

Common Wildlife Mishaps and What to do About Them By Dave deCalesta – Reprinted from the 3/08 KLA Newsletter

Living on Keuka Lake and traveling in the surrounding rural countryside exposes us to any number of wildlife mishaps. Especially in spring, when we return to the lake, open cottages, and wildlife are having their babies. What to do?

I've caught a gull with a lure while fishing. Now what?



- Reel the bird in, slowly. When it gets close, put your foot on the line you're reeling in to keep the bird low to the ground as it gets close (obviously, ignore this step if fishing from a boat).
- Drop a clean cloth, towel or jacket completely over the bird, covering its head, back and wings. This protects you from taking a nasty peck and calms the gull down for what's next.
- Using gentle but firm pressure, fold the gull's wings to its body and wrap the cloth around it, holding it away from your face.
- **Do not cut the fishing line!** Instead, cut off the barb of the hook by pushing the hook forward through the bird's skin or beak until the barb is exposed then clip the barb off with wire cutters. Back the hook out. For treble hooks, cut them where they join, then push each hook forward and remove it. Unless you're extremely ambidextrous, the de-hooking operation works much better with an extra pair of hands – get help.
- Keeping your face away from it, release the gull with the wind so it will fly away from you rather than getting blown back into you.

Thunk! A bird just hit the window and is lying there, lifeless. Now what?



- Watch and wait a few minutes. The small songbird variety either are stunned, or may have suffered major injuries (fractured skull, fractured sternum or wing bones).
- When it comes around, pick it up gently and place it where it won't be easy pickings for a predator (e.g., bushes at base of tree). Check it out in 20 minutes or so. Most recover and fly away, unharmed. If still there and unable to fly, follow instructions at end of article (**getting critters to wildlife rehabilitators**).
- If it's larger, like a hawk, give it 20 minutes to recover and fly away. If still there after 20 minutes and isn't able to fly, slowly approach it, drop a large cloth or blanket over it, gently wrap it up, and take to a wildlife rehabilitator.

The baby birdies fell out of the nest and are lying on the ground. Now what? This one is really easy. Simply pick them up and put them back (mom will still care for them). If the nest is really dilapidated and additional drop-outs seem likely, patch the nest with duct tape (really).



I just ran over a nest of bunnies in the yard while mowing. Now what?

- Happens all the time – cottontails love to make their little baby nests in yards. Little scooped out hollows filled with rabbit fur and dried grass, these cups are below ground level and baby bunnies are unharmed. Mom bunny is watching from a safe distance with her heart in her mouth – don't "rescue" them. Leave them be, and...
- Surround the nest with a couple of stakes in the ground with flagging on them and don't mow the bunny patch, unless...
- You've hit and made an obvious mess of mom (very unlikely). If the bunnies are indeed orphans, put them in a shoebox with lots of dried grass and feed them whole milk from a medicine dropper for about 3 weeks until they can take greens (lettuce, beans, etc), then let them go.



I came upon bambi alone in the woods. Now what?

- Nine times out of ten, mom is out of sight in the proverbial bushes, watching hopefully. Leave bambi alone, mom will come to the rescue after you beat a retreat.
- The 10th time might be when mom took a hit on the highway and is obviously not going to be taking care of junior. Approach bambi – if it's able to bound away rapidly it'll be fine, leave it alone. If it's recently born and wobbling around (mid May – mid June) and you can catch it, it needs help. But it's against the law to raise bambi, so call the local NY DEC office in Bath (607) 776-2165 and ask for instructions.

You just hit a deer with your car and it's down. Now what?

- Whoa! Be very careful if you see a deer in the road! **DO NOT** try to avoid hitting it by driving into the opposing lane or going off the highway. You may hit another car or a tree, doing considerably more harm to yourself and car than if you just hit the deer. The correct procedure is to jam on the horn and brakes, hoping to scare the deer off the road before you hit it. If you hit the deer on the road, it's a comprehensive damage and your insurance will pay and not raise the rates. If you hit a tree or another car, it's a collision, and you will pay big time.
- O.K., you hit it. Pull slowly off the road, parking on the shoulder. Make sure the radiator hasn't been smashed in and/or a tire hasn't been impeded by a crumpled fender and you can safely drive the car. **Do not approach the deer** – you may be severely injured by flailing hooves or antlers. There is nothing you can do for the deer. Call 911 or the Bath DEC office (607-776-2165) and report the accident. If you cannot drive the car away safely, wait inside the car until help arrives.



Yuck! You just caught a snake in the glue trap you meant for catch mice.

Now what? Another easy one. Glue traps are those little rectangular trays filled with sticky stuff people put along walls in the basement (or garage) to catch mice. Snakes like to crawl along walls, looking for mice. Take snake and trap outside, spray with Pam or other cooking oil, and snake will slither (gratefully) away.

What about other injured animals (e.g., hawks/owls shot or hit by cars, orphaned possums, birds that hit windows and can't fly). Unfortunately, there are no wildlife rehabilitators in Yates or Steuben Counties. However, help is nearby.

For small mammals and reptiles contact: Kimberly Raide in Shortsville at kar22@hotmail.com or 585-957-2198 or Lynda Twist in Seneca Falls ltwist@rochester.rr.com 315 -568-0503 or 315-651-3108 (songbirds also with Lyda Twist)

For hawks, owls and waterfowl contact: Gail Culver, Wildhaven Wildlife Rehabilitation Center in Medina at GailWild@aol.com 716-798-3884

For songbirds contact: Mary Lou Callahan at 315-415-4187 or mlcallahan@rochester.rr.com

For raccoons, skunks, bats, large & small mammals, hawks and owls, songbirds, waterfowl, game birds, reptiles, fawns contact: Kristin Steffen, Second Chance Wildlife Rehabilitation krittrkris@yahoo.com 315-374-4542 or Lynn Crane, Woodlands Wildlife Rehabilitation Facility lync@tds.net (315) 365-3222

