

Orphaned animals

Suburban growth clashes with wildlife

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

Suburban living can be treacherous, especially if you're an animal at the mercy of traffic and other dangers of human life. At this time of the year, the result is a lot of orphaned baby animals.

While statistics aren't available, an increasing number of Oakland County residents are stumbling upon orphaned raccoons, squirrels and birds — the result of the growing clash between suburban growth and wildlife.

"It's becoming more apparent. I don't know if I'm becoming more well known for what I do, but more and more people are calling for help with baby animals they find," said Farmington Hills resident Beverly Cornell.

Cornell is one of many licensed by the state Department of Natural Re-

sources to care for wild orphaned animals. The rehabilitators raise the animals and release them back to the wild when they are old enough or healthy enough to be on their own.

The season for wild animal babies generally runs through the end of May. Squirrels generally have babies in the spring and fall, and so do certain types of birds. Raccoons have their young in the spring, as do ducks, Cornell said.

She is already caring for 13 orphaned animals, including squirrels and raccoons. That's not including the five bunnies she had, the result of a mother's and parent's desire to make their children happy — for a short time.

Some believe that orphaned wildlife should be left solely to nature's ways. But Cornell disagrees.

"That may be nature. But we don't. People are encroaching on the

animals. Some animals, such as raccoons, have become adoptable to suburban living."

One of many people is to immediately pick up baby animals when they see them, but state Department of Natural Resources Lt. Cliff Johnson advises against that. "If you don't see their mom, leave them alone. If you pick them up and take them home immediately, then you have orphaned them."

The mother won't be around if people are around. Animal mothers are not like human mothers. They will leave their babies if they sense danger, Johnson said.

Cornell suggests leaving the animal alone for several hours to be sure the mother is not returning. "Parents will come back if people aren't around. Guard the babies, but don't stand over them. Nine out of 10 times, the babies' parents will come back."

IF THE mother is dead or has not returned after several hours, Johnson said the Oakland County DNR office (466-1500, ext. 666-500) should be called to have the animals placed with one of many DNR wildlife rehabilitation specialists.

Orphaned animals should be given to a rehab specialist within 24 hours of being found, particularly if their eyes are still closed. If the eyes are closed, that means the animals are unable to eliminate wastes on their own and could die from uremic poisoning, Cornell said.

Rehabilitators will not retrieve animals from the mouths of their mothers if they need to be taken from a chimney, porch or attic, for example.

While calling the DNR for a rehabilitator, residents also should call a licensed control company that can live-trap the animals and release them to the wild if the animals are old enough.

How to help baby animals:

Here are some immediate steps that can be taken to help orphaned wildlife babies and newborns:

- Immediately call the state Department of Natural Resources Oakland County office, 666-1500, to have the babies placed with a rehabilitation specialist.

- If the animal does not feel warm, its temperature must be brought back to normal immediately. Animal temperatures are higher than humans. Keep the animal warm with a heating pad wrapped in layers of toweling to prevent burning. A hot water bottle will work.

- If the animal's skin tents when pinched, it is likely dehydrated. It

should be given a small solution from an oral syringe every 15 minutes for an hour. The solution consists of 1 tsp. of salt and three lbs. of sugar in a quart of warm water.

- Holding the animal is simple. You can place it in a cardboard box with newspaper and soft flannel or towel. Heat, either from a heating pad or protected light bulb, should be provided.

- If it will be a couple days before the animal can be placed with a rehabilitation specialist, the animal must be fed properly. Ignorance about feeding can be deadly to the

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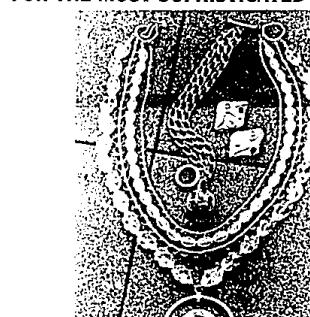
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