

The Cutest Baby by Cindy Williams

We've talked a lot about some of the more common animals that we see during baby season and I've tried to bring interesting, unusual stories to light. But this month let's just see the babies and enjoy the cuteness that we see on a daily basis (x100 or so).

There is always controversy about what is the cutest baby. Raccoon rehabbers make a great case for their species – in fact, they are so cute as babies that they compel many people to keep them as “pets”. Then when the babies get to be teenagers and start pooping on the carpet/couch/table and tearing up the living room and biting people, folks suddenly want to do the right thing and bring them to the Center (or release them into the wild). Either way that critter is probably doomed because it is imprinted on people and hasn't learned how to be a wild animal. But if we get them early enough we can certainly do our best to make them into wild creatures and return them to nature.

Raccoon Candidates:



I'm pretty partial to Virginia Opossums, but they don't get a lot of votes. You may or may not know that they are North America's only marsupial, which means they are related to Kangaroos. That's right, they carry their babies in a pouch on their stomach (and here's proof) until they are old enough to ride around on mom's back. Eventually mom has to cut the apron strings, shake them off and send them on their way into the world (just like a human teenager). Here just one of the momma Opossums that we've received into the Center. It's always nice when mom can be saved and continue to raise the babies, but when she can't, we take over. Here's my favorite orphaned Possie picture from this year!

Opossum Candidates:



Skunks – the very name strikes fear into most people. Believe it or not they have their champions for cutest baby and it's not undeserved. Skunks have their scent from a very

young age but they are not able to control the spray until they get bigger. Therefore they are more like to have accidents when startled than they are to deliberately spray their rehabber. But it takes a special human to take them on. Let's hear it for the Skunk rehabbers!!!!

Skunk Candidates:



Baby squirrels get a lot of votes. They are adorable and sweet and they look like they are desperate for food at every meal. When they start holding things with their little hands and balancing on their haunches to eat, you just melt. Then when they become teenagers, well - let's just say I would rather wrangle a juvenile or adult Opossum than a juvenile or adult Squirrel. Those little cuties can and will bite!

Squirrel Candidates:



Bunnies, on the other hand, are gentle and fearful and oh so adorable. They quickly grow from little bundles of fur to small versions of adult rabbits, and they are ready to be on their own pretty soon after their eyes open. They are relatively easy to rehab since they are only fed twice a day (that's all their mother feeds them in the wild) and they need a very hands-off approach to rearing since they are scared of everything. But their numbers are overwhelming (twice a day multiplied by 30 or 40 or 50 is still a lot of feeding time) and their digestive system is very delicate. These are the most likely to succumb during the rehab process. Much better off with mom no matter how cute they are.

No list of cute babies would be complete without fledgling birds. Nestling and hatchling birds range from comic to, oh let's not say ugly, let's just say they don't rate high on the list of cuteness. But once they have their feathers they are much easier on the eye. We've gotten lots of robins in this year (not unusual) and here is one fledgling who hung out in the incubator until a kind rehabber gathered her up and took her home to be with others of her kind.

Bunny Candidate



Fledgling Candidate:



I apologize if your favorite baby isn't on the list, these are just the most common ones we see and no one species has a corner on cuteness. It's all subjective anyway. I hope you just enjoy peeking a little bit behind the curtain at the adorableness we see every day. They all deserve a chance at becoming wild adults!