

Who to Contact for Wildlife Concerns

Have you ever come across sick, injured, abandoned, or otherwise distressed wildlife and wanted to help? If you find yourself in these situations and don't know what to do, or who to call for assistance, keep reading!

Our "Neighborhood Best Practices" program provides tips and techniques on understanding and dealing with wildlife, along with efficient irrigation, Florida-Friendly Landscaping™, preserves, protecting our local waterways, creating community gardens, composting initiatives, and much more. Register online at tiny.cc/ufsaraext_nbp to make a difference in your neighborhood.

Sick, Injured or Abandoned Wildlife

It is natural to want to help wildlife. Important tips on when and how to help:

- Determine if intervention is needed or if it would cause more harm than good. If intervention is needed, note the animal's location and contact a resource below.
- A young animal's best chance of survival is with its parents in its natural environment. Do not try to take care of an animal on your own.
- Feeding wildlife often causes more harm than good, and is often illegal. An animal's natural food provides it with the best nutrition.
- Animals that are injured, trapped, or otherwise distressed can be more aggressive, as they attempt to defend themselves. Approach wildlife only if you can do so safely.
- Prioritize your safety if you do approach wildlife, especially if on or near a roadway.
- If handling an animal is necessary, wear gloves, use a blanket, towel, or item of clothing to cover the animal's head and eyes and protect yourself. Be aware of teeth, beak, feet and claws.
- Wildlife can carry diseases that might infect humans. If an animal appears ill or deceased, report it to one of the resources below.
- Keeping any sick, injured, or orphaned wildlife beyond the time necessary to transport to a licensed wildlife rehabilitator is a violation of Florida law.
- **Have a plan: What will you do? Who will you call?**



Mother deer leave their fawns while foraging during the day. Fawns have minimal scent when born, protecting them from predators.



Take care approaching any wild animal. If handling, watch for teeth and claws, and make sure your surrounding environment is safe.

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC)

As our state wildlife agency, FWC focuses on wildlife research, wildlife conservation, hunting regulations and permitting, and preventing conflicts with wildlife. Their work supports the conservation of fish and wildlife resources. Public sighting reports can provide valuable information. Report wildlife concerns, species sightings, and learn about citizen science opportunities at myfwc.com/contact/incident-reporting/.

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Hotlines/Websites

FWC Wildlife Alert Hotline: 888-404-3922

- **Fishing, wildlife, and boating violation reports**
- **Manatee reports:** myfwc.com/research/manatee/information/support/contact/
- **Bat reports:** myfwc.com/research/wildlife/health/bats/bat-mortality/

Deer reports (for chronic wasting disease - deer sick or dead of unknown causes): 866-293-9282

Fish (saltwater or freshwater) kill hotline: 800-636-0511

Report invasive and non-native species: myfwc.com/wildlifehabitats/nonnatives/report/ or 888-483-4681

Nuisance Alligator Hotline: 866-392-4286

An alligator may be deemed a nuisance if it is at least 4 feet long and might pose a threat to people, pets or property. Learn more: myfwc.com/wildlifehabitats/wildlife/alligator/snap/



Young birds are best returned to the nest. It is a myth that parents will reject a bird that a human has touched.

It is important to balance protecting human interests and respecting wildlife. Learn how to identify invasive species, differentiate between normal and unusual behavior, and when wildlife are a true nuisance, or if you can learn to coexist.



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(cont.)

Who to Contact?



The Wildlife Center of Southwest Florida

is committed to preserving Southwest Florida's native wildlife through educational outreach and rescuing and rehabilitating sick, injured, and orphaned animals for their eventual return to their natural habitats. Also contacted the center for questions of what to do when you encounter injured, sick, distressed, or potentially abandoned wildlife. Found an animal? Visit wildlifewfl.org/found-an-animal or call 941-484-9657 (after hours: 941-416-4967).



Save Our Seabirds

is dedicated to rescuing and rehabilitating sick and injured birds, aiming to return them to their natural habitats. Save Our Seabirds is located at 1708 Ken Thompson Parkway, Sarasota. Help line and volunteer dispatch: 941-388-3010. After-hours intake box located beside the back hospital entrance.



Mote Marine Laboratory

For sea turtle hatchlings that are in distress and cannot reach the water, or if you notice concerning nesting activity, please contact Mote's sea turtle program at 941-388-4331. Report stranded dolphins, whales, manatees, or sea turtles along the Southwest Florida coast, please call the Stranding Investigations Program any time at 888-345-2335.



Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC)

To find or learn more about permitted wildlife rehabilitators, the animals they can assist, and the counties they service, visit the FWC injured and orphaned wildlife webpage at myfwc.com/conservation/you-serve/wildlife/injured-orphaned/.

Rabies and Domesticated Animal Concerns



Florida Department of Health, Sarasota County Department

Report rabies concerns to the local Florida Department of Health. If you are bitten by an animal that could be infected with rabies, immediate medical attention is crucial. Raccoons are the primary vectors (carriers) of rabies in our area, but a variety of other mammals and unvaccinated pets can also carry rabies. Never handle injured or seemingly deceased wildlife. Make sure dogs and cats are vaccinated for rabies and supervise them when they are outdoors. For more information, call 941-861-2900 or visit tiny.cc/fdoh_rabies.



Sarasota County Sheriff's Office, Animal Services

Animal Services is a division of the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office, responding to incidents involving wildlife and domestic animals. They enforce the Sarasota County Animal Control Ordinance and respond to calls including nuisance complaints, animal bites, injured animals, and animal cruelty. The service's lost-and-found kennels help reunite impounded animals with their owners and provide adoption services. For more information, call 941-861-9501 or visit sarasotasheriff.org/programs_and_services/animal_services/index.php.

Learn more in our "Neighborhood Best Practices" program

online course: tiny.cc/ufsaraext_nbp

social media:

facebook.com/ufsarasotaext | instagram.com/ufsarasotaextension | youtube.com/@ufsarasotaext



Questions? sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/sarasota | sarasota@ifas.ufl.edu | 311 (or 941-861-5000)