



Softshell Turtles

Have you seen them? Florida softshell turtles have been on the move!

During the hot and dry nesting season months of March through the early weeks of July, Florida softshell turtles have embarked on perilous journeys from their drying ephemeral ponds to their former nesting sites.

More than once in the years I have lived here, I've stopped my car to help one get across a highway safely. It's no surprise that our ambulances have been called on regularly over the last few months to rescue turtles who didn't make it safely across a stretch of road. Their determination and focus are admirable, but they are no match for the increasing car and truck traffic in our region.

While at South Florida Wildlife Center we typically treat these unique and "intelligent" looking turtles mainly for vehicular trauma, we also find it troubling that softshell turtles have been heavily killed in some areas for their meat, and populations in northern Florida have declined because of this practice. Because of the challenges this species faces, a long-term management strategy is essential in order to protect the Florida

softshell and to ensure that this unique turtle remains a visible and viable part of our region's freshwater ecosystems.

Although we employ a skilled staff of about 60 paid professionals—three licensed veterinarians, wildlife rehabilitators, veterinary technicians, and many other animal care specialists—we could not exist a day without the tireless support of more than 400 active volunteers and thousands of generous donors.

Without your ongoing support, our team would not be able to provide field rescue, clinic triage, state-of-the-art diagnostics, expert veterinary treatment and surgery, as well as pediatric and rehabilitative care to our wildlife patients.

Thank you for all that you do for animals—and for standing with us today and tomorrow.

For the animals,

Dr. Antonia Gardner, Medical Director

South Florida Wildlife Center admits over 12,000 injured, orphaned, or imperiled animals annually... including the occasional Florida softshell turtle... making us one of the largest wildlife hospitals, trauma centers, and rehabilitation facilities in the nation, in intake numbers.

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A Place for Baby Raccoons to Play, Learn and Grow

Thank you for helping us ready baby raccoons and other animals for their return to the wild.

South Florida Wildlife Center successfully rehabilitates thousands of animals every year. With the support of our many loyal donors and volunteers, we've been able to refine our processes and develop new habitats.

Our latest addition to our rehabilitation program is the playpen for baby raccoons. This new enclosure—created and maintained through generous gifts to the Center—is specifically designed to be an intermediate habitat between the indoor nursery and the big, outdoor habitat for raccoons, where the rehabilitation process is finished. The playpen allows for a softer transition between the two habitats, giving recently weaned raccoons an additional environment to grow and develop important survival skills.

The playpen offers babies many new learning opportunities—it is their first encounter with natural textures like sand, grass, and rocks; hammocks, branches and shelving units help them develop climbing skills; hide boxes give them places to

retreat as well as navigate in and out of; foraging opportunities with many food options expose them to a variety of dietary choices; and a 360-degree open-air, fully-screened enclosure introduces them to natural sounds and elements, like rain, wind, and sun.

Maintaining Our Distance

The playpen also minimizes staff interaction so the baby raccoons do not become dependent on or comfortable around humans. We only enter the playpen twice a day and wear masks to prevent facial recognition. Once the babies are juveniles and moved from the playpen to the big raccoon habitat, we aim for zero human interaction. This helps preserve the natural tendency of raccoons to be uneasy around humans and other large, potentially dangerous species.

\$50
...pays for a physical exam
by one of our licensed
veterinarians.



STAFF/SFWC



Jessica Sayre Sonzogni

Amazon Registry

*Interested in providing learning opportunities for our young raccoons?
Check out our Amazon "Baby Registry"*

The Amazon Registry includes a list of habitat enrichment items and supplies to benefit our nursery and other South Florida Wildlife Center departments. Any purchases made through our registry will be shipped directly to us and will immediately go to work making a difference for our animals.

Find the staff's hand-picked "baby registry" list of needed supplies for all departments at: www.amazon.com/baby-reg and search for South Florida Wildlife Center.

BABY
REGISTRY
by amazon

Looking for Emergency Shelters

As everyone in Florida should be doing, SFWC is revisiting and updating our emergency evacuation plans. We are hoping to expand our options for locations able to accommodate injured or impaired wildlife in the event we have to evacuate. If you have a large enclosed (fence or walls) covered area that you might consider allowing us to access, we would love to talk.

Please call or email Christina Baez, 954-524-4302 ext. 19,
cbaez@southfloridawildlifecenter.org.



Volunteer Spotlight

We're So Glad You Found Us, Brian Jackson!

Originally from Canada, Brian Jackson moved to the U.S. fourteen years ago. He spent time in Texas and Louisiana before his work as a "self-employed, semi-retired" helicopter pilot brought him to South Florida last fall.

As he settled into the area, he purposely kept an eye out for opportunities that fit his lifelong interest in animals and wildlife. Lucky for us, he happened to see one of our ambulances on the road rescuing an animal and was inspired to call our Volunteer Coordinator, Kim Hill, to learn more.

Brian started off volunteering once a week doing various landscaping work like trimming and mowing, but was soon training to assist in the wildlife ward and recovery center. Today, he's putting in extra volunteer time riding along with the ambulance so he can eventually provide relief for our regular drivers. Without more drivers, we would not be able to keep our ambulances on the road seven days per week rescuing thousands of injured animals per year.

"I feel it is almost a responsibility for people to volunteer and give back to their community if they are able."

—Brian Jackson, SFWC Volunteer

Seeing the Impact—Being the Impact for SFWC

The success stories keep Brian coming back each week. As a volunteer who isn't with the animals daily, the dramatic healing and recovery process is even more evident to him when he works his shifts. An injured pelican that he helped transport a few weeks ago might now be thriving and ready for release back into the wild.

It's no secret that engaging and retaining our volunteers works best when the work is meaningful, interesting and fun. Brian wasn't shy about starting off getting his hands dirty with the grunt work because he knew it was the first



Brian Jackson

step in learning our mission and the work we do.

"It has to be enjoyable and rewarding or you are not going to stick with it and grow into roles that utilize your skills and training even more."

—Brian Jackson, SFWC Volunteer

In addition to everything else he is doing for SFWC, Brian's interest in videography is something that fills a big need here at the Center. He has started documenting our work with animals by taking various video of rescues, treatments, recoveries and releases as part of his volunteer role.

From "Do It All Volunteer" to Donor

Though Brian has been volunteering at SFWC for less than a year, he recently took his involvement and commitment a step further by making a vehicle donation to SFWC. He had purchased a small convertible as a second car when he moved to Florida but it was not getting much use. At first he considered selling it to put a few dollars in his pocket, but decided to donate it to SFWC to support our mission. Brian acknowledged the role donors play in our success saying, "I give the staff and leadership full credit for accomplishing a lot with just a little. The sheer volume of injured animals they help is amazing when you consider that the Center's primary source of daily operations funding comes from donations."

\$700

...feeds a recovering pelican for four weeks.

Thank you for sharing
your gifts of time, skills,
passion, dedication and
your car, Brian!



Jessica Sayre Sonzogni



Wheels for Wildlife Vehicle Donation Program

For more information about SFWC's vehicle donation program, visit www.WheelsForWildlife.com or call (855) 647-1618. Donate cars, trucks, RVs, motorcycles or boats—running or not. Vehicles can be towed for free from anywhere in the U.S. On average, SFWC receives 80% of the proceeds from vehicles sold at auction.

\$100

...allows us to administer
antibiotics that can save
the life of an animal.

\$35

...covers a day
of hospitalization.



Therapeutic Laser Treatment

Is used to alleviate pain and speed healing to help our patients regain function of injured limbs faster.



Hydrotherapy

Birds with muscle or neurological damage often benefit from hydrotherapy in specialized pools. Hydrotherapy also improves feather quality and overall well-being.



Digital Radiology

Improves what we can see on an X-ray and decreases the time the patient needs to be under anesthesia or restrained.

Innovative Medical Treatments

The South Florida Wildlife Center provides top-notch, innovative care for all its patients. Most medical treatments at SFWC are done by our highly-skilled staff wildlife veterinarians, but local veterinarians who specialize in advanced medicine and surgery regularly volunteer their time at the Center as well.



Therapeutic Ultrasound Treatment

Penetrates scarred skin, muscle, and connective tissue and helps improve the range of motion of our patients.



Ophthalmology

Provides diagnosis and treatment, with the help of a local veterinary ophthalmologist, for our patients with injuries, diseases of the eye, including cataracts and glaucoma.



Feather Imping

Involves clipping the broken feathers and affixing temporary feathers to the clipped shafts. The new feathers remain in place until the bird naturally molts them.



Surgery

Is used to remove fish hooks and other foreign bodies from our patients, to repair broken limbs, often with advanced orthopedic procedures or techniques like skin grafts to repair wounds, and much more.

\$500

...pays for the rearing of
an orphaned baby bird
from nestling to release.



Thank You! Your Support Helped SFWC Raise and Soft-Release 500 Orphaned Eastern Gray Squirrels Last Year

A wonderful example of donations at work here at South Florida Wildlife Center is the expansion and improvement of our soft-release program for rescued animals like the Eastern Gray Squirrel. Donor support helped us rescue over 12,000 animals in the last year, including over 500 baby squirrels.

The squirrels are hand-reared in our wildlife nursery by caring staff and volunteers until the babies are old enough to eat on their own (up to 3 months) before joining a group of about 20 squirrels in an on-site outdoor enclosure getting ready for soft-release. The soft-release involves a smaller group of squirrels spending a few days in an enclosure in someone's private yard, where they are fed as they acclimate to the wild landscape.

A suitable site for squirrel soft-releases has a couple of trees in a yard or other private property with no big dogs. This "mini-ecosystem" can sustain the squirrels after they have left the cage. If there are other squirrels seen in the

neighborhood already, this is an indicator that the area is a good habitat.

The soft-release is a technique that gives them the best opportunity for survival in the wild—a gradual release back to nature.

Donations have been key to this program's growth.

At least \$100,000 of our annual operating budget is spent on direct care for these baby squirrels, from our nursery to our on-site outdoor habitat to the soft-release back to nature – every \$200 donors invest in SFWC provides lifesaving care for a baby squirrel!

The success of the soft-release program would not be possible without the commitment and dedication of so many staff, volunteers and donors. We thank those who are helping us release hand-reared orphaned wild animals back to their natural habitats.

If you have property that you think might make a good release site for squirrels, find out more about the soft-release program



Toby Blades
-Volunteer

by contacting Dr. Renata Schneider, Director of Wildlife Rehabilitation, at rschneider@southfloridawildlifecenter.org.



STAFF/SFWC



Toby Blades
-Volunteer

Planned Giving

Planned gifts have a significant positive impact on our organization and our ability to properly care for the animals entrusted to us now and in the future.

For information about planned giving opportunities, please contact Jan DelSesto at 954-524-6344.

\$150

...covers the cost
of an x-ray.

An Investment in Wildlife

- Janice Mancini Del Sesto, Sr. Director of Development

Recently, a visiting supporter told me that his donations to SFWC bring him a "better return on investment" than any money he has ever put into the stock market. He knows each gift has a direct and significant impact for our area's wildlife that far exceeds the monetary value of his donation.

I'm reminded of this donor-driven impact each day when witnessing the critically important, lifesaving work taking place here at the Center. Small miracles take place in every corner of the hospital and nursery, thanks to an extraordinary professional team made up of about 60 veterinarians, technicians, rehabilitators, and animal care staff.

While our sole financial support comes from individuals, foundations, and businesses, we also benefit greatly from the gift of time. Our staff could not admit, treat, and rehabilitate the thousands of animals each year without the time committed by an amazingly loyal and well-trained group of several hundred volunteers.

I like to think of our donors, volunteers, and friends—our investors—as the "health insurers" for the wildlife who live in our community.

Because of you, South Florida Wildlife Center is making a difference for the wildlife here. All of us should be proud that we are now considered one of the premier Centers of its kind in the U.S., attracting interns and externs from around the world who come to learn and be trained by our veterinary team.

Thank you for your trust in our mission and for your interest and investment in Florida's native wildlife.



South Florida WILDLIFE CENTER

In partnership with The Humane Society of the United States

3200 SW 4th Avenue
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33315



STAFF/SFWC

CONTACT US

Online: southfloridawildlifecenter.org

954.524.4302

Hospital Admissions: **ext 10**

Volunteers: **ext 40**

Donations: **ext 25**

Email: info@southfloridawildlifecenter.org

Hours of operation:

8am to 6pm ET

365 days a year



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Aaron Ansarov -Volunteer



Toby Blades -Volunteer



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