

Wildlife Rehabilitation Ireland (WRI)



Strategy & Action Plan 2024 – 2028

Introduction

WRI [www.wri.ie] is a not for profit NGO established in 2010 working for the general advancement of wildlife protection and rehabilitation in Ireland. It is a registered charity and private company limited by guarantee.

WRI promotes and encourages best practice and sets high ethical standards for the rescue and rehabilitation of wildlife; is a data collection point for records of wildlife casualties; unites Ireland with the International wildlife rehabilitation community; cares for wildlife; and offers wildlife educational events to all interested in Ireland's wildlife.

The driving force is its voluntary Board of Directors who oversee the implementation of WRI's objectives. The Board is responsible for the overall control and strategic direction of the charity. It is made up of eight to twelve experienced and driven people and presents a balanced combination of people in the fields of wildlife conservation, welfare and rehabilitation, management, finance, communications, governance, education and IT.

The range of skills and expertise shared amongst Board Members also includes (but not limited to):

- Veterinary
- Dealing with Wildlife Crime
- Working with Communities
- Hospital Developments/Hospital Building Projects
- Project Management
- Process Management
- Marketing

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to articulate the future ambition of WRI, to outline its key strategic priorities for 2024 – 2028 and to present these in the form of a Strategic Plan. This is accompanied by an Action Plan focused on key deliverables over the 5-year life span of the strategy.

Developing the Strategy

The Board of Directors worked closely to ensure that WRI is identifying and focusing on key strategic priority areas over the next five years. They participated in a facilitated workshop and a number of exercises to build strategy content while taking into account the evolving requirements of wildlife rehabilitation in Ireland. As part of the workshop the vision, mission statement, objectives and constitution were also reviewed by the Board. A detailed SWOT analysis is included in Appendix 1 attached.

Stakeholder Engagement

In developing its Strategy and Action Plan, WRI was conscious of its supporting role to individuals and professions caring for and interacting with wildlife around the country. Members of the Board of Directors continue to solicit ideas and gain input from key stakeholders.

Mission of Wildlife Rehabilitation Ireland

“To promote and advance wildlife rehabilitation, welfare and protection.”

Vision of Wildlife Rehabilitation Ireland

“WRI envision a world where people recognise both the intrinsic value of wildlife and that protecting biodiversity is fundamental to life on earth..”

Aims & Objectives of Wildlife Rehabilitation Ireland

Provide educational and training opportunities.

- *Provide science-based educational and training opportunities for anyone with an interest or involvement in wildlife welfare / protection.*
- *To raise awareness of biodiversity, ecosystems and the intrinsic value of wildlife.*

Rehabilitate injured and orphaned wildlife.

- *Care for injured and orphaned wildlife to facilitate their return to the wild.*

Establish a Wildlife Hospital & Nature Education Centre.

- *Estsablish Ireland’s first dedicated Wildlife Referral, Education, & Teaching Hospital, to cater to complex rehabilitation cases.*
- *Provide science-based educational and accredited training opportunities in this Hospital.*
- *Establish a Wildlife Hospital in each province to localise care and prevent wildlife welfare transport issues.*
- *Promote quality and ethical standardisation of rehabilitation care.*

Facilitate wildlife monitoring and research.

- *Facilitate collaborative wildlife monitoring and research with state agencies and stakeholders to improve wildlife welfare and conservation.*

Offer assistance to wildlife rehabilitators.

- *Offer assistance, as practicable, to anyone caring for wildlife.*

Identify and reduce threats to wildlife.

- *Assist state agencies in enforcement of the lawful protection of Ireland’s wildlife and their habitats.*
- *Raising awareness of wildlife crime in Ireland*
- *Assist in mitigation of human-wildlife conflicts.*

Values

The work of the WRI will be underpinned by Excellence, Integrity and Caring:

Excellence

Through ongoing training and research, we are committed to facilitating the delivery of a wildlife rescue and rehabilitation service which provides the highest standard of wildlife care and meets international best practice standards.

Integrity

We will at all times endeavour to work in partnership and collaboration with key stakeholders including volunteers, veterinary professionals, WRI subscribers and patrons, wildlife experts, other wildlife and conservation NGOs, and government agencies in a trusting and transparent manner. We are an organisation that “says what we do and does what we say”.

Caring

We are committed to facilitating the delivery of a rescue and rehabilitation service by wildlife rehabilitators and other stakeholders, for all wildlife in Ireland through a caring and wildlife centred approach.

Strategic Objectives

WRI has 3 main objectives.

- *Provide Care for Wildlife in Ireland*
- *Provide Education in Wildlife Welfare and Protection*
- *Raise Awareness of WRI, Wildlife Welfare & Conservation*

Strategic Objective 1

Provide Care for Wildlife in Ireland

Ireland is home to 28 species of land mammal, over 400 species of birds, and over 12,000 species of insect (National Parks and Wildlife Service).

There is currently no national organisation representing all types of wildlife rescue and rehabilitation in Ireland. Admirable work is done by small organisations and individuals (rehabilitators) around the country but without sufficient finance or support network.

WRI was established to develop a more coordinated approach, raising the standards of care across the country and helping groups and individuals through the provision of funding, equipment and training.

Research

- WRI carries out wildlife research through various surveys and contact with veterinary practices and rehabilitators. The surveys form part of ongoing research providing invaluable data on wildlife casualties; emerging infectious diseases, volume, species and location of casualties, the effects of illegal persecution, habitat loss and climate change. The data also provides WRI with information on the varying standards of care being delivered across the country.

This information is shared with other organisations including the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), researchers, and other interested bodies.

The data demonstrates the enormity of the numbers of wildlife casualties being rescued. It enables WRI to identify and provide assistance to rehabilitators. It has led the NPWS to establish new licencing protocol. It has led to wildlife care being added to the veterinary nursing curriculum. Ultimately it illustrates the need for and the value of the profession of wildlife rehabilitation.

Post-Release Monitoring

Monitoring animals after they are released informs us of the effectiveness of the wildlife rehabilitation process. It is essential that rehabilitators demonstrate that the welfare of the animals they're caring for isn't compromised by the process. WRI has facilitated various post-release monitoring programmes in Ireland and coordinated Ireland's first ever post-release monitoring project of two rehabilitated pine marten kits using radio telemetry.

WRI worked with Fingal County Council (FCC) to establish the first National Wildlife Rehabilitation Hospital and Nature Education Centre which, as well as providing a location for wildlife to be treated, would act as a focal point for education and research. WRI worked with FCC between 2017 and 2020 to realise this project at a site in Turvey Nature Reserve, Donabate. A Feasibility Study was produced but due to Covid 19 the project was put on hold. However, the pandemic created an unexpected surge of wildlife casualties being brought to rehabilitators who were unable to cope with the demand. In response, in 2021, WRI created an interim emergency Wildlife Hospital near Navan, Co Meath and took in 2,500 casualties during the 10-month operational period.

From 2024 to 2028 WRI will seek to ensure that:

- 1) Rehabilitators are provided with support where possible/practicable.
- 2) Post-release monitoring of wildlife is introduced across the county.
- 3) Surveying of rehabilitators and vets treating wildlife is undertaken to establish the volume of wildlife casualties, baseline practices and wildlife health issues.
- 4) Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the Wildlife Hospital are well underway together with Fundraising campaigns.

Strategic Objective 2

Provide Education in Wildlife Welfare & Protection

One of the main keys to effective wildlife care and protection is information and education. WRI strives to inform and educate all those who have a role to play in wildlife welfare. These include people trained in veterinary care at all levels, rehabilitators, volunteers and the general public as well as local and national policy makers.

WRI uses a number of vehicles to carry out this objective including websites, newsletters, training courses, workshops, webinars and events, articles and press releases, social media, mailshots, local talks and school/college visits.

Websites

Currently WRI is hosting the following websites:

- **Wildlife Rehabilitation Ireland** website (wri.ie)
This site provides information to individuals or groups actively involved in rehabilitation. It offers general guidelines on rehabilitation, licences and provides standardised forms for rehabilitators dealing with wildlife casualties. It includes links to national surveys, relevant publications, further education, grants and career options in wildlife care / rehabilitation.
- **Irish Wildlife Matters** website (irishwildlifematters.ie)
This wildlife first aid site provides specific step-by-step information for treating the most common mammals and adult or baby birds. It is aimed at the general public, rehabilitators and the veterinary profession. It offers information on capture, assessment and short-term care in addition to detailed rehabilitation process information, common diseases and species-specific veterinary treatment.
- **Wildlife Crime Ireland** website (wildlifecrime.ie)
This site provides detailed information on wildlife crime, advice on recognising & recording a wildlife crime, contact details for reporting a wildlife crime, and links to further information.
- **WRI Wildlife Hospital** website (wriwildlifehospital.ie)
This site was created in 2021 when WRI created the emergency Wildlife Hospital in Co Meath. It provides information to the public about the work done behind the scenes at this facility.

Courses

WRI have provided wildlife courses since 2011 and they have grown rapidly in popularity. All WRI courses are accredited by the Veterinary Council of Ireland.

- **'Introduction to Wildlife Rehabilitation'** Course
This Introductory course outlines the theory and practice of wildlife rehabilitation and is run once or twice every year.
- **'Advanced Wildlife Veterinary Treatment'** Course which is designed to give veterinary professionals an in-depth knowledge of the modern approaches to mammalian and avian wildlife treatment options.
- **'Orphan Rearing and Fostering'** Course which focuses on the rearing and fostering of orphaned Irish birds and mammals.

Strategic Objective 2 – cont.

Provide Education in Wildlife Welfare & Protection

UCD’s School of Veterinary Medicine

Introducing wildlife training to University College Dublin’s (UCD) Veterinary Nursing Curriculum

In 2015, following the publication of WRI’s article on Wildlife in Veterinary Practices, WRI was invited to teach wildlife rescue and first aid to UCD’s School of Veterinary Medicine veterinary and veterinary nursing students. This has now become part of the curriculum for the veterinary nursing degree course and WRI spend two days every year providing this training.

Conferences

- **Wildlife Rehabilitation Conferences**

These conferences are aimed at professionals and volunteers involved in rehabilitation. Both national and International speakers are brought in to deliver talks and practical workshops. These conferences also provide excellent networking opportunities. As of Dec 2023, WRI has run 4 of these conferences.

- **Wildlife Crime Conferences**

WRI believes that wildlife crime needs to be tackled on an All-Ireland basis through collaboration, communication, and cooperation of all the relevant parties. To this end, as of Dec 2023, WRI has run 5 highly successful All-Ireland wildlife crime conferences where government agencies, NGOs, professional bodies, voluntary groups and individuals network and share their experience and expertise.

Webinars

From 2020 onwards WRI has also been offering online educational events. These have been extremely well attended and provide the opportunity to reach a National and even International audience.

- **Wildlife Veterinary Medicine Q&A**
- **Hedgehogs – a practical approach**
- **Wildlife Crime**

WRI plans to achieve the following between 2024 – 2028

1. Continue to run existing training courses.
2. Provide even more online educational webinars and tutorials.
3. Work with education providers to bring wildlife modules into junior and senior cycle curriculum.
4. Development of accredited training programme for Wildlife Hospital Interns.
5. Work towards making wildlife first aid a module in the veterinary (in addition to the vet nursing) curriculum.
6. WRI annual event to alternate between a practical training event, a Rehabilitation or Wildlife Crime Conference, and other topics relevant to the welfare, conservation or protection of wildlife.

Strategic Objective 3

Raise awareness of WRI, wildlife welfare & conservation

Raising awareness about wildlife welfare, conservation, and WRI involves a combination of educational, outreach, and advocacy. These are some strategies we use:

Online Presence:

Social Media Campaigns: Utilize platforms like Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook to share visually compelling content about wildlife, conservation, and WRI's initiatives, and use hashtags strategically to reach a wider audience and engage with existing conversations.

Newsletters: Create informative and engaging e-newsletters on a monthly basis on topics related to wildlife conservation, highlighting success stories, challenges, and the importance of conservation efforts.

Videos: Produce videos featuring the impact of WRI's work.

Educational Initiatives:

Webinars and Online Workshops: Host webinars or online workshops to educate the public about the importance of wildlife conservation, sustainable practices, and WRI's specific initiatives.

Educational Resources: Develop and share educational materials, such as infographics, fact sheets, and lesson plans for schools and community groups.

Collaborations:

Partnerships with other environmental campaigners/groups: Collaborate with others in the wildlife and environmental advocacy space to amplify your message and reach a broader audience.

Corporate Partnerships: Form partnerships with businesses and corporations that share a commitment to environmental sustainability. Joint initiatives can raise awareness and provide funding.

Local Community Engagement:

Community Events: Organize and participate in events and community gatherings to engage directly with the public.

School Programs: Work with schools to implement educational programs on wildlife conservation, encouraging students to participate in related activities.

Exhibitions: Organize a photography exhibition showcasing the beauty of wildlife and need for conservation efforts.

Advocacy and Policy:

Petitions and Campaigns: Start or support petitions advocating for stronger wildlife protection laws and policies.

Engage with Policymakers: Work to engage with and educate policymakers about the importance of wildlife conservation, pushing for legislation that supports these efforts.

Metrics and Impact:

Transparency: Share measurable outcomes of wildlife conservation projects to demonstrate the impact of WRI's work.

Regular Updates: Provide regular updates on the progress of ongoing initiatives, creating a sense of involvement and urgency among supporters.

By combining these strategies, WRI creates a comprehensive awareness campaign that reaches diverse audiences and fosters a greater understanding of the importance of wildlife welfare and conservation, as well as the role of WRI.

Strategic Objective 3 – cont.

Raise awareness of WRI, wildlife welfare & conservation

Governance & Fundraising

In the period of this plan, WRI is determined to maintain its quality, credibility, and effectiveness by paying attention to a number of organisational areas including the effectiveness of its Board, its volunteers and administration. Charities are rightly expected to attain and maintain high standards in their governance. The continued recruitment of high calibre board members and the provision of opportunities for training and continuing professional development for board members and volunteers is also vital in that regard.

WRI depends on regular grants, donations and events to cover the running costs of the organisation. Medium-term sustainability is still a challenge and it will continue to be necessary to develop diverse sources of core funding from grants, individual supporters, own income and fundraising, to ensure that any forms of Government funding is matched from other sources, so that the independence of WRI is assured. For this, and in order to further its other goals, WRI needs to maintain a high profile on all platforms with clear information and messages.

1. Marketing plan in place.
2. Develop merchandising for sale online, at key locations and at conferences etc.
3. Keeping the websites updated.
4. Streamlining of operations by maintaining formalised book-keeping and administration.
5. Ensure best practice in the Board by having good governance in place and adhered to.

Implementation Planning and Reporting

It is important that control mechanisms are in place to ensure the success of implementing the strategy in a timely manner and also to ensure that the measures being implemented are having the desired effect. These mechanisms also provide an opportunity for WRI to reflect on what may not be working as well as anticipated and to put remedial measures in place to address issues identified.

Priority Pillars

	Activity	Impact	Requirement
Hospital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Create a Rehab & Teaching Hospital ➤ Run Internship training programme ➤ Rehab injured and orphaned wildlife 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Save the lives of 100s of wild animals ➤ Reduce wild animals' pain & suffering ➤ Reduce incidences of notifiable disease in domestic/farmed animals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Find site for permanent Hospital ➤ Regularize planning situation ➤ Submit planning application ➤ Source seed funding
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Progress Green Schools initiative ➤ Progress Wild Schools curriculum ➤ Deliver in-person Wildlife Courses ➤ Deliver online training/outreach ➤ Teach in vet Colleges/Uni's 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Deliver nature education to a nationwide audience of thousands of children ➤ Foster a sense of pride and protection of our native Irish wildlife and habitats ➤ Increase standard of care given to casualties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Find link person in Green Schools ➤ Funding to continue content creation for Wild Schools & Internship programme ➤ Train Irish vets as Instructors ➤ Help students to request wildlife education
Awareness Raising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Stalls at events / festivals ➤ National wildlife protection campaign ➤ Wildlife submissions/papers ➤ Conferences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Gives respect to the profession providing benefit to wildlife care ➤ Increases funding opportunities ➤ Generates respect for nature leading to protection of the environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Recruit volunteers ➤ Stalls at events / festivals ➤ National campaign – cat attack birds ➤ Source funding
Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Post release monitoring ➤ Survey's / questionnaires ➤ Engage with DAFM & Uni's for samples/cadavers ➤ collaboration with Govt Depts and 3rd level institutions on research projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Justify the resources involved in wildlife rehabilitation ➤ Obtain more information about the species to better protect/care for them ➤ Save the lives of other wildlife casualties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Source funding ➤ Additional resources; manpower / time ➤ Find data analysis individual ➤ Adequately trained staff at Hospital, & time
ISO for Wildlife Rehab	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Create <u>SOP's</u> for operation of Hospital, isolation units & disease surveillance ➤ Work with NPWS on licensing ➤ Support rehabilitators; financially / in-kind to raise standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Wildlife will receive the best possible care ➤ More efficient procedures can lead to greater survival rates for more casualties ➤ Protocols based on experience save lives ➤ WRI support can facilitate improved care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Source veterinary advisor to assist ➤ Find link person within NPWS ➤ Source funding
Wildlife Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Promote PAW Wildlife Crime App ➤ Host Wildlife Crime Conferences ➤ Initiate habitat cleaning initiatives ➤ Participate in habitat restoration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Increase reporting of suspicious incidents leading to reduction of wildlife crimes ➤ Positive change in attitude & and behaviour to better protect nature ➤ Healthy environment increases biodiversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Journalist/writer to write about the App ➤ Funding for upkeep of App & events ➤ Resources; manpower for physical events ➤ Need volunteer to pursue WC issues

5 Year Action Plan

Year	Objective 1 Provide care for wildlife in Ireland	Objective 2 Provide education in wildlife welfare & protection	Objective 3 Raise awareness of WRI, wildlife welfare & conservation
	HOSPITAL : ISO's	EDUCATION : RESEARCH	AWARENESS RAISING : WILDLIFE THREATS
2024	Support rehabilitators as practicable	Webinar - veterinary	Presentation on WRI's work at WRI event
	Source site for Wildlife Hospital	Courses – public & vet	Promote online Annual Reports
	Create SOP's for WRI Volunteers	Conference/workshop – Wildlife Crime	Webinar – public; wildlife crime
		Teaching Vet Nursing students in UCD curriculum	WRI stall at public events
		Junior Cycle wildlife module in curriculum	Veterinary survey
			Promote PAW Ireland App
2025	1 st Wildlife & Exotics Veterinary Clinic partnership	Webinar - veterinary	Increase social media output
	Create <u>SOP's</u> for Hospital activities	Courses – public & vet	WRI stall at public events
	Support rehabilitators as practicable	Teaching Vet Nursing students in UCD curriculum	Submissions made to consultations
	Planning permission for Wildlife Hospital	Senior Cycle wildlife module in curriculum	Initiate habitat cleaning initiatives; e.g. litter picking
		Progress Green Schools initiative	Promote PAW Ireland App
2026	Phase 1 Wildlife Rehab & Referral Clinic	Webinar – conservation/rehabilitation	Develop online shop
	Open Hospital for wildlife admissions	Teaching Vet Nursing students in UCD curriculum	Expand social media platforms
	Support rehabilitators financially/in-kind	Development of Internship programme	Initiate habitat cleaning initiatives; e.g. river clean-up
		Module in Green Schools programme	Promote PAW Ireland App
		Work with DAFM re disease surveillance	
2027	Support rehabilitators financially/in-kind	Webinar – conservation/rehabilitation	Increase social media output
	Veterinary survey	Courses – public & vet	WRI stall at public events
	Work with NPWS on licencing	Accreditation of Internship programme	National wildlife protection media campaign
		Teaching Vet Nursing students in UCD curriculum	Promote PAW Ireland App
		Facilitate research students from Universities	
2028	Support rehabilitators financially/in-kind	Teaching Vet Nursing and Vet students in UCD curriculum	Increase social media output
	Rehabilitator survey	Conference	WRI stall at public events
	Phase 2 Wildlife Rehab & Referral Clinic	Collaborative post release monitoring project	Presentation on WRI's work at WRI Conference
	Satellite Wildlife Hospital into next <u>5 year</u> plan		Participate in habitat restoration initiatives
			Promote PAW Ireland App

Appendix 1

WRI SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weakness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Skilled & knowledgeable BOD ▪ Strong Governance ▪ Reputation/liked/good will ▪ Relevant ▪ International Connections ▪ Politicians supportive of the Wildlife Hospital project ▪ First Irish all-species National wildlife welfare & conservation organisation ▪ Directors and rehabilitators all passionate about their role ▪ Patrons ▪ Wildlife Hospital innovative project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Funding / fundraiser ▪ Staff and Resources ▪ Not aligned to one government department (DAFM & DCHG) ▪ BOD as per Memo & Arts, must work voluntarily. ▪ Key Man Reliance ▪ Time ▪ Spokesperson ▪ Not utilising patrons enough
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Board of Directors ▪ Patrons ▪ General goodwill ▪ Educational opportunities and enthusiasm ▪ Global Partners ▪ Wildlife Hospital ▪ Academic Partner i.e., UCD ▪ Advertising ▪ Links with conservation and biodiversity ▪ International Dimensions ▪ Social Media ▪ National Wildlife Day ▪ Merchandise ▪ Grants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Recruitment difficulties without steady income ▪ Change in government leadership. ▪ Economic downturn ▪ Competition