

## Save our wildlife Pacific Wildlife Care needs donations

BY DYLAN BAUMANN

Pacific Wildlife Care is the only organization that rescues and rehabilitates wildlife locally. From the start of this year to Oct. 20, they took in 1,331 wild animals. The number of rescues has dramatically increased since the group opened its wildlife rehabilitation center in Morro Bay in Spring 2007. They received more than 1100 animals in 2007 and more than 1600 last year.

Although the organization works cooperatively with government agencies, all revenue comes from individual donations and grant awards. It's run by more than 75 unpaid volunteers. There is one modestly paid professionally trained supervisor who has long experience in animal rescue.

"If there were any issues with medicating the animals or whatever, the paid supervisor could handle it," said Kelly Vandenheuvel, a 26-year volunteer for Pacific Wildlife Care. "We really rely on the public for donations, food is very expensive, and we need all the money we can get." The rehabilitation center is open 365 days a year from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. The annual operations budget encompasses \$20,000 for food, \$11,000 for utilities, \$8,000 for veterinary care and medications, and \$6,000 for telephone and office expenses.

In addition to being the sole local organization for rescuing any wildlife, Pacific Wildlife Care works with the Oiled Wildlife Care network as one of 12 primary care facilities for cleaning and nursing injured creatures if an oil spill occurs in SLO County.

Local veterinarians treat the majority of the center's wild animals. They significantly reduce their fees in doing so. Services they provide include x-rays, surgery to repair broken bones, wound care, and drug prescriptions. Participating veterinary clinics include: North County Animal Hospital, Atascadero Pet Center,



*Pacific Wildlife Care released a bobcat on Oct. 20 that the organization had rescued as a tiny abandoned kitten.*

*Photo by STEVE E. MILLER*

El Camino Veterinary Hospital, Central Coast Pet Emergency, VCA South County Animal Hospital, Bear Valley Animal Clinic, Coast Veterinary Clinic, and Los Osos Pet Hospital.

The dour economy has severely reduced donations to the organization and the need for support has become critical. People who would like to aid this vital community resource can pay for food for recovering animals, pay for an x-ray or surgery, purchase antibiotics and supplements, support non-releasable educational animals, fund a natural outdoor habitat, pay operational expenses, sponsor a recovering animal, donate in memory of someone, or volunteer.

Volunteers can be rehabilitation center workers, staff the hotline, transport wildlife, rehabilitate some wildlife at home, provide office support, work as website and newsletter editors, and there are many other opportunities.

"I've been a volunteer for PWC for over half my life and my favorite part about volunteering is releasing the animals out into the wild. After all the hard work, to see them after they're sick or injured be able to go back out and survive on their own in the wild is great," said Vandenheuvel. "We have taken in more birds and mammals in 2009 than ever before. Our numbers are increasing every year and they will continue to grow in upcoming years."

The hotline number to call to report a wild animal in need of help is 543-9453 (543-WILD); the same number to call to make a donation or to ask any questions about wildlife care. Donations can be mailed to PO Box 1134, Morro Bay 93443. For more information or to make a donation online visit [pacificwildlifecare.org](http://pacificwildlifecare.org).