Quarter 1 - 2026

Editor: E. Stetzar

DELAWARE COUNCIL OF WILDLIFE REHABILITATORS & EDUCATORS

LICENSED IN THE STATE OF DELAWARE

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DCWRE NEWS

REFLECTING BACK ON 2025

It was a challenging year with a large influx of animals in need of care, but also an extraordinary year of membership building, trainings, and administrative improvements. These accomplishments were made possible by the dedication, time, and effort of DCWRE members, officers, and board of directors, whose passion and dedication gave Delaware's wildlife a second chance. What an amazing team of volunteers!

2025 DCWRE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Rehabilitation

Received close to 1,000 wild animals into rehabilitation, including 15 different species native to Delaware: Red Fox, Beaver, Virginia Opossum, Striped Skunk, Groundhog, Eastern Cottontail, Eastern Gray Squirrel, Eastern Flying Squirrel, Little Brown Bat, Eastern Red Bat, Eastern Box Turtle, Diamondback Terrapin, Eastern Painted Turtle, Red-bellied Turtle, and Eastern Garter Snake. Handled over 3,000 calls about injured or orphaned wild animals.

Animal Housing Improvements

Built and placed 2 outdoor squirrel structures in each of Sussex and NCC County, and 1 NICU/Training structure in Kent County. DCWRE members also worked side by side with DE Master Naturalists to build 19 intermediate squirrel cages with a portion of the materials donated by **Jon Baker**. Also, **Al Rizzo** donated a dozen squirrel boxes and **Chris Stetzar** built and donated a squirrel nesting box.

Membership

DCWRE membership increased by 60%, including 17 new apprentice rehabilitators (4 in Sussex, 4 in NCC plus 2 assisting, 7 in Kent). Five members volunteered to transport wildlife from the public to DCWRE rehabilitators.

Administrative

Finalized an update of DCWRE Bylaws and made substantive changes to the DCWRE website. Al Rizzo joined the Board. Joint Board/Officer meetings began, to improve internal communication and keep the organization moving in a positive direction. DCWRE hats, T-shirts, and bags were developed to help garner more recognition of the organization. Business size cards with DCWRE information and a QR code were created to hand out to the public when transferring animals or at outreach events.

Education and Outreach

DCWRE's educational display was set up at 11 festivals. Educational programming was offered throughout the state reaching over 7,550 participants. Member **Jean Hedrich** gave 21 virtual box turtle presentations to 2,180 students. Four trainings were attended by 52 members, including the annual full day training held in the fall. WBOC broadcasted/interviewed DCWRE member **Vickie Henderson** about aquatic turtle rehabilitation.



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

DCWRE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH PLANNING

There are going to be many opportunities in 2026 for members to actively participate in DCWRE, by attending educational trainings, membership meetings, or helping at an outreach event. The educational series is designed to comprehensively cover the topics needed to ensure rehabilitators get a well-rounded education.

2026 MONTHLY TRAININGS - *Tentative* Schedule

MONTH	TOPIC	FORMAT[1]	TIME
March	Small Mammal Rehabilitation	Virtual	5:30pm-8:00pm
April	Eastern Cottontail Training	Virtual	6:00pm-7:00pm
May	Turtle Rehabilitation- aquatic and terrestrial	In-Person	6:00pm-8:00pm
June	Rabies vector species	Virtual	6:00pm-7:00pm
July and August	*No Training Planned*		
September	Wildlife Rehabilitation - Topic/Speaker TBD	In-Person	Full Day
October	Whitetail Deer - how to handle public calls	Virtual	6:00pm-7:00pm
November	IRWC Coffee Talk Series - Q&A	Virtual	6:00pm-7:00pm

[1]**Virtual sessions** will run approximately **one hour; In-person sessions** will be about **two hours** and centrally located to accommodate attendees from both the northern and southern parts of the state.



OUTREACH EVENTS

DCWRE sets up an informative educational display at events throughout the year. There is always a need for members to help educate the public at these events. Come for a few hours or volunteer for a longer shift!

Be on the lookout for correspondence about events that DCWRE is planning to participate in. Two annual events on the calendar are:

Blackbird Creek Fall Festival - St. Jones DNERR - 3rd Saturday in October
Coast Day - U of DE, Lewes Campus- 1st Sunday in October

Questions? Please contact **Tonyea Mead** at ercomead@aol.com.

CONTINUING EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

The International Wildlife Rehabilitation Council (IWRC) hosts a **free online** seminar each month called "**Coffee & Tea with IWRC**". The series provides wildlife rehabilitators with continuing education opportunities and a connection among the global community of rehabilitators.

You can tune into the March 19 seminar "*Ethical Risk Communication at the Human-Wildlife Interface"* or April 20 for "*Dial "W" for Wildlife: Tips for Managing Wildlife Hotlines"* by registering as noted below. If you are an IWRC member you can access past seminars via an **archive link** on the IWRC Coffee & Tea page, including '*Self Care & Coping Strategies for Animal Caretakers*' (January) and "*Wildlife in Social Media'* (February).

You **must register** to attend free live' sessions: Coffee & Tea with IWRC - International Wildlife Rehabilitation Council

Make sure to use **your own name and email address** because those that attend the seminar 'live' (i.e., *not* the archived version) for at least 3/4 of the run time will receive a **Certificate of Attendance** from IWRC.
***Important NOTE*:** the seminar **start time** listed is UTC, which is **5 hours ahead** of the time in DE (EST).

WILDLIFE REAHABILITATION HEALTH NEWS

BOT FLIES

Botflies (aka Warble flies) are common parasitic flies that infest mammals to complete part of their life cycle. In the wild, botfly infestations do not usually kill healthy hosts. But, wild animals in rehabilitation are already compromised by injury or other illnesses making appropriate care of the fly infestation critical because of the potential for bacterial infections.

Infection Route is through the skin. Female flies deposit eggs on mammal fur or in areas a mammal may physically contact, such as the entrance of their den. When the eggs hatch the larvae burrow through the skin, enter via a cut in the skin, or through the mouth or nasal opening. As the larvae grows, lumps (or warbles) become visible under the skin. Once mature, the larvae pop out of skin through a small 'breathing' pore and fall to the ground and burrow into the soil; emerging weeks later as an adult fly.

Rehabilitation: At intake during the initial examination, look in the fur of mammals for small white eggs or newly hatched larvae which are grayish white and 2 to 4 mm long. These can be easily removed using a small comb or tweezers. Once the larvae have burrowed into the skin, they form visible 'warbles'. **Only experienced rehabilitators** should remove the larvae once they are in this stage to prevent further damage.

After removal care: Flush the empty wound where the larvae was housed with an antiseptic solution. Clean the wound daily and monitor for signs of infection (swelling, discharge, redness). Administer antibiotics to prevent infection, in consultation with an experienced rehabber.

For more Information:

Cuterebra Infestation in Small Animals - Integumentary System - Merck Veterinary Manual

EENY 401/IN984: Tree Squirrel Bot Fly, Cuterebra emasculator Fitch (Insecta: Diptera: Oestridae)

Bots and Warbles | Game Commission | Commonwealth of Pennsylvania



Bot Fly (Cuterebra family)





Mature larvae

A gray squirrel with visible 'warbles'



RABIES

Dr. Karen Lopez, Delaware's State Veterinarian, presented a virtual training "*Wildlife Diseases and Zoonoses"* on November 20, 2025. She spoke about Rabies, an **acute viral infection of the central nervous system**. The virus is transmitted via bites, scratches or direct contact with mucosa and saliva. Once **clinical signs** appear, the disease is almost always fatal. She described **two 'types' of behavior** that are symptomatic of **Rabid** animals:

1) '*Dumb*': an animal that is usually timid or scared acts friendly, has inability to swallow, salivates excessively, has drooping jaw, stumbles, is lethargic, has paralysis
2) '***Furious***' - normally friendly animal acts viciously aggressive, agitated, irritable, unpredictable.

DCWRE rehabilitators must be rabies vaccinated (with proof of a titer check every 2 years) to handle **Rabies Vector Species,** including: Bats, Raccoons, Foxes, Skunks, and Groundhogs. When **handling** a Rabies Vector Species it is imperative that personal protective equipment **(PPE)** is worn, including gloves, safety glasses, a face mask, and skin protection (i.e., long sleeved shirts, pants, shoes).

Post-exposure prophylaxis for humans: flush wound site with soap and water, contact your Doctor to determine if you need to receive human rabies globulin (HRIG), and a four-dose vaccine series. *Recommendations vary depending on previous rabies vaccine status and those that are immunocompromised.*

Mandatory Reporting: if exposed to a rabid animal, report to DE Div of Public Health at: **1-888-295-5156**.

Stay tuned *for more about Rabies in* ***2026*** *- its important that all DCWRE rehabbers keep current with this disease.*

WILDLIFE PATIENT HIGHLIGHTS - by Samantha Stetzar

The patients below are just a few of the many that were in the care of DCWRE rehabilitators in 2025. The beaver on the following page was named 'Hobby' by our FB followers, but its important to avoid personifying or giving wild animals human characteristics. It is paramount to keep wildlife 'wild' if these animals are to have a second chance at living free.

Gray Squirrel - An Astonishing Recovery



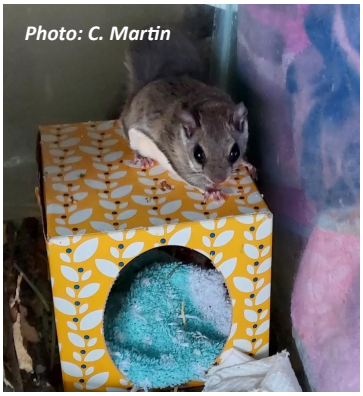
The large scar miraculously healed to just a thin scar



After release, he returned to visit the food cache I left for him.

Members that attended the September 2025 squirrel rehab training were shown a 6-week old male gray squirrel that had a large wound from mid-chest to his genitalia. The wound was leaking urine and other body fluids (perhaps stomach acid), causing his skin to burn and exacerbating the injury. Jean Taylor explained that his survival was unlikely, however, with her meticulous care and careful cleaning of the wound, he started to heal. She transferred his care to me, her apprentice, and I continued to feed formula and then introduced natural foods such as acorns, mushrooms, hickory nuts, supplemented with rodent block, and small amounts of fruits and vegetables. When he was weaned and ready for release (about 10 weeks old), the scar had healed to a thin red line. He was released in a wooded area. I saw him return to a food cache I left for him, multiple times. His recovery is a testament to the resilience of nature and how proper wound care and nutrition can make a world of difference!

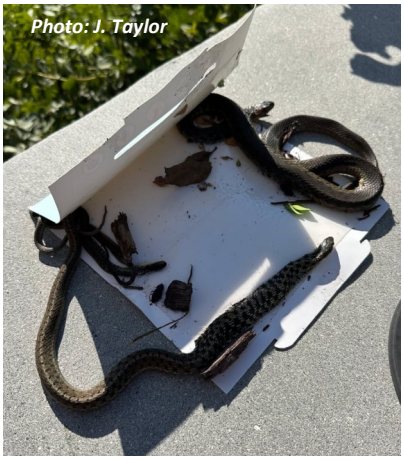
Eastern Flying Squirrels - A Need to Overwinter



I visited DCWRE rehabber Cathy Martin to learn how she was overwintering an adult Eastern Flying Squirrel she received in November, and three adolescents she got in December (2025). Flying Squirrels do not hibernate, but survive winter through communal nesting, accumulated body fat, and consuming food they gathered and stored. It was too late in the year for Cathy to release them. Not only was their natural food more scarce, but there wasn't enough time for them to gather and cache enough food for the winter.

I watched as Cathy put a variety of food items in their cage - fruits, vegetables, rodent block, hickory nuts, tree buds, and lichens. They occasionally get mealworms or waxworms too. This was their food 'cache'. Their large luminous eyes (they are nocturnal) glinted with curiosity as they poked their heads out of the tissue box serving as a 'nest cavity'. Flying Squirrel tend to be solitary, however, they nest communally in the winter to keep warm. Thus Cathy was able to place males and females together, providing fleece fabric and leaves for the nest. She also placed a wooden squirrel box in the corner of their enclosure. This is the box they will be taken in to the release site - a wooded area - in the spring of 2026.

Garter Snakes - Victims of Glue Traps



Two of three Eastern Garter Snake saved from glue traps in October 2025 are currently in the care of rehabber Jean Taylor. She said it took over four hours to carefully remove the snakes from the glue traps because their bodies and jaws became tangled in the glue as they wriggled to get free. Their scales were badly damaged and the smallest one had a significant jaw injury from the glue trap; it later died.

When I stopped by Jean's to see the surviving patients, they were displaying signs of brumation (i.e., preserving energy through decreased movement); burrowing in leaf litter and soil for insulation. They became considerably more active when it was feeding time! I helped Jean feed the snakes wriggling earthworms using a long pair of medical-grade tweezers. They swallowed the worms whole at a surprisingly quick pace. Garter Snakes do not use teeth to chew food like mammals, instead they devour prey whole through a series of muscle convulsions.

The two survivors will remain in rehab with Jean until they shed their skin and spring temperatures are consistently above 60°F. As the snakes heal, humidity and warm temperatures in their enclosure will aid with shedding. Snakes also need adequate hydration during shedding, so rehabbers should provide a bowl of fresh water.

NORTH AMERICAN BEAVER - *CASTOR CANADENSIS*

A beaver was found during early November 2025 in the Hobby Lobby parking lot in Middletown, DE. Beaver, especially those older than 1 year, are rarely brought to rehabilitators in Delaware, and this beaver was the first in many years. Presenting with a mild respiratory issue, it has since recovered under the care of DCWRE rehabber Cathy Martin.



Pumpkin is a nutrient packed food to give a beaver, along with branches from preferred tree species

Although beavers can't be sexed externally, its possible it's a young male that ventured out to find a new territory. At approximately 2 years old, maturing males are kicked out of their home den by the adult buck. Finding suitable habitat for a territory of its own, especially in a heavily developed area like Middletown, was likely difficult for this young semi-aquatic mammal, The beaver will remain with Cathy until spring because it likely doesn't have a home den to return to, and its difficult to establish one during the winter.



A Beaver's unique tail stores fat, and is used for balance, swimming, communication, and thermoregulation.

Cathy is feeding the beaver a variety of vegetables (corn cobs, kale, carrots, pumpkin), and giving it tree branches (red maple, dogwood, viburnum) to gnaw on. Beaver have an instinct to gnaw because wood pulp is essential for keeping their continually growing teeth trimmed. A beaver this size eats 1.25 - 5 lbs per day of highly nutritious inner bark. DCWRE Board Member Al Risso, several members of the public, and Weed Warriors doing invasive removal at Auburn Valley State Park, donated plenty of fresh branches. There is also a large 'kiddy' pool in the enclosure as a source of water and Cathy reports that the beaver spends a fair amount of time in it.

The biggest challenge will be finding a suitable location to release the beaver in the spring of 2026. Not only will the site need to have essential elements such as flowing water and preferred tree species, but enough space to establish a lodge to support a new family unit. Beaver are social animals that live in a 'colony' consisting of the breeding pair, yearlings, and kits. Its also important that the site is not known for furbearer trapping, to give the beaver the best chance at longer term survival.

The vital importance of beaver to the environment cannot be overstated. They are 'ecosystem engineers' and create habitat for other wildlife species. The lodges they create in streams block water flow and create an impoundment or pond ecosystem. This type of habitat supports many common species of wildlife, but can also harbor some of the rarest plant and animal species in the world.

INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT BEAVERS

Beaver are the 2nd largest living rodent, only Capybara (found in South America) are larger
Due to extensive trapping for their fur in the 19th century, Beaver were in danger of extinction
'Dam Analogs', human-made structures that mimic natural Beaver dams, are being used to replenish water regimes and restore wetland ecosystems in areas without beaver populations
The heaviest beaver on record weighed a whopping 110 lbs!
Their incisors have a thick enamel layer; iron compounds create the orange color
Within 1 hour of birth they take to the water in their lodge, and within 1 week they are skillful swimmers

NEW DCWRE MEMBER HIGHLIGHT - Sherry Hulse

DCWRE members represent a diverse swath of our community with various levels of experience with wildlife. One goal is to get to know each other better in 2026. Sherry Hulse joined DCWRE in 2025 and nicely agreed to an 'interview' to provide insight into what it's like being a new wildlife rehabilitator.



DCWRE: ***Why did you become a wildlife rehabilitator with DCWRE?***
Sherry: I've always loved animals. As a child I was nicknamed Ellie Mae after the girl on 'The Beverly Hillbillies' who had every animal under the sun. Late last summer my dogs found a cottontail nest in the yard. Unfortunately only two survived their discovery. I called DCWRE and that's when I met Lisa. She came out and picked up the two surviving babies and we got to talking. I told her that rehabilitating wildlife was something that I always had an interest in getting involved. Lisa said help was always needed and I was at a point in my life where I had the time to dedicate to it. Not long after, I filled out the paperwork to become an apprentice, and started this new chapter in my life.

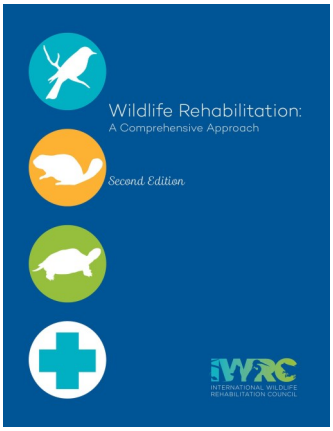
DCWRE: ***What species of wildlife have you been working with?***
Sherry: My first intake was eleven baby opossums. Each feeding took me approximately an hour and a half, so this all started with a bang for me. After the opossums, cottontails and squirrels followed. This past December I got the pre-exposure rabies vaccine, so now I can also work with rabies vector species.

DCWRE: *What are the most valuable lessons you have learned from your mentor, Tonyea Mead?*
Sherry: Tonyea has been so incredible! I couldn't have asked for a better fit as a mentor. It's comforting knowing I can draw off of her many years of knowledge and experience. One of my biggest problems was knowing what to say to someone who was bringing in an animal that had a poor prognosis. Tonyea told me to keep a positive but realistic tone. To let them know that I would do whatever I possibly could. These people took time out of their lives for these animals and many were emotionally invested. The least I could do is let them know, regardless of what the outcome may have been, their help and compassion for the animal was not in vain.

DCWRE: ***What advice would you give to someone new that wanted to become a wildlife rehabilitator?***
Sherry: Becoming a wildlife rehabilitator has given me a new purpose. It is rewarding in so many ways, but you have to be prepared for the heartbreak that comes along with it. A lot of these animals come in severely injured or sick. When I do lose a baby, I tell myself that for the brief time it was with me, it was safe, made as comfortable as possible and loved. It doesn't take away the sting of the loss, but it does give me some comfort. But when you do have a success, and the time comes for release, it makes every hour of sleep lost and every tear cried so worthwhile.

DCWRE: *Is there anything you'd like to add?*
Sherry: I want to thank everyone involved for everything you do. This is a great group of people. I haven't met too many other members, but those I have met were so friendly and helpful. They say it takes a village to raise a child. I'm learning that it takes a village to successfully rehab animals. And I have to say I'm very proud to be a part of this village.

These are books recommended for new rehabilitators:



1) Wildlife Rehabilitation - A comprehensive Approach- IWRC; $56 - $120.80

Wildlife Rehabilitation: A Comprehensive Approach 2nd Edition - International Wildlife Rehabilitation Council

2) Standards for Wildlife Rehabilitation - IWRC; $35 - $60

Standards for Wildlife Rehabilitation - International Wildlife Rehabilitation Council

3) American Wildlife & Plants - A Guide to Wildlife Food Habits (Martin, Zim, Nelson 1961)- Amazon, Ebay, etc.; $6 - $40

This is a classic that has no substitute at this time

MEET DCWRE LEADERSHIP



Edna Stetzar, President

Currently a Program Manager for the DE Division of Fish and Wildlife, Edna has worked as a Fish and Wildlife Biologist and been a member of DCWRE since the early 1990s. She has a B.S. in Natural Resources (Wildlife Management major) from OSU and M.S. of Biology from DSU. Her lifelong love of nature was fostered by her father who took her on walks in the forests and swimming in the lakes of Ohio. She strongly believes in connecting people with nature and fostering a sense of stewardship to value and protect habitat. In addition to being part of the DCWRE 'family', Edna enjoys hiking, scuba diving, world travel, gardening, and spending time with her husband, daughter, family, friends, and dog Lucy.

Tonyea Mead, President-Elect



Tonyea is a seasoned educator with a rich history in Delaware's public educational system and in non-formal education. With over 40 years of experience, Tonyea has held various roles, including elementary, middle, and high school teacher, building administrator, district science specialist, adjunct professor, education associate for science at the Delaware Department of Education, a subcontractor for a science company, and various environmental educator positions throughout the state including DE State Parks. She has received numerous state, national, and international awards, including the Fulbright Teaching Award, the Ross Armbrecht Outstanding STEM Advocacy Award, and Delaware Nature Society Outstanding Environmental Educator Award. She has been a wildlife rehabilitator for over 20 years and has been involved with bats since she was 8 years old.

Cathy Martin, Secretary



Cathy was a Fisheries Biologist with the DE Division of Fish & Wildlife for over 40 years. That is where she met DCWRE co-founder Dawn Webb and the two became good friends as both raised orphaned wildlife, before permits were required. With a few close friends, including Edna Stetzar, they organized active rehabilitators throughout DE to band together and network resulting in the DCWRE. Although Cathy has rehabbed most native mammal species and turtles; red fox, opossums, and box turtles are her favorite species to work with. Her rehab "career" began in 1988 and is still continuing! Cathy finds being part of the rehabilitation community very rewarding.

Jean Taylor, Treasurer



Jean's professional background is nursing, primarily emergent &/or urgent care, but she's also worked EENT, Ortho, and Neuro. She taught Medical Assistants and Surgical Technologists in a vocational training school and was part of the Delaware Medical Reserve Corp. Jean advocates for continuity of care and 'triage' for wildlife patients using evidence-based research. She also believes it is vital for rehabbers and the public to understand how to protect themselves against zoonotic diseases. Jean has always loved being in the woods and shares her passion for nature through environmental education, including past work as a naturalist for Kent County and currently with DE Master Naturalists. Jean LOVES spending time with her amazing family, pets, and friends and enjoys learning, reading, music, art (watercolor painting), travel, adventures with grandkids, and occasional quiet time.

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