



WILDLIFE *Rescue*

FOR WILDLIFE REHABILITATORS,
EVERY ANIMAL, REGARDLESS OF SPECIES,
DESERVES A FIGHTING CHANCE.

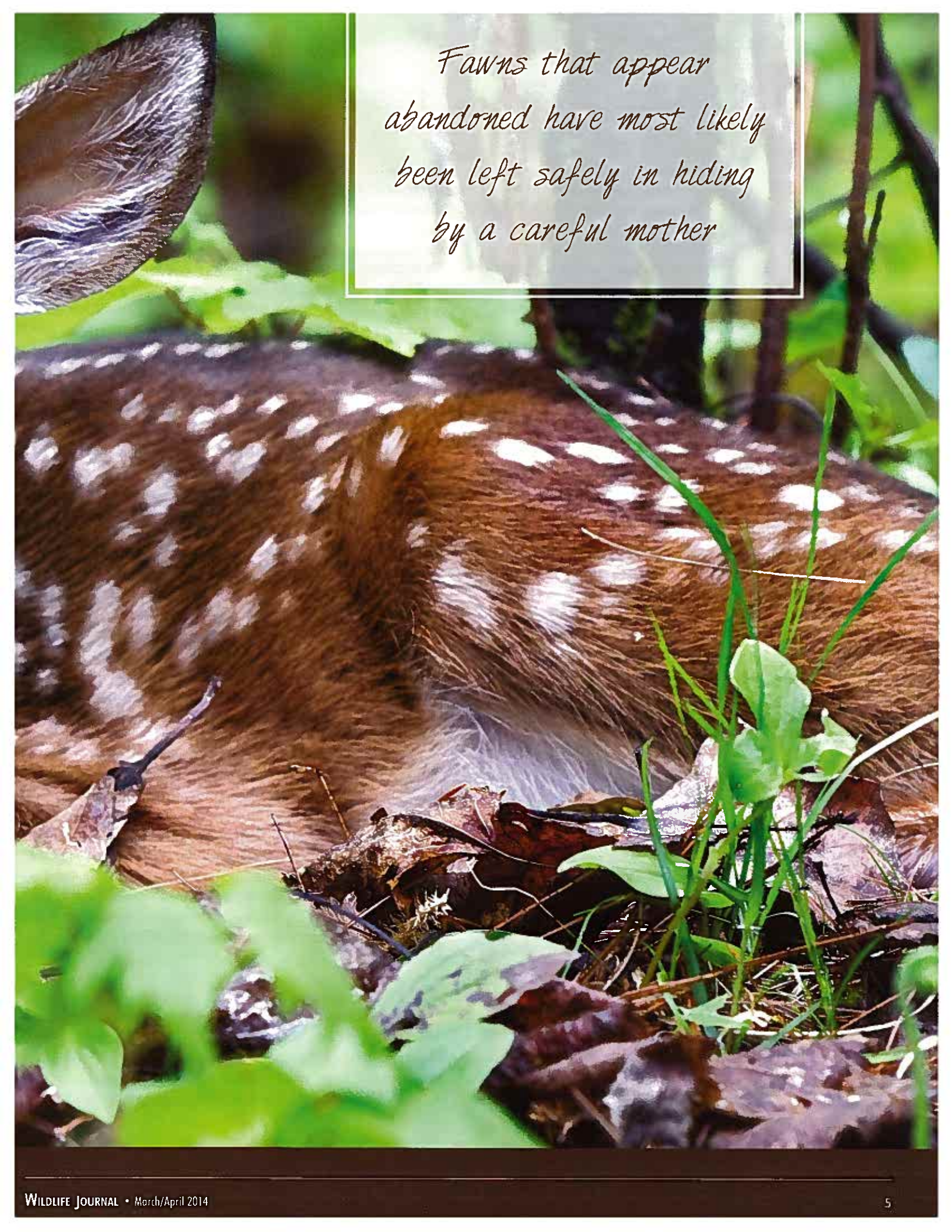
BY NANCY SKARMEAS

Early on a spring day last year, a driver in Belmont accidentally hit a coyote crossing the road. He pulled over to see if the animal was alive and was met by a complicated set of circumstances. The coyote, an adult female, had not survived the impact. But nearby was a tiny pup, very much alive, newly orphaned and in need of care. Unwilling to leave the pup to fend for itself, and uncertain of what to do next, the driver put the pup in the car and drove on to work. He then called N.H. Fish and Game, which in turn contacted the Squam Lakes Natural Science Center, where Animal Care Manager Nancy Kitchen agreed to take in the orphaned pup.

Scenes like this are repeated in every season in every corner of New Hampshire. Citizens encounter wildlife they believe to be in distress and are faced with a tough decision. Should they intervene? Those who call Fish and Game for guidance are most often advised to give the animal time and space. Fawns that appear abandoned have most likely been left safely in hiding by a careful mother; birds that fly into windows often just need a bit of time to recover and fly away. Sometimes intervention is called for, however, and in those cases Fish and Game looks to its network of wildlife rehabilitators for help. Licensed by the state to care for injured or orphaned animals, these dedicated individuals combine their passion for animal welfare with expertise gained through years of hands-on experience to provide an invaluable safety net for animals in need.

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FROM OWLS TO OTTERS

The coyote pup was lucky to end up at the Science Center, a large facility in Holderness with the experience to care for any native New Hampshire species.

As Animal Care Manager at the Science Center, Nancy Kitchen is responsible for nearly 80 resident animals, most orphaned, injured or otherwise unable to return to the wild. Many of these animals serve as ambassadors for their species, allowing the public to observe them up close through educational programs and a network of trail exhibits. When Kitchen evaluated the coyote pup and found it to be only ten days old, she knew that a decision had to be made. Raising the pup to adulthood would require intensive, hands-on care, producing an adult coyote fully habituated to humans and unable to live in the wild. So the Science Center committed both to raising the pup and to providing it a permanent home.

Animals come to the Science Center from across the state and sometimes across the country. For Kitchen and her two associates, the first goal with any new arrival is stabilization; after that, the hope is to provide the time and necessary care that will allow the animal to return to the wild. When that is not possible, the animal may become part of the Center's exhibits or educational program, or Kitchen will work to find it a home at another facility. The Science Center's current list of animals runs the gamut from the common blue jay through otters and owls to black bears. During more than forty years in operation, rehabbers at the Center have rehabilitated eagles and owls hit by cars, taken in injured skunks, and raised a pair of orphaned mountain lions from Montana.

The resident animals at the Science Center receive expert care and live out their lives as essential elements of the Center's mission to provide the public with a deeper appreciation of native wildlife.

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and around the clock.*

But Kitchen is adamant that each animal would be better off living in the wild, never having interacted with any human being. She stresses that people encountering wildlife they believe to be in distress should

never rush to intervene unless there is an immediate emergency. Give animals time and distance, she urges, and if in doubt, always call a rehabilitator.

WATCHING OVER TURTLES

While rehabbers at the Science Center are prepared to work with any species, Epping resident and licensed rehabilitator Chris Bogard has been working exclusively with turtles for more than thirteen years. She puts in long hours caring for injured turtles, keeping up with the latest turtle research and fielding calls about wild and pet turtles.

Bogard's devotion is inspiring. She will drive to just about any location to pick up an injured turtle and will do whatever is in her power to get each individual healthy. Ninety-eight percent of the calls she receives are about turtles injured by cars. From early spring to late summer, turtles are on the move looking for mates, traveling to nesting sites, and later moving towards hibernation grounds. For turtles, movement means danger. In a typical spring/summer season, Bogard will answer as many as sixty calls about turtles hit by cars. Each is given proper care and time to recover, and in every possible case, returned to where it was found for release.

Fish and Game Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program Coordinator John Kanter calls Bogard's work vital to the survival of threatened and endangered New Hampshire turtle species. Many of Bogard's rescues each year are Blanding's turtles, which can live up to seventy years and do not reach sexual maturity until the age of 15-20, making reproduction rates very low. "A single Blandings turtle, rescued and given a second chance," Kanter says, "can have an impact on the survival of the local population."

Bogard's advice when it comes to encountering turtles is simple. Resist the urge to pick them up and let wild turtles stay wild. The one exception? Turtles crossing a road can be gently moved to the side of the road, always in the same direction they were traveling. If a turtle is injured, keep it safe and quiet and contact a rehabilitator immediately. Bogard, who has learned from some of the country's top turtle experts, stresses that licensed rehabilitators are more than just compassionate animal lovers. They have the training and experience to provide the best possible care for injured wild animals.

ALL CREATURES GREAT AND SMALL

In the case of threatened and endangered animals, the rehabber's role is directly supportive of Fish and Game's mission to conserve and protect native wildlife. But not every rescue or rehab saves a member of a threatened species. One rehabilitator recalls trying to save orphaned baby mice, and though many New Hampshire residents might see squirrels and raccoons as nuisances, rehabilitators will take them in as well. Rehabilitators are

TURTLE CROSSING

Countless turtles in New Hampshire are killed or injured by cars between March and October. The danger is especially great from late May to early July, when females migrate to nesting areas. Please watch for turtles in the road!



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driven by their compassion for all living things. For every animal in need, regardless of species, there is a rehabilitator ready to step in. And when they do step in, seasoned rehabbers bring with them years of hands-on experience and the type of practical knowledge and skills that can mean the difference between life and death for an imperiled animal.

Cathie Gregg at the Elaine Conners Center for Wildlife in Madison exemplifies this type of rehabber. In 28 years as a wildlife rehabilitator, she has worked with almost every native New Hampshire species, but her specialty is the fawns and moose calves orphaned or injured every spring and summer by highway accidents. These youngsters find a safe haven with Gregg, who holds special licenses for her work with fawns and moose calves and for more than a decade has partnered with Fish and Game to raise and rehabilitate them.

The work is hectic, intensive and around the clock; fawns need to be fed 4-5 times a day and also must be kept quiet and isolated from the activities of the Center. Gregg and her volunteer caretakers must provide the proper care without allowing the fawns to get habituated to people. Along with the injured and orphaned, Gregg also finds herself raising fawns brought in by citizens who find them alone and assume they've been abandoned. For the animal-loving public, Gregg is emphatic about one bit of advice. "Seeing a fawn alone is not proof that it has been abandoned," she cautions. Does regularly leave their fawns hidden while they feed. "Give the fawn time," Gregg says, "and if you feel it is truly in need of assistance, contact a rehabilitator before intervening."

PURE DEVOTION

Last November, Conservation Officer Delayne Brown received a call from a Henniker police officer who had hit a bobcat kitten crossing the road. The young cat was unconscious, but not seriously injured. Brown took the kitten to Maria Colby at Wings of the Dawn rehab center in Henniker, where it was kept safe and given time to recover. Two weeks later, Brown and the police officer returned to the spot where the kitten had been hit and released the healthy youngster back into the wild.

The bobcat rescue made the local paper and was rightly celebrated as a successful partnership between local police, Fish and Game and rehabilitator Colby. But not every rescue is deemed as newsworthy as a bobcat kitten, and the daily work of New Hampshire's wildlife rehabilitators goes largely unnoticed by the public. In fact, when Nancy Kitchen made the decision to hand-raise that coyote pup, she was well aware that coyotes are considered by many to be a nuisance and that some would question her efforts to save a single orphaned pup. But for wildlife rehabilitators, every single animal, regardless of species, deserves a fighting chance at survival. And it is this pure devotion to animal welfare that makes rehabbers such an essential partner in Fish and Game's work to conserve and protect our state's precious wildlife!

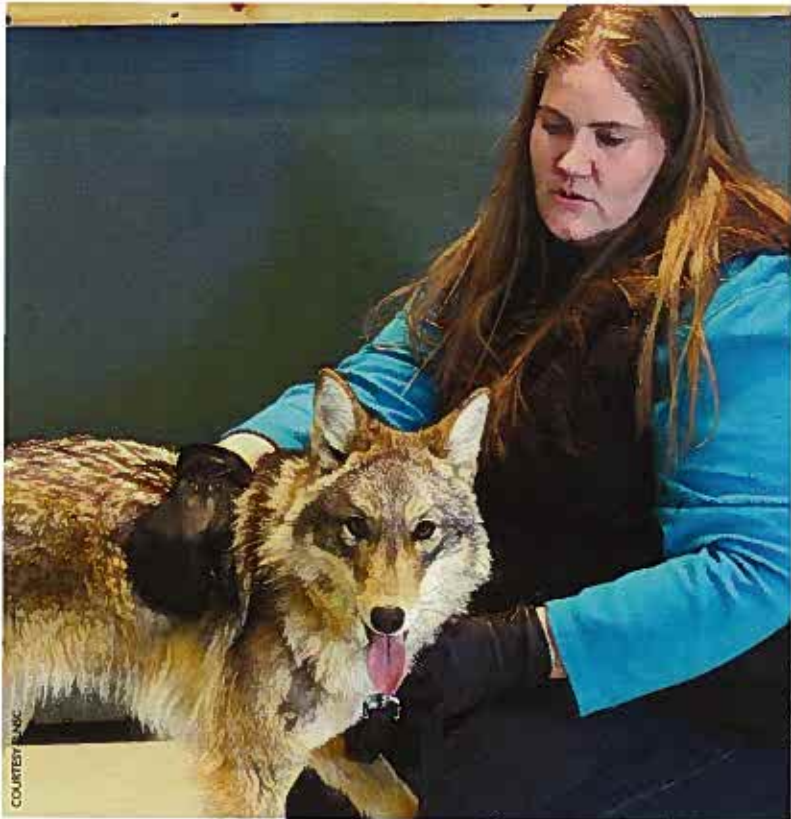


(Top) Originally from Louisiana and orphaned due to the Gulf oil spill in 2011, this otter found a home at the Squam Lakes Natural Science Center.

Chris Bogard (right) is a licensed rehabilitator who specializes in turtle rehabilitation and rescue. She is holding a common snapping turtle.



Nancy Kitchen (below), the Animal Care Manager for the Squam Lakes Natural Science Center, works with an orphaned coyote that is now a permanent resident of the Science Center.



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