

The Wild Life

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE WILDLIFE REHABILITATORS OF COLORADO

FALL 2009



The American Beaver: Our Affable Wetlands Engineer

By Janet Rutigliano

The industrious, gentle, and shy beaver, often called “nature’s engineer,” has been preparing for the winter months ahead by building, repairing, and securing dams and lodges, and establishing an underwater food supply. This non-hibernating, semi-aquatic rodent is the only existing member of the family *Castoridae*, which contains a single genus, *Castor*. It is the second-largest rodent in the world next to the capybara of South America.



By the early 19th century, trapping had eliminated the beaver from large portions of its North American range. The draining of lands for agriculture also contributed to its decline. Trappers sought beavers for their luxurious furs and castoreum, a secretion of the castor glands near the base of the tail, which was used in traditional medicine and in perfume production. Castoreum has been credited with analgesic and anti-inflammatory properties due to the accumulation of salicin from willow trees in the beaver’s diet, which is converted to salicylic acid and has an action very similar to aspirin. The beaver population was once more than 60 million, but is currently estimated to be about 15 million.

The American beaver, also called the Canadian or North American beaver, is native to Canada, the United States, and parts of northern Mexico. It can be found throughout Colorado’s riparian areas and wetlands, although it is most abundant in the sub-alpine zone. A slow meandering stream with aspen and willow thickets is an ideal habitat for a Colorado beaver colony.

American beavers use their powerful front teeth to fell large mature trees in strategic locations to form the basis of a dam. They carry mud and stones with their forepaws

and timber between their teeth. First they lay a series of vertical poles, and then fill between the vertical poles with “crisscrossed” horizontally placed branches. They fill in the gaps between the branches with a combination of weeds and mud until the dam holds back sufficient water to create a pond environment for the beaver home. Dams can last several years with proper strengthening and maintenance.

Once a dam has flooded enough forest area to the proper depth to form a protective moat, construction

begins on the lodge, which is made from tree branches and mud. The beaver covers its lodge every autumn with fresh mud, which freezes when the cold sets in, becoming almost as hard as stone. Lake beavers generally do not have to create dams because the water level is stable; they usually build lodges at or near the bank where the water is shallow.

Beavers dig out their dens with underwater entrances after they finish building the dams and lodge structures. These underwater entrances make home invasion nearly impossible for any other animal. There are typically two dens within the lodge, one for drying off after exiting the water, and another drier one where the family actually lives.

Beavers do not hibernate, but remain active throughout winter. Active maintenance work on dams and lodges begins in autumn; however, beavers rarely finish the outer coating until the cold becomes severe. When they erect new structures, they fell the wood early in summer, and then begin building near the end of August.

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Beavers are herbivores with a specialized digestive system. Colonies of microorganisms in their intestines digest up to 30 percent of the cellulose from the tree bark and other woody material they consume. Some nutrition also comes from fecal pellets that they re-digest. Their preferred food is the water-lily (*Nuphar luteum*), which grows at the bottom of lakes and rivers. Beavers also gnaw on the upper, tender branches, leaves, and bark of trees—part of their winter food supply—but during the summer, they prefer a more varied diet, including berries, apples, grasses, clover, buds, and forbs. Beavers do not eat the woody parts of trees, only the soft cambium tissue close to the surface. They feed on an underwater cache of edible branches all winter.

Beavers are monogamous and mate for life. A beaver couple produces a single litter of young each spring, after approximately a four-month gestation period. The den houses a nuclear family, or colony, including parents, yearlings, and four or five kits. Both parents care for the kits. The young normally stay with their parents for two years, and yearlings serve as “babysitters” for the new litter. Beavers rarely overpopulate because they are limited to riparian habitats and breed only once per year.

A beaver continues to grow throughout its life and, although the average adult weighs about 40 pounds, specimens weighing as much as 55 to 60 pounds are not uncommon. Females are as large as, or larger than, males of the same age, which is uncommon among mammals.

The beaver’s fur has two layers: the outer layer consists of coarse, long, glossy guard hairs varying in color from yellowish-brown to reddish-brown to black; and the under-fur consists of dense, short, fine hairs that are grayish to brown. The inner layer of fine hair (plus castoreum secreted by scent glands) provides the waterproof barrier that keeps their skin dry underwater.

Beavers are good swimmers and can stay under water for as long as 15 minutes. Their fur-lined lips close to form a seal behind their teeth, allowing them to hold their breath while cutting, peeling, or carrying branches underwater. The dexterous front feet are used for carrying and handling mud and building materials. The back feet have webbing connecting the toes and are used for paddling.

Predators vary from region to region and include coyotes, bears, lynx, wolverines, dogs and, of course, humans, with trapping being the most common cause of mortality. The two-year old adults who leave the colony in spring to seek new territories are especially vulnerable. Kits have many predators, including hawks, owls, and eagles. Water is the beaver’s best defense and refuge, since it is most vulnerable walking on dry land. At the first sign of a



predator, a beaver will retreat to the water and attempt to warn other beavers in the area with its characteristic “danger signal”—slapping the water with its broad tail. The tail also serves other key functions; it is used as a rudder while swimming, a third leg while standing upright, a lever when dragging branches, and a place for the body to store fat in winter.

Beavers are mostly nocturnal, sleeping by day, and foraging for food and doing “construction work” at night. While they can occasionally be seen during the day, the best time is at dawn and dusk. Some have speculated that this nocturnal behavior resulted from the beaver being hunted almost to extinction. However, as human activity subsides in autumn and early winter, beavers spend more time outside their lodges during the day to complete their chores and stock up on a winter food supply.

In 1996, the voters of Colorado passed Amendment 14, which bans the use of leghold and kill traps throughout the state. While the intent of the amendment was to stop lethal trapping, it also prevents the control of animals causing damage. The agricultural exemption allows farmers and ranchers to trap beavers causing damage to their crops and property one 30-day period a year. However, according to the Division of Wildlife, the vast majority of problems involve beavers damming up waterways and culverts or cutting down ornamental trees.

Wildlife 2000, one of the most experienced beaver conservation and relocation services in Colorado, offers sound advice to landowners who have experienced beaver-caused damage, such as downed trees, flooding, or plugged culverts. Sherri Tippie, *Wildlife 2000*’s president, works tirelessly with the public and the Division of Wildlife to raise awareness about ways to co-exist with the beaver and the ecosystem it supports. She advises property owners on ways to protect trees and prevent flooding (caused by beaver dams) by installing flow devices.

Wildlife 2000 relocates beavers to places where they are wanted and needed, when necessary and appropriate. This is done exclusively by live-trapping between June 1st

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and September 1st. If an entire beaver family must be relocated, then they often wait until the third week of June, when the kits are weaned. It is important that the entire family be relocated together, not only because this is the right thing to do for the animals, but also because there is a better chance that they will remain in their new location.

The beaver has, for centuries, helped to create and maintain optimum riparian habitats for an abundance of wildlife. Although it is limited by this very specific niche that it fills, the beaver has wide-reaching and positive effects for other species of animals and plants. Sherri Tippie reminds us that in an optimum state, "things are never static—they ebb, and flow, and change. That's what makes natural areas so vitally alive, intriguing, and wondrous. Beavers make it happen!" •

Sources

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Note: This article also incorporates text from the Encyclopedia Britannica, Eleventh Edition, a publication now in the public domain.

TIPS & TRICKS

RAISING MONEY IN THE OFF SEASON

The height of the rehabilitation season is over. Now we begin making repairs, completing reports and assessing our financial picture. As we move into the winter months, the ability to do fundraising, more so in these tight financial times, is a major concern for the majority of rehabilitators.

Now is a great time to reach out into the community. Organizations that normally see a decrease in summertime meeting attendance now see an increase in these winter months. The weather is a great incentive for this change. What a great captive audience!

Most organizations that hold breakfast or luncheon meetings provide their participants with a guest speaker. The nice part about being a guest speaker at these meetings is the fact they usually want a 15-20 minute presentation. For a professional speaker on an in-depth topic, that is not enough time to cover with any sense of efficiency. However, talking about what you do, what are the benefits of your service to the community and what would be of great help to you, can be accomplished in the short time frame allotted.

Give thought to what would be an acceptable donation to your organization. Your goal is to identify an amount that would be widely acceptable to organizations and/or individuals. When an organization secures a speaker they openly address the subject of what would be a fair consideration for your services. There are two avenues available to you.

First you may request a one-time donation from the organization, paid at the time of your presentation. This would be paid by the organization itself. Your second choice is that of asking for donations from the audience. The latter choice would need to be approved by the organization in advance. To facilitate individual donations, you should create a simple flyer (one page document) giving an overview of what you do and why, making sure your mailing information is included on this flyer. A donation basket or jar (decorated appropriately) along with your flyers should be on display while you are speaking. This display encourages individuals personally interested in your worthy cause to contribute freely.

Contact the Chamber of Commerce in your area. Through the Chamber you will be able to secure a listing of organizations and their meeting dates and times. You will find it very worthwhile to pursue these brief, however, highly productive opportunities for short presentations. Since the winter months are a slow time for wildlife rehabilitators, taking advantage of this time frame, will give you an opportunity to increase your revenues, placing you in a better position when raising funding is not possible or convenient. •



More Information on Chapter 14 Regulation Changes: *Unlicensed People Assisting Rehabilitators with Wildlife*

Rehabilitation busy season is starting to wind down for most rehabilitators. Hopefully you can all take some well-deserved time to rest and appreciate your work helping wildlife and the public who asks for your help! Since the changes in rehabilitation regulations that were approved in March and May were implemented during busy season, I wanted to explain more about the section that expands how unlicensed people may help rehabilitators with wildlife when people have more time available. The 'less-busy season' is also a good time to review, revise, and/or prepare materials used by the unlicensed people helping rehabilitators with wildlife — whether these are regulatory requirements or just part of your good rehabilitation practices.

The Division has had some questions about rehabilitation regulations affecting the use of unlicensed people helping with direct animal care that became effective as of July 1, 2009. It was clear from the testimony at the Wildlife Commission meeting in March, 2009, that some rehabilitators, particularly larger rehabilitation centers, needed help beyond what the individual licensed wildlife rehabilitators could provide in order to care for the caseload of animals in rehabilitation. The Commission and Division understood those requests and agreed to make changes that would allow the use of unlicensed people to help with animal care working with the rehabilitator at her/his facility.

Reasons for training

Any unlicensed people working with wildlife must have some basic training before starting to work with wildlife. As rehabilitators know, working with wildlife is not easy. It requires some basic knowledge and skill. The people involved need to know that rehabilitation includes respecting a wild animal's *wildness*, and not treating it like a pet. People also need to understand the zoonotic disease and physical injury risks that are always present when working with wild animals that are temporarily in captivity. It means the animal is in temporary care until it can develop to an age or recover from injuries that it can survive independently. And if it is unable to recover that the animal is euthanized.

Licensed rehabilitators know these concepts as part of the Rehabilitator's Code of Ethics and state rehabilitation regulations. But new, unlicensed people are unlikely to know these basic concepts when they start. Not knowing these

things means that they may want to treat wild animals as pets and habituate them, or not appreciate the dangers of handling wildlife. A clear understanding needs to be established in advance that when wildlife that is unable to recover and be able to survive must be euthanized. Otherwise, the need to euthanize may result in conflict with the rehabilitator, or the volunteer quitting after the rehabilitator has spent considerable time training him or her. While many rehabilitators have already been providing such basic information to volunteers or staff, some were not. The Division believes that requiring unlicensed people working with animals to be familiar with the Code of Ethics and Regulations is essential for everyone involved. Copies of the Code of Ethics and Chapter 14 are available at

<http://wildlife.state.co.us/RulesRegs/SpecialLicenses/WildlifeRehabilitationInformation/WildlifeRehabilitationDocumentsandApplications.htm>. If you do not have internet access at home or work, local libraries generally have such services available.

Training on wildlife diseases and parasites is required. Anyone working with wildlife needs to know that diseases or parasites can be transmitted between animals — and how to prevent and control them. They also need to know that some of the diseases and parasites can be transmitted from wildlife to people. Again, this is basic information that many rehabilitators have already covered with their unlicensed people and should not be additional work. Information on this is also on the website above.

The regulations also require training on safe capture and handling of the species with which the unlicensed people will be working. The Division knows that most rehabilitators already want to make sure that anyone helping them with wildlife knows how to do so safely. The Division also knows that there have been times when rehabilitators, particularly those working with large volumes of animals, have allowed unlicensed people to handle animals for which they do not have demonstrated and confirmed skills. This can result in injuries to wild animals and to people — and have many consequences, including euthanasia of the animal, the unlicensed person quitting, and more. The Division believes that safe capture and handling is essential training that most rehabilitators have already been doing. Adding this requirement to regulation should not increase the rehabilitator's workload.

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Since most unlicensed people who work directly with wildlife are involved with feeding animals, the regulations also require basic training on diet and nutrition. Other training is required for tasks the unlicensed person may be performing, such as first aid, admitting animals to rehabilitation, and release.

Training content

Rehabilitators have continued to be concerned about the minimum training requirements. The Special Licensing website describes the minimum of what should be included. Again, the Division believes that these are items that most rehabilitators are already covering in their training for unlicensed people and most should not be a new task. Just go to the Special Licensing website above and check the Training section in the Requirements for Unlicensed Individuals Assisting with Animal Care for specifics.

Written protocols

Rehabilitators also have asked about the new regulatory requirement for written protocols. This was another item that the Division believed was needed to allow unlicensed people to work at the rehabilitator's facility when the rehabilitator was absent for a short time. Rehabilitation has many requirements and activities. It is all too easy for anyone, especially a less knowledgeable and experienced unlicensed person, to forget basics or be overwhelmed when lots of things are happening at once, many decisions are needed, and feeling stressed. Written resources provide a guide for decisions and actions.

Written protocols are now required by regulation if the rehabilitator is not onsite when the unlicensed individual is working with animals. If the rehabilitator is *always* present when unlicensed people are working with animals, written protocols are not required. While the rehabilitator is expected to be onsite and supervising unlicensed people working with animals, the Division wanted to ensure that the unlicensed people had a phone number where the rehabilitator could be reached as well as written protocols to rely on if the rehabilitator was away for a short time. More information on the written protocols is available on the website listed above.

Recordkeeping for people helping rehabilitators

Chapter 14 regulations have required that rehabilitators maintain records of the people working with wildlife since 1995. The change in 2009 is that the records must be submitted to the Division with the rehabilitator's annual rehabilitation report by January, 31, and the rehabilitator must maintain a copy of these records for 3 years. Elec-

tronic forms are available at the website above to make this easier.

If you have any questions on the use of unlicensed people assisting rehabilitators at their rehabilitation facility or other regulatory items, please let me know.

I want to thank you all once again for the tremendous dedication and support you have given the Division of Wildlife and, more importantly, the wildlife of the State of Colorado.

Kathy Konishi, Manager
Special Licensing Unit
303.291.7143

Kathy.konishi@state.co.us •

“ “ Words of Wisdom...

What is the good of having a nice house without a decent planet to put it on?

—Henry David Thoreau

Those who wish to pet and baby wildlife love them, but those who respect their natures and wish to let them live their natural lives, love them more.

—Edwin Way Teale

It's curious what we take for granted or never even notice. Untold thousands of insects are devoured nightly by our little furry friends, the bats. They emerge at dusk and disappear at dawn, and we are hardly aware of what they have done for us.

— Amanda Lollar, Bat World

Lots of people talk to animals.... Not very many listen, though.... That's the problem.

—Benjamin Hoff, *The Tao of Pooh*

” ”

Rabid Horse in El Paso County and Skunk Rabies in Colorado

Courtesy of CVMA and FRCC

Editor's Note: With the apparent rise of rabies cases in Colorado, it is important for rehabilitators to be aware of and on alert for this disease in the animals they care for.

On September 13, Colorado State University reported rabies DFA positive results for a horse from the Black Forest area of north central El Paso County. The last rabid horse on record in Colorado was well over 25 year ago.

The owners observed a skunk acting strangely on their farm in mid-July but did not notice any direct contact with their animals. On September 9, the owner noted changed gate in the horse and called a veterinarian for a lameness check. By Friday September 11, the horse was ataxic and eventually went down and was unable to rise. Due to the neurologic presentation, the poor prognosis, and the history of skunk rabies in the area, the owners elected for euthanasia of the horse. None of the horses on the property had been previously vaccinated for rabies.

El Paso County public health officials completed investigation of possible exposure among the owners, veterinarian, and veterinary technician who had contact with the horse. Three individuals were recommended for rabies post-exposure prophylaxis based on this risk assessment. Public health and state animal health animal control officials are assessing whether other domestic animals on the farm need to be quarantined. Specimens from the horse will eventually be sent to CDC for monoclonal antibody testing, but the variant is expected to be the south central U.S. skunk variant. Eight skunks have tested positive for rabies in El Paso County this year.

Since January 1, 2009, 79 skunks have been submitted for rabies testing in Colorado. Of these, 29 (37%) were positive for rabies and reported from the following 9 counties: Arapahoe (N=4), El Paso (N=8), Elbert (N=1), Kiowa (N=1), Kit Carson (N=1), Lincoln (N=1), Morgan (N=7), Prowers (N=2), and Yuma (N=4). A fox has also tested positive from Prowers County, which tested positive at CDC for the circulating south central U.S. skunk variant.

Public health officials would like to remind veterinarians to check their titers every two years for previous rabies pre-exposure prophylaxis, to ensure that staff who are decapitating neurologic animals are vaccinated for rabies, and to wear barrier personal protective equipment when

handling neurologic animals, with the addition of a face shield to protect the mucous membranes during necropsy, head removal, or brain removal.

For more information on rabies in Colorado, including maps, please visit the Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment webpage at: <http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/dc/zoonosis/rabies>

Rabies Cases among Cats on the Rise

While reported cases of rabies in the United States dropped in 2008, veterinarians and public health officials warn that an increase in the number of reported cases in cats poses a health risk to both animals and people.

There were 6,841 reported cases of animal rabies in the United States and Puerto Rico in 2008, according to a report issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and published in the Sept. 15, 2009, edition of the Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association. The number represents a 3.1 percent decrease from the 7,060 rabies cases in animals reported to the CDC in 2007. There were two cases of rabies in humans in 2008, up from one case reported in 2007.

According to the CDC report, rabies continues to affect wildlife much more than it does domestic animals. Wild animals, especially raccoons, bats, skunks, and foxes, accounted for 93 percent of all rabies cases reported in 2008, the report states.

More work needs to be done, however, when it comes to controlling rabies in pets, especially cats and dogs. Cats led the list of domestic animals with reported cases of rabies in 2008. According to the CDC report, there were 294 reported cases of rabies in cats last year, up about 12 percent from the 262 reported cases in 2007. Dog-related cases totaled 75 in 2008, down from 93 in 2007.

Jesse Blanton, an epidemiologist at the CDC, said cats have more interaction with wildlife, where they are prone to being bitten by a rabid animal, and they aren't getting the vaccinations they need. "The CDC's general belief is that people are doing a good job vaccinating their dogs, but not their cats," Blanton said. "We have controlled canine rabies through the vaccination of domestic dogs, so we know that vaccinating works."

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The belief that cats aren't getting their necessary shots is supported by data from an AVMA report that indicates 36.3 percent of U.S. cat-owning households did not visit a veterinarian in 2006. In contrast, the report, "U.S. Pet Ownership and Demographics Sourcebook," indicates that 17.3 percent of dog-owning households did not visit a veterinarian in 2006.

The simple act of vaccinating a pet, Blanton said, provides protection to the animal and the humans with whom it may come in contact. Veterinarians can vaccinate dogs and cats, and they will advise clients on the recommended or required frequency of vaccination needed.

Rabies remains a threat worldwide, killing more than 55,000 people every year, according to the World Health Organization. •

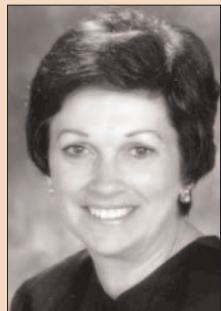


CCWR NEWS

From the President

Save The Date – February 6, 2010

Yes, mark your calendars. On Saturday, February 6, 2010, CCWR will host a one-day workshop for individuals involved in the world of wildlife rehabilitation in Colorado. The day will begin with keynote speaker Pat Craig from the Wild Animal Sanctuary, sharing the challenges, experiences and rewards of a large animal facility. Join us for a day filled with speakers, open discussions, networking and opportunities to interact and learn from individuals like yourself; passionate about wildlife and their survival. Learn about the new direction we plan to take CCWR in the future, by attending our annual meeting. More details about the event will be forthcoming in the very near future. Don't forget to check out our website. Plan to attend and participate in this worthwhile, informative day. We look forward to seeing you.



Joyce Benesh-Williams

Call for Nominations CCWR Board of Directors

Do you have great ideas? Would you like to try a new experience? How about working with a great team. Better still, would you like to make a difference? Simply worded. We would love to have you. Any member is eligible for being nominated to the Board of Directors. We welcome self-nominations.

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Important Information About Milk Replacer

KMR Problem

Small mammal rehabilitators often use KMR® milk replacer powder as the basis for formula for raccoons and rabbits. PetAg, the manufacturer of KMR® and Esbilac®, has just announced that some of the KMR® powder was damaged after being exposed to excessive heat after the manufacturing process. PetAg.com says to NOT use KMR if there is an 'off' odor. Rehabilitators around the country are reporting that some of the raccoons and cottontails are developing diarrhea and even dying after being fed KMR does not even have the 'off' odor. PetAg says they are presently changing the KMR® manufacturing process to improve 'product stability.' It should be noted that when PetAg began using the same manufacturing process for Esbilac® powder in December, 2008, the energy and many nutrients of the product change changed significantly. Rehabilitators should monitor this closely. Information on this will be available at www.ewildagain.org.

Esbilac® Changes and Concerns

Esbilac® powder, a puppy milk replacer, has been used by small mammal rehabilitators as the base foundation for making formula for decades. PetAg, the manufacturer of Esbilac®, made what they described as minor manufacturing changes in the product in December, 2008. The change resulted in different nutrient and energy levels that require rehabilitators to add additional fats to achieve minimum nutrition for juvenile wildlife.

Some rehabilitators reported the juvenile wild animals seemed healthy and grew normally when extra fats were added. Other rehabilitators around the country have reported numerous serious problems, including fatalities, when the juvenile wild animals were fed formula made with the 'new' Esbilac® powder even with extra fats. Research on the health problems, product changes, and treatments are underway. More information on the issue, test results, and resources, as well as regular updates are available at http://www.ewildagain.org/Nutrition/esbilac_problems_with_wildlife.htm.

— Shirley Casey,
WildAgain Wildlife Rehabilitation

If you are interested in applying, please review the "Base Requirements of CCWR Board Members" document posted on the CCWR website, in the "About CCWR" section on our website www.ccwr-co.org. Submit a short biographical sketch highlighting your experience and/or interest in wildlife rehabilitation or that of the person you are nominating.

Please mail your nominations by January 1, 2010 to:

CCWR Nominating Committee
PO Box 68, Hygiene, CO 80533-0068

Nominations must be post marked no later than December 27, 2009 for eligibility.

Ballots will be **mailed** to members by January 8, 2010 and must be either mailed back to the address above by February 4, or hand-delivered at the 2010 CCWR Workshop, February 6, 2010.

Call for Grant Applications

CCWR is pleased to announce a call for its 2010 Catherine Hurlbutt & Matching Fund Grants. The Catherine Hurlbutt Grant is for rehabilitation of birds and the Matching Grant Fund, for rehabilitation of mammals, reptiles or amphibians. Both grants have a \$500 maximum and are available to current CCWR members (individuals or organizations). A grant committee (consisting of CCWR members) will review the applications and award the grants based on need, merit of the request, and ability of person/organization to conduct the project.

Grant applications should be mailed to:

Grant Committee,
PO Box 68,
Hygiene, CO 80533-0068.

The application and applicable instructions, which will be available by November 1, 2009, and can be downloaded from our web site www.ccwr-co.org.

Closing date for grant applications is January 15, 2010. Recognition of the grant recipients will take place at the CCWR Workshop, February 6, 2010.

Contact us with your questions at ccwr_4_members@msn.com or call me at (970) 686-9217. We are here for you. Help us to continue to meet the needs of people working to give Colorado wildlife the best care possible.

Together making a difference,



Joyce Benesh Williams,
CCWR President

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Send Us Your News!

The Wild Life is a quarterly newsletter for members of CCWR. We encourage you to share this newsletter with volunteers, staff, and colleagues. We hope you enjoy the publication.

We strive to publish well-researched information that is up-to-date, interesting and helpful. However, information in *The Wild Life* is provided only as a service to our members and is not intended to be directive, nor applicable in all circumstances. Members are always advised to seek counsel from their veterinarian and DOW officials on matters applicable to their locale.

Suggestions and contributions are welcome. To submit an article, case study, tips, or other contribution for consideration, please e-mail it to:
CCWR_4_Members@msn.com