

# Wildlife rehabilitators help injured animals

By Joe Mosby  
Outdoor Editor

Cindy Westra wants to weave a web — a network of wildlife rehabilitators who can work with each other and with public agencies to help sick and injured birds and animals.

The Jacksonville, Ark., resident is one of the founders of Florida-based Back to Nature Wildlife. She moved from Orlando to Jacksonville last August when her husband took a job as a research scientist with the U.S. Air Force.

Licensed by state and federal authorities, Westra said the goal of helping wildlife goes far beyond mending broken legs and wings or administering antidotes to poisons picked up in the wild. Educating the public about wildlife is a necessity, she said.

Back to Nature Wildlife is educational in its functions along with the rehabilitating work.

"We have a woman in Bald Knob, Martha Swain, who is setting up some acreage as a wildlife center. An adjoining landowner has offered to let her use 18 more acres if she needs it, too," Westra said.

Arkansas has licensed wildlife rehabilitators living in many parts of the state now. Nearly all work in conjunction with Karen Yaich, urban and nongame wildlife specialist with the state Game and Fish Commission, and many of the wildlife rehab workers give public programs on birds and animals, especially to school groups.

Best known and one of the busiest of the rehabilitators is Jane Gulley of Little Rock, "Arkansas's Eagle Lady." Gulley's work with eagles, hawks and owls has attracted national attention, and she has made appearances at New York City and at the White House.



Joe Mosby/Gazette Staff

**HELPING THE BIRDS:** Cindy Westra (above) gives a hand to injured Fergie the pileated woodpecker, a permanent resident in her Jacksonville home and wildlife rehabilitation program. (Below) Phoenix, a 6-week-old great horned owl, was hit by a car and suffered a broken hip, broken leg and malnutrition before being found by a jogger and taken to a veterinarian.