

# Back to the Wild, Wildlife Rehabilitation

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## Background

- Back to the Wild is a rehabilitation center for wild animals that were injured or orphaned due to human interference or development. It is in Sandusky County, Ohio, and is a privately owned, non-profit organization. They rescue around 2,500 animals native to the area annually.
- My job title was a Wildlife Intern where I handled, fed, and completed husbandry duties for a diverse array of animals.
- I found this opportunity through their Facebook page. They posted that they were looking for summer interns, so I emailed them about my interest.



## Animals and Education

I was given the opportunity to look after many different types of animals including, raptors, turtles, snakes, squirrels, opossums, songbirds, etc. We tried to rehabilitate and release as many animals as possible, but some were too injured or accustomed to humans to be released. We kept these animals as ambassadors and used them for education purposes. They are kept year-round and used for programs and tours to educate the public.



Orphaned baby opossum (left) and muskrat (right). Car crashes frequently take the lives of parent wildlife leaving their babies orphaned. Opossums were particularly frequent because they are found in the pouch of the mother by drivers. We have formulas for these animals and keep them away from humans as much as possible so that they stay wild.

## On the Job

### Daily Tasks:

- Maintained and kept track of times to feed baby mammals and songbirds. Fed them diets depending on age and weight.
- Periodically checked food and water bowls to be refilled and cleaned.
- Completed any daily projects given to me by supervisors such as setting up cages, assisting with handling large animals, or making enrichment for the animals.
- Went on trips to release rehabilitated animals to safe areas.



A baby Great Horned Owl that is being trained to be an ambassador.

Examples of the enclosures we make to enrich the animals and keep them happy.



## Skills/Accomplishments

- I learned many important skills from this internship such as how to work with wild animals, the correct way to handle and feed them, and many facts about wildlife.
- This experience taught me how to work in a high stress environment. This summer had a small staff, but a lot of animals because of the pandemic. It was important to get everything done and remember to go back to it when I got pulled away to help with other tasks.
- Time management and teamwork skills were essential because the staff members worked together to keep all the animals maintained and fed on time.

Getting ready to feed a warbler that had a head injury.



## Reflection

- This summer internship was my first experience working in a wildlife/conservation field. I enjoyed it very much and have realized that it is very rewarding work.
- Looking to the future, I would like to have an internship/position like this one again, but I also want to try out other aspects of the environmental science field. I want to try areas outside of wildlife such as restoration to see which one I enjoy more.
- For anyone who is interested in wildlife, I highly recommend working for a wildlife rehabilitation facility. It can be dirty work, but the payoff is worth it. Seeing an injured animal be nursed back to health and released to the wild is rewarding and makes you proud of what you did.
- For future interns:
  - The internship is unpaid.
  - It is a long commute unless you live in Sandusky.
  - All equipment is provided.
  - No previous training is required.

