

Rehabbed fawns released at ranch

By Jim Anderson
Correspondent

Last Saturday was a red-letter day for the deer population of Sisters Country. Right around noon, Judy Niedzwiecke, who operates Wildside Rehabilitation, Inc, in Bend (<http://www.wildside-rehab.com>), and her crew of volunteers arrived at Gayle Baker's Rimrock Ranch with a horse trailer half-full of rehabbed mule deer fawns to be released on the banks of Whychus Creek.

This is a usual fall event for Wildside, who took over the fawn rehab responsibility from wildlife rehabber Tracy Leonhardy, who once lived in Sisters Country. Each fall, Leonhardy would

truck out a load of 20 to 30 fawns to Rimrock and watch them answer the call of the wild for the first time in their lives.

This time, among the eight fawns that slowly walked freely across the ranch, there was one among them that had an adventure that is all too familiar.

A couple driving down the road near Prineville saw the newly born fawn wobbling on unsteady legs on the shoulder and immediately that age-old thought hit them: "Oh, look at that poor baby deer, it doesn't have a mother, we'd better take it home." And they almost did.

But on the way home wiser thoughts began to seep in that perhaps it didn't

need help. The fawn's mom was in all probability standing behind a bush watching the couple kidnap her baby. Anyway, they took the fawn to the Prineville police station—as if they knew what to do with it.

The desk officer immediately contacted ODFW and they in turn contacted Tracy Leonhardy, who has a long history of knowing how to keep kidnapped fawns alive and well. Tracy brought it to Wildside, where the fawn became the responsibility of rehabber Sandy Thompson, and the rest would be history except the fawn was so young it wasn't even into knowing how or why to suck.

It took a total of four weeks before the team of volunteers finally taught the fawn what the nipple was all about and how much she would enjoy the contents of the liquid in the bottle. From that point on it was a battle to just keep the bottle full long enough to satiate the growing fawn's appetite and physical needs.

There are two fawns still with Sandy that are not fit enough for release. They will winter-over in the capable hands of Wildside volunteers.

Rehabbers urge the public not pick up "abandoned" fawns, even if you see a dead doe on the road next to it—it may not be the fawn's mother. Just call ODFW, OSP, or the local sheriff, to report when, where, and what you saw and let it go at that.



PHOTO BY JIM ANDERSON

Rehabbed fawn release with friends at Rimrock Ranch.

The season's upon us...



PHOTO BY JIM CORNELIUS

Habitat ReStore created a magnificent holiday sale space for local shoppers last week.

CORRECTION

The name of the theater company that received a grant from The Roundhouse Foundation was listed incorrectly in *The Nugget's* story

"Roundhouse grant boosts theater group," (*November 9, page 10*). The Silent Echo Theater Company received the \$1,000 grant. They are planning their first production next month at The Belfry.



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