

## **These people are the REHABILITATORS.**

They are the ones that will slog out on a cold winters night to affect a rescue of an injured animal, work in 90 degree weather to keep a bird cool, trundle into the water to untangle a creature caught in a cast-away fishing line or a net long forgotten or spend sleepless nights trying to nurse some poor creature carelessly shot or poisoned. They are the ones who do so without thought of recompense. They do so because they care and want to make a difference - not for themselves or others but, for the wildlife they hold dear and near.

It can sound so romantic - curing, rehabilitating and releasing back to the wild. Yet, as every rehabilitator knows, it is long hours, little thanks and lots of hard work. Yes, there is the easy days, few and far between. There is the self-gratification when the success is there and the self-recrimination when failure rears its ugly head.

It's, for the most part, a thankless job when it comes down to others of our own species. They think it's great we do what we do, but, wouldn't consider spending the time themselves.

“Become a Rehabilitator! .... What For?” you say.

I'll tell you why: It's the look you see in the eyes of the injured creature as it first comes to you...that look of defeat shrouded in pain. It's the look of mistrust as you tend to its' wounds. It's the look of fear as you manipulate the injured area in physiotherapy. It's the look of semi- trust *but, not one of giving in*, when you catch it up to transport for release. More than anything, it's the look you don't see as it rushes off in its' release to be free and wild once more. It's the joy you feel within yourself. All of a sudden there is a balance in what you do and the pay off is not in the thanks you'll never get from them but in putting them back where they belong and giving them that second chance.

I know I'm just an “infant” compared to some, but, I will learn to do better than what I did even yesterday, because I care to. I'm not an idealist who thinks I can save the whole of the species I've chosen to help, but, I can help a bit - one at a time. Every journey starts with one step.

I once read on one of those fancy book marks: “Reach for the moon, even if you miss, you'll still end up among the stars.”

In experiencing comes answers, in the answers come more questions and with the questions, the seeking to find the answers and the seeking leads to more experiences.

So, yes, I'll be a rehabilitator for the long haul and I'll keep on finding out how little I really know about it all. Stay an “infant”. There's something to be said about not growing up.

Carol Ricciuto – Open Sky Raptor Foundation 1999