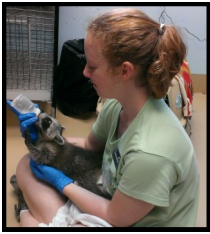


SUCCESS STORIES FROM THE SAWGRASS NATURE CENTER & WILDLIFE HOSPITAL

One morning in early July, a volunteer of the SNC rushed into the hospital cradling 3 neonate baby raccoons. Apparently, Momma raccoon had given birth in a parked vehicle and had jumped out and run off when the car was started. Donna, our SNC rehabilitator, determined that they were a mere two to three days old-their umbilical cords were still attached! They were cold, hungry and dehydrated.



The babies were placed in the incubator to warm and to raise their body temperature back to normal and they were given subcutaneous fluids with vitamins and oral fluids. Because of their young age, Donna started them on a course of antibiotics as they had not received much of their mothers colostrum. Colostrum, also known as first milk, contains antibodies to protect the newborn against disease, as well as being lower in fat and higher in protein than ordinary momma's milk.

Orphaned raccoon babies of this age are also given L-glutamine & vitamin K supplements and need 24 hour care. They went home each night with the rehabber. The next day, all the babies awoke covered with tiny red bumps. Donna thought this might be some sort of allergic reaction possibly due to something in the car where they were born, so they were given a course of diphenhydramine. Within 2 days the bumps had disappeared. The babies were then put on a special formula and were gaining weight steadily.

For animals that as adults eat out of dumpsters, raccoon babies have very sensitive tummies! We went through weeks of tummy issues - changing and adjusting the formula, giving anti-diarrheals and supplements, and adjusting feeding schedules.

The babies have grown from admission weights of 2.5 ounces to a current weight of 4 or 5 pounds. They are now about 5 months old and will soon be moved to an outside enclosure. There they will learn to climb, fish for minnows and become accustomed to a wild diet. They will be released back to mother nature as healthy beautiful juveniles when they are about 8 months old.



Late in the summer, we were presented with a fledgling pigeon who literally did not have a good leg to stand on. One foot appeared to be burnt as if he had stepped in hot tar, and the other leg had multiple fractures to the femur. Because he was still so full of life despite his injuries, we decided to give him a chance. Each day, the burned foot was soaked in a mild disinfectant solution, gently massaged and treated with antibiotic cream. The broken leg was splinted and taped up to the body for support. Since this was a young bird, he was fed a special hand feeding formula directly into the crop 3 times a day. The splint was kept on the leg for three weeks, while the other therapy continued. All of the talons on the burned foot sloughed off, but the skin was now pink & healthy. The splint was removed after the 3 weeks and the bird was standing and even perching for the first time since he had arrived. He became enamored with a pretty white pigeon in a neighboring enclosure. They now reside happily together and she doesn't seem to notice his funny "leprechaun" foot.

Early this fall an adult squirrel was admitted to the hospital dragging its back legs. The finder found it in the road, so it was most likely glanced by a car. Upon exam we realized that this was a lactating female and instructed the finder to look around for babies or a nest. (Unfortunately, none were discovered). The squirrel was found to have no use of the back legs, but did have a tiny bit of pain sensation. That very little bit of feeling in the legs gave us some hope. The rehabber suspected spinal soft tissue trauma, but sent the animal to one of our generous veterinarians for an x-ray.



As suspected there were no fractures, but there was spinal trauma. We started the squirrel on a course of fluids, steroids, pain meds and muscle relaxers. She was very ornery and gave us a hard time when we had to give her injections or medications, but we all kept to the course. Recovery was long and slow, but little by little she regained more and more use of her limbs. She was eventually moved into an outside enclosure and could now run so fast that we had trouble capturing her for release! Bruce, one of our release volunteers, brought her back to the yard of the people who rescued her, and they had the wonderful opportunity of witnessing her return to the wild!