

# **West Michigan Wildlife Center Volunteer Manual**

## **About West Michigan Wildlife Center**

West Michigan Wildlife Center is an independent, nonprofit, volunteer organization dedicated to offering the West Michigan area a reliable, high-quality resource for the rehabilitation of orphaned, abandoned, injured, or incapacitated wildlife. Licensed by both the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, we offer a professional and simple way to provide the swift and humane return of wounded animals and migratory birds to their natural habitat.

**We expect you to maintain a positive and professional attitude while you are here. The wild animals in our care are very sensitive to their surroundings. It is important that their environment be as comfortable as possible.**

**Please read all of the information presented here and make note of any questions. Fill out and sign the necessary forms and return them to the center at your first training session. Thank you for your interest in becoming a volunteer at West Michigan Wildlife Center.**

### **Age Requirement:**

- Volunteers must be 18 years of age and have reliable transportation.

Volunteers 16 years of age are permitted with a parent or guardian's presence on shift.

## **Policies and Procedures**

***All the policies and procedures set forth in this manual are WMWC policies and we expect our staff and volunteers to respect and adhere to these guidelines.***

You will be working with ***WILD*** animals. Every effort is made to assure that those animals are released ***WILD***. This is the main goal of the West Michigan Wildlife Center. Except for a brief period during infancy, when nurturing is essential, and those few exceptional cases, ***there will be no unnecessary handling, playing, cuddling, petting, or talking to around these animals.***

If these animals are allowed to imprint on us they will not survive in the wild and we will have defeated our purpose. Extra precautions to prevent imprinting/habitualizing must be taken for their stay at WMWC. They are not to be treated as domestic animals.

Remember, your safety comes first! Do not take any unnecessary chances when handling the animals. If you are bitten or badly scratched (any break of skin), ***immediately*** wash the wound thoroughly. After first aid is completed, fill out an Accident Report Form (QR Code located at the front desk).

All species cared for at this center are treated with the same respect. Please keep your dislikes for a particular animal or species to yourself.

It is important to know that we cannot save them all. We do our best and sometimes that will mean we must give them a humane death or a quiet place to die. Animals are euthanized only when absolutely necessary and there is no hope for recovery and release. A lot of thought and consideration goes into every decision concerning euthanizing an animal.

## **Animal Care & Hygiene**

- Animals are sensitive to sound. Voices and other noises must be kept low and at a minimum. Ex.: Close the kitchen door and window when using a blender. Pick up the garbage can instead of dragging it across the floor.

- Do not assume anything! If something is unclear, don't hesitate to ask. •

**Don't rush!** Stay alert. Pay attention to what you're doing and follow procedures.

- All animals have care charts to monitor their progress. Charts are to be read *before* working with that animal. Fill in all necessary data when caring for them.
- Make note of any unusual behavior or appearance, record it on the chart, and call it to the attention of the Wildlife Care Supervisor or senior person as well as the next shift.

▪ **Never walk away from an open cage, even if it is only for a minute.** ▪

Always secure cages after cleaning & feeding. Recheck cages at the end of every shift. Doors to each room should be shut when cages are being opened frequently (during cleaning, feeding, etc). At the end of every shift, all doors should be shut before leaving the premises.

#### Food Safety - Animal

- Food storage
  - Fruits and vegetables must be stored **above** any raw meat products
  - Foods other than fresh produce must be put in a container and labeled with the date
  - Includes thawed smelt, chicken, other meat, thawed smoothie, scrambled eggs, etc
  - Dated food will be disposed of after 7 days

#### Food Safety - Human

- Human Food: Any snacks/drinks/food brought in by volunteers
- Human food shall not be stored with animal food
- Drinks must be in closeable/sealable containers
- Wash hands thoroughly prior to eating any snacks

*Hygiene training for human and animal safety at a wildlife center is of great importance and must remain foremost in your mind and you will be thoroughly trained. This is for your protection as well as the animals'. There are several diseases that can pass from animal to man (zoonoses) and also between animals. You will learn how to function at West Michigan Wildlife Center without unnecessarily exposing yourself or the animals to these diseases. Please read and familiarize yourself with the following information concerning hygiene and information about some common zoonoses. **These***

***procedures are to be strictly adhered to as we are an animal hospital. Gloves and safety glasses are available for use at any time.***

**Additional policies and procedures during your training will include proper techniques for disinfecting caging, treatment room items, food prep, laundry, infant, juvenile and adult animal care, medical procedures and general care and treatment. *Our goal at WMWC is to release healthy and well functioning wild animals back to the wild. Everything we do has that goal in mind.***

### **Safety Policy**

- **Your** safety always comes first. You must wear gloves when handling animals, cleaning cages, and doing laundry. Heavier gloves are worn when handling animals with a higher risk of injury (i.e. Raptors, muskrats, woodchucks, etc)
- Dress Code: Appropriate clothing such as long sleeves and long pants are recommended for your protection against scratches etc but is not mandatory (i.e. Season/temperature appropriate). Footwear should be non-slip and it is recommended that an additional pair are left at the building to change for contagion mitigation.
- Jewelry should be kept to a minimum with nothing hanging. If you are concerned about losing/breaking an item, it is recommended that you leave it at home.

The animals we work with are wild, potentially dangerous, and need to be handled safely. They can bite, claw, scratch, kick, and wing swipe you. They may carry diseases that can be transmitted to humans. These include, but are not limited to: rabies (very rare), mange (aka scabies), bird flu/ avian influenza/ HPAI, lymes disease, cryptosporidiosis, tape worms, roundworms, ringworm, E. coli, giardiasis, hantavirus, and salmonella. These protocols are in place to protect volunteers from physical injuries and pathological infections.

- PPE
  - Eye wear
    - There are safety goggles available at all times
    - Protective eyewear **MUST** be worn when handling herons or cranes
    - Protective eyewear **MUST** be worn during any veterinary procedure where there is a risk of fluid or debris spray
    - Eyewear must be sanitized after use using disinfectant spray
  - Gloves
    - Latex or nitrile gloves

- There are latex and nitrile gloves available for use at all times
  - Latex or nitrile gloves MUST be worn during any veterinary procedure
  - Includes triage, parasite removal, wound cleaning and care, medicating, administering subQ fluids
  - Latex or nitrile gloves MUST be worn when handling an animal or cleaning the cage of an animal with mange
  - Gloves must be changed between patients
- Bite gloves
  - Bite gloves MUST be used while handling raptors, foxes, coyotes, raccoons, squirrels, muskrats or any other animal that poses a bite/talon risk
- Disposable smock
  - Recommended for use when handling an animal with mange
  - Dispose after use
- Injuries (bites, scratches, cuts, etc.)
  - Report any and all bites to shift lead immediately
    - Wash open wounds and clean with iodide
    - Bandage open wounds
    - Stabilize any breaks/sprains
    - Lead will fill out an incident report sheet, and notify Allyson & Alesha
  - Depending on severity, urgent care visit may be needed

**Thoroughly wash hands with soap and water before and after treating animal wounds, after contact with bodily fluids, and before leaving your shift.**

## **Absences**

**It is your responsibility to replace yourself *and* your skills if you cannot make your shift. Please review the following policy carefully. It is your responsibility to understand and follow it.**

## **IMPORTANT!!**

WMWC uses a combination of Text, Facebook and Shiftr for all messages, schedules, announcements, questions, and more.

Discuss any schedule problems with the Volunteer Coordinator. Not showing up for your shift without proper notification (no show) may result in less than adequate animal care and will **NOT** be tolerated. The first no-show will warrant a discussion to assess

the issue. A second offense may result in **termination** of your volunteer opportunity. Chronic lateness will also be addressed.

If you are running more than **15 minutes late** to your shift you must contact the Volunteer Coordinator

## **FINDING A REPLACEMENT**

- 1. There is usually sufficient notice for vacations, holidays, and work/school related issues, so please plan ahead.**
2. Do not leave your time uncovered unless approved by the Volunteer Coordinator
3. Switching shifts is an option but must be done carefully with the Volunteer Coordinator's approval.
4. Be sure to let your replacement know your shift hours.
5. It is your responsibility to let the Volunteer Coordinator and your shift mates know of your change in schedule!
6. In the case of illness do not wait until the last minute to find a possible replacement. Reach out to the Volunteer Coordinator if arrangements cannot be made.
7. In the case of emergencies (an unforeseen and grave personal circumstance that requires your attention) please do your BEST to find subs as early as possible and call your shift supervisor so that they are aware of the situation.
- 8. If your attempts at finding a replacement are failing, you must contact the Volunteer Coordinator within 3 days of your scheduled absence or as soon as you know you cannot make your shift (as in the case of an emergency) whichever comes FIRST.**

## Inclement Weather Policy

Your safety is of the utmost importance to WMWC. At the same time, the animal patients still need to receive care, even during inclement weather. Every effort must be made to best plan for changes due to weather; and your careful planning through good communication is critical. Communication must be by phone/text or in person.

Check the weather forecast and current conditions well before your expected arrival. Everyone's comfort level, capabilities, locale, vehicles, etc., are different. In no way should you feel obligated to put yourself at unnecessary risk. If you absolutely do not feel safe coming in, contact the Volunteer Coordinator asap and try to find a replacement.

### **Anti-Harassment Policy**

WMWC is committed to a safe environment in which all individuals are treated with respect and dignity. Each individual has a right to volunteer in a professional atmosphere that promotes equal opportunities and prohibits discriminating practices, including harassment. It is therefore the expectation that all relationships among individuals associated with WMWC to be free of bias and prejudice. Harassment and interference with the ability of volunteers to perform their tasks/duties is prohibited. WMWC will not permit any volunteer to sexually harass another volunteer or individual. In addition, WMWC will not tolerate the harassment of any volunteer on the basis of race, national origin, age, religion, sex, disability, sexual orientation, or any other legally protected status.

Each volunteer is responsible for contributing to a harassment-free environment, and management is strictly responsible for maintaining an atmosphere free of discrimination and harassment, sexual or otherwise. Reporting of all perceived incidents of harassment is required as outlined below. Retaliation against any individual, who reports or participates in the investigation of a report of harassment, is prohibited. Retaliation in violation of this policy is grounds for dismissal of volunteer opportunity.

### **Mandatory Reporting of Harassment**

If you observe or experience harassment based on your race, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, disability, or another factor, or believe that you have been treated in an unlawful, discriminatory manner, promptly report the incident to the Executive Director who will investigate the matter and take appropriate action. Your complaint will be kept confidential to the maximum extent possible.

### **Prohibition Against Sexual Harassment**

Sexual harassment occurs whenever unwelcome sexual conduct occurs in the workplace. Such unwelcome advances, requests for sexual favors or other verbal, physical, or visual conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

- submission to such conduct is explicitly or implicitly made a term or condition of an individual's volunteer opportunity; or

- submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as a basis for volunteer opportunity decisions affecting the individual; or
- such intentional or unintentional conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an associate's work performance or creating an otherwise hostile, intimidating, or offensive volunteer/working environment

Sexual harassment refers to behavior that is not welcome, is personally offensive, fails to respect the rights of others, lowers morale, interferes with work performance or is reasonably perceived as offensive by the recipient. Sexual harassment may take different forms. Conduct that may be acceptable in other social settings may be inappropriate at WMWC. One specific form is the demand for sexual favors. Other forms of harassment include, but are not limited to:

Verbal: Sexual innuendos, suggestive comments, jokes of a sexual nature, sexual advances or propositions, repeated unwelcome sexual flirtations, graphic verbal commentaries about an individual's body, sexually degrading or provocative words used to describe an individual.

Non-verbal: Sexually suggestive objects or pictures, e-mails, graphic written commentaries, or suggestive or insulting sounds, leering, whistling, obscene gestures.

Physical: Unwanted physical contact, including touching, pinching, brushing the body, pushing, assault, or sexual activity.

Whether a behavior is considered unwelcome is determined by the recipient's reaction to the behavior, *not* by the intention of the person initiating it. Conduct is unwelcome if the recipient did not initiate it and regards it as offensive. Conduct such as consensual joking, teasing, touching, etc., does not amount to harassment if it is not unwelcome or offensive to any direct recipient or indirect observers.

### **Other Forms of Harassment**

Harassment may take many forms. It includes, but is not limited to, the display or circulation of pictures or written materials degrading to one's gender, disability, race, ethnicity, religion, age, or sexual orientation. Impermissible harassment also may consist of verbal abuse, insult, comments, gestures, or jokes directed at or made in the presence of members of a racial, ethnic, or other minority group. Simply put, unlawful harassment refers to behavior that is personally offensive, impairs morale, and interferes with work effectiveness. Any such harassment is strictly prohibited.



### **Harassment Complaint Process**

Volunteers who believe that they have been the subject of sexual harassment, or harassment of any form, should immediately report the matter to the Executive Director so that steps can be taken to stop the harassment. WMWC will immediately investigate the complaint. No retaliatory measures will be taken against any volunteer who complains of harassment. Under no circumstances is the volunteer required to confront the individual whom he/she is accusing of harassment. However, the volunteer may be asked during the investigation if he/she has attempted to resolve the matter on his/her own.

To the maximum extent possible, WMWC maintains the confidentiality of complaints on a need-to-know basis. However, investigation of such complaints will generally require disclosure to the accused individual and to other witnesses in order to gather pertinent facts. When the organization becomes aware that discrimination or harassment might exist, it is obligated by law to take prompt and appropriate action, whether or not the individual wants the organization to do so.

### **Appropriate Discipline**

If, after a complete investigation, WMWC determines that a volunteer is guilty of harassing another individual, appropriate disciplinary or other action will be taken against the offending person, up to and including termination of their volunteer opportunity.

### **Retaliation Prohibited**

WMWC prohibits any form of retaliation against any volunteer for filing a bona fide complaint under this policy or for assisting in a complaint investigation. However, if, after investigating any complaint of harassment or unlawful discrimination, the organization determines that a complaint is not bona fide, was not made in good faith or that a volunteer has provided false information regarding a complaint of harassment, disciplinary action may be taken against the individual who filed the complaint or who gave the false information.

**Volunteers experiencing harassment issues not addressed in this policy should immediately contact the Executive Director for assistance.**

### **Drug and Alcohol Use**

It is the policy of WMWC to create a drug-free, healthful and safe environment. To promote this goal, volunteers are required to report to work in appropriate mental and physical condition to perform their tasks in a satisfactory manner.

The use of controlled substances is inconsistent with the behavior expected of all volunteers and subjects animal patients to unacceptable safety risks as well as undermining WMWC's ability to operate effectively and efficiently. While on WMWC premises and while conducting organization business off our premises, no volunteer may use, process, distribute, sell or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs. The legal use of prescribed drugs is permitted on the job only if it does not impair a volunteer's ability to perform their essential tasks effectively and in a safe manner that does not endanger other individuals or animal patients at the center. Such conduct is also prohibited during nonworking time to the extent that in the opinion of WMWC it impairs a volunteer's ability to perform their tasks or threatens the reputation or integrity of WMWC.

Volunteers convicted of controlled-substance-related violations, including pleas of nolo contendere (i.e., no contest), must inform WMWC within five days of such conviction or plea. Volunteers who violate any aspect of this policy may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of their volunteer opportunity. At its discretion, WMWC may require volunteer's who violate this policy to successfully complete a drug abuse assistance or rehabilitation program as a condition of continued volunteer opportunity.

### **Smoking or vaping at the Center**

Smoking or vaping is not permitted in any of the indoor or outdoor areas collectively known as WMWC. However, smoking or vaping is permitted inside your personal vehicle while on WMWC's property. All resulting waste is the responsibility of the smoker and must be taken away or disposed of in a safe and responsible manner. Smoking or vaping is only allowed during designated breaks.

### **Political Activity Policy**

Volunteers are reminded that, as a tax-exempt organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, WMWC is prohibited from supporting or opposing any candidate for public office, or from engaging in partisan political activities.

Consequently, if a volunteer or any representative of WMWC engage in partisan activities or any activity that supports or opposes a candidate for public office, such activity is personal in nature and must be outside of the scope of the individual's service to WMWC. Volunteers may not, in their capacity as representatives of WMWC, engage in any partisan activity or activity which would constitute either support for or opposition to candidates for public office; nor may they engage in any such activities on behalf of WMWC. Such activity must be conducted on the volunteer's personal time rather than WMWC time, and must be wholly separate from their volunteer duties.

### **WMWC Phone/Social Media/ Internet Policy**

We understand that WMWC offers a unique opportunity and that you may want to share photos with friends, family, and online via social media sites or otherwise. We ask that you adhere to the following policy.

West Michigan Wildlife Center: Phone, Photo, and Social Media Policy:

To ensure the safety and well-being of the animals in our care while maintaining professionalism in our communication and social media presence.

#### **\*\*Phone Policy:\*\***

1. Personal phone usage is allowed but should be limited during volunteer hours to maintain focus on the animals and tasks at hand.
2. Phone calls/Texts regarding animal care, concerns, or updates must be directed to the appropriate management personnel.
3. Volunteers should refrain from using personal phones in/around the animal, ensuring minimal stress to the patients.

#### **\*\*Photo Policy:\*\***

1. Photos of the animals may be taken for the purpose of documenting medical concerns and sharing with management for assessment and treatment.
2. Photos may be taken of animals if appropriate, provided they do not cause stress or anxiety to the animals.
3. Animals must NOT be handled specifically for the purpose of taking photos; their comfort and well-being are our top priority.
4. Proper personal protective equipment (PPE) must be worn when handling animals, and photos must not include images of animals on the heads of volunteers, being cuddled etc.
5. If you wish to share photos of the animals, they must be submitted to management for approval before being shared on any social media platforms.

#### **\*\*Social Media Policy:\*\***

1. Volunteers are prohibited from sharing photos of the animals on personal social media accounts.
2. Any approved photos MUST be shared through West Michigan Wildlife Center's official social media accounts to maintain a consistent and professional image.
3. All social media communications should align with the mission and values of the West Michigan Wildlife Center.

**\*\*Compliance:\*\***

Adherence to this policy is mandatory for all staff and volunteers. Failure to comply may result in disciplinary action. Thank you for your cooperation in ensuring the safety and well-being of our wildlife!

**Policy Governing Speaking to the Media**

A volunteer may not speak to the news media as an official or unofficial spokesperson of WMWC without prior clearance from the Executive Director. All inquiries from the media should be referred to the Executive Director. Should a volunteer receive a media inquiry, he or she should respond: "I have no authority to respond to your request. You should refer your question to the Executive Director."

**Miscellaneous**

- **Leave personal stresses at home. Your responsibility here is to care for the animals and they come first. This work requires your full attention, best attitude, concentration and consideration for both the animals and shift mates.**
- **Personality differences must be accepted.** They must not interfere with your work. If there is an on-going problem call it to the attention of a staff member. **We expect professionalism.**
- There will be no eating, drinking or smoking, or vaping around the animals. WMWC is a smoke-free and vape-free environment. If you must smoke or vape, do it in your vehicle. Take butts with you.
- People food and beverages must be consumed in the break room or front desk area only.

- Showing up for your shift under the influence of any drug or alcohol is forbidden.
- You are expected to arrive on time. If you are going to be 15 or more minutes late you must notify the Team Lead(s).
- Absence policies will be followed by all volunteers.
- Use of cell phones should be limited to animal free zones (Break room, front desk area, etc)
- Purses, coats, and any other personal items should be kept in the front lobby area, on the coat rack or in the front closet or keep personal items locked in your vehicle.
- There will be no visitors on your shift. If you want to bring visitors at another time, all visitors must be approved ahead of time by the Director or supervising staff.

**We appreciate your cooperation. These rules are in effect for a reason! You never know who may see these photos and WMWC or yourself could suffer serious consequences.**