

Animal Instincts

Located at the Conservancy Nature Center, the von Arx Wildlife Hospital is an emergency care facility that specializes in the treatment and rehabilitation of native birds, small mammals, and reptiles. In fact, over 4,000 injured, sick, and orphaned native animals are admitted each year. Unfortunately, most of the injuries sustained by these animals stem from interactions that involve humans—car strikes, domestic pet attacks, window collisions, fishing line and hook injuries, gunshots, and toxicosis, a condition caused by the action of a poison or toxin.

Recently a realtor discovered an abandoned gopher tortoise, now an unwanted pet, in a home that had been listed for sale. Remember, gopher tortoises are a threatened species in Florida, meaning tortoises, their eggs, and their burrows are protected under state law. It is illegal to capture or possess a gopher tortoise. She realized the tortoise was too ill to be released, and immediately brought her to von Arx.

Upon admission, the tortoise was dehydrated and not attempting to move. She kept her head tucked into her shell, and she had a noticeable wheeze when she breathed. She was placed in a large recovery space with heat and water, where she began a slow but successful recovery.

Intentional cruelty, animal abuse, abandonment, or neglect is never acceptable with any animal—and attempting to keep a wild animal as a pet typically dooms that animal to a life of stress and poor health. Wild animals do not do well in captive situations and the average person does not have the knowledge or ability to provide for a wild animal's specific nutritional and husbandry needs. Therefore, if you find an injured or orphaned animal you believe needs help, rather than try to rehab or raise it yourself, the best course of action is to contact von Arx Wildlife Hospital. They have the skills and training

necessary to analyze situations involving wildlife and can determine the appropriate course of action.

Because of the number of animals they assist, von Arx staff are 100% focused on assisting their “patients.” Therefore, they are unable to provide health status updates should you bring a bird, reptile, or animal to their facility. However, rest assured they are committed to providing the highest quality, individualized treatment to each patient.

Remember, the wild animals were here first, and we are sharing their habitat! Be respectful, be kind, be safe, and be aware of local wildlife rules and regs.

von Arx
Wildlife Hospital
is open 365 days
a year, from 8 am
– 8 pm.

239-262-2273

1495 Smith
Preserve Way,
Naples

<https://conservancy.org/our-work/wildlife-rehabilitation/>