



Mother's care: Bev Cornell, a Farmington Hills wildlife rehabilitator, keeps six abandoned baby bunnies in a homemade sleeping bag so they can keep warm and snuggle each other.

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across abandoned baby animals — will no longer take her usual menagerie of wildlife. Baby wild bunnies are all she'll take. And she has changed her state DNR license to so just that.

"I will miss it," said Cornell, whose husband Tom has helped her through the years. "I miss these raccoons already. There is nothing like raising a silly raccoon with that personality. They are so endearing."

But take heart all those who have relied on Cornell's gracious acceptance of the abandoned babies and made it an unpaid career. Cornell isn't going anywhere and says she's more than willing to give her help when asked. She's also helping train two women, one from Farmington Hills, under her license, who are required to train for one year.

On May 4, Cornell received six, two-week-old baby bunnies. Their mother was killed by a dog. The dog's owner contacted Cornell. "They're infants for a long time," said Cornell, who keeps the six in a homemade sleeping bag to keep them warm and to allow them to snuggle with each other.

And just as unexpectedly, Cornell received another six bunnies Friday. This group is a few days younger than the first six. This week Cornell was busy converting her baby raccoon cage in her back yard into a bunny run for her brood, which will be released to the wild in roughly five weeks.

"As soon as the white spot on their foreheads disappears, it's time to release them," Cornell said. "With bunnies, any stress and they just don't do well."

It's those kind of details about wild baby animals for which Cornell is known. Altogether she's taken in 12 raccoons, 18 squirrels, 25, 30 birds, six ducks, one goose and rabbits.

She's beginning to write a book on the information she's learned day by day caring for the animals. Cornell also recently gave a presentation to a standing-room-only crowd at the Spivey House in Herk Co. Park for interested residents and other rehabilitators. The talk was hosted by the National Farm and Garden Association. "There's so many little details."

For example, you know that age-old myth that once a human touches a baby animal, the mother won't return? It's not true, according to Cornell. You just have to know certain things about certain animals. And that's what Cornell wants people to learn.

Not too long ago, Cornell heard an awful squeaking outside her house. She went outside and noticed that a baby squirrel had fallen out of its nest in a nearby tree. The baby had dropped into the neighbor's yard, where there was a dog. To distract the dog from her baby, the mother squirrel ran back and

forth on the fence. Finally, when it was safe, the mother jumped down, grabbed her baby and got back into the nest.

"I raised the mother squirrel. She looked at me like, 'do something,'" Cornell said.

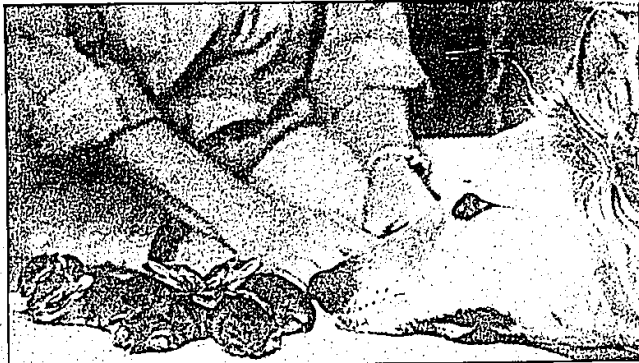
There's just a lot of bits and pieces of information that you pick up when you care for animals over a long period of time. For example, did you know that if you try to feed or give a drink to a baby animal while it's cold, it will probably die? How about the little bird you find on the ground chirping and flapping its wings? It's likely not abandoned. It could be that it's parents probably kicked it out of the nest for flying lessons.

Also keep in mind that it is now illegal to raise skunks as baby ones, you might find. Unlike other animals, skunks can carry the rabies virus for more than a year without showing outward signs of illness.

Cornell is full of information. But she is steadfast in urging people to seek help immediately if they come across an abandoned baby animal. Remember, if you feed a baby animal the wrong food, they could die.

Most of all, as cute as a baby raccoon or bunny is, it doesn't belong to you, and you can't keep it.

"They are wild animals. You want them to remain wild," Cornell said.



Watchful eye: Bev Cornell's dog, Bristol, keeps an eye on six abandoned baby bunnies. Bristol's care and attention is unusual for most dogs, so don't let your dog try it.

Tips in caring for baby animals

BY JOANNE MALINZESKI
STAFF WRITER

It's the season when there's a good chance you could find abandoned baby animals — raccoons, squirrels, bunnies, ducks, geese and birds. If you're like most people, you'll pick them up and try to help.

But more than likely you're not sure what to do and you'll have to seek help. The state Department of Natural Resources, which can put you in touch with a wildlife rehabilitator, is your best shot.

In the interim, however, here are a few tips and do's and don'ts from Farmington Hills wildlife rehabilitator Bev Cornell:

- **Birds:** determine if indeed the baby is abandoned. Twenty-four hours is too long to leave a baby. If you find a baby on the ground with its eyes closed, put it back in the nest if you can find it. If not, make a foster nest with a margarine tub and paper towels. "The mother will come down and take care of the babies."

- **Rabbits:** observe the rabbit nest for 24 hours. You won't always see the mother rabbit. "They are hit and run mothers. They don't necessarily hide their babies." If the bunnies in a 24-hour period are breathing well and are warm, they're OK. If you discover they are having difficulty breathing and are cold, you should take them and keep them warm.

- **Squirrels:** If a baby's eyes are closed put them back in the nest or leave them on the ground. Some-

times, baby squirrels fall out of a nest. The mother will return. "If she doesn't come back in 6-10 hours, it's time to rescue a squirrel."

- **Raccoons:** If you see a baby without its mother in the daytime, you have an abandoned baby. Raccoons generally aren't out in daylight.

Remember, before you intend to pick up any wildlife babies, wear gloves and be careful. After picking them up, wash your hands well.

If you have determined a baby is abandoned, there's some basic things you have to do. First, keep the baby warm. Immediately, you can do that with your own body heat. With a raccoon, for example, put the baby carefully in a box. Use a heating pad, set on warm, under the box, or use a light for warmth. Use a towel between the heating pad and box.

With baby bunnies, raccoons and squirrels, pinch the skin lightly. If it tents, the baby is dehydrated. With an eye dropper give it a solution of one teaspoon of salt and three tablespoons of sugar in a quart of bottled water. Babies should be given a small amount of the solution every 15 minutes over the next hour.

Feeding babies is a little more complicated. Bunnies, for example, must be given KMR, which is orphan kitten formula, with evaporated milk and liquid pet vitamins.

For help, Cornell suggests that anyone who finds an abandoned baby should call Sgt. Jeff Pendergaff at the DNR in Livonia at 953-9241 immediately. As always, Cornell said she will offer her help.

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Grand River to undergo repaving

State transportation officials are planning to resurface Grand River Avenue through the city of Farmington from Halsted Road in the west to Hawthorne Street on the east.

Hawthorne is at the city's eastern border, one block east of the southern leg of Orchard Lake Road.

Timelines are not yet available on the resurfacing project, which will include milling of 1 1/2 inches of existing pavement, repair of road joints and application of new asphalt.

The city must pay \$2,300 of the project, which is the

estimated cost of paving the eastbound parking lane on Grand River in the central business district. Under new state policies, the state will not pay for portions of a state trunkline used for parking, said City Manager Robert Deadman. The city council approved the expenditure on May 4.

Deadman said the city has deemed parking on the trunkline necessary to maintaining a pedestrian-oriented downtown. Parking is also convenient for downtown merchants, and separates downtown pedestrians from passing vehicles.