



# Becoming a *Wildlife Rehabilitator* in Rhode Island



The proper care of sick, orphaned, displaced, or injured wild animals requires special knowledge, skills and facilities not possessed by the general public. Specially trained individuals, collectively called wildlife rehabilitators, provide for the care of injured, sick, and orphaned wildlife with the goal of returning them to the wild. Wildlife rehabilitators are permitted by the State of Rhode Island to temporarily possess wildlife protected by the Department under R.I. Gen. Laws Chapter 20-1, and to insure the safety and welfare of those animals under their care, as well as the health and safety of themselves and the public.

Wild animals have very specific and unique dietary, housing, and handling requirements which entails training, education and experience. For these reasons, wildlife rehabilitation may only be conducted after first obtaining a wildlife rehabilitation permit from the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM), Division of Fish & Wildlife (DFW). A wildlife rehabilitation permit may be obtained once the applicant is able to demonstrate that they have obtained the proper certifications, hands-on experience, and educational requirements. Wild animals held under this permit are not pets, and shall not be owned, offered for sale, purchased, bartered, tamed, neutered, exhibited, or used for propagation purposes.

## REFERENCES FOR WILDLIFE REHABILITATION IN RHODE ISLAND:

- State Wildlife Rehabilitation Manual can be obtained by emailing [Sarah.Riley@dem.ri.gov](mailto:Sarah.Riley@dem.ri.gov)
- RIDEM Wildlife Rehabilitation Regulations are available at: <https://rules.sos.ri.gov/regulations/part/250-60-00-1>
- Current IWRC Minimum Standards for Wildlife Rehabilitation (4<sup>th</sup> ed). More information at: <https://theiwrc.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/Standards-4th-Ed-2012-final.pdf>
- Wildlife Rehabilitator Association of Rhode Island (WRARI) Subpermittee Training Manual can be obtained by contacting WRARI at [riwildliferehab@gmail.com](mailto:riwildliferehab@gmail.com) or by calling 401-294-6363.
- Rules and Regulations Governing Importation and Possession of Wild Animals (250-RICR-40-05-3) can be found at: <https://rules.sos.ri.gov/regulations/part/250-40-05-3>
- Rules and Regulations Governing the Prevention, Control, and Suppression of Rabies Within the State of Rhode Island (250-RICR-40-05-2) can be found at: <https://rules.sos.ri.gov/regulations/part/250-40-05-2>

There are multiple levels of permitting which allow the permittee to rehabilitate those animals for which they have experience, facilities, and equipment to provide appropriate care. Those levels, and their requirements, are outlined below.



Photo: WRARI



Photo: G. DeMeillon



Photo: WRARI



Photo: WRARI

## WILDLIFE REHABILITATOR SUBPERMITTEE:

A subpermittee works under the permit of a licensed Level 2 wildlife rehabilitator to aid with the care and transport of a limited list of wildlife.

### REQUIREMENTS:

- Six (6) hours of instructional training from a licensed wildlife rehabilitator or facility
- To take and pass the RIDEM Wildlife Rehabilitation Subpermittee exam, with a grade of 80% or higher
  - 50 question, multiple choice and true/false style questions
  - One hour allotted to take the exam
  - Covers information found in:
    - ◆ The Wildlife Rehabilitator's Association of Rhode Island (WRARI) Subpermittee Training Manual
    - ◆ The RIDEM Wildlife Rehabilitation Training Manual, and
    - ◆ The RIDEM Wildlife Rehabilitation Regulations
- A RIDEM-licensed Level 2 wildlife rehabilitator who agrees to oversee you as a subpermittee
- Twenty-five (25) hours hands-on experience working with a licensed Level 2 wildlife rehabilitator

### RESTRICTIONS:

- Wildlife care is restricted to: Non-rabies vector species (RVS), un-weaned small mammals, pre-fledged songbirds, and waterfowl.
- Subpermittees cannot accept wildlife from the public, prescribe medication, or perform euthanasia
- May not rehabilitate wildlife at home until receiving approval from RIDEM, or an RIDEM-approved representative

## LEVEL 1 – APPRENTICE WILDLIFE REHABILITATOR:

Wildlife Rehabilitators must start with one calendar year as an apprentice to a fully-licensed Level 2 wildlife rehabilitator. You do not have to be a subpermittee before you apply for a Level 1 permit, but sponsors may require that candidates work under them as a subpermittee before they will agree to sponsor them as an apprentice.

### REQUIREMENTS:

- To complete and submit a Wildlife Rehabilitator's Permit application with all required information and documentation
- Certification that the applicant is at least 18 years of age or older and a Rhode Island resident. (e.g., copy of R.I. driver's license or other government-issued identification)
- A signed letter from a veterinarian agreeing to examine and treat injured wildlife. The Division will not be responsible for reimbursing the veterinarian for services rendered
- A signed letter from a sponsor agreeing to provide guidance and support throughout applicant's apprenticeship year. Sponsor must be a RIDEM-permitted Level 2 wildlife rehabilitator
- A copy of an International Wildlife Rehabilitators Council (IWRC), basic wildlife rehabilitation course certificate of completion
  - This course is offered annually by IWRC and hosted by the RIDEM, Division of fish & Wildlife. For more information go to: [www.iwrc.org](http://www.iwrc.org)
  - 2-day classroom and lab course covering the basics of wildlife rehabilitation



- To take and pass the RIDEM Wildlife Rehabilitation Level 1 exam, with a grade of 80% or higher
  - 100 question, multiple choice and true/false style questions
  - Two hours allotted to take the exam
  - Covers information found in:
    - ◆ The IWRC Basic Wildlife Rehabilitation Training Course materials
    - ◆ The RIDEM Wildlife Rehabilitation Training Manual, and
    - ◆ The RIDEM Wildlife Rehabilitation Regulations
- Proof of tetanus vaccination within the last ten (10) years
- If you would like to apply to rehabilitate wildlife at home, you must have a site/facility inspection completed by the RIDEM Division of Fish & Wildlife. Contact [Sarah.Riley@dem.ri.gov](mailto:Sarah.Riley@dem.ri.gov) for more information. Inspections shall be contingent upon adherence to the IWRC Minimum Standards for Wildlife Rehabilitation.
- If you would like to apply to rehabilitate migratory birds, you must possess a USFWS-issued permit for the rehabilitation of migratory birds.

RESTRICTIONS:

- An apprentice is authorized to receive, rehabilitate, transfer and release only wildlife in categories listed on their permit, and under conditions specified in regulation.
- Apprentices must consult their sponsor immediately after receiving any wildlife, as well as adhering to regulatory requirements.
- Level 1 Apprentices are not authorized to sponsor subpermittees

LEVEL 2 WILDLIFE REHABILITATOR:

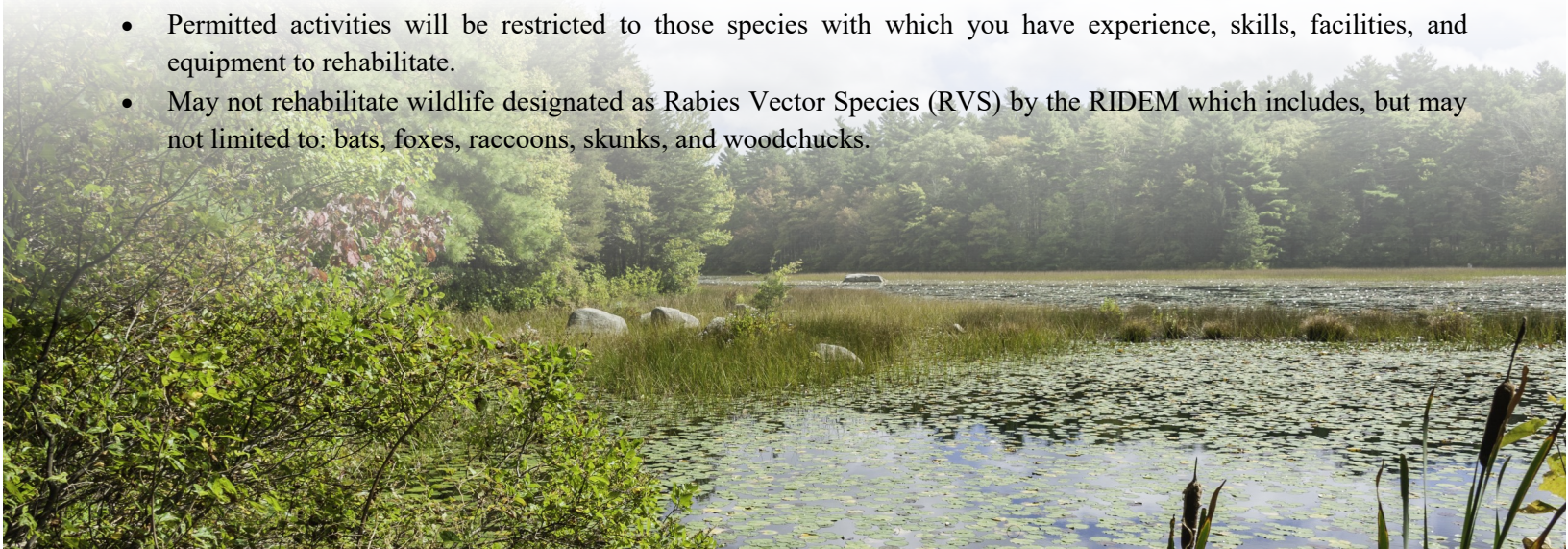
Once the apprenticeship year has been completed, and with a letter of recommendation from their sponsor, a Level 1 rehabilitator may apply for their Level 2 permit.

REQUIREMENTS:

- To complete and submit a Wildlife Rehabilitator's Permit application with all required information and documentation, including:
- A signed letter from a veterinarian agreeing to examine and treat injured wildlife. The Division will not be responsible for reimbursing the veterinarian for services rendered
- A signed letter of approval from your sponsor verifying that they support your eligibility for a Level 2 permit
- Proof of tetanus vaccination within the last ten (10) years
- If you would like to apply to rehabilitate wildlife at home, you must have a site/facility inspection completed by the RIDEM Division of Fish & Wildlife. Contact [Sarah.Riley@dem.ri.gov](mailto:Sarah.Riley@dem.ri.gov) for more information. Inspections shall be contingent upon adherence to the IWRC Minimum Standards for Wildlife Rehabilitation.
- If you would like to apply to rehabilitate migratory birds, you must possess a USFWS-issued permit for the rehabilitation of migratory birds.

RESTRICTIONS:

- Permitted activities will be restricted to those species with which you have experience, skills, facilities, and equipment to rehabilitate.
- May not rehabilitate wildlife designated as Rabies Vector Species (RVS) by the RIDEM which includes, but may not be limited to: bats, foxes, raccoons, skunks, and woodchucks.



## LEVEL 2-X RABIES VECTOR SPECIES (RVS) REHABILITATOR:

A Level 2 wildlife rehabilitator may apply for a Level 2-X RVS permit after they have met the requirements of a Level 2 permittee, and the additional requirements outlined below. Only Level 2-X permittees may handle, transport, or rehabilitate RVS wildlife, which includes, but may not be limited to; bats, foxes, raccoons, skunks, and woodchucks.

### REQUIREMENTS:

- To complete and submit a Wildlife Rehabilitator's Permit application with all required information and documentation, including the RVS Wildlife Rehabilitation Application
- To provide certification of proof of Tetanus vaccine within the last ten years, and additionally, proof of rabies vaccination or report of antibody titer  $>0.5$  IU checked within the last two years.
- To attest that you can and will follow the RI Department of Health and RI Department of Environmental Management protocols regarding the possession, handling, and care of RVS
- Level 2-X wildlife rehabilitators who want to rehabilitate RVS at a home or facility are required to first have a site inspection conducted by DFW in order to ensure that the facility and equipment are appropriate for RVS
- Additional requirements can be found in the RIDEM Wildlife Rehabilitation Regulations, Section 1.9.9

### RESTRICTIONS:

- Level 2-X wildlife rehabilitators must not request or direct any subpermittee, non-Level 2-X permittee, or person who discovers a RVS to handle or transport that animal.

## SCHEDULING STATE WILDLIFE REHABILITATION EXAMS:

Exam dates and times will be contingent upon availability of DFW staff to proctor the exam. Generally, there will be a few days set aside per month for participants to take the exam in groups of not more than six (6) at a time. The exam dates and times will only be Monday through Friday; exams cannot be taken during the weekend, or outside of normal business hours: 8:30am – 4:00pm. Contact the DFW to sign up for the next available exam date/time. Email [Sarah.Riley@dem.ri.gov](mailto:Sarah.Riley@dem.ri.gov) or call 401-789-0281.

## PERMIT APPLICATION FEES:

There is an application fee for the RIDEM Wildlife Rehabilitation Permit of \$25.00 dollars which must be submitted with the application in check or money order, only. These can be made out to *RIDEM/Div. Fish & Wildlife*.



WRARI is a 501c3 nonprofit organization that provides professional care for injured, orphaned, or sick wildlife in Rhode Island. If you would like to learn more about their organization, visit the WRARI website by going to: [www.riwildliferehab.org](http://www.riwildliferehab.org)