

[!\[\]\(c8d96c8885d3000a912c2582004aed63\_img.jpg\)](http://commons.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Lightmatter_wild_squirrel.jpg)I never imagined that a squirrel would provide some valuable life lessons. That's certainly what I thought - until one fateful day not that long ago.

Wilber was his name. Wilber the squirrel. In all reality, he probably wasn't called Wilber in the animal kingdom. I am sure he was nameless in the squirrel world, until he received the moniker from me.

Wilber and I would have not had any reason to meet. Wilber's world hadn't crossed mine - until he fell out of a tree. I am sure it's not that rare for a squirrel to fall out of a tree, land on its feet, and scurry off to new adventures. But as I soon found out, he was a baby squirrel, and I don't think he'd fully understood the concept of how to jump and fall safely. I found him in the yard, obviously scared and unable to move his hind legs. He was barely the size of my palm.

It was a Sunday morning, and a quick online search revealed a contact email for Wildlife Rescue. Email sent. Waiting. Waiting. More waiting.

In the meantime, we certainly didn't want to see him suffer, and we wanted to do the most humane thing possible. We kept him warm, tried to give him water and sustenance, and above all, just tried to keep the little guy comfortable. What do you do? No word was forthcoming from Wildlife Rescue.

There were a lot of quiet words spoken to him. There was a lot of willing him on to eat and drink. But over the course of the next few hours, his motions were slowing. It was a difficult time. Word finally arrived from Wildlife Rescue that they would be able to assess him and put him down if they found that there was nothing that could be done.

But it was all too late. He died in my hands.

It was a sad, heartbreaking, big slap-in-the-face reminder of how fragile life really is, a reminder served up whether you wanted to acknowledge it or not. It doesn't really matter that it was a squirrel or a human or any other living creature. The take-home message was the same - life can change in a heartbeat. Here's this squirrel, playful, living life fully, enjoying the moment, enjoying life as he knew it. In a split second it all changed. With any luck, this little guy named Wilber was as comfortable as possible in his final hours. His life ended surrounded by the love of people that barely knew him. And I am sure he's now off chasing other squirrels in the afterlife.

Wilber, as sad as it was to watch you go, you reminded me of the beauty and fragility of life, of compassion and caring and love. Your passing reminded me of how we simply can't bank on any moments other than the one we're living - right here, right now.

Image via [Wikipedia](http://commons.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Lightmatter_wild_squirrel.jpg)

