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Editor: Edna Stetzar

DELAWARE COUNCIL OF WILDLIFE REHABILITATORS & EDUCATORS

LICENSED IN THE STATE OF DELAWARE

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DCWRE NEWS

Meet Junior DCWRE Member Nicola Gould

It's incredible what our youth can teach us about being kind and doing things for others. Nicola, an 11 year old from Middletown, was looking for a good deed 'Mitzvah' project for her Bat Mitzvah when she found DCWRE listed online amongst animal rescue operations. Being an animal lover herself, Nicola took the initiative to go door to door in her community to get donated items from the DCWRE Wishlist. She even made an Amazon WishList and developed a QR code to facilitate donating.



Nicola going door to door collecting donations



Nicola said she felt nervous at first knocking on doors, but friends, neighbors, and also people she met for the first time gave with enthusiasm and generosity. By the time Nicola was done, she had received paper towels, tissues, weigh scales, gloves, hay, hamster hammocks, dawn dish soap, clorox wipes and spray, scrub brushes, dog blankets, dog beds, a collapsable kennel, heating pads, vetericyn, pet food bowls, a tub of 32/40 formula, and $45!

DCWRE is proud to have someone like Nicola in our corner! Thank you so much!

DCWRE is excited to start a partnership with **Eco Plastic Products of Delaware** (ECOP). Also a 501(c)3 non-profit, ECOP up-cycles post-consumer plastic waste into lumber products. They have offered to construct cages of various sizes for wildlife in our care using plastic waste that isn't easily recycled in our curbside bins, specifically those marked **#2, #4,** and **#5.**

If you would like to help us out, we will be collecting **cleaned** plastics at our future meetings, trainings and events. Make sure to **clean** the plastic of any food debris and check the small triangle to make sure it's a **#2, #4,** or **#5**.



ECOP also makes a variety of other weather-resistant products such as raised garden beds, bicycle racks, benches, picnic tables and more. Check out their webpage: Eco Plastic Products of Delaware | Recycle & Make a Difference

We think this is just such a genius way to keep waste out of the environment and make something useful!

Turtle Rehabilitation - May 28, 2026

A training for members, and for those interested in turtle rehabilitation was held on May 28 at the Collette Education Resources Center in Dover. Attendees gained first-hand experience in caring for injured turtles, from intake to release. The instructor, Cathy Martin, has been rehabilitating turtles for over 35 years. Although she specializes in box turtles, she has experience and knowledge with all of Delaware's native turtle species. The event was well attended with 34 participants, including staff and volunteers with the Center for the Inland Bays (CIB). DCWRE is working on developing a partnership with CIB as they have several special projects involving diamondback terrapins, which are found statewide in brackish water. Diamondback Terrapin Survey | Delaware Center for the Inland Bays



A post training survey of participants found that overall they were engaged and thought the instruction was informative. They specifically praised Cathy for her warmth, honesty, and genuine passion for the animals. This was a great first step to recruiting more turtle rehabbers which is desperately needed due to the number of turtles received by DCWRE. Participants want more hands-on demonstration of wound treatment and bandaging, so stay tuned for a future training, perhaps 'Turtle Rehab Training Part 2'!



Above: showing how to ID a snapping turtle

Below: A box turtle, easy to ID but can be mistaken by finders as a pond turtle.

Photo credits: Samantha Stetzar



Cottontail Rabbit Training - March 26 - Virtual

Peggy Hentz with Red Creek Wildlife Center provided instruction on Cottontail Rabbit rehabilitation. Cottontails are one of the more challenging species to rehabilitate because of their stress response and digestive issues. Peggy developed feeding and handling methods over many years and provided practical advice on how to increase the chances for release into the wild. Peggy advised rehabbers to assume all rabbits brought to them have wounds associated with a cat attack, as this is the most common injury. She also cautioned against unnecessary handling and to keep rabbits, both adults and young, warm and quiet at first to de-stress. They are susceptible to multiple forms of shock and it's the #1 killer of bunnies in rehab. Peggy swears by Valerian Root and its ability to calm stress. She gives rabbits in her care 2 drops every 12 hours, in their formula or by mouth. At 8 days old when they start dish feeding, she puts the Valerian Root on top of the formula (not mixed in). They actually like the taste! When they start eating greens, feed at a rate of 1 g of greens/1 gram of body weight/day. They especially love dandelion greens, which should be the bulk of the greens given. Peggy has a world of knowledge and the training was excellent - I took 6 pages of notes! Check out her book "*Raising the Neonatal Cottontail, 2nd edition*".



Questions on trainings? Contact Tonyea Mead, ercomead@aol.com

DCWRE OUTREACH EVENTS

Our members have been very busy educating the public about Delaware's native wildlife. A big thank you to everyone that pitched in. We are always looking for volunteers - come on out and have some fun!

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION	LED BY:
April 18	Nature Fest	*Trap Pond State Park*	Tonyea Mead and Bonnie Harris
April 22	**DCWRE Fundraiser with ECO Plastics Demo	*First State Brewery*	Jean Taylor, Cathy Martin, Tonyea Mead, Nicola Gould, DE Division of Fish and Wildlife
April 22	STEAM DAY Box Turtle Presentations *(300 students)*	*Capital School District* Grades 1-2 and 4-5	Jean Hedrich
May 2	Water Family Fest & Native Plant Sale	*James Farm Ecological Preserve*	Tonyea Mead and Phil Mead
May 6	Nature Walk with State Representative Alona Berry	*Prime Hook National Wildlife Refuge*	Tonyea Mead and Al Rizzo
May 13	Super Science Day Eastern Box Turtle *(250 students)*	*Hartley Elementary*	Jean Hedrich
May 20	STEAM Career Day *(300 Students)*	*Delaware Museum of Nature and Science*	Tonyea Mead and Josh Worth
May 28	Eastern Box Turtle *(23 students)*	*Mount Pleasant Elementary* Brandywine School District 2nd Grade	Jean Hedrich

**DCWRE FUNDRAISER - First State Brewery *Jordan Brown*

On Wednesday, April 22, we held our first ever fundraiser at Middletown's First State Brewing Company, a locally-owned brewery featuring elevated American gastropub fare with locations in both Middletown and Rehoboth Beach. First State, like many other establishments, offers a "Dine & Donate" fundraising opportunity for select non-profit organizations, schools, and sports clubs. The fundraiser is held on a specific date and the restaurant donates 20% of Net Sales from participating guests (guests must present a flyer at the time of check out to be eligible) to the featured group.

The fundraiser was supported by not only DCWRE Board and Officers but also members, their families and friends. A large group of DNREC Division of Fish & Wildlife's staff came out to show their support. A table was set up near the entrance with information about DCWRE and from our friends at Eco-plastic Products (https://www.ecoplasticproducts.org/our-story). Many members of the public dropped by to say hello and get information from both organizations.

We are happy to report that through this fundraiser, DCWRE raised $236.81. Fundraisers such as these, that are relatively passive, are a great way to earn money that supports our goals to educate the public, promote respect for wildlife, rehabilitate orphaned or injured wildlife, and provide continuing education and training opportunities to our members. We look forward to hosting more fundraisers like this in each county to be more accessible by members and constituents state-wide.

WILDLIFE REHABILITATION HEALTH NEWS

CHRONIC WASTING DISORDER OR DISEASE (CWD)

CWD is a **neurodegenerative disease** that affects members of the Cervidae family (deer, elk, moose). Caused by infectious, misfolded proteins called Prions, the disease leads to dysfunction and ultimately death by secondary causes (e.g. starvation, pneumonia, drowning, etc.). There is no effective treatment or vaccine and **CWD is always fatal**.

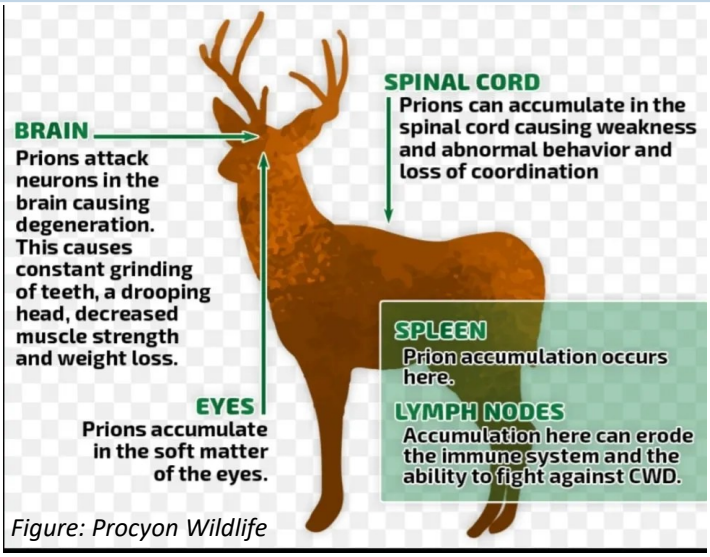


Figure: Procyon Wildlife

Symptoms: Early signs include difficulty moving, decreased interactions, seemingly loss of awareness. As it advances: chronic weight loss, tremors, repetitive walking patterns, listlessness, and lowered head posture. Behavioral changes, such as reduced fear of humans, are also common.

Transmission: CWD spreads directly animal-to-animal via saliva, urine, and feces. Because the incubation period of the disease can last up to 24 months, infected animals can appear healthy. The prions can also contaminate the soil, water, plants, carcasses, or even objects that come into contact with the animal. These prions can persist in the environment for years. CWD can also be transmitted from doe to fawn in utero or during birth and has been found in buck semen.

What Rehabbers Should Know:

The first confirmed case of CWD in Delaware was found in a White Tailed Deer in Sussex County on April 21, 2026. Because of the seriousness of this disease and to prevent its spread in Delaware, the Division of Fish and Wildlife suspended all rehabilitation of adult deer in Delaware. Because the disease has a low prevalence in deer less than 6 months old, fawns can be rehabilitated except for those found in the zones where CWD has been confirmed.

DCWRE does not currently have members that rehabilitate deer, but there are a few rehabbers licensed in Delaware that do and we refer the public to these people. DCWRE does still receive calls from the public and inquiries at our education and outreach events. Its vitally important that accurate information about this disease is provided. DNREC wants all sick, injured, or dead deer reported to them. Please refer all calls and all inquiries about this disease to DNREC, there is a link to a reporting form on their website at: Chronic Wasting Disease - DNREC .

SQUIRREL POX


Photo: S. Stetzar

Prevent the Spread

- *Avoid low quality food in your bird feeders - no peanuts!*
- *Disinfect feeders used by squirrels often*
- *Make it difficult for squirrels to access bird feeders: 5ft above ground, 7ft from surfaces, 9ft below hanging branches (aka the 5-7-9 rule)*
- *Reduce mosquito breeding habitat in your yard by often emptying anything holding standing water*

Squirrel Pox or 'fibromatosis' is caused by a virus in the *Parapoxvirus* genus. It causes smooth or blistery, red wart-like fibromas up to 25mm in size. This virus affects tree squirrels, with the highest prevalence in Eastern Gray squirrels. *Note: there is a different virus in the genus Sciuripoxvirus (SQPV) found in the United Kingdom that is carried by Gray Squirrels but life-threatening to Red Squirrels.*

The disease is first transmitted to squirrels by biting insects such as mosquitoes, flies, midges and fleas. It is highly contagious, any direct contact with an infected squirrel or it's bodily fluids can spread the virus to another squirrel. The virus can survive on surfaces, so there is risk of spreading at communal feeding spots or nests.

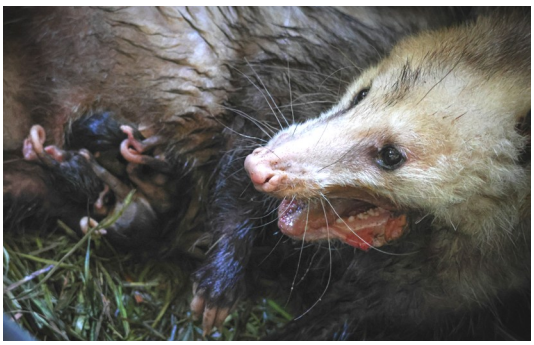
Squirrel pox is typically benign, but can cause problems if warts cover eyes, mouth, or genitalia. Occasionally, secondary complications occur, such as bacterial infections of the fibromas.
There are no vaccines for the virus, but a healthy squirrel with a strong immune system should recover in 4-8 weeks. If not, it is a candidate for wildlife rehabilitation.

WILDLIFE PATIENT HIGHLIGHTS

Samantha Stetzar

Below are a few patients we've received since the last newsletter. You may have seen some featured on our Facebook.

OPOSSUM:



A female Virginia Opossum was hit by a car in New Castle with 7 nursing joeys in her pouch. It seems most of the time, a caring person comes along and rescues the babies because the mother has died. But this fiery momma had a strong will to live! Although she did recover from her injuries and was released back into the wild, the babies in her pouch did not recover from the trauma of the accident. She was given a second chance to breed and hopefully raise another brood of young.



GROUNDHOG:

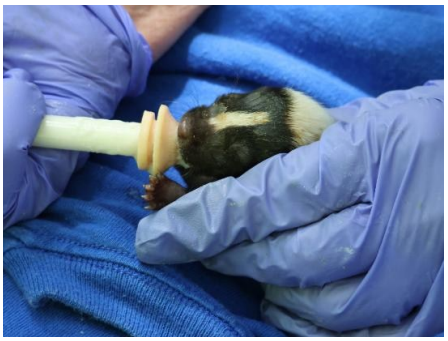
A female groundhog pup (or kit) was found lying on the side of the road near the Wilmington riverfront. We can't confirm what happened to her.

As the photographer, I can confirm she is as small as the photo suggests! When I stopped by Cathy Martin's house to take photos, the little whistle pig's high-pitched (and slightly off-key whistling) caught me by surprise, as did her loud munching! She was feeding on dandalions, although also still receiving specialized formula.

She is set to be released this summer and will have to construct a den of her own. Another one of our Kent County rehabilitators, Cathy Capone, is now caring for her until she's released in suitable habitat - not the city riverfront!

STRIPED SKUNK:





A litter of six striped skunk were discovered by a construction team iwhen they removed a shed in a Dover neighborhood.

When I visited the litter at rehabber Cathy Martin's, they were still too young to spray (their spray glands don't fully develop until three weeks). Each sibling had unique identifying striping on their fur, much like the patterns on turtle scutes or snowflake crystals. When it's time to feed, they make a pleasant chittering noise. At this young age Cathy was feeding them Fox Valley Skunk formula at a rate of 5% per gram of body weight (ex: 5ml of formula/100g of body wt). When she weans them off the formula, she'll first make a slurry with canned dog food so they can adjust to the diet change. Then they'll get other sources of protein, such as meal worms and hard boiled eggs. Because Skunks are omnivorous, they will also get various types of vegetables. They can't be released where they were found, so another release site will be needed.

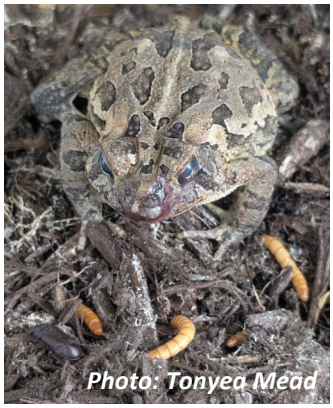


Photo: Tonyea Mead

FOWLER'S TOAD:

A Fowler's toad was brought to DCWRE rehabber Tonyea Mead in early July with minor lacerations from being hit with a lawn mower. The finder also donated $50 for its care.

The wounds were treated with an antibacterial spray and given time to heal. As you can see in this photo, it was fed meal worms, a great source of protein and similar to the wild invertebrates that comprise a large part of an adult toad's diet (the tadpoles eat algae and detritus mostly). It was released into a woodland after its wounds healed.

It warrants being highlighted here - this is one of few toad patients DCWRE has received, but a true testament that no wild animal is too small or too common to receive help! We are grateful to the finder for caring enough to give this toad another chance.

RED FOX *Vulpes vulpes*

Red Fox are fairly common patients in DCWRE rehabilitation, although just a handful of rehabbers have rabies vaccinations and the space and experience to care for them.



Red Fox kit with a white tip on its tail

Young fox are called 'kits' and when very young its not that easy for members of the public to distinguish them from a puppy or kitten. In fact, rehabber Cathy Martin received a young fox kit once from a veterinarian. A person had brought it in thinking it was a feral kitten! Grey Fox, Delaware's less commonly seen fox, look nearly identical to Red Fox at this age, but they lack the white tip on the tail.

The Red Fox kit in the photo to the right is estimated to be about 1-1.5 weeks old based on size, weight, and the fact that its eyes are still closed. Young kits such as the one in this photo are initially fed Smartwater, and then over the course of a few days formula is mixed in. At first the ratio is about 80% water to 20% formula, then the proportion of formula is increased to 40% and so on. Introducing formula this way gives their intestines a chance to acclimate from the milk they were receiving from their mother to the formula given in rehab. And it's a good rule of thumb to assume an animal coming into rehab is dehydrated and to treat accordingly.

Within a couple weeks the young fox kits will get baby food - such as 'chicken and vegetables' - but at first mixed into their formula as a slurry. Once they are used to receiving more solid foods, they will get canned chopped dog food (*not* the kind with chunks and gravy). They are also given an assortment of fruits and vegetables. Before they are released its important to give a varied diet because wild foxes are highly opportunistic. Their diet is based on seasonal availability of the small animals, fruits, and vegetation found in their natural environment.

DCWRE rehabber Cathy Martin received three fox kits recently, two were from Townsend and one from Magnolia. Although its beneficial to put conspecifics together, Division of Fish and Wildlife Policies do not allow fox kits from different counties to be comingled. When raising a solo fox kit, rehabbers should try to connect with another rehabber that also has kits from the same county. When raised alone, they tend to imprint on their caretaker even when the person is very careful and only minimally interacts with that animal. In fact, Cathy had a solo kit that got very excited when it heard her voice or saw her. It wagged its tail and made doglike noises. Luckily, she was able to find another rehabber with a kit from the same county to finish raising it. The kits learn from each other, instincts kick in, and wild behaviors develop. Its very important that the animals in rehabilitation receive very minimal interaction with their caretakers. Despite their friendly demeaner, like Cathy's solo kit, they are still wild animals and its our job to ensure they do not acclimate to us in any way. We've all heard the saying Keep the 'Wild' in Wildlife. Well, that is our mantra!

INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT RED FOX

They can leap up to 2 meters high (or about 6.5 feet!) high to catch prey
They are the most widely distributed terrestrial carnivore in the world, including all major landmasses in the Northern Hemisphere
They can make over 40 different sounds. Each one has a specific communicative function such as warning of danger, establishing territory, coordinating hunting, or communicating with their mates and offspring.
In addition to their facial whiskers, Red Fox have another set of 'whiskers' or specialized hairs on the lower part of their front legs. These hairs serve as a sensory tool and provide information about their immediate surroundings as they move through dense vegetation or tight spaces.



Early one morning while weeding my garden I was delighted to come across a nest of baby bunnies safely tucked within my strawberries. Having raised hundreds in the past I knew they weren't abandoned, and that I did not need to intervene.

But does the public hold that same knowledge? Not many do. Wildlife Rehabilitators receive thousands of calls annually regarding "abandoned" animals people stumble across during their everyday life; in their attic, mowing grass on the farm, walking their dog. I fondly remember the frantic phone call from a lady that found a bat on her deck. After listening to her story, I asked her if she knew how a bat takes flight. They can't take off like an airplane, they drop down and into flight. "Oh my" was her response. I instructed her how to safely move it to a nearby tree in the shade. Her return phone call to me that evening was glorious.

Delaware is home to 1.06 million people. Our state is comprised of 1,955 square miles of land and 534 square miles of water...that's some shocking numbers. Human habitats are overlapping native wildlife habitats at an alarming rate, and the numbers of animals taken in by rehabilitators has increased substantially.

Creating awareness through education is essential and can start with that phone call a rehabilitator receives from an individual needing help with an animal. Involving that individual from the intake of the animal to its release increases a respect for what we wildlife rehabilitators do. Even if the end result is not always what we had hoped for.

As we approach the fall and hopefully the off-season, relax a bit and take the time to gain some knowledge on how you can promote living in harmony with wildlife!

For more information on human/wildlife coexistence, click the orange links below:

- https://wildlifecoexistence.org

For the Future of Our Wild Earth

- https://www.worldwildlife.org

What is human-wildlife coexistence? | WWF

- https://defenders.org

Defenders of Wildlife

"Wildlife is a vital element in our life system. Coexistence is the only way forward." - Richard Leakey

***Note from the Editor**: Dawn Cox is a co-founding member of DCWRE, Board Director, wildlife rehabber, and mentor to many. She moved to Florida a few years ago and now leads a Wildlife Alliance in her community, continuing to educate about co-existing with wildlife. The alliance has over 100 members.*



Above: Eastern cottontails
Photo courtesy of Dawn Cox

Below: Whitetail doe nursing her fawn
Photo courtesy of Samantha Stetzar



A SUCCESS STORY


Photo: C. Martin

Remember the juvenile Beaver highlighted in the first 2026 Newsletter? We now have an exciting update on his return to the 'wild'!

Recall, a juvenile beaver was found in the Hobby Lobby parking lot in Middletown during November 2025 and brought to DCWRE rehabber Cathy Martin. He was one of DCWRE's most popular patients - a recap of his journey on our Facebook page caused engagement rates to skyrocket. His ability to handle a full size pumpkin was almost comical. Because of the timing of his intake into rehab, Cathy had to overwinter him. If you ask her, she'll tell you what a challenge it was to overwinter a semi-aquatic mammal with specialized feeding habitats, especially with the weather we had this past winter! The good news is that he got a second chance to live free - a testament to why we are all involved with DCWRE in the first place. ***Below is a behind the scenes exclusive***:


Photo: J. Taylor

In March 2026 me (Sam), Cathy, and Jean Taylor released the beaver with the assistance of Delaware's furbearer biologist, Joe Kessler. Using a basic pet carrier to transport the beaver, the four of us hiked about a mile or so into the site to find a good access spot along the waterway. It was important to use a waterway without an established beaver family, because males are territorial and will defend their lodges. This is where Joe was especially helpful - he put careful thought into a good site (which is not being disclosed to protect the beaver).



Reaching the release site was a slow process. Transporting an adult male beaver in a blanket-cloaked pet carrier, was awkward and heavy! If you're familiar with state wildlife areas, you know that some are not well-maintained for hiking so seed ticks are plentiful! But we did make our way to a beautiful floodplain where the creek flowed in ripples and pools and was teeming with *Vallisneria americana* (tape-grass), a native submerged aquatic plant. Dragonflies and damselflies buzzed about, lowering their ovipositors to tap the surface.



Cathy had done this before and handling a wild animal is second nature to her. I loved watching through my camera lens, as she coaxed him towards the water by tapping and shaking the carrier. The noise and vibration seemed to work. At first he was reluctant to leave the carrier. Then he slowly peeked out and cautiously let his feet touch the sedge-covered bank. He moseyed down the bank and slid into the cool water in one smooth stroke, albeit at a glacial pace! Once submerged, it was like he was given new life! He eagerly paddled a few circles in front of us in the creek before taking off upstream. We felt in that moment the real impact of our work - he was finally home.

Photos: S. Stetzar

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: Bonnie Harris