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Bi-State Wildlife Hotline  
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For Immediate Release



## CALL OF THE WILD ANSWERED BY NEW BISTATE MISSOURI/ILLINOIS WILDLIFE HOTLINE @ (636) 492 - 1610

The Bi-State Wildlife Hotline is now officially available for callers in Missouri and Illinois. This free service is available for police, animal control, conservation centers, nature centers, animal rescues, public health departments, etc. to refer wildlife conflict calls to, effective October 1, 2011. Citizens calling in regards to any species of **wild** animal in need can call the hotline to get information, assistance, and local contact information to address their specific concern and circumstances. Citizens can reach the hotline via telephone at (636) 492 – 1610 or online at [www.wildlifehotline.com](http://www.wildlifehotline.com). The hotline is available 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.

The Wildlife Hotline was put together by a group of wildlife rehabilitators in the Missouri and Illinois area to offer citizens free advice and assistance with wildlife conflicts. When citizens call the hotline they will be connected with a wildlife specialist who is available to answer their questions, or refer the citizen to someone who can. Our specialists are volunteers who either are working for a wildlife rehabilitation center currently, or have in the past, and have been educated and certified by the NWRA or IWRC as rehabilitators. We have specialists that are located in Missouri and Illinois, from many different counties, and who are knowledgeable with mammals, birds of prey, songbirds, reptiles, waterfowl and all domestic animals vs. wildlife conflicts.

The Bi-State Wildlife Hotline (636) 492 – 1610 was created to address a variety of wildlife issues:

- Wildlife Conflicts – property damage, evicting wildlife, nuisance wildlife, coexistence issues.
- Orphan Wildlife – breeding seasons, reproductive educational information, reunite strategies to get babies back to mom.
- Rehabilitation Referrals – referring ‘finders’ to the proper, licensed rehabilitator for truly injured or orphaned animals, dispatch services for true wildlife emergencies.
- Educational support to inform callers of the legalities of keeping wildlife as ‘pets’ and improper rehabilitation, legalities of trapping, releasing, and controlling nuisance wildlife, and offering humane alternatives.
- Sick animal reporting – Distemper raccoons, possible rabid reports, down deer in road, etc.
- Rapid Response Services – skunk stuck in dumpster drain pipe, bird stuck in storefront ceiling, fox stuck in culvert grate, rescuing distressed wildlife in emergent need of help

Currently, the majority of wildlife calls are referred to conservation departments, animal control, humane societies, and sometimes even police and fire departments. These entities are often times undermanned, or unable to field such calls in the peak seasons. Many animal rescue organizations feel frustrated that they cannot assist callers with wildlife issues, especially when an animal is suffering and the caller is desperately trying to find help. Our hope is to offload these calls from these places and offer a knowledgeable wildlife specialist to assist in these matters. Over time, citizens will learn that it is inappropriate to call places like 911 or the fire department for an issue with a wildlife issue. Please feel free to refer those callers to the Wildlife Hotline at 636-492-1610 or our website at [www.wildlifehotline.com](http://www.wildlifehotline.com).

As rehabilitators, past and present, we know all too well that many wildlife orphans can be avoided if ‘finders’ attempt to reunite babies with their natural mothers quickly and correctly. Often times, wildlife rehabilitation

centers are closed in the early morning or late evening and cannot offer citizens assistance with this at the time that it is needed. The hotline's purpose is to fill that needed gap, and in turn cut down on the numbers of orphans that need to be rehabilitated each year.

For instance, eastern cottontail rabbits are very small and very young when their mother leaves them and moves on to have another litter. Citizens often feel the need to intervene with these small, adorable juvenile rabbits. In reality, these animals need to be left alone in order to develop the skills they will need later in life to survive. Sometimes callers find a nest of rabbits in their yard and they move the nest to another location so they can do yard work or let their pets out in the yard, etc. Mother rabbits will never find that nest of babies again, as they have no scent, and no tracking abilities to return to their nest. The Wildlife Hotline would instruct those callers to use an upside down wheelbarrow on top of the nest so that family pets cannot get to it, but mother rabbits can. When callers realize the fate of those rabbits if the nest is moved, oftentimes they are very willing to accommodate however they can especially when they find out that the babies will only be there two weeks at maximum.

We also take calls regarding conflicts with wildlife; e.g. skunks/moles/groundhogs digging up gardens and yards, opossums living under porches, raccoons living in the attic and chimney, squirrels destroying property and nesting in gutters and eaves. We have different solutions for each of these issues, and we offer humane solutions as an alternative to pest control. Often, citizens cannot afford pest control services, or they do not wish to harm the animals. If necessary, as a last resort, we can refer the caller to the proper wildlife rehabilitation center to get assistance for the animal, if injured or truly orphaned. The hotline can assist callers in reaching the proper people to pick up and dispose of sick animals, as is the case with distemper raccoons and foxes, and possibly rabid animals.

Animal Control agencies usually will not take these calls, or assist in these cases, so it has fallen on the rehabilitation people in many areas to handle these calls, though it depends on the county involved. Bite cases still must be reported to the proper animal control departments, which we can assist callers in finding contact information for. Note: The hotline will be instructing callers to seek medical attention for bite incidents, and file a bite report with their county's animal control department regardless of the risk category.

In addition, we offer referral contact information for callers to get in touch with the right center for their needs. For instance, many rehabilitation centers do not take in deer, so if a caller is truly in need of fawn rehabilitation, we can refer them to the proper place with the correct permit to accept the species in question. Many times, the caller is not in need of rehabilitation services, they simply need to be educated to understand why there is a fawn under their porch all day. Our joy comes from having the caller wait and watch as Mom comes back to get their fawn at the end of day, knowing that without our assistance, that fawn may have been transported to a rehab center and essentially stolen from her mother.

Our hope is that through this free, public service, citizens will learn how to peacefully coexist with the nature that surrounds us all. We can only achieve this through education, and this service intends to reach that goal, while providing the public with a one-stop solution for all wildlife issues, big and small.

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If you would like more information on this topic, or need to contact Angel Wintrode, please call (636) 233 – 0289 or email [angel@wildlifehotline.com](mailto:angel@wildlifehotline.com)