



JOSEPH J. AND HELEN M. SOMMER WILDLIFE CONSERVATION CENTER

Volunteer Handbook



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Introduction

We at The Wildlife Conservation Center (WCC) would like to welcome you to our volunteer program. Your time spent here is immensely appreciated, as our volunteers are the backbone of the Center. This handbook is relevant to all WCC volunteers, please take the time to read through it. The information given is to provide you with a background of our facility, explain policies and procedures, and outline the tasks in which you will be performing.

About Stark Parks Wildlife Conservation Center

The Wildlife Conservation Center (formerly named Sanders Wildlife Center) was gifted to the Stark County Park District in 1986 from the Sanders Wildlife Foundation and its founder C. Pitt Sanders. In June of 2018, the opening of the newly named WCC was made possible by the contributions of Joseph J. and Helen M. Sommer. Staff and volunteers at the WCC provide care to over 2,000 injured, ill, and orphaned native wildlife annually with the goal of releasing them back into their natural habitat. Our 30 non-releasable Ambassador animals located at the WCC and our Quail Hollow Nature Center help us educate the public about Ohio's native wildlife and the importance they present.

Stark Parks Mission Statement

"Preserve, manage, and connect natural areas to serve the community through recreation, conservation, and education"

Natural Resources Mission Statement

"Dedicated to the conservation and management of native wildlife and their habitat through research, education, and quality animal care"

Contact Information

Stark Co. Parks WCC
800 Genoa Ave. NW
Massillon, OH 44646

Phone number: 330.477.0448

Ranger number: 330.353.2377

Website: <https://starkparks.com/wildlife-conservation-center/>

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/StarkParks/>



Serious Commitment

Volunteers are the Center's backbone. They help complete necessary tasks so staff are able to spend valuable time giving supportive care to those in need. Our staff and patients heavily rely on volunteers' help year round. Please note that daily household tasks are the greatest need at the Center.

Through observation and training progression, WCC Volunteers will learn species identification and fun facts, hygiene and safety precautions, species specific diet preparations, cleaning protocols, handling protocols, and much more. We ask all incoming volunteers to make a commitment to a regular shift once they complete the WCC orientation. Volunteers will be able to pick a two hour time slot based on our hours of operation below. Intakes, medical treatment, and wound management will only be done by WCC staff.

Hours of Operation

The Center's hours will reflect seasonal needs

Hours Open to the Public:

Winter (November-March)

8:30a to 4:00p, Monday to Saturday

Summer (April-October)

8:30a to 4:00p, Monday to Sunday

Overall Hours of Operation: (subject to change due to seasonal need)

Winter (November-April)

8:00a to 4:30p, Monday to Sunday

Summer (April-October)

8:00a to 9:00p, Monday to Sunday

Regulation Laws

Wildlife rehabilitation laws are governed and regulated by The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (Division of Wildlife), The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and USDA (Animal Welfare Act known as AWA). These laws are in place for the safety of the public and to ensure a successful future for all native wildlife. Several state and federal permits were obtained to allow the Wildlife Conservation Center to rehabilitate wildlife as well as for public education. The WCC holds the following permits; State Category II Rehabilitation Permit, Federal Rehabilitation Permit, Ohio Wildlife Permit, USDA, and Federal Salvage Permit.

Adherence to Laws Regarding Wildlife

No one is allowed to remove any part (i.e., feathers, nests, eggs, etc.) of any native or migratory birds from the premises. This is in accordance to The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services laws. Also, park ordinance states that no person shall injure, deface, destroy, disturb, and introduce any item that may cause damage or remove any part of the Park District. This means that without an applicable permit issued from the Natural Resources Department no one may pick mushrooms, leaves, rocks, branches, artifacts, etc. from the parks as well as release animals, plants, or trash into the parks.



Volunteer Roles & Responsibilities

Upon volunteering with the Wildlife Conservation Center, a training checklist will be provided to each volunteer. Each line item in the training checklist must be completed before permission is given to the volunteer to work without direct supervision. Each volunteer's starting role is with Facility Husbandry. If a volunteer would like to advance in their opportunities, one can do so by contacting a year round part time or full time staff member.

Roles:

Facility Husbandry (*please note, each Wildlife Center volunteer is required to complete these duties to start*)

Includes basic housekeeping duties such as dishes, laundry, and stocking supplies. Diet prep and enclosure cleaning of our wildlife ambassadors. Feeder colony care is also included. Our feeder colonies consist of a variety of insects and mice. Limited animal handling: crating the ambassadors (ex: moving the animal out of enclosure for cleaning purposes.)

Track 1: Wildlife Ambassador Handler (*limited spots available*)

This volunteer must be 18 years or older. Includes Facility Husbandry duties as well as being trained to perform formal and informal programs with a Wildlife Ambassador. There are certain hourly requirements needed to complete this training and will include an interview process. Any volunteer interested may speak to the supervisor of animal care for further information.

Track 2: Wildlife Rescue & Release

Includes Facility Husbandry duties as well as attending a training class to learn how to safely go out on rescues for a variety of species when a patron is not able to bring an injured animal into the center themselves. Training also includes releasing techniques for a variety of species. This volunteer must be able to readily respond and attend the mandatory training class offered at Stark Parks WCC.

Track 3: Wildlife Rehabilitation Husbandry

Includes Facility Husbandry duties as well as diet prep and enclosure cleaning of most of the wildlife patients at the Center. Facility Husbandry training must be completed beforehand.

Track 4: WCC Volunteer Mentor (*limited spots available*)

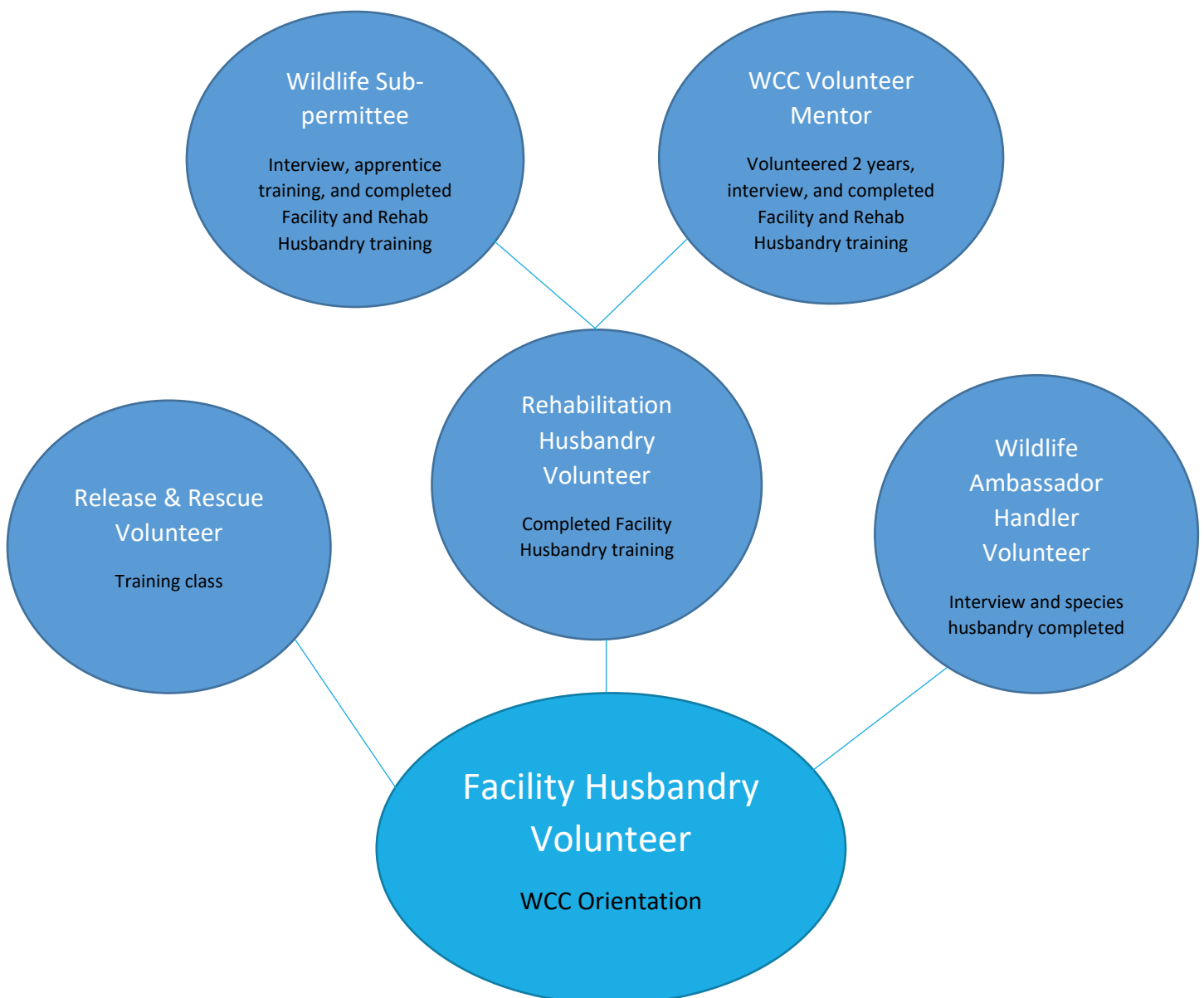
This is a volunteer who has been with us for at least two years or more and has gone through an interview with a panel of three interviewees (the supervisor of animal care and two full-time rehabilitators). Facility Husbandry and Wildlife Rehabilitation Husbandry training must be completed beforehand. This volunteer helps staff by training volunteers in the Facility Husbandry and Wildlife Rehabilitation Husbandry roles. When not training new volunteers, this volunteer will perform husbandry and household cleaning duties as set forth in track three.



Track 5: WCC Wildlife Sub-permittee (*limited spots available*)

This volunteer must be 18 years or older. The volunteer is responsible to care for infant wildlife in their home by going through an apprentice training program. This is a big commitment of time and funds. This volunteer will be held to state and federal regulations and will be listed under our rehabilitation permit. Facility Husbandry and Wildlife Rehabilitation Husbandry training must be completed beforehand. For further information, please see the supervisor of animal care.

Volunteer Roles Flow Chart





Conduct

Stark Parks strives for a work environment that allows people to be creative and have fun while maintaining their professionalism at all times. We strongly believe that workplace and volunteer disputes and conflicts should be addressed using approaches that foster clear communication, facilitate respectful interactions and yield solutions of mutual agreement. Civility involves treating others with dignity and respect, and acting with regard to other's feelings. Volunteers are held to the same standards of conduct and behavior required of all staff and should they need clarification or may have a concern those can be directed to WCC administrative assistant, animal care supervisor, or volunteer coordinator at any time. Should a volunteer's conduct be unbecoming and repeated, the situation will be turned over to the Human Resources Manager for review.

Attire

Volunteers will receive a Stark Parks volunteer shirt after their first 8 hours of volunteering. The Center expects volunteers to wear the volunteer shirt upon receiving it, as well as clean and appropriate clothing for wildlife work. This means no tank tops, torn pants, leggings/yoga pants, and no shirts with inappropriate print. **Closed-toed shoes with socks must be worn at all times.** Shorts (of a respectable length), capris, and jeans can be worn. Much of our work involves animals in outdoor pens so please be sure to bring clothing and shoes appropriate for the season, however long pants are recommended at all times to protect your legs. Volunteers will get dirty, please dress accordingly.

Basic Requirements

Volunteers must be at least 16 years of age unless otherwise specified for various roles (rabies vector species or specific duties, etc.). We ask that volunteers fulfill a 2 hour shift once a week. Caring for wildlife in a rehabilitation environment requires the following physical abilities: walking, lifting, and bending of knees and elbows, manipulation of objects with fingers and using fine motor skills. Part of volunteers' responsibilities may include duties such as lifting, carrying, bending, pushing, and pulling items up to 50 lbs. throughout the assigned shift. Please speak with the wildlife care supervisor regarding accommodations needed prior to completing any assigned tasks. Volunteers must have a reliable source of transportation to and from the Center. To remain an active volunteer, one must have a minimum of 32 hours annually. If this is not met in a period of 12 months, your Wildlife Center volunteer status will be placed as inactive. If you choose to return to volunteering at the WCC after this time, you will be required to complete the Facility Husbandry training upon your return.

Upon arriving to volunteer, please sign in to the volunteer binder located at the communal area. Always wear your provided nametag as it helps us become better acquainted with one another and it helps the public identify to whom they may be speaking. Volunteer shirts should also be worn at all times as this helps the public recognize your role in the parks. Before leaving, make sure to touch base with a staff member and sign out of the volunteer binder. Please keep your volunteer binder up-to-date, this is how we track your volunteer hours.



Call Off Policy

If you are going to be late, or unable to make it for a volunteer shift, please let the WCC administrative assistant know as soon as possible by calling the Center at (330) 477-0448. Our staff plans their day according to how many volunteers are scheduled as well as who is scheduled so communication is key to our business needs.

Feedback

We appreciate feedback and any recommendations on how we can improve our volunteer program. You may share your ideas by reaching out to the Center administrative assistant or animal care supervisor at any point in time. You may also reach out to the volunteer coordinator with any feedback or concerns.



WCC Map





Wildlife Conservation Center Protocols

- Volunteers are welcome to bring in snacks and non-alcoholic drinks, they can be stored in the staff lounge where they must stay. A water fountain can be found by the restrooms for use.
- Please be mindful in the clinic, noise and crowding can increase the animal's stress and agitation. Do not peek into cages or handle animals unnecessarily.
- Please keep your cell phone on silent. It is good practice to keep a phone with you in case of an emergency.
- Please seek permission from a year round staff member before bringing visitors through the clinic. Visitors may not be taken into the animal enclosures.

Animal Handling

The animals housed here at the WCC are wild and therefore should be treated as such. Petting an animal or talking to it is NOT comforting to it; it is actually very stressful to the animal. This is extremely important for orphaned animals when the risk of imprinting or taming is very high.

Volunteers should not enter into an enclosure or handle an animal until they have completed the provided checklist/training and have been given permission to do so by a staff member. Until that checklist is completed a staff member must always be present when entering an enclosure.

Only staff are permitted to handle and perform examinations with a new intake of an animal. Some of the animals are listed as staff only, no volunteers are allowed to handle these animals. Quarantine area of the Center and animals housed there are also staff only. The quarantine area is reserved for animals with contagious diseases and extra disinfection protocols are necessary to prevent the spread of disease to other animals.

Photographs and Social Media

Wildlife Conservation Center volunteers have a unique privilege of working with native wild animals. We ask that our volunteers do not discuss the behavior, medical condition, or status of any animal in our care. The Centers rehabilitation animals currently undergoing care should remain private as per Federal, State, and local permitting guidelines. Therefore we ask that you not post pictures or information about these animals on any personal social media accounts. If you would like to share an animal success story please speak with the wildlife care supervisor and/or the volunteer coordinator as they will be able to help guide you in the right direction.

The Center wildlife ambassadors available for public viewing may be publicized. However, we ask that volunteers make it clear in their posts that wildlife are not pets and should not be handled in the same way as pets are.



Wildlife Center Critter Cams

Please be aware that the Center may have live or recording video cameras at any time in common areas and including the animal viewing room.

Euthanasia

Euthanasia is an important tool in wildlife medicine. Since many animals that come to us have already sustained severe trauma or have severe debilitations, euthanasia is a procedure to end suffering. Decisions made regarding euthanasia will be made on a case-by-case basis.

Animals will be selected for treatment based on the likelihood that they will be able to be released as a functional individual without handicap to reasonable life. The following are a few general guidelines for consideration put forth by the National Wildlife Rehabilitators Association (NWRA) Principles of Wildlife rehabilitation:

- No animal with visual impairment in both eyes should be released
- No bird can survive normally with any portion of its wing missing
- No mammal with impaired use in two or more legs can move well enough for release
- Animals that are human-imprinted are not behaviorally equipped for life in the wild and may pose a threat to humans
- No animal should be released if it has a high likelihood of shedding/transmitting a disease to the wild population

Additionally, other considerations to be made include:

- Pain and suffering is always a primary concern. Appropriate medications and measures will be used, but if these are not providing adequate relief, euthanasia may be elected to eliminate pain and suffering.
- Animals that are determined to be non-releasable will most often be humanely euthanized early to prevent undue suffering in captivity.

Some patients may be placed in educational programs/exhibits. In general, most wildlife species do not adapt well to living in captivity. The decision to place any wild animal into a permanent captive setting is one not to be taken lightly. In addition to this, there are limited opportunities for placement of these handicapped individuals. All the above factors must be taken into account before continuing treatment with an animal that has been determined to be non-releasable.



Rabies Vector Species (RVS)

Rabies is a viral disease that attacks the nervous system and can be transmitted by any mammal infected. Ohio's rabies vector species are Raccoon, Skunk, Fox, Coyote, and Bats. Birds are not thought to be susceptible to infection. Prevention of rabies is critical and the disease is fatal if left untreated.

Rabies is transmitted through contact with the saliva and brain tissue of the infected animal. Transmission occurs when the infected saliva comes in contact with a person's (or animal's) exposed mucous membrane. This usually occurs during a bite, a scratch from a saliva-covered paw of an infected animal, or infected saliva entering a pre-existing break in the skin.

The WCC requires volunteers to take the RVS Training Class given by OWRA (Ohio Wildlife Rehabilitation Association) and bring in a copy of the certificate and to sign a waiver before being allowed to work with our RVS wildlife ambassadors only. No volunteer will be allowed to work with RVS in rehabilitation unless they are inoculated (proof of documentation needed), have taken the RVS training class, and sign our waiver.

Health and Safety

Wildlife can carry, contract, and transmit a variety of diseases. Many can be species specific, but some can be transmitted between the species and humans (zoonotic diseases). Proper hygiene such as wearing protective clothing, washing hands often, and using proper safety techniques will greatly minimize any risks.

Some diseases that may not pose a risk to us, may pose a risk to your pets. Use precaution when coming in contact with domestic animals after volunteering at the Center. It is good practice to change out of your volunteer clothing and wash hands well before entering pet-occupied areas. Bring a separate pair of shoes to volunteer in and keep them in your trunk of your car.

Thank You

We want to thank you for being a part of our care team! We appreciate our volunteers and their immense dedication towards making a difference in conservation.