

Wildlife need room to grow each spring

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Spring is a great time of year to enjoy new beginnings, and flowers and leaves are not the only signs of new life. Plenty of food and warmer weather make this the ideal time for wildlife to mate and raise their offspring.

The young, formative years are perfect for learning and developing, and baby ani-

mals are no different from baby humans in this regard. Important life skills need to be mastered while individuals are young if they are going to be able to survive in a harsh world. Even innate or natural skills often must be mastered through practice.

For example, consider flight in birds. Flying is a very complicated process, even though it is natural to birds. Flight is

not only the ability to move through the air using feathered wings. The bird also needs to change directions without falling out of the sky and to land without crashing or missing the landing site.

Young animals must also learn to find food. Hawks must learn to wait until just the right moment to pounce on their prey. Squirrels need to figure out which acorns are

good to eat and which ones are rotten. Wolves need to learn how to work in packs to take down large prey like moose or elk.

Many kinds of wildlife even seem to suffer through a “teenage” period. Like human teenagers, they are ready to strike out on their own, but they still need a little more training and oversight. News stories about “misbehaving” wild animals often feature adolescents that made a bad choice to raid a garbage can or enter a dwelling. They may wander off to explore, which can result in well-meaning people stepping in to help the “lost” or “orphaned” animal.

These springtime lessons and adventures often put young animals in the paths of people. Many folks do not realize the animal is likely very close to its home. They don’t understand that important life lessons need to be learned or that a parent animal may be nearby, watching and protecting its offspring. People are tempted to intervene.

As a result, many baby birds, rabbits, raccoons, opossums, fawns and other wild animals end up “rescued” and

Southern Miss awards degrees at spring 2019 commencements

The University of Southern Mississippi held spring 2019 commencement exercises May 9 and 10 at Reed Green Coliseum on its Hattiesburg campus, and May 11 at the Mississippi

Coast Coliseum in Biloxi. Southern Miss President Rodney D. Bennett conferred undergraduate, graduate and specialist’s degrees at the ceremonies.

Southern Miss graduates from the local area include: **LEXINGTON** - Raven Redmond-Johnson, Master of Arts in the Teach Lan; **TCHULA** - Dominique Common, Bachelor of Science.

in veterinary hospitals or rehabilitation centers. This fate is unfortunate for two reasons. First, state and federal laws do not allow wild animals to be removed from the environment without the appropriate permits. Second, in most cases, it is best to let the animal be raised as nature intended -- by its parents in the natural world. This is the best way to ensure wild populations of animals remain strong and healthy.

The world is a challenging place for young animals. Let’s make sure we give them all the room they need to grow and develop without adding any undue human interference.

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A stray fawn may look vulnerable and alone, but the mother is usually nearby keeping a watchful eye on her offspring. (Stock photo)

Wright: Districts won’t have to use own money for pay raise

Associated Press

Mississippi’s superintendent of schools said Thursday that the state will give local districts enough money this summer to ensure they don’t have to reach into their own pockets to cover a shortfall in teacher pay raise funding.

State Superintendent Carey Wright said after a state Board of Education meeting in Clinton that the department is still calculating the amount of the shortfall caused by the department’s ignorance of how teachers were coded in its own computer system.

Department officials originally said they thought the deficit was between \$10 million and \$15 million, but Wright said she now doesn’t want to make an estimate until a fuller report is compiled later this month.

Wright continues to reassure that all teachers and assistant teachers will get a \$1,500 raise beginning July 1. The Legislature mandated that pay increase in law, so districts must pay it regardless of state funding.

“Every teacher and every teacher’s assistant is going to get their well-deserved pay raise,” she told board members.

The problem stems from the department’s count of how many teachers were

eligible, as documented in a March 27 letter counting 31,157 teachers.

Officials say that was a count of teachers in its computer system classified as being paid only with funds from the Mississippi Adequate Education Program, the formula that divides state aid among school districts.

The idea was to omit teachers paid with federal funds, with federal money covering their raises. But Wright said the department didn’t know that its computer system places some teachers paid all or in part with state money into classifications that the department thought included only teachers paid completely with federal money.

Because the count was short, lawmakers allotted only \$58 million to pay the raises. The department usually sends state aid to local school districts in two checks a year. Wright said that, if necessary, the department won’t split the \$58 million in pay raise funds equally, but will send a larger share this summer. She’s counting on assurances from Republican leaders that lawmakers will cover the shortfall in January when the next regular session starts.

“So there is sufficient money to cover the teacher pay raises until the legislature meets,” Wright said. “And

we’re very comfortable with that.”

Because it’s an election year, there’s no guarantee of who will hold top posts in January. Some people have pushed for a special session to solve the problem now, with the pressure of the November general election looming over incumbents. Gov. Phil Bryant and others have rejected that move as a waste of money.

Wright has said the episode points to the continuing need to overhaul the department’s data system, called the Mississippi Student Information System, dismissing criticism that the department is incompetent.

“Yes, MDE can count,” she said. “But however, comma, it takes having accurate information in our data system in order to be able to produce an accurate number on the front end.”

Wright said Thursday, May 9, that staffers would present a data overhaul plan in June.

Lawmakers allotted \$500,000 for the department to begin work starting in July, but Wright said that’s not enough.

“I’m sure it’s going to cost several million dollars,” she said. “But if that’s what we need to ensure that something like this doesn’t happen again, then we’ve got to get that done.”

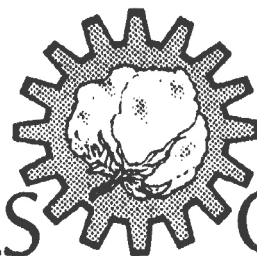


Robert Killebrew, Holmes County Bank, President is shown presenting 2019 Scholarship Awards to Noah Burton (left), valedictorian, and Laura Kathryn Rutledge (right), salutatorian, of Central Holmes Christian School. The awards are presented each year to the top two graduates at CHCS.

Congratulations

Our congratulations to Noah Burton and Laura Kathryn Rutledge, winners of the 2019 Holmes County Bank Scholarships awarded at Central Holmes Christian School.

It is a pleasure to help recognize students who make such achievements in academic work.



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