

# WildRescue purchases one of nation's first animal ambulances

By [Alia Wilson](#)

Posted: 04/21/2010 01:30:59 AM PDT

MOSS LANDING -- In a moment's notice, rescuers from WildRescue of Moss Landing can respond to injured wildlife in one of the nation's first animal ambulances.

After raising \$5,000 to purchase a used ambulance listed on the Web, WildRescue Founder Rebecca Dmytryk and her team converted the ambulance once used to transport humans. Two months of modifications included fixing the carburetor, switching red and white lights to amber and painting on the group's emblem of the medical cross and a coyote paw.

"It's a hospital on wheels," Dmytryk said. "It has been a dream of mine to do this. Having all of our gear in one place will increase our effectiveness and substantially shorten our response time."

WildRescue specializes in response to emergencies involving wildlife and averages hundreds of calls each year, according to Dmytryk.

"An animal ambulance is something that the U.K. and Australia have had for a long time, so this is something that the U.S. has needed to catch up on," Dmytryk said. "I hope this starts a trend."

While mainly serving the Central Coast, rescuers are also stationed in Los Angeles and the Bay Area, but travel wherever they are called. Last year, they worked with the Coast Guard on a mission to recover 400 dying seabirds in Astoria, Ore.

"Our greatest challenge is time -- there's this window of opportunity we have to work in before it's too late," Dmytryk said. "For most animals we have minutes to respond, not days."

For example, when there's an oil spill, it takes immediate action to save lives."

Dmytryk had been searching for a new way to transport sick or injured wildlife to animal hospitals when she found the bank-repossessed ambulance in Washington. She believes it is one of the first of its kind in the U.S.

The new ride stores capture equipment, materials to humanely remove nuisance animals, and medical supplies. Last week, Dmytryk's husband, Duane Titus, loaded up a 14-foot ladder to safely return baby barn owls to the wild.

"We are able to load up so much different equipment now; we can easily move from being at the beach picking up birds to climbing trees or picking up a fox," Titus said. "It's much better than working out of the small Honda Odyssey that we've been using."

Dmytryk, the daughter of film director Edward Dmytryk and actress Jean Porter, moved in 1974 to the hills above Malibu, where her love of wildlife and nature flourished. Inspired by the work of Jane Goodall, and E.O. Wilson, her career in wildlife rescue started in 1981. Initially she supported herself through her mobile dog grooming business, and as a freelance voice artist.

In 1993, she became a member of International Bird Rescue's response team. In 1996, she founded The California Wildlife Center, when she renovated a ranger's home on State Park property into a wildlife hospital. WildRescue, organized in 2000, is a nonprofit project of EarthWays Foundation in Malibu. In 2005, she married Titus and they moved to the Central Coast.

The group is looking to recruit and train new members for their rescue teams. A class is slated for the end of May. Those interested can e-mail [rebecca@wildrescue.org](mailto:rebecca@wildrescue.org).