

So You Want to be a Wildlife Rehabilitator?

It is important to consider the responsibilities and challenges of being a wildlife rehabilitator before embarking on the journey. Ask yourself the following questions. There are no right or wrong answers. Remember that your wildlife rehab journey does not need to look exactly like anyone else's, but there are some unchangeable realities of the job. If becoming a wildlife rehabilitator doesn't work with your life right now, still share your gifts by getting involved in other ways (volunteer, capture & transport, education, board service, etc).

1. Do you want to sub-permittee, join an existing rehabilitator, or rehab independently?

a. Sub-Permittee

i. Pros:

ii. Cons:

b. Join an existing rehabilitator

i. Pros:

ii. Cons:

c. Rehab independently

i. Pros:

ii. Cons:

2. Do you have the time?
 - a. Keep track for one day- what do you do with your 24 hours? What time is left unfilled? What things could be changed or eliminated to make room for wildlife rehab?
 - b. Using your knowledge from working with an existing rehabilitator, and thinking about the species you want to do- how much time and when do you need time for wildlife rehab? How does this change daily, weekly, and seasonally?
3. Do you have the space?
 - a. What space do you have indoors for wildlife rehab? Is that space away from pets and family members? Map out how much space you need for caging and supplies at all stages of the rehab process.
 - b. What space do you have outdoors for wildlife rehab? What are the minimum standards for outdoor caging for the species you want to work with? Do you have areas outside for caging that are not viewable to the public walking/driving by?
 - c. What space will you use for patient admissions from the public? Indoors or outdoors?

4. Are you a people person, an animal person, or both?
 - a. What parts of wildlife rehab are good for an “animal person”?

 - b. What parts of wildlife rehab are good for a “people person”?

5. If rehabbing independently, do you want to be a business owner and entrepreneur by starting your own non-profit? If not, how will you fund your work?
 - a. How much does wildlife rehab of the species you want to work with cost?
 - i. Start Up Costs:

 - ii. Ongoing Costs:

 - b. What additional knowledge and skills do you need before starting a non-profit?

6. Do you know what the job looks like?
 - a. What zoonotic diseases are a concern for the species you want to work with? How will you protect yourself, your pets, and your family?
 - b. Are you able to handle seeing gory injuries and live parasites on wildlife? If not, how will you handle these cases?
 - c. Do you understand the requirements of different species? What species would fit best with your current life?
 - d. Can you emotionally handle releasing animals that you have worked with? How will you cope with the tough cases?
 - e. Can you emotionally handle euthanizing animals? Can you make those decisions with the wild animal's best interests and quality of life as the priority?

- f. How will you cope with the cases where patients die, despite your best efforts?

- g. How will you handle people who are angry or unkind when they call about a wild animal? How will you handle people who have harmed a wild animal?

- 7. Do you have the patience to teach people about wildlife when they call you? Can you effectively talk someone through reuniting baby wildlife? Can you teach someone how to safely contain and transport a wild animal? Do you have the knowledge or resources to give good advice?

- 8. Who is in your support network? (fellow rehabilitators, volunteers, family, friends outside of rehab, etc.) What do each of these people offer you? (emotional support, expertise, accountability, skills you do not have, etc.)

9. Can you set boundaries before you start? What will those boundaries be? Who will hold you accountable and support you?

10. What is your personal mission? Why do you want to become a wildlife rehabilitator?