

## **No room at animal shelter for wildlife rescue group**

**BY LAYLAN CONNELLY IRVINE WORLD NEWS**

A raccoon with black fur, white streaks and a brown belly bolts up and plops its long claws over cage bars, peering closely at a passerby using its one good eye.

Illness blinded the other eye. When the now spunky raccoon was brought to the Pacific Wildlife Project, its body was home to maggots living inside deep wounds.

At least 50 other creatures likely will fend for themselves after Pacific Wildlife, located off of Sand Canyon and Oak Canyon, shuts down. After seven years leasing a building at the city's animal shelter, the organization has been asked to leave and is searching for a new place to care for wild birds and small mammals.

The city has plans — and always has had — to expand the animal control division into the building occupied by Pacific Wildlife, which serves as both a foster home and rehabilitation center for injured or abandoned birds and small mammals.

"Without us, these animals will be euthanized or die," said Linda Winkle, volunteer coordinator at the Pacific Wildlife Project.

Deanna Manning, community services director, said the city needs the building for a new animal control unit because of Irvine's increasing population. It would be an extension of two existing animal control buildings. The city, however, generally cares for only domestic animals such as cats, dogs and rabbits.

Winkle said her center is the only safe haven in south Orange County where wild animals can be taken. A center in Huntington Beach cares for birds, where the city says it will start transporting injured birds and small animals. The center won't, however, take crows and other types of birds, Winkle notes.

"We're not abandoning the birds or doing anything of that nature. We're simply exercising what we need to do. We'll do everything we can to ensure the birds will have a safe environment," Manning said.

The city will determine if animal control can care for ducklings that are found abandoned at Woodbridge Lake.

A dozen week-old ducklings— each small enough to scoop up in the palm of a hand — live in a fish tank that serves as an incubator, snuggled under a red heat lamp. As babies, they cannot produce oils in their feathers to keep them warm, and can easily suffer hypothermia, Winkle said.

A note taped onto the fish tank reads: "Found in concrete parking structure. No ponds or creek around. No mom."

There are dozens of ducks at the center at any given time, Winkle said.

Other animals include an injured pelican that sits behind a sign that reads "Intensive Care." A Canada goose — described as a powerful bird full of muscle — hops on its left foot around his 8-foot tall cage. The other foot is limp and dangles.

Throughout the years, thousands of birds and small animals have been patched up at

the center, Winkle said. Former patients include brown pelicans who had fishing lines wrapped around their bills, or hooks deep in their legs or breasts. Volunteers bring them in from Newport Beach and Dana Point harbors.

Pacific Wildlife has been at its site for the last seven years. It came here on an emergency basis in the wake of a botulism outbreak among brown pelicans at the Salton Sea.

Not only does the center work to save animals, it serves as a place to volunteer for individuals and groups, including teens from the Braille Institute. The partially-sighted adolescents will soon be holding a pancake breakfast to raise funds for Pacific Wildlife.

The center has been in negotiations several times with the city to keep leasing the building. The deadline for moving is June 30.

"They've been asked to move on a number of occasions throughout the years," said Manning. "We need those buildings."

Contact the reporter: Laylan Connelly at (949) 553-2911 or [Lconnelly@ocregister.com](mailto:Lconnelly@ocregister.com).



— LAYLAN CONNELLY/IRVINE WORLD NEWS

**This raccoon** was brought to the Pacific Wildlife Sanctuary after becoming blind in one eye.