



South Florida WILDLIFE CENTER

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southfloridawildlifecenter.org



Dear Friend,

Spring is probably the most-anticipated of seasons. It's a time of regeneration and rebirth. In Northern states it is a time when others eagerly search for the first buds on the maple trees or that first brave daffodil, thrilled that new growth ventures out despite the still-frigid temperatures. A time when the sighting of a robin is a notable occasion inspiring hope for warmer weather.

In South Florida, the first signs of Spring might not be as obvious, but there are still plenty of indications that the seasons are changing. Frangipani buds are just starting to bloom. Many trees and plants are taking on a visibly greener hue. Spring is also the season of migration. This year, you may see uncommon avian visitors in your yard, as the effects of hurricanes sometimes change migratory patterns for many birds.

And, of course, you will see ample evidence of newborn animals popping up everywhere! Spring is a universal time of rebirth, and our community, with its lush foliage, tender grasses and waterfront access, is more hospitable than many. Your yard is likely home to dozens of animal families ranging from songbirds to squirrels to opossums - may- be even turtles, foxes or ospreys!

Top: Migrating birds, like this hooded warbler, are often injured from window collisions
Left: Baby squirrel sleeps in peace, knowing he's now safe; This young grey fox came to us with a broken leg; The nursery hand-raised this least tern- a threatened species in Florida



Baby opossums peek out of a knot-hole in one of our enrichment tools



A young brown thrasher opens wide for one of her daily hand-feedings



These tiny squirrels were blown out of a tree during a storm and abandoned

Most wildlife mothers are clever about camouflaging their nests, so it is essential that you take care when working in your garden, trimming trees, or mowing your lawn so that growing families aren't disturbed. If an accident does occur, more often than not, simple steps can keep wildlife families together and safe.

Each Spring, our Resource Center staff field hundreds of calls a day from concerned citizens like you who encounter newborn and juvenile wildlife while enjoying their yards and hiking trails or local waterways. As long as the babies are uninjured, our message to these would-be rescuers is almost always "If You Care, Leave Them There." Typically, these youngsters are not abandoned or orphaned. Their parents are most likely foraging, or may be warily watching you (as a predator) from afar before returning to their young. For more information on our "If You Care Leave Them There" campaign, go to our website: www.southfloridawildlifecenter.org

There are some occasions, however, when expert assistance is essential. For instance, if the family cat should bring home a baby animal, veterinary care is required for that infant. A litter of young opossums whose mother is dead or was forced to abandon her young will need raising. A nestling who tumbles from a tree and has a visible wound will need treatment, as will wild infants hit by cars or clipped by lawn mowers.



This orphaned black-bellied whistling duck was adopted by a family of Muscovy ducks



It's almost dinner-time for this two-week-old raccoon



A migrating yellow-billed cuckoo rests for a few days in one of our aviaries



Great blue herons nest in trees close to wetlands, where they can find food



Orphaned bobcat kittens like this one may be found in suburban areas



Common moorhen, also called a gallinule, in our nursery's care

By April, our nursery will be bursting at the seams with wild youngsters who have truly been orphaned or abandoned. The youngest and most fragile will be kept together in temperature- and humidity-controlled walk-in incubators. Many will be fed by staff and volunteers every 15 minutes for 10 hours a day to give them the nourishment they require to grow and thrive. The injured will receive bandage changes, medication and physical therapy. What a cacophony of noise greets those who enter the nursery at this time of year!

As full as we expect to be, we will also be there for you! Please know that, as you enjoy all that nature has to offer this time of year, you can contact us whenever you encounter wildlife in peril. Our staff stands at the ready to raise infants, heal the injured and sick, and provide all our wild patients with a safe retreat to recuperate and thrive.

You can also contact us seven days a week, 365-days a year, with your wildlife questions. Need to know how to humanely co-exist with a fox family? We can help! Seeking tips for keeping raccoons from nesting underneath your porch? Call us! Wondering if that bizarrely-hopping bird is injured or doing a mating dance? We'll let you know!

Of course, none of what we do would be possible without generous supporters like you. Without your help, thousands of baby animals would suffer, and most likely not survive. Without expert species-



Young Virginia opossums hone survival skills until ready for release into the wild



Sedge wrens make their winter home here, but may be seen flying north this spring.



Florida softshell turtles can be seen near water, basking in the sun



This immature peregrine falcon will gain strength in our flight cages before release



A young raccoon feels more safe and secure nestled in this hand-knit nest



Anhingas fly over freshwater areas or perch in the sun with wings outstretched

appropriate care, these animals would not thrive or develop properly, and would never be released back into their natural environments. YOU make the difference that allows South Florida to remain a haven for wildlife of all species.

Just as you carefully keep watch on the animals with whom you share your backyard, your support for South Florida Wildlife Center provides safety and security for hundreds of species of other animals who co-exist with us. YOU are the reason wildlife in peril is protected, treated and then returned to an environment where they can reside, reproduce, provide valuable support to the ecosystem and delight those who, like you, are proud of our community and all of its natural gifts.

In this season of new birth and new growth, please consider renewing your commitment of support to South Florida Wildlife Center. And please accept my deepest appreciation for all you do, individually and as a supporter of South Florida Wildlife Center, to protect and preserve our community's unique ecosystems and the lives of the wild animals who, along with us, call this extraordinary region home.

Happy Spring,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Debra Parsons-Drake".

Debra Parsons-Drake
Executive Director



A female summer tanager is carefully monitored during rehabilitation



Be on the lookout for birds nesting in trees, shrubs or even on the ground



A young burrowing owl is literally "in good hands" as he receives medical care