

# Wild Animals

People obtain wild animals in many ways. Some people rob nests or trap these animals. Others can obtain them at pet stores. But most people find young animals that appear to need help, care for them, and later cannot bear to part with them.



## **Before you obtain a wild animal for any reason, ask yourself these questions...**

### **Are you willing to pay a fine and/or spend the night in jail?**

The possession of almost all wild animals is illegal in Wisconsin. Birds are protected by federal law, mammals and other wildlife by state law. You must have a permit from the proper governmental agency to keep a wild mammal or bird. And, strange as it seems, it may be perfectly legal for a pet store to sell you a wild animal and illegal for you to possess it.

### **Are you becoming a victim of the 'Bambi Syndrome'?**

Cuddly puppies grow into dogs, cute kittens into cats, and helpless little wild animals into big wild animals. Would you allow an adult wild animal into your home? Would you allow children to play with an adult wild animal? Eventually you will have to face this situation.

### **Are you aware of the health hazards to which your family will be exposed?**

All wild animals are susceptible to parasites and disease. While most of these parasites and diseases are not communicable to humans, some are. The result may be painful and anxious moments for your family and the animal. All warm-blooded animals may contract rabies. Are you able to recognize the symptoms of disease to protect both humans and animals? (Only a post-mortem examination can determine whether or not an animal has rabies, and wild animals cannot be vaccinated against the disease.)

## **Are you willing to accept responsibility for your wild animal 365 days a year?**

A wild animal has definite needs every day. It will not graciously understand if you leave for a two-week vacation or visit the relatives during the holidays. You cannot board it as you can a dog or cat.

## **Can you afford the time or money to feed your animal properly?**

Providing a good diet for wild animals is not an easy thing to do. While substitute diets work temporarily, an animal will eventually weaken and die from an improper diet. Are you willing to buy, gather or kill your animal's natural diet? Can you provide it with whatever it would eat in the wild?

## **Can you provide proper housing?**

Every wild animal is born with well-defined instincts. It feels good when it can follow its instincts, bad when it cannot. Your inability to read the behavior signs related to instinct will eventually frustrate you and your animal. A frustrated animal may bite, scratch or become destructive. Can you be understanding when the squirrel climbs the drapes or the raccoon bites the relatives?

## **Can you prepare your animal for a free & wild existence?**

Unfortunately, most wild animals are picked up in the spring because they were thought to be abandoned. In reality, they are not abandoned until fall, when their human friends dump them in the woods. The animal has never hunted for its own food, never competed with other animals and never been threatened by a predator. It has no bed, no territory, no family - it is truly alone. Unless it is very lucky and very smart, it will die. Can you teach your animal how to forage for food, recognize danger and defend itself? Can you teach it to be what it was born to be?

## **Enjoy wild animals in their natural habitat - not your home.**

If you should see an injured or "orphaned" wild animal - don't touch it. Contact the Jefferson County Humane Society.