

CONSERVANCY
OF
SWFL

preserving PARADISE



by Karen Coney Coplin

The greater Naples community has a wonderful resource with the Sharon and Dolph von Arx Wildlife Hospital at the Conservancy of Southwest Florida. Nearly 4,000 animals were treated last year. Let's all commit to help reduce the number of wildlife in need of care. By heeding fairly simple actions, more wildlife will be safe, rather than suffering adverse impacts from the rapidly growing Collier County population, and reduction in habitat.

There are many ways to ensure that wildlife is respected and kept safe from human interaction. Here are a few suggestions:

1. Keep your pets on a leash or indoors. Sadly, dog and cat attacks are one of the most common causes of injury seen at the von Arx Wildlife Hospital every year. Collier County has a leash law (which is applicable to cats, too). The good news is that cats kept indoors thrive as well as remaining safe from outdoor risks. And, there are many dog parks around town to enjoy the great outdoors safely.

2. Be mindful of trimming trees or bushes during nesting season, generally in the Spring. Many species of native birds, squirrels, and ground nesting mammals are impacted by landscaping activities. Always examine trees, bushes and lawns for active nests so you avoid

risking the lives of vulnerable newly born or hatched wildlife.

3. Watch for unintended food sources (garage bins, etc.) which should be well-secured to minimize attracting wildlife. Sometimes these visitors are deemed a nuisance, and unfairly so. In this case trappers may be called in; often leaving baby animals without care should their mother be removed. The Conservancy can help educate residents & communities to learn the best ways to coexist with our wildlife neighbors.

You can be prepared to help if you encounter an animal in distress. Keep a towel and ventilated box in your car. If you can't help, reach out to find someone who can - it's possible a Conservancy "Critter Courier" can assist in the rescue. You can also volunteer for this role or otherwise support the Conservancy of Southwest Florida.

Contact the von Arx Wildlife Hospital about a wild animal needing care, other questions, and to learn more about the best actions to protect our wildlife:

► **von Arx Wildlife Hospital**

239.262.2273

1495 Smith Preserve Dr.

365 days a year: 8 a.m. - 6 p.m.

conservancy.org