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PHOTOGRAPHS BY KEN FORMAN

# 911

## for wildlife

Would you know  
what to do if you  
found an injured  
animal or bird?

**The Animal Help  
Now** smartphone  
app connects you  
to nearby wildlife  
experts during an  
emergency.



AS HE ROUNDED a bend in a mountain road near Crested Butte, CO, David Crawford noticed fluttering movements on the pavement. He pulled his Subaru, packed with camping gear, onto the shoulder and got out to check. Two panicked young birds flitted amid the flattened bodies of three others — probably the fledglings’ parents and a sibling — and they were in danger of meeting the same fate from vacation traffic. He went to help, but as he approached, one of the fledglings keeled over, dead from stress and fear.

Crawford, an animal rights advocate from Boulder, CO, knew the situation was dire. The sole survivor wasn’t old enough to fend for herself in the wild, so the only hope was to take her into the tiny resort town and look for a wildlife rehabilitator — on a summer weekend when everyone was out hiking and cycling. He gathered the distraught bird in a towel and held her in his lap while his friend drove.

The next hour was fraught with tension: Crawford’s dogs sniffed and growled at the bird, and he worried the fledgling would succumb to the same terror as her sibling. As as they drove around town frantically searching for someone who could care for a wild bird, his friend suggested they should “let nature take its course.” “I told her nature doesn’t build roads through a forest or drive SUVs,” says Crawford. Ultimately he located a vet, and when he released the fledgling in the clinic, she flew partway down the hall, a good sign she would be OK.

This bird rescue in 2008 was a tipping point for Crawford, who worked at the time for Rocky Mountain Animal Defense. “Some people go decades without seeing an injured animal,” he says. “I rarely go for a month without finding one who needs help.” Because of his work, he knew the basics of handling the fledgling’s emergency, but even he had difficulty finding help away from home. His frantic search for a vet in an unfamiliar town made him realize the urgent need for a 911-type service for animals, particularly wildlife.

So began a quest, which ultimately

led to the creation of Animal Help Now (AHNow.org), a website and free Android and iPhone application that educates people in all 50 states about how to safely assess an animal’s situation and get support from nearby wildlife rehabilitators and vets during an emergency. The AHNow app also provides rescue assistance for lost, hurt or abused domestic animals in Colorado and Texas only.

**Emergency Assistance by Smartphone**  
**BACK IN BOULDER,** Crawford and two fellow advocates for wildlife, Bob Rose and Daniel Ziskin, began envisioning a tool that connects those who come to the aid of animals with trained help nearby.

DIY Animal Rescue Kit

Have these items on hand, or keep them in your car, in case you encounter an animal in need. Learn more about dealing with animal emergencies at AHNow.org.

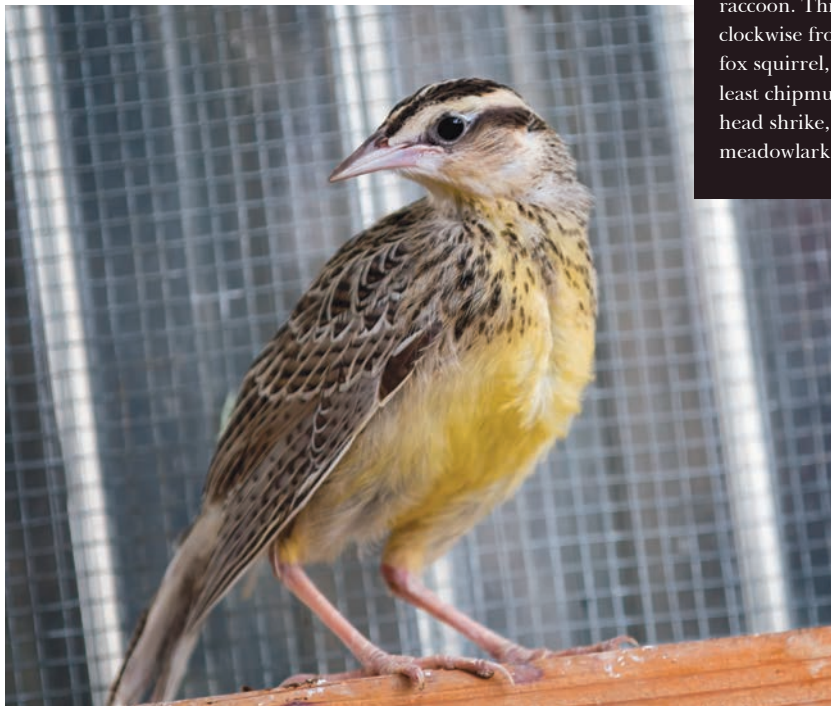
- Animal Help Now smartphone app for iPhone and Android.
- Thick work gloves to protect you from bites and scratches.
- Tight-weave towel for wrapping an animal. Light blanket to throw over animals to immobilize and/or cushion them.
- First aid kit: antibiotic ointment, gauze, bandages, alcohol wipes, antiseptic towelettes, nitrile exam gloves, aspirin, non-aspirin pain reliever, first aid tape.
- Flashlight. Multi-use tools: pliers, knife, scissors, file, screwdriver, small saw.
- Fishnet for captures; for birds and bats, use a butterfly net or lightweight cloth.
- Collapsible traffic cones for roadside emergencies.
- Paper grocery bag or small animal carrier (preferable) for transporting mice, voles, salamanders, songbirds, etc.
- Cardboard box with small breathing holes or collapsible pet carrier for larger animals and birds.
- Pillowcase for transporting snakes. Throw a shirt or light blanket over the snake, scoop it up, and place shirt and snake into the pillowcase.

“There are more resources than people realize,” Crawford says. “Coast to coast, we’re linked with more than 3,700 wildlife rehabilitators, veterinarians, hotlines and rescue organizations. These unsung heroes are a safety net for animals in peril.” Using their collective backgrounds in digital technology, the three men — along with other devoted volunteers — created the Animal Help Now project in 2011 and launched the country’s first nationwide wildlife emergency app in 2012. Crawford is its executive director and serves on the board of Animal Watch, the nonprofit that oversees Animal Help Now.

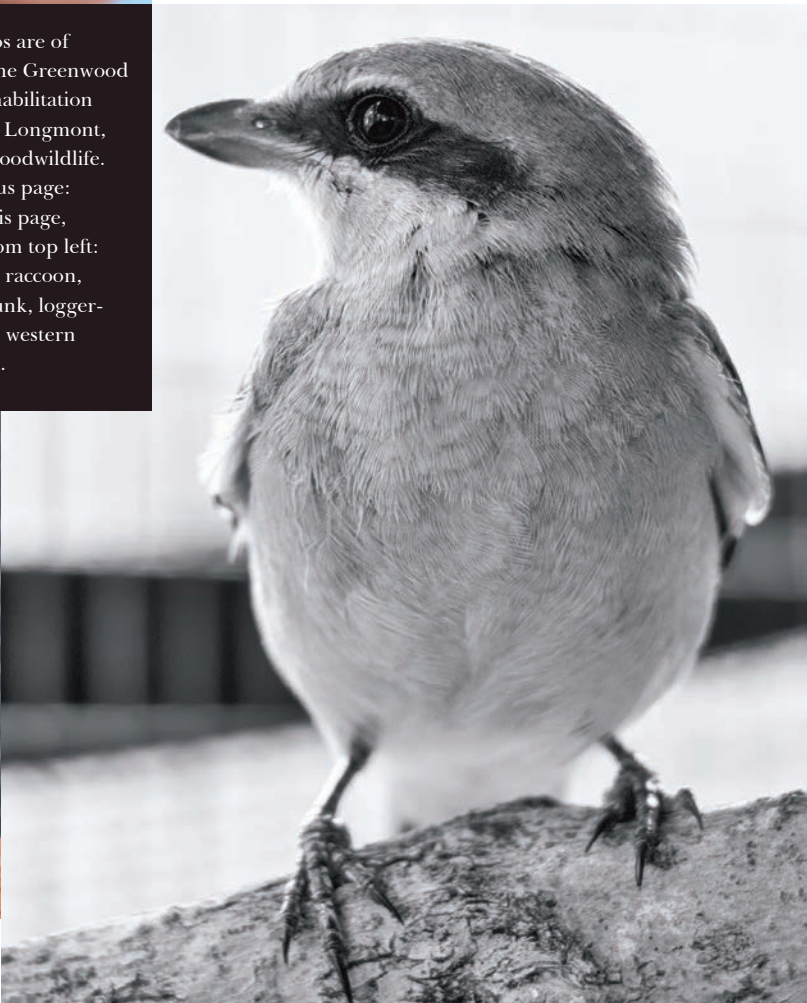
Since it debuted, the Animal Help Now app has been downloaded by more than 15,000 people, and its use has doubled every year to a reported total of 104,500 times by the end of 2016. “The fact that we’re helping save the lives of wild animals every day across the country is incredibly rewarding,” says Crawford. “And we dream of expanding the app’s functionality worldwide. We’ve already inspired a similar app in New South Wales, Australia.”

Using the app is easy, but it’s good to become familiar with it before you encounter a real-life situation. When you open it on your smartphone, it displays your current location. Tap on the type of help you’re seeking: wildlife, nearest vet, animal abuse or neglect, animal issue involving human safety, lost or found pets (Colorado and Texas), and assistance in evacuating animals during a disaster. If you choose “wildlife,” you’ll receive a few cautions about contact with wild animals. Read those carefully and then follow the prompts about the current situation and type of animal you’re trying to help. A list of resources will appear. When you select one, you’ll see details, including contact info, web link, hours of service, and an email photo function.

If you encounter a distressed or hurt animal, observe it from a distance and consult the app, which works even in remote areas where there’s no cell reception. You can use the app’s built-in geo-locator to record the location of an injured animal, leave the area and return with trained help. Do not attempt to capture or transport an animal unless you believe he or she is in imminent danger.



These photos are of patients at the Greenwood Wildlife Rehabilitation Center near Longmont, CO (greenwoodwildlife.org). Previous page: raccoon. This page, clockwise from top left: fox squirrel, raccoon, least chipmunk, logger-head shrike, western meadowlark.







Greenwood Wildlife Rehabilitation Center treats nearly 3,500 birds and mammals each year, representing almost 200 different wildlife species. Clockwise from top left: European starlings, American mink, fox squirrel, raccoon, American crow's feet.



## Make Your Lifestyle Wildlife Friendly

1

### PREVENT BIRD STRIKES ON YOUR WINDOWS

Birds fly into windows because the glass reflects open sky. However, most birds avoid windows with vertical stripes spaced no more than 4 inches apart or horizontal stripes spaced no more than 2 inches apart. **Decals:** A single, hawk-shaped decal won't work because birds perceive empty space for flying around it. For safety, you need a number of decals (of any shape) spaced 2 to 4 inches apart. **Tape:** Try exterior window tape or dot-matrix strips (Feather Friendly, ABC Bird Tape). **Cords:** Hang parachute cords 4 inches apart on the outside of the full width of your windows (Acopian Bird Savers). Strands of beads also work as long as they're on the windows' outside.

2

### SLOW DOWN IN WILDLIFE CROSSING ZONES

Reducing the speed of your vehicle gives you additional time and distance to react to wildlife on the road. Also, deer adapt to the speed limit on the highways they cross, so going 70 mph in a 55-mph zone is more likely to end in a fatality.

3

### SQUIRRELS LIVING IN YOUR ATTIC? A SKUNK UNDER YOUR PORCH?

Evict them humanely. See tips for how to do this yourself at [urbanwildliferescue.org](http://urbanwildliferescue.org).

If you wish to hire a "pest-removal" company, first check into its methods. Some companies claim to use humane practices but actually kill the animals they remove or leave behind babies without parents.

4

### DON'T FEED BREAD TO DUCKS

Bread is junk food for waterfowl, and low-nutrient bread can cause them to develop "angel wing," a deformity that prevents them from flying.

Injured animals might perceive you as a threat and lash out, and relocating them might cause further harm or complicate the problem. Case in point: People often encounter young animals who appear to be orphaned but really are not. For example, a doe will hide her fawn, who has no body scent, and leave for hours for the baby's protection.

### Wildlife Education at Home

FOR PEOPLE WHO COME TO THE AID OF suffering mammals, reptiles, amphibians and birds, Animal Help Now's app offers hope and peace of mind that they can get assistance from a rehabilitator trained in wild-animal behavior and health. Beyond that, however, Animal Help Now has another mission: to educate the public about how animal deaths can be prevented and how to live with wildlife in a more companionable way.

"When humans interact with wildlife, it

usually involves guns or bulldozers," says Crawford, "and bulldozers do the worst damage." He cites housing developments and highways that destroy black-tailed prairie dog habitat. He also mentions the new, glass-covered Minnesota Vikings football stadium that has become an avian death trap. Though the Audubon Society advised adding an outer coating to the glass that would help birds discern between sky and stadium, the owners refused.

"I feel like Animal Help Now is a matter of justice," says Crawford. "If we humans create threats to wildlife, we should be prepared to address the animals suffering as a result." Not all problems are caused by corporate greed; many are much closer to home. Each year in the United States, domestic cats kill 1 to 1.5 billion birds and 1 billion small mammals every year. One billion birds — 30 per second — die from striking the

windows of homes and office buildings. And 400 million animals are killed by motor vehicles.

The Resources page of Animal Help Now's website provides information on many topics, including how to use the app and species-specific information about encounters with baby birds, bats or an injured deer. You can read about the safest ways to capture and transport an animal (always wear thick gloves) and when not to approach or touch an animal: if it's circling, staggering or displaying signs of disease (salivating, discharge from the eyes or nose).

There are also resources to consult when you seek humane solutions to wildlife conflicts at home, such as deer eating your garden, raccoons raiding the garbage cans, a fox building a den under a shed, or baby bunnies nesting in the compost bin.

Education also raises awareness of our prejudices against certain animals, and makes us realize the value of all wild species, whether they live within city limits or in the backcountry. Crawford recalls the time he rescued a rattlesnake coiled on a busy highway. He flagged down a driver and asked him to stop traffic until the rattler was safely off the road. The man stared at him and said, "But it's just a snake," then sped away. Luckily a kinder person agreed to stop oncoming vehicles while Crawford yelled and waved two golf clubs he duct-taped together. As the snake slithered off the road and disappeared into the grassland, the helper murmured, "Wow, that's beautiful!"

Though Crawford has had his share of animal rescues that ended in euthanizing an animal who couldn't be saved, he points out that the good work by users of Animal Help Now bolsters his spirits. "We're helping mitigate threats to animals, which is still an underserved area," he says. "And I get to see the best in people, including our volunteers, tireless wildlife rehab professionals — many of whom work without pay — and compassionate members of the public who do their best to help animals in need. They're all part of a worldwide revolution to make the world more friendly to wildlife." **WH**