

A photograph of a dog running in a grassy field with a wooden fence in the background. The dog is seen from behind, running towards the right side of the frame. The fence is made of weathered wooden planks and runs across the top and right side of the image. The ground is covered in green grass and some dry leaves.

BACK TO NATURE:

Rescuing Wildlife

As a world biosphere reserve, the Niagara Escarpment is meant to be a place where native plants and animals can thrive in natural, wild settings, despite human communities, industry, agriculture, development, vehicles and recreational activities. Yet human pressures can lead to harm for wild birds and animals. Wildlife rescue centres help by nursing them to health and ideally, eventual release back into the wild.



◀ The Coyote Samson being released at his home farm after being treated for mange at Procyon Wildlife Rehabilitation and Education Centre. The owner of this property wanted the Coyote returned because Coyotes keep mice down, and the horses here are more disturbed by mice than Coyotes. Procyon always aims to release animals back in the area where they were found, according to Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry regulations. Procyon is celebrating its 10th anniversary.
PHOTO BY JENNIFER HOWARD.



▲ Two of the many orphaned Raccoons being raised at Procyon Wildlife until they are old enough for release to the wild. PHOTO BY MIKE DAVIS.



◀ One of the orphaned White-tailed Deer fawns being raised at Procyon for release at age 5 ½ months. Fawns can become imprinted on humans, so contact with them must be minimal. PHOTO BY MIKE DAVIS.

No government funding. Centres that rescue wildlife receive no government funding. They operate year-round, providing medical and nursing care, shelter, food, enrichment, and then transporting them for release, all thanks to volunteers, donations and grants. They do this for both orphans and mature birds and animals. Some centres focus on a specialty. Some may not be able to care for certain species, especially large carnivores or bears. Each organization may treat hundreds of animals a year, providing services free of charge.

“We receive calls

from people desperate for a solution to the many human/wildlife situations that arise,” explains Debra Spilar, director of Procyon Wildlife Rehabilitation and Education Centre in Beeton. “They call about orphaned animals they’ve found, injured animals, diseased or disoriented animals.”

What To Do

If you find an injured or orphaned bird or animal, be aware that some animal control and humane centres will euthanize wild animals because they are not prepared or equipped to provide the specialized, ongoing



▲ A Snowy Owl being fed meat at Procyon.
PHOTO PROVIDED BY PROCYON WILDLIFE.



▲ This orphaned Red Fox was raised at Procyon Wildlife until she was safely released to the wild. She was given the name Talitha. Procyon is rare in being able to accept eyes-closed babies.
PHOTO PROVIDED BY PROCYON WILDLIFE.

care that may be needed to bring them to safe release.

If you come upon an injured animal, call a wildlife centre. Don't email, as staff are usually busy caring for animals and not always able to monitor their inboxes. Staff will give instructions on first aid and help you get the animal to the right place for care. Generally, small animals can be placed in a deep cardboard box and kept quiet until brought to help. Large animals and birds of prey need special care.

Any young animal found near a dead mature female should be regarded as orphaned. Things are a little

more complicated for birds and animals that seem to be on their own. White-tailed Deer fawns are left alone by their mothers who return to them every four hours or so to nurse them. Solo fawns usually aren't orphaned or abandoned.

Other baby mammals can be returned to their nest or den, if known. Otherwise, they can be placed in a warm shallow box close to where they were found.

Young birds that are out of their nest or on the ground but can't fly, may also have watchful parents nearby. It is a myth that once touched by a human, baby birds are rejected by their adults. You can return

a fallen hatchling into its nest. If you can't find the nest, you can place it in a warm shallow box where it was discovered.

Mammals and birds that seem to be orphaned should be watched for four to six hours for the return of their mother. If they have not been cared for by their mother in that time, it's safe to consider them an orphan.

When in doubt, call an expert. To find a wildlife centre near you, look online at OntarioWildlifeRescue.ca or call them at 416.436.9892. This umbrella organization exists to help support a network of rehabilitators who work at saving wild animals. Their

website can direct you to the right centre which can care for the animal or bird you found.

How To Help

Financial donations are needed to keep wildlife rescue centres operating. Some can use volunteers on site or as drivers to pick up or transport animals for release. Medical supplies, food, bedding materials and other goods can be given. It's best to check their website or contact the centre to find out how you could help. Here are some needs from some centres near the Escarpment.



▲ Cottontail Rabbit being sheltered at Procyon. “We try to make the cages as natural as possible,” says Debra Spilar. PHOTO BY MIKE DAVIS.



▲ Two Opossums hiding in their enclosure. The open mouth is meant to intimidate, but if that doesn't work, Opossums will play dead in the hope of being ignored by predators. PHOTO BY MIKE DAVIS.

▼ White-tailed Deer fawn being released. PHOTO PROVIDED BY PROCYON WILDLIFE.



Procyon Wildlife

6441 7th Line, Beeton
 ON L0G 1A0
 905.729.0033
 procyonwildlife.com
 Cheques payable to Procyon Wildlife. Donate online by PayPal or Canada Helps. Links are on their website. Wish list items: drivers for animal transfers and produce pickup; carpenters, maintenance and work-day helpers; sponsors for animals; shovels, rakes, brooms; bottles for returnable deposits; medical supplies; cleaning supplies, used Christmas trees, used Halloween pumpkins.

The Owl Foundation

4117 Twenty first St.,
 Vineland ON L0R 2E0
 905.562.5986
 theowlfoundation.ca
 Provides help for owls but can also care for other birds of prey like hawks and falcons. “Injured raptors need immediate attention by people trained and authorized to care for raptors,” explains

Rod MacFadyen, chair and manager. “Some permanently disabled owls are accepted as residents and become parents or foster parents of young birds that are releasable.”

Prefers cheques payable to The Owl Foundation but also accepts donations through Canada Helps and from direct credit card donations.

Sometimes needs towels, cleaning supplies, medical supplies and office supplies.

“Check with us before bringing them, in case we can't accept what is being offered,” says Rod. “Send inquiries to owlmail@sympatico.ca.”

Bear Creek Exotic Wildlife Sanctuary

8633 10th Line of Essa
 Township, Barrie ON L4M 4S4
 705.721.4730
 bearcreeksanctuary.com
 Can care for coyote, fox, groundhog, porcupine, possum, raccoon, skunk, squirrel, turtle, weasel, wolf. “Aside from our rehabilitation facility, our sanctuary has

been home for permanent placement of native and exotic species for 30 years,” explains Mary Barros.

Needed are donations of supplies and materials such as lumber, fencing, towels, linens, gift cards for building materials, dog and cat food, vehicles for animal transports. Financial donations are appreciated, especially cheques. Electronic donations are easy but Mary notes that organizations providing this service take a percentage of the donation. “Direct donations are the best way for the full amount to be used.”

Hobbitstee Wildlife Refuge

1226 Concession 4 Walpole,
 Jarvis ON N0A 1J0
 519.587.2980 hobbitstee.com
 Cheques made out to Hobbitstee Wildlife Refuge. E-transfers to chantal@hobbitstee.com. Wish list items are on their website and on Amazon.



▲ A Raccoon being released to the wild.
PHOTO PROVIDED BY PROCYON WILDLIFE.

Shades of Hope Wildlife Refuge

P.O. Box 87, Pepperlaw ON L0E 1N0
705.437.4654 shadesofhope.ca
Cheques payable to Shades of Hope.
Donations available through their website.
They have a wish list on Amazon.

National Wildlife Centre

P.O. Box 192 Caledon East, ON L7C 3L9
416.577.4372 nationalwildlifecentre.ca
Currently operate an accredited
mobile wildlife clinic to help other

wildlife rehabilitators. Recently
acquired 100 acres of land.

“Our vision is to build a Centre
of Excellence for wildlife medicine,
surgery, rehabilitation, and education in
Caledon,” declares Sherri Cox, a wildlife
veterinarian. Fundraising goal is \$5
million. Cheques payable to National
Wildlife Centre or donate through
their website or Canada Helps. Will
need volunteer skilled tradespeople
to help build the hospital. **NEV**

OTHER ESCARPMENT-AREA WILDLIFE CENTRES

DUNDAS:
Dundas Turtle Watch
289.775.1351;
evenings call 905.627.8917

GRIMSBY:
Open Sky
Raptor Foundation
905.643.1391

GRIMSBY:
Urban Wildlife Care
23 Betts Ave., Grimsby ON
L3M 2S7
905.818.5708
urbanwildlifecare.com

LIVELY, NEAR SUDBURY:
Wild at Heart Wildlife
Refuge
95 White Rd., Lively ON
P3Y 1C3
705.692.4478
wahrefugecentre.org

PETERBOROUGH:
Ontario Turtle
Conservation Centre
4-1434 Chemong Rd.,
Selwyn ON K9J 6X2
Help for turtles
all across Ontario
705.741.5000
ontarioturtle.ca

TORONTO:
Toronto Wildlife Centre
4-60 Carl Hall Rd.,
Toronto ON M3K 2C1
416.631.0662
torontowildlifecentre.com

For more information
about these centres, see
OntarioWildlifeRescue.ca
or call 416.436.9892.

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