



Your safety comes first. Before attempting to help any injured wild animal, assess the situation carefully. Wild animals in distress will bite, scratch, and struggle. Bites from mammals require medical evaluation. Raptors have powerful talons that can cause serious injury. This guide provides practical first-response guidance while you arrange professional help.

■ Before You Act: Is This Animal Actually Injured?

- **Fledgling birds** on the ground are almost always healthy (see WLD_19).
- **Canada Geese in June–July** that cannot fly are molting — this is normal and temporary.
- **Opossums "playing dead"** will recover on their own — leave them.
- **Turtles basking** on logs appear motionless — they are fine.
- **Bats roosting** in a shaded spot during the day may just be resting, but a bat on the ground during daylight is abnormal and needs assessment.

■ Injured Birds (General)

- **Window strikes:** Place the bird in a cardboard box lined with paper towels. Add a few small air holes. Keep in a dark, quiet place at room temperature for 1–4 hours. Many birds recover fully from the concussion. If it does not recover, call a rehabilitator. Darkness reduces stress dramatically.
- **Cat-caught birds:** This is a medical emergency regardless of visible injury. Cat mouths harbor bacteria (*Pasteurella multocida*) that causes fatal septicemia within 24–48 hours if untreated. A bird caught by a cat **MUST** receive antibiotics — call Wild Bird Fund or a rehabber immediately.
- **Do not offer food or water** to an injured bird unless specifically instructed by a rehabilitator.

■ Injured Hawks, Owls, and Eagles

- **Approach from behind**, if possible. Raptors strike with their talons — keeping the head occupied or covered prevents injury.
- Throw a thick towel or jacket over the bird, then gently gather the wings against its body. Grip the legs gently but firmly (this prevents taloning you).
- Place in a cardboard box with air holes — do not use wire cages (feather damage).
- Keep the box in a cool, quiet location. Do not look directly at owls repeatedly — it triggers defensive responses.
- **Contact Wild Bird Fund: (212) 331-9495** or NYS DEC: 1-800-847-7332.

■ Road-Struck Turtles

- Move the turtle off the road — only if you can do so safely — **in the direction it was heading**. Do not relocate it far from where it was found.
- Turtles with cracked shells are not always fatally injured. Box turtles, painted turtles, and even snapping turtles can survive significant shell damage with veterinary care.
- **Do not put an injured turtle in water** — it may drown. Keep upright in a well-ventilated box.



- Do not attempt to clean or repair the shell yourself.
- Wild Bird Fund accepts injured turtles. Call ahead.

■ Stranded or Oiled Waterfowl

- **Molting geese (June–July)** are flightless but healthy. Do not attempt to capture or help them.
- **Entangled birds** (fishing line, six-pack rings): If safe and the bird is accessible, carefully remove the entanglement. If not, call for help — do not leave the scene.
- **Oiled birds:** Do NOT attempt to clean an oiled bird yourself — improper cleaning kills birds. Call the NY/NJ Harbor Coalition or WCS. Contain the bird in a box and keep warm.

■ Marine Mammals: Seals, Dolphins, Porpoises

Marine mammals are increasingly seen in NYC waters and occasionally haul out on beaches or jetties. A seal resting on a beach is almost always healthy — seals regularly haul out to rest, warm up, and digest meals. They may appear sick or injured when they are simply resting.

- **Do not approach, touch, or pour water on a resting seal.** Your presence causes extreme stress. Stand at least 150 feet back and keep dogs leashed.
- If a seal or other marine mammal appears injured, entangled, or has been on a beach for 24+ hours, call the **Atlantic Marine Conservation Society (AMSEAS): 631-369-9829**.
- A dead or stranded large whale should be reported to **NOAA Fisheries: 1-866-755-6622**.

■ **NYC Wildlife Emergency Contacts:** Wild Bird Fund (birds, turtles): (212) 331-9495 | NYC Health (bats): 311 | AMSEAS (marine mammals): 631-369-9829 | NOAA Fisheries (whales): 1-866-755-6622 | NYS DEC 24-hour hotline: 1-800-847-7332 | WCS Urban Wildlife: 718-220-5100

■ **Animal Bites Require Medical Attention:** Any bite from a wild mammal — even an apparently healthy animal — requires prompt medical evaluation for rabies exposure assessment. Post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) is highly effective when started promptly. Do not delay seeking care after any mammal bite.



■ Final Summary

Responding to injured wildlife effectively means knowing your limits, having the right contacts ready, and acting quickly to get animals into the hands of trained rehabilitators. The best outcome for wildlife is almost always professional care — not improvised home treatment.

■ Related XVC Guides:

- [WLD_19: Baby Wildlife Guide](#)
- [WLD_21: NYC Wildlife Resources](#)
- [WLD_14: NYC Birds of Prey](#)
- [WLD_16: NYC Mammals](#)



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