

**BAY BEACH**  
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sure that, annually, they have two field trips to Bay Beach to get the spring and the fall warbler action," Nancy Nabak, president of Bay Area Bird Club, said. "They're seeing birders from all across the state. It's just another example of how great of a hotspot it is. Real serious bird nerds want to see the warblers. They're very challenging."

**Rehabilitation facility**

One of the signature aspects of BBWLS is its rehabilitation program, the second largest of its kind in the state.

Mike Reed, who spent 34 years with Bay Beach Wildlife Sanctuary before retiring as the facility's director in 2019, said because of the high cost associated with animal rehabilitation, they looked to the public for support.

To avoid cuts to the program, Reed and his wife, Gail Garrity-Reed, developed a concept called the Rehabilitation Program at the Wildlife Sanctuary (R-PAWS) and went to work recruiting volunteers.

Garrity-Reed served as the group's president for the first three years, while Reed helped develop the training protocol for volunteers who work with animals in the rehab program.

With the support of the community and the efforts of the hundreds of volunteers, the BBWLS rehabilitation program now helps more than 5,000 injured, sick and orphaned animals annually.

"Every year, that number keeps growing," Reed said. "As the city expands and the summers get longer, there is more wildlife/human conflict, so, there's a greater need for wildlife rehabilitation. We've taken care of pretty much every animal you can find, and the goal



The Bay Beach Wildlife Sanctuary, now in its 85th year of operation, is home to a wide variety of wildlife.

Josh Staloch Photo

is to release them back into the wild where they belong."

Volunteers treat animals within the sanctuary borders, but also accepts injured animals brought in by the community.

Currently, BBWLS utilizes between 60 and 80 licensed volunteers to keep up with the rehabilitation program's demand.

"The sanctuary maintains all the licenses, and we keep up the training," Garrity-Reed said. "(Volunteers) go through stages. They start out with bunnies and they grow into handling more complex animals. The sanctuary, in a lot of ways, is like a triage center, and Mike was able to grow that program without any additional costs to the city."

**Education facilities**

With the rehabilitation program established, Reed turned his focus to education.

"With that in mind, he started the first nature-based, 4-year-old kindergarten in Wisconsin," Garrity-Reed said. "He partnered with UWGB and the Green Bay School District. The school district took it on, and now children can attend tuition-free."

The Oak Center Learning Center 4K program is taught by a licensed kindergarten teacher who is assisted by a naturalist to help shape curriculum.

Garrity-Reed said students interact with wildlife, plants and other outdoor resources, rain or shine, to engage all their senses, as they prepare for kindergarten.

The 4k program is housed in a 13,000-square-foot addition to the sanctuary's Nature Center.

At a cost of \$3.1 million, the education facility was the largest and most costly project ever undertaken at the wildlife sanctuary.

For more information on Oak Center Learning Center 4K, contact Mary McCabe with the Green Bay School District at 920-391-2447 or mamccabe@gbaps.org.

**Promote Understanding**

Though the sanctuary's goal is to rehabilitate and return sick and injured animals back into the wild, it's not always possible.

The animals who cannot survive in the wild, for whatever reason, are given

a safe and permanent home at the sanctuary.

It's the core goal of the sanctuary to promote greater public awareness, understanding, appreciation and concern for wildlife, plants and other natural resources.

It does this in part through its Nature Center, Wildlife Habi-Trail and Rehabilitation Building.

The three-story Nature Center offers visitors several hands-on exhibits to explore, the Stop-N-Gander Gift Shop, estuary room and library.

Just outside is the Wildlife Habi-Trail, which includes the Woodland Building, Grassland Habitat, observation tower and amphitheater, which is home to a collection of numerous animals native to Wisconsin,

including foxes, bobcats, wolves, a cougar and various small mammals and birds, giving visitors an up-close and personal view of nature.

The Observation/Rehabilitation Building, located in the back right of the property, includes the Resch Conservation Wing, live birds of prey and waterfowl exhibits, wildlife rehabilitation area, animal nursery viewing and Raptor Theater.

It is also here where parkgoers can purchase bags of corn to feed the geese and ducks roaming the sanctuary.

The sanctuary is free and open to the public year-round.

For more information on BBWLS visit baybeachwildlife.com.

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