

# Wolf Hollow rescues over 200 animals in 2020

BY QUESTEN INGHAM  
qingham@goanacortes.com

All sorts of Fidalgo Island critters have found their way to Wolf Hollow Wildlife Rehabilitation Center over the years, and 2020 was no exception.

In fact, Shona Aitken, education coordinator for the center, said there were more calls than previous years from concerned people noticing wildlife and wondering if they needed help.

Many of them did. Over 200 animals were released from the center after rehabilitation in 2020, Aitken said.

One of them was a great horned owl, found in February stuck in a barbed-wire fence — a barb had caught its eyelid.

“The eyelid was swollen and a bit torn, but the eye itself was in pretty good shape,” Aitken said. The finders untangled the owl and wrapped it in a coat before giving it to a center volunteer. After treatment, it was



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A great horned owl found stuck in a barbed-wire fence near Tafton Lake last February was successfully rehabilitated and released.

released a month later.

In June, a Great Blue Heron nestling was found in the Skyline Marina area. Because the herons nest high up in trees, there was no way to return it, and it was brought to the center, where it was fed fish until it learned to fly and was released after two

months. They are funny looking chicks, Aitken said.

“They’ve got a great big beak, great big feet and down sticking out all over the place,” Aitken said.

Just over half of the animals taken to the center, which is located on San Juan Island, are from

**Wildlife emergency?**  
Wolf Hollow Wildlife Rehabilitation Center can be reached 24/7 at 360-378-5000.

Skagit County. The center relies on a network of animal transport volunteers who can respond and transport the animals by ferry or San Juan Airlines.

Shelley McGuire is one of eight volunteers in the network based on Fidalgo Island. She has been a volunteer since 1998 and has helped transport countless animals.

McGuire got involved after reading an Anacortes American article in 1997 about the rescue of two fawns. For a few years, McGuire took the ferry to San Juan Island once a week to volunteer at the center. She still remains at the ready. Working from home in the software industry gives her flexibility to be

on-call frequently, she said.

This time of year is especially difficult for wildlife rehabilitation, because of high winds and fewer people outside to spot injured animals before it’s too late.

In the summer, it’s as busy as a few calls a week or just as many in a single day.

In May, twin fawns were found in the Skyline area. After observing that the mother had not come back a day later, McGuire helped to transport them to the center.

One fawn did not survive, but the other was released with some other fawns that were rehabilitated in November.

A red-tailed hawk was rescued from Highway 20 on Fidalgo Island on New Year’s Eve and later ended up at the center. Because of its fractured shoulder, chances of recovery were slim so it was euthanized, Aitken said.

Among other notable creatures brought to the center were an

injured eagle, completely pale from a condition known as leucism. It was released six days later. A seal pup hooked in a fishing line was treated and released after six weeks.

If you find an animal, Aitken recommends calling Wolf Hollow for advice when coming across a wild animal that appears to be injured or alone. Sometimes young animals that seem alone don’t actually need help.

“If you’re on a forest trail and you see a fledgling, don’t pick it up,” McGuire said.

Instead, come back later to see if it is still there. She said the best thing to do is assess the situation and ask “Is the animal threatened by something?”

If there are any doubts or concerns in a situation with wildlife, call Wolf Hollow for advice, McGuire said. “They understand what needs to be considered.

“The most important thing is to not put yourself in harm’s way,” McGuire said.

# Assistant fire chief proposes sprinkler requirement for larger buildings

BY RICHARD WALKER  
rwalker@goanacortes.com

The national firefighting standard is 12 firefighters at the scene of a fire within 12 minutes 90% of the time.

“We don’t have enough people to meet that,” Anacortes Assistant Fire Chief Jack Kennedy told the City Council on Monday.

If firefighter/EMTs are responding to multiple calls, the first on the scene of a structure fire might be an engine with two firefighters onboard,

Kennedy said. But until a third firefighter is on the scene, those two firefighters cannot enter the structure to perform a rescue.

“Under our current staffing, we have to wait until an additional fire engine gets on scene before we have enough staff to effect that rescue,” Kennedy said.

Kennedy has proposed an amendment to the building code requiring automatic sprinkler systems be installed in new buildings 3,600 square feet or greater. Fire sprin-

klers are activated when the temperature at the sprinkler head reaches 155 degrees. That gives the building occupants adequate time to leave the building, Kennedy said.

“The reason we’re asking for the sprinkler amendment is to get the fire knocked down or allow additional time for the occupants to escape under their own power before we even get there,” he said.

The City Council is considering adopting the updated International

Building Code, a model building code that is used by most jurisdictions in the United States.

Planning Director Don Measamer said an automatic sprinkler system can cost as much as \$10,000.

Councilmember Christine Cleland-McGrath, a real estate agent and former planning commissioner, expressed concern about how sprinkler costs would affect construction costs and housing affordability — it would apply

to attached accessory dwelling units, duplexes and triplexes, the development of which the city is encouraging to meet local affordable housing needs. She also expressed concern that older buildings would not be required to have sprinklers.

Cleland-McGrath and Council member Anthony Young asked whether fire safety would be better bolstered universally — and more cost effectively — by increasing

fire department staffing.

“What I wouldn’t want to do is write in legislation because we don’t have enough staffing,” Young told Kennedy. “Staffing seems to be an issue that we really need to confront, making sure you have adequate staffing to meet the demands and needs of the city.”

The issue will return for discussion in about a month, Mayor Laurie Gere said. The goal is to have the code adopted by July 1.

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