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.
A service for animals, particularly wildlife. 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 — a summer weekend when everyone was out hiking and cycling. He gathered 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.

The next hour was fraught with tension. Crawford's doggies sniffled and growled at the bird, and he worried the fledgling would succumb to the same terror as her siblings. As they drove around town frantically searching for someone who could care for a wild bird, his friend suggested they simply had to trust 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 meadowlark.

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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.

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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 to go off and eat. Some companies claim to use humane practices but actually kill the animals they remove or leave behind babies without parents.

**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.

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

Evict them humanely. See tips for how to do this yourself at urbanwildliferescue.org.

**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.

**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.

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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.

   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.

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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 100 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 and give the coiled rattler a lift. Crawford notes that the coiled rattler could have dropped its tail but did not.

“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 — 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.”