CITY OF LOS ANGELES
DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL REGULATION
111 EAST FIRST STREET

Contact: Jim McNamara
Department of Animal Regulation
Telephone: 485-5771

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Immediate Release

Los Angeles is probably the only city in the world with a program designed to shelter the wild animals uprooted by urban expansion.

On September 11, (1973) the city's unique Animal Airlift will begin its fourth year in the interest of wildlife conservation. Since 1969, the Los Angeles City Department of Animal Regulation has airlifted, by helicopter, multitudes of small wild animals, humanely trapped in the city, to the wooded habitat of Angeles National Forest. There, the displaced animals take up a new life removed from the perils of human activity.

To date 1760 wild animals have been flown to the interior of the forested region thirty-five miles northeast of Los Angeles. They are released in carefully selected areas where food, ground cover and water, necessary for survival, is in ample supply.

The Los Angeles Animal Airlift was conceived and implemented by Robert I. Rush, general manager of the Los Angeles City Department of Animal Regulation.

The airlifted animals include raccoons, opossum, foxes, squirrels, rabbits, owls, hawks and non-poisonous snakes. They are generally trapped in outlying areas of the city at the request of harried home owners, who, for some reason or another, find the animals a nuisance.

Humane box traps are used by Animal Regulation Department wildlife officers. The trapped animals are placed in safe comfortable cages at a neighboring animal shelter for a short period of time before departing on the Airlift for new homes in the wilderness.

For the 35-mile flight to the Forest, the animals are placed in ventilated boxes and secured to the frame of the helicopter. The animals are assembled at the West Valley Animal Shelter in Chatsworth where Shelter District Supervisor George W. Mason takes charge of the flying cargo. He and city helicopter pilot Ray Schutte release the animals in the Forest.

Release sites with plenty of food, water and shelter are selected with the assistance of game management personnel of the Angeles Forest.

Only animals native to California are released back to the wilds. Other wild animals found in the city are given sanctuary in zoos or similar facilities. Deer, frequently found in Los Angeles urban areas, are corralled and returned to native habitat by vehicle.

Rush urges other states and communities to emulate the Los Angeles wildlife conservation program.

"Wildlife, on the wane, is becoming a precious commodity in the ecological structure," Rush says. "Steps must be taken to preserve what is left."

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