

# Volunteer Handbook

Thank you for volunteering with Sonoma County Wildlife Rescue. This handbook goes over our policies and procedures. While many activities are best learned while volunteering, we'll go over the volunteer opportunities available here at SCWR and our expectations. Wildlife Rehabilitation is very rewarding and offers a unique view into the lives of wildlife. However, it's not for everyone. We aim to give you an idea of the opportunities available and how you might find a place here!

## **Mission:**

Sonoma County Wildlife Rescue is dedicated to the rescue, rehabilitation, and release of sick, injured, and orphaned wildlife and the promotion of understanding and appreciation of wildlife through our education outreach program.

*What does this mean?*

Short version: We help wildlife with people problems and people with wildlife problems. 😊

Everything we do comes back to our mission statement. We want a Sonoma County where people can humanely coexist with their wildlife neighbors and we help to promote that through education and assisting wildlife with medical needs. We operate an exclusion service to humanely evict wildlife who are living in people's homes. We also are promoting ways ranchers and farmers can protect their domestic animals from predators to protect predators from retaliation.

## **Overview**

Our organization began as an all volunteer-organization. Once we had a physical address, we began to be able to care for more and more animals. Finally, we reached the point where we needed full time staff. Staff are here to support volunteers. We could not possibly do everything at SCWR without volunteer help. Staff are here to perform functions that require a greater time commitment than volunteers can provide. Staff are also here with skills to teach volunteers. We have about 100 semi-active volunteers, and a core group of about 40 dedicated volunteers. We teach nine orientations every year to give interested people like you the opportunity to learn more.

## **So you want to be a Wildlife Rehabilitator...**

1. Commitment is the most important thing for us. Animals need care 365 days a year. We rely on volunteers to help us care for the animals and they're counting on you to show up! The best way to learn is to keep showing up and helping out. There's always something going on here.
2. We NEVER play with the animals. Wildlife are scared of us, and stress is the number one cause of death for rehabilitating wildlife. Wildlife Rehabilitation looks a lot like alien abduction to wildlife. Think about it. Big strange looking creatures put you in a fast moving box, conduct medical procedures on you, and eventually put you back where you came from. Imagine how scared you'd be if you were abducted by aliens! We ARE the aliens, so we try and limit the time

we interact and are visible to the animals we care for. If you'd like to play with the animals, a shelter would love your help.

3. It isn't glamorous. If you work with the animals, you will be peed on, pooped on, possibly vomited on, and even sprayed by skunks. (Good thing all these substances wash off pretty well, and humans are washable!) We serve our animals natural diets, which means cutting up mice, rats, and quail. During baby season, all we seem to do is feed babies, wipe tails, and do laundry, laundry, and more laundry.
4. It can be dangerous. Wildlife being handled think that they are about to be eaten and act accordingly. They use their teeth, claws, and beaks to protect themselves. All wildlife have some kind of parasites. Some parasites and animal diseases are transmissible to humans. We provide safety equipment and training, but you need to provide common sense and the awareness that you could be injured by an animal.
5. We must manage our emotions. Not every animal that comes in the door survives. Sometimes an animal must be euthanized. We strive to put our personal feelings aside and focus on the best possible outcome for the animal, even if that outcome is hard on us.
6. Rewarding doesn't even begin to describe it. Human activities cause most of the injured and orphaned animals we receive, but as a volunteer, you're helping to balance the scales. Each animal we put back where it came from is another step to a sounder planet and a more sustainable future. There's nothing like seeing an animal heal and able to go home.

### **Application**

We have our most current volunteer application available on our website to print off. To become a volunteer you must fill out the application and become a supporter of SCWR.

- Individual Supporterships are \$85, and include a badge and t-shirt.
- Family Supporterships are \$1000, and include two badges and two t-shirts. Additional badges and t-shirts are available for purchase.
- Scholarships are available for those with financial need.

### **Training**

We provide a combination of both in class and on the job training for each position.

All volunteers must complete the following classes:

- Volunteer Orientation
- Policies and Regulations

Animal Care Volunteers must also take:

- Introduction to Wildlife Rehabilitation

Rescue Team Volunteers must also take:

- Introduction to Wildlife Rehabilitation
- Wildlife Rescue and Restraint

Docents and Hotline Volunteers must schedule a one-on-one training for these positions.

Additional classes are available to improve your skills and learn new and interesting things! Please see the schedule on our website for the whole class schedule.

### **Positions**

We offer a variety of volunteer opportunities. Most people who volunteer with us do between 1-3 positions. It all sounds exciting, but starting with one commitment and adding others as your interests and availability change is usually the best route.

1. Hospital Assistant
2. General Animal Care
3. Feeder
4. Office Assistant
5. Education Assistant
6. Docent
7. Gardener
8. Maintenance
9. Hotline
10. Rescue Team
11. Foster Parent
12. Tech Support
13. Grant Writer
14. Fundraising/Event Planning
15. Junior Volunteer

Hospital Assistant

- Clean the cages of patients, prepare diets for patients, clean the hospital, assist with medicating animals and medical procedures
- Commitment: 4 hours per week, set shift from 9:30am-1pm ( Or until finished- winter is usually earlier, summer sometimes goes later). Limited positions available.

## General Animal Care

- Assist the animal care staff with whatever needs doing. Feed babies, clean ponds, clean outdoor enclosures, restrain animals for procedures, weigh animals, do dishes, do laundry.
- Commitment: 4 hours per week, schedules depend on staff need and intern schedule. Limited positions available.

## Feeder

- Prepare diets, including cutting up dead mice, rats, fish, and quail. Feed our outdoor animals and nursery animals, including our education animals and recovering wildlife. Monitor behavior, pick up poop, and record food offered and eaten. Do dishes. You need to be able to bend, stoop, lift up to 50 lbs, and keep a lot of information in your mind.
- Commitment: 2-6 hours per week. (Average 4 hours) Shifts start at 10 am. Limited positions available.

## Office Assistant

- Answer the phone. Assist staff with computer tasks and data entry. Help with sending thank-you letters. Make signs, posters, and laminate. Greet the public and assist with animal intake. Seasonally assist with mailouts.
- Commitment: 2 hours or more per week preferred. Coming at the same time each week allows us to plan projects for you based on your skills and interests. Positions always open.

## Education Assistant

- Assist with presentations in classrooms or at SCWR. Do Powerpoint presentations, lead tours, lead games and activities.
- Set up a table for SCWR at community events. Staff our booth. Answer questions from the public about wildlife.
- Commitment: Variable depending on when schools schedule presentations. Expect 2 hours for a presentation and four hours for an event. Positions always open.

## Docent

- Lead tours of our wildlife community for the public and school groups
- Commitment: One Saturday tour per month (1.5 hours including set up and take down.) In Winter, tours are at 2 pm. Summer tours are at 12 and 2 pm. School tours are variable and usually during the week, during the day. Limited positions available.

## Gardener

- Use existing knowledge of growing vegetables, flowers, and fruit to help plan crops for the SCWR garden. Start seeds, plant starts, maintain beds.
- Or just show up to weed!
- Commitment: Varies according to schedule and skill. Positions always open.

## Maintenance

- Use existing carpentry, painting, plumbing, electrical, custodial, or other construction skills to assist with the maintenance of existing enclosures and facilities.
- Assist with building new structures, enclosures, and exhibits as needed.
- Commitment: Varies according to schedule and skill. Positions always open.

## Hotline

- Pick up messages about wildlife in need from a remote answering service every half hour during scheduled shift. Return messages and offer appropriate advice. Find rescue team members to rescue animals as needed.
- Commitment: One 4 hour shift per week. Limited positions available.

## Rescue Team

- Respond to hotline calls. Safely rescue animals in need and transport them to SCWR. Transport only is also often needed.
- Commitment: On-Call, respond as available. Must have own reliable vehicle, appropriate insurance and welding gloves. (Roughly \$12, available at Home Depot, Lowes, etc.) SCWR can provide a crate for transport. Positions always open.

## Foster Parent

- Care for orphaned wildlife babies until weaned. Species may include squirrel, raccoon, opossum, or skunk. SCWR provides appropriate caging, formula, syringes, nipples, mice, nuts, and fruit. Volunteer must have a scale that weighs in grams, a room where the babies can be kept separately from pets, and a heating pad without an automatic turn-off. (Best available online)
- Commitment: Intensive. Varies according to species, age of baby, and number of foster babies. Always expect multiple feedings throughout the day and sometimes night feedings. Positions always open.

## Tech Support

- Fix computer issues as they arise.
- Help staff update the website and facebook.
- Install new technology and teach the staff how to use and maintain it.
- Commitment: Varies according to schedule and skill. Positions always open.

## Grant Writer

- Find and apply for grants for SCWR projects.
- Commitment: Varies according to schedule and skill. Positions always open.

## Fundraiser/Event Planner

- Assist or lead in planning fundraising events for SCWR. We currently have one main event each year, Pints for Paws at Lagunitas.
- Help with set up or take down at the events
- Find additional event opportunities for SCWR. We are not looking to lead bake sales, quilt auctions, silent auctions or other small fundraisers. These are not sustainable in the long term for the amount of effort compared to the money raised. Lagunitas brings in between two and five thousand dollars each event, and we work really hard to make the event amazing. We expect your suggestions for fundraising events to be on that scale. You are welcome to do your own bake sale fundraising with your scout troop or classroom and donate the money to SCWR, but we are not putting staff and center resources into those kind of events.
- Commitment: Varies according to schedule and skill. Positions always open.

## Junior Volunteer

Junior Volunteers are special to us. We see the Junior Volunteer Program as a family commitment and expect the parent to come with their child and participate. Junior Volunteers must be 13 years of age or older. Junior Volunteers cannot handle wildlife on SCWR property, but can handle baby wildlife at home or domestic animals on site.

Below are Junior Volunteer Opportunities

- PEEP Animal Caretaker: Care for the domestic animals in our barnyard  
Commitment: One day per week, 1-2 hours on site. Time variable. Limited positions available
- Foster Parent- see above
- Gardening - see above
- Maintenance- see above
- Hospital Assistant- see above with the exception that the JV cannot handle patients, but can help with other aspects of care.
- Art- Commitment varies according to projects and skill.

## **So What Now?**

You've taken all your classes, you're ready to go to work, now what? Let us know! Email or a note is so much better than verbally. There is so much going on around here it is too easy to forget a verbal request. We periodically post openings, but often there are positions available without an

announcement. Email the Volunteer and Community Support Coordinator and they'll put you to work. Please make sure you have the required classes before trying to get into a specific position. We're serious about the classes. You need them to be safe and informed. Please also understand that as noted above, openings for some positions are limited. We may not have the specific volunteer opportunity you want available at the time you want it. Things change frequently around here and it may open up. In the meantime, try a different position. You never know, you may love it!

### **SCWR Policies**

We go over the policies and regulations of SCWR in detail in our Policies and Regulations class. Every few years we must reapply for an MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. This is a legal document which allows us to rehabilitate wildlife in the state of California only if we abide by its regulations. As these policies are covered elsewhere, we will not be listing them here. Here we will list a few policies we want to reinforce:

#### **No Harassment Policy**

In a spirit of courtesy, cooperation and decency, SCWR fully supports laws prohibiting harassment because of race, religion, color, national origin, ancestry, physical handicap, medical condition, marital status, age and/or sex, or sexual orientation and it seeks to maintain a workplace free of any such harassment. No such harassment will be tolerated. Any volunteer who feels he or she is being harassed, or is aware of harassment, should report it immediately to the Executive Director. If appropriate, a thorough, objective and confidential investigation will be undertaken.

#### **Professional Culture and Etiquette Expectations:**

In order to maintain an environment where members of the public feel they can trust us to care for their rescued animal, it is imperative that we behave as professionals, even when volunteering. Below are the staff and volunteer expectations for conduct

#### **General Conduct**

- Bring your positive and professional attitude, because complaining has a negative effect on everyone
- Dress professionally for your duties. Wear your SCWR t-shirt if possible.
- Communicate effectively and honestly. We do not gossip here.
- Emotional drama is unproductive and puts a strain on all others involved
- Personal hygiene and common cleanliness including handwashing after bathroom visits, coughing, sneezing and blowing your nose
- Work as a team and support and comfort your fellow workers
- We don't compete or brag, because that does not contribute to making our workplace a healthy environment.
- You are welcome to look anywhere you want to find things. See if you can find it first, before interrupting someone to ask where something is.
- Please ask for help if you cannot figure it out yourself or feel uncomfortable in any way

- Feel free to keep yourself busy
- Always put items away where they belong when done using them

### **Hospital**

- Talking is limited to questions or information needed to discuss the care of patients only
- Asking questions while someone is engaged with a patient or patient recordkeeping is discouraged. Watch and your questions may be answered. We're happy to answer questions not answered once the patient care is complete.
- Quiet observation of hospital staff caring for a patient is the most effective way of learning in the hospital
- Interrupting staff during an exam or caring for a patient for any reason is strongly discouraged
- Only trained volunteers or volunteers being trained are permitted in the hospital
- Not having an official reason to be in the hospital is unacceptable
- Please use the dry/erase board to jot down questions or concerns that you would like to have addressed at an appropriate time
- Leave emotionally charged comments out of the hospital

### **Offices**

- Ask before you go in any of the offices
- You are welcome to use office computers with prior permission

### **Kitchen**

- Clean and put away your own dishes
- Use hot, soapy water to wash your dishes and do not leave water running ever! All of our water use is restricted and counted on a meter.
- Use plastic only utensils when using the Teflon pots and pans, never use metal utensils
- Label and date all your food
- The fridge is cleaned out every Friday
- Always wash your hands before using the kitchen, coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose

### **Watering Outside**

- Never spray water above plants
- Always water directly into the ground next to the plant that needs watering
- Never leave water running for any reason
- Use water for plants when changing water in troughs

## **Staff**

We could not do our work without volunteers, but we have a few staff who are dedicated to keeping the organization going. You can find their names, titles, and emails below.

Name	Title	Email
Doris Duncan	Executive Director	<a href="mailto:scwrdoris@scwildliferescue.org">scwrdoris@scwildliferescue.org</a>
Danielle Mattos	Animal Care Director	<a href="mailto:animalcare@scwildliferescue.org">animalcare@scwildliferescue.org</a>
Michelle Fowler	Education Outreach Assistant	<a href="mailto:education@scwildliferescue.org">education@scwildliferescue.org</a>
Michael McGuire	Exclusion Director	<a href="mailto:awes@scwildliferescue.org">awes@scwildliferescue.org</a>
Katie Woolery	Assistant Animal Care Director	<a href="mailto:assistant@scwildliferescue.org">assistant@scwildliferescue.org</a>
Linnaea Furlong	Volunteer and Community Support Coordinator	<a href="mailto:support@scwildliferescue.org">support@scwildliferescue.org</a>
Katlyn Wolzen	Animal Care Assistant	<a href="mailto:assist1@scwildliferescue.org">assist1@scwildliferescue.org</a>
Abby Call	Animal Care Assistant	<a href="mailto:assist2@scwildliferescue.org">assist2@scwildliferescue.org</a>

## **Recognition**

We have a yearly Volunteer Appreciation Party where we celebrate together the accomplishments of the last year. This is usually held in February. You'll receive an invitation with your update form in December.

## **Questions? Concerns? Complaints? Compliments?**

We have a suggestion box up front for general comments. If you have a personal question or comment about volunteering please contact the Volunteer and Community Support Coordinator.