The expansion of development in the North Texas area has created more pressure on the natural world and stewardship of these natural resources is critically important. Wildlife rehabilitation prevents unnecessary suffering and helps conserve healthy populations of these species who help maintain our environment.

Backyard wildlife provides substantial benefits. For example, opossums eliminate rodents, snakes, insects and carrion and eat food that would have attracted those pests. Raccoons and other species also help to keep yards free of pests.

This ongoing project will provide master naturalists with ways to help orphaned, ill, or displaced wildlife so that the animals can continue to play their vital roles in our ecosystem. In addition, it will offer both master naturalists and the community learning opportunities about our ecosystems. Education will include both benefits of wildlife and ways to help protect wildlife, such as reducing the use of poisons and chemicals outdoors.

We work with Texas Metro Wildlife Rehabilitation (TMWR), a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. TMWR rehabilitates and releases injured, orphaned, displaced, or ill native wildlife. The organization rehabs squirrels, opossums, cottontail rabbits, deer, raccoons\*, skunks\*, and foxes\* and takes in more than 1,500 orphaned or injured wildlife per year.

Opportunities for Master Naturalists volunteer hours include:

* Fostering orphaned or injured wild animals under the supervision of a licensed rehabber
* Transport of wild animals who need help
* Special projects such as making cages, nesting boxes, and snuggle beds; this provides a learning opportunity for a group, such as a class or youth group, and is helpful to the wildlife
* Community outreach

There are also advanced training (AT) opportunities through educational programs and classes:

* Well Baby Care
* Introduction to Wildlife Rehabilitation
* Wildlife Rehabilitation Basics: Advanced Topics
* Opossum Care
* Raccoon Care
* Eastern Cottontail Rabbit Care

\*These animals are rabies vector species that require special training and are outside of the scope of this program.