



Fellow Mortals

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Wildlife Rehabilitation

“We’re all just seeds in God’s hands; We start the same, but where we land is sometimes fertile soil, sometimes sand; We’re all just seeds in God’s hands.”
—Kathy Mattea

FINDING THE COURAGE TO CARE

Not many can resist the sight of a downy duckling, a soft baby-grey squirrel or a tiny cottontail. It is easy to care about the children of summer. It is a joy to raise them and there is no heartache at returning them to the wild.

But wildlife rehabilitation is not limited to raising orphans. 60 percent of the animals admitted to us have injuries or impairments in varying degrees of severity.

Few would want to cuddle a rabbit skinned, but still alive, an owl with naked bone protruding from wing feathers or an adult squirrel with its face covered in blood, its head crushed.

It takes courage to care for these. Their needs are greater, the outcome less certain and the pain — the pain we feel at their plight would not seem a place one would willingly return to again. My heart breaks over and over all summer long, though my eyes may look dry. Pouring my life energy into the hundreds of creatures who fill my hands and enter my heart drains all but my spirit sometimes. Yet I am uncommonly blessed.

Years of rehabilitation have taught me to find hope in seemingly hopeless situations,

and the ability to make a difference in these small broken lives is the reason we are here. No, the results are never sure, and it can be hard to continue to have faith, to try, when the statistics loom up against us, but the determination in the eyes of a fragile songbird, the fallen owl, a wounded fawn, demand no less than our best efforts.

Fellow Mortals cannot save every life that



comes into our hands; but we do care about every life that passes our way. All of us — human and non-human — are the “same being in different disguises” and, even in adversity, the essence of who and what a creature is remains behind the ruins of a body, or a life.

It can take a terrible amount of courage to care when we are surrounded by the darkness and the danger of complacency, of apathy, but somehow we must find the strength to do so and, through our example, light the way into a brighter future for all creatures.

If thoughts are things, I pray for wings, that I might spread the peace I've found in learning how to love.

— Yvonne Wallace Blane