36 hours. Less acute forms cause bleeding from the mouth, nose, and rectum, difficulty breathing, blood in the feces, and yellow mucous membranes. Neurological symptoms include loss of coordination, seizures, depression, lethargy, and loss of appetite. Rabbits with less severe symptoms have the possibility of survival, but may continue to shed the virus for up to 30 days.

For more information:
See the Cornell College of Veterinary Medicine's website at this link:

Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease | Cornell Wildlife Health Lab



NEPARC - EMERGING DISEASES

The Northeast Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (NEPARC), has an **Emerging Disease Workgroup**. The purpose is to "*provide information on disease prevalence, monitoring, and prevention for reptile and amphibian populations in the northeast region*". The workgroup includes **wildlife rehabilitators** as well as academics, government resource managers, veterinarians, and others. They hold monthly meetings to share information and coordinate efforts to safeguard populations from disease. The group produces outreach and educational materials as well.

If you would like to participate in the group, you can contact the working group chair. Go to:

Northeast PARC - Emerging Diseases Working Group

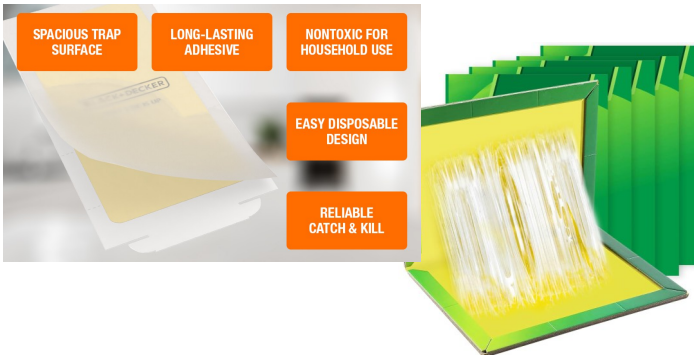
STICKY TRAPS - INDISCRIMINATE KILLER OF WILDLIFE - BY JEAN TAYLOR

Although its not precisely tracked, wildlife rehabilitation organizations report receiving dozens of injured animals per year that were caught in glue boards or 'sticky traps'. These traps are flat boards of plastic or cardboard coated with a strong adhesive glue. They are most often used to target rodents and snakes but frequently capture other non-target animals such as birds, bats, lizards, or other small animals.

Animals caught in these indiscriminate traps undergo significant pain and suffering and slowly die from dehydration, starvation, exhaustion, suffocation, and exposure. It can take days before the animal will succumb to these affects. Attempting to escape causes further ensnarement in the sticky adhesive - resulting in broken bones, ripped skin, fur or scales, and torn limbs. Animals will chew their own limbs in an attempt to get free. If their head makes contact with the glued surface they can end up with their mouth or nostrils glued shut.

An attempt **CAN and should be made to free animals** that are still alive and caught in glue traps, by doing the following:

Place paper towels or tissues on any area of the glue board that still has a sticky surface. Vegetable oil can often help loosen the adhesive which may assist in releasing each portion of the victims' body from the board. Sometimes you need to carefully utilize a utility blade to cut through some of the glue. As you free a portion of the animals' body from the board, continue to place paper towel or tissue on that area so it does not get re-stuck. The animal will likely need to stay in care for a couple of days or weeks while it heals from the experience. They will likely be dehydrated and need additional nourishment. The oil will need to be removed so it doesn't cause additional problems. Many times, even after a rescue attempt, the animal will not survive the the physical and psychological trauma of being caught in these traps.



SQUIRREL REHAB TRAINING ….CONTINUED FROM COVER PAGE

On August 26, members **Cathy Martin** and **Jean Taylor** led an engaging presentation on rehabilitating gray squirrels at the Delaware Department of Education's John Collette Building from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. Sixteen attendees participated, learning about the natural history of Delaware's native squirrels and viewing the Wildlife Care Academy's video *"Basic Eastern Gray Squirrel Rehabilitation."* The session covered how to perform a basic exam—including assessing skin turgor, aging, and weight—and emphasized the importance of keeping squirrels warm and hydrated during the first 24 hours before feeding. Jean and Cathy also discussed proper housing requirements and common health issues associated with squirrel care. Participants had the opportunity to practice feeding techniques at the end of the presentation. Feedback from the evening was overwhelmingly positive, noting the presentation's organization, depth of information, and the helpful resource packets provided to each attendee.

Attendees also received 2 hours of training credits and a certificate of completion for their records. Continuing education is a requirement for maintaining state wildlife permits; including sub-permittees and apprentices.

A drawing was held at the end of the training, and one lucky participant won a squirrel nesting box crafted and donated by **Chris Stetzar**. **Al Rizzo** also generously donated a dozen squirrel boxes when he heard about the large influx of squirrels DCWRE received in August. Rehabbers, many of them training participants, received the boxes to house their squirrels as they grew and were ready for a soft release.



Chris with the Squirrel box he made for the prize giveaway



Cathy fielding questions from participants



A pair of 10 week old squirrels peak out of one of Al's donated boxes



INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT EASTERN GRAY SQUIRRELS

A group of squirrels is called a Scurry or a Dray.
Newborn squirrels are called kits, kittens, or pups.
When running, their 'bounding stride' can be two to three feet long!
They will flick their tails and sound warning calls to alert other squirrels when predators are nearby.
The nuts they bury and then fail to retrieve are *essential* for forest regeneration.
Their fur is predominantly gray, but can be brownish, and sometimes white. There is also a melanistic form that is black. These individuals appear to have a higher cold tolerance than the other color morphs.

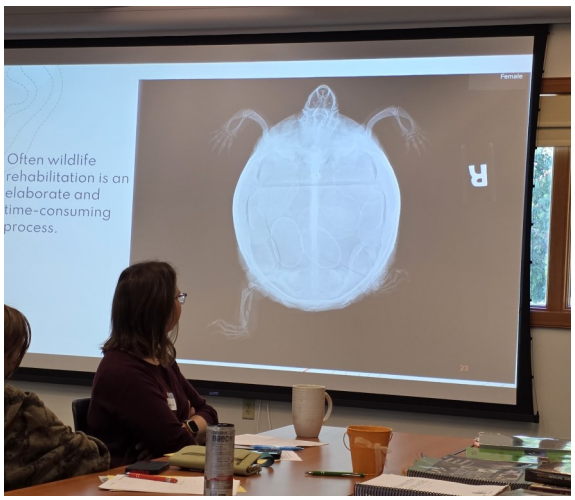
BASIC WILDLIFE REHABILITATION TRAINING - Tonyea Mead

On a beautiful Saturday, September 28, 2025 twenty-eight attendees gathered at St. Jones Preserve for the fall DCWRE training. The session featured special guest speaker **Emily Garrigan**, founder of **West Shore Wildlife Center** in York, Pennsylvania. Before founding the center, she worked as a rehabilitator and educator with Raven Ridge and Tamarack Wildlife Centers. She holds both state and federal permits—including those for non-releasable and endangered species—and frequently presents at professional conferences nationwide. Emily is a dynamic speaker and an excellent educator.



Emily shares the origin story of West Shore Wildlife Center and how she raised the funds to support it.

During her engaging presentation, Emily discussed what it takes to become a wildlife rehabilitator and the steps to obtaining permits. She provided valuable resources, slides, and handouts, along with a convenient QR code that linked to additional educational materials. Her presentation covered essential topics such as animal intake procedures, stabilization, initial exams, triage considerations, and treatments. Participants enjoyed a picnic lunch outdoors, took time to mingle, and even won a few prizes. The day was both informative and inspiring—leaving members feeling motivated to continue helping Delaware's wildlife.



Emily described how turtles can have injuries, especially to their shells, that can take a long time to heal. Rehabbers must be equipped to handle the specific housing and nutritional needs of a turtle while its healing. It can be a lengthy time commitment that sometimes involves a need to overwinter the turtle until its completely healed.

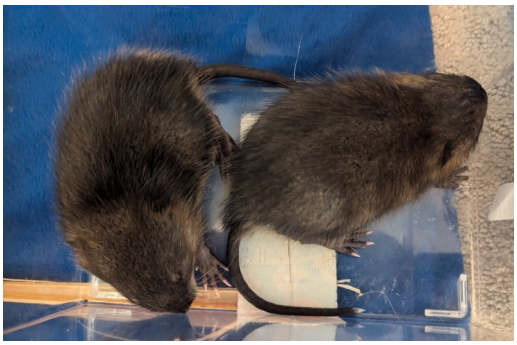
West Shore Wildlife Center

MUSKRATS - NATIVE DELAWARE MAMMAL

Muskrat *Ondatra zibethicus* are semiaquatic rodents that live in wetlands and marshes where they forage mostly on aquatic vegetation. They have water resistant fur, webbed back feet, and vertically flattened tails, making them excellent swimmers. They build a 'nest' or den out of aquatic plants such as cattails and phragmites - it resembles a mound rising out of the marsh. It has an underwater entrance and provides shelter from the elements and predators.



Two of four muskrat kits brought to a rehabber recently. Photo: Toni Oddo



Although muskrats are considered a common mammal in Delaware, orphaned or injured individuals are rarely brought to rehabilitators. Perhaps this is because they typically live in families with the advantage of both parents caring for their young. Or maybe there is less potential for human-animal conflicts in the marshes.

A rare case of 'orphaned' muskrats occurred recently when four kits were transferred through DCWRE to Voice for the Voiceless. They were collected by a person who observed their mother placing them on high ground in the marsh after their nest was flooded. We'll never know if she planned to return, but muskrats are not known to abandon their young so easily. This illustrates the need to educate the public about Delaware' s native wildlife and when its ok to intervene, and when its best to let nature be.

EASTERN BOX TURTLE OUTREACH - BY JEAN HEDRICH



In the Delaware Wildlife Action Plan, Eastern Box Turtles are listed as Tier 1 Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN). Education is the foundation of conservation – we protect what we understand and treasure. With this in mind, a few years back, I decided to get the "word out" on Eastern Box Turtles to as many young people as possible. In April 2020, I took over the care of an Eastern Box Turtle that had been in captivity since 1988, and was surrendered to Hilary Taylor (a rehabilitator based in New Castle County), with the thought that he could act as my educational ambassador for outreach. Using the knowledge I had gained through research, wildlife rehabilitation training and as a public-school educator, I began to create virtual presentations on Eastern Box Turtles and their conservation…with the help of "Ed" the Eastern Box Turtle.

At first, I thought that remote meetings would not have the same impact as an in-person presentation, but I've found that there are some advantages to presenting virtually. Participants are able to view the presentation's photos and videos with more clarity than when I had presented in-person…including up close views of Ed! Another advantage has been the broad reach that is possible through virtual presentations. There have been many times when I was able to present to an entire elementary school, with each classroom logging in to the Zoom presentation. Having the opportunity to "visit" so many schools and camps, has been a great experience!



For more information about Eastern Box Turtles go to:

Eastern Box Turtle | National Wildlife Federation

Eastern box turtle | Smithsonian's National Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute

Northeast PARC - Native Turtles of the Northeastern US

A MESSAGE FROM DCWRE LEADERSHIP

A very special thank you to **CHRIS STETZAR, AL RIZZO**, and **JON BAKER** for their generous donations of squirrel boxes, and cage making materials.

To all of the volunteers that assisted this past year with incoming phone calls, animal transport, wildlife rehabilitation, and other functions that keep DCWRE operating - you are our most valuable asset, and we appreciate you all more than you know!

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/

DCWRE Leadership

- President: Edna Stetzar
- President-Elect: Tonyea Mead
- Past President: Jean Taylor
- Secretary: Cathy Martin
- Treasurer: Jean Taylor