

York Region

# Families

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## ON THE WILD SIDE

BY JACLYN WILKINSON  
SPECIAL TO THE ECONOMIST/TRIBUNE

**N**ear death, a fox was found in a Holland Landing garage, struggling to survive

Missing large patches of fur, suffering from infected sores and with its eyes swollen so tightly shut it couldn't even see to hunt, the fox had little chance of survival.

That is, until the family in whose garage the fox was found took the little creature to a place that could help — Wildcare.

Wildcare is a rehabilitation centre for wild animals, and the little fox, who is only a year old and was suffering from a form of mites, is just one of the many animals the centre has helped this year.

Raccoons with multiple fractures, baby birds that have fallen from nests and squirrels who can no longer jump from tree to tree also benefit from the services Wildcare provides.

Located on land belonging to the Kortright Centre for Conservation near Kleinburg, Wildcare looks after animals when they can no longer look after themselves.

Started in 1988 by a group of wildlife rehabilitators, animal care workers, vets and environmental educators, Wildcare's purpose is to "take in injured and orphaned animals with the aim of ultimate release", said Csilla Darvasi, a clinic supervisor.

Wildcare takes in as many as 1,000 animals in one summer, but Darvasi notes those numbers are high because of the number of baby birds cared for. An estimated 150 animals can be housed at

the centre at one time.

Darvasi said "it's quiet this time of year", and the centre is currently housing about 45 animals, including a fox, a muskrat and a raccoon. The centre has also seen a number of birds of prey recently.

The centre's policy on accepting animals is that the creature has to be releasable and able to function as a wild species. It also must have a fairly good chance of survival. Animals that cannot be released to live a normal, healthy life are either euthanized or transferred to another facility for specialized care.

For example, an injured deer might be transferred to a centre that specializes in deer.

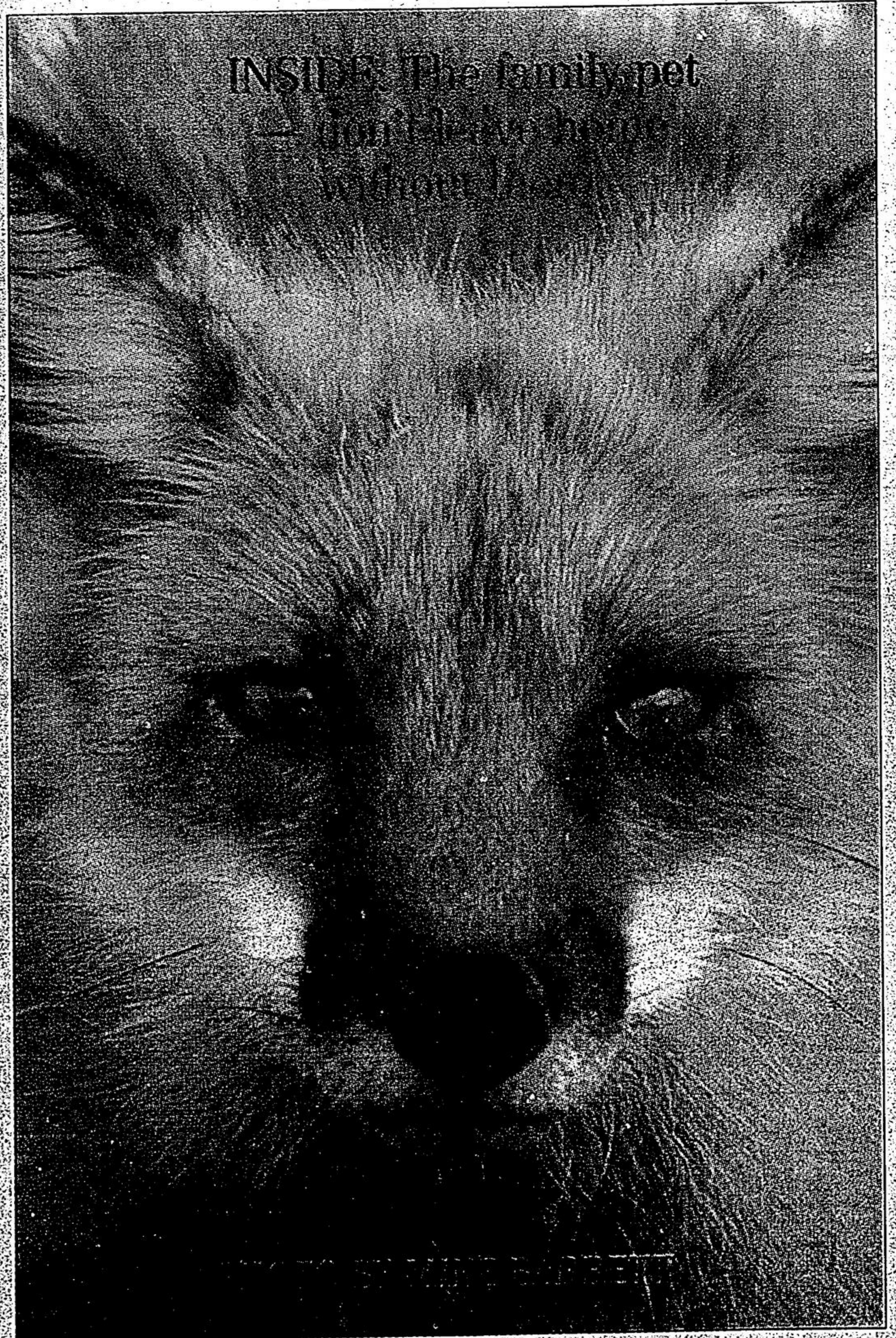
The centre is currently being renovated to allow for the care of more animals. It is "trying to become more efficient and have more work space", Darvasi said.

Three or four years ago, Wildcare operated out of a single small school portable. Since then, two more portables have been added, providing space for a vet room, surgery room, staff room, an enlarged office and various species rooms.

The centre is a registered charity and is maintained mostly through fundraising and grants. Wildcare has two bingo nights a month as a way of raising money.

There are only two people on staff, Darvasi and Brad McKay, and the rest of the work is done by the more than 120 volunteers at the centre and on-call veterinarians.

The centre is always looking for new volunteers to either help with the animals or do other tasks that help keep Wildcare running. If you are interested, please call (905) 832-6957.



INSIDE: The family pet — fox — has been found in a garage.

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