

Jennifer Marchigiani  
Auburn

Since getting my wildlife rehabilitator's permit in 2002, there has been much growth in the community between rehabilitators and State agencies such as Game Wardens and other State officials that oversee the wildlife management. When I first started I was made to "fear" the State and wardens. Over time I learned I was taught incorrectly and there should be a team effort. Then there was animosity between PAID State agencies and "volunteers". One issue that always comes up is how we are "permitted" by the State, we have laws we must abide by, regulation that need to be met and we are providing a service of professional care for local wild animals with the intent of releasing them back into the wild as a healthy, viable example of their given species to thrive in their natural habitat yet we, as wildlife rehabilitators, are not funded by the government in any way. An animal control officer is paid by the city/town to handle domestic animals. Game wardens, who bring us animals, are paid by the State, yet we are the ones paying out of pocket to give these animals a second chance at life since most times the issue which brings an animal into rehab is human impact related. The State of Maine has a beautiful license plate that says "Support Wildlife" and I was so excited to see it, thinking FINALLY, maybe they are going to help fund rehabilitators when in fact, the money raised by that plate is for the fishing/hunting of wildlife. I would love to see State funding to help support the rehabilitators financially to benefit their efforts in giving local wildlife the best possible care. This service often helps protect the animals from wrongful dietary issues by the general public trying to raise orphans without proper training and knowledge as well as protecting humans from potential disease transmissions to themselves, family or pets.