

# The Ridgeline

NEWSLETTER OF THE BLUE RIDGE WILDLIFE CENTER

ISSUE 48



## 2020 Annual Report

*This juvenile Bald Eagle was released back at its found location in Widewater State Park this past summer!*

A Year in Review | One Health Research at BRWC | Volunteers and Training Programs | Financials

# Why save the life of one wild animal? What difference could it possibly make?



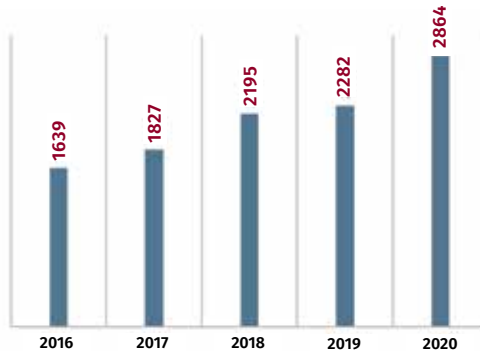
**That's** a question we hear often at Blue Ridge Wildlife Center. And it's a great question with one simple answer: the health of everything—people, the environment, and animals—is all connected.

That is the **One Health** concept that fuels our veterinary, rehabilitation, and education work every day. Not only do we treat individual animals, but we research and contribute to the ongoing study of diseases that impact wildlife and humans like Rabies, West Nile Virus, and Salmonella. Every patient is an opportunity to educate the public on how to stay safe and protect animals and the environment on which we depend.

The Center rehabilitates wild animals each year in addition to saving thousands more with advice given through our wildlife hotline, education programs, newsletters, and social media posts. And when we look back on our 20-year history, the impact becomes evident.

**In the past 20 years, Blue Ridge Wildlife Center has treated over 24,000 native wild animals and provided over 900 education programs.**

Each year, as awareness of us grows, so does our impact. In 2020, despite the pandemic, we hit a new record of over 2,800 patients treated, and we expect that number will continue to rise each year.



We know that our successes are only possible because of **YOU**. You have supported us throughout the years with monetary and in-kind donations, admitting animals into our care, volunteering, and sharing the knowledge you have learned with others. Thank you for believing in our mission. With your help we will continue to care for our native wildlife for the next 20 years and beyond!

*With gratitude,*

Annie Bradfield



## The Ridgeline

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Carly Corbin  
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Blue Ridge Wildlife Center is a 501(c)3 organization caring for native wildlife by integrating veterinary medicine, rehabilitation, education, and research.

BRWC is located in Boyce, Virginia on the Burwell van—Lennep Foundation's property on Island Farm Lane.

The Center relies on private donations exclusively. Contributions are tax-deductible.

### FOLLOW US



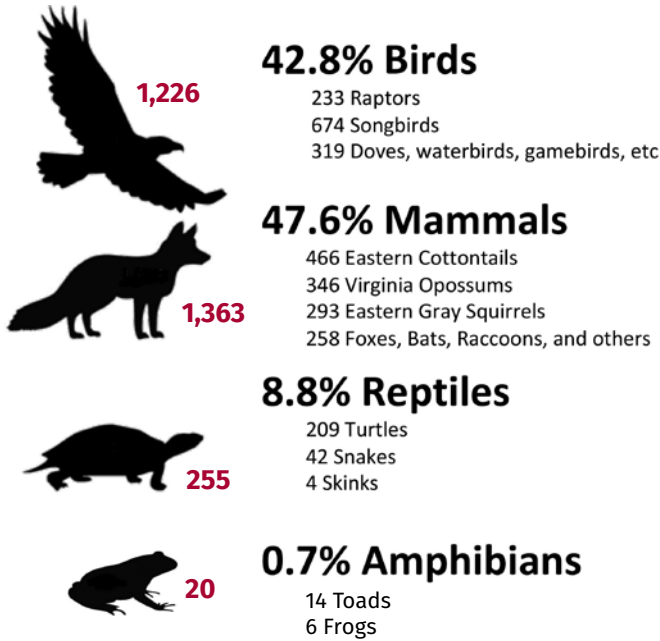
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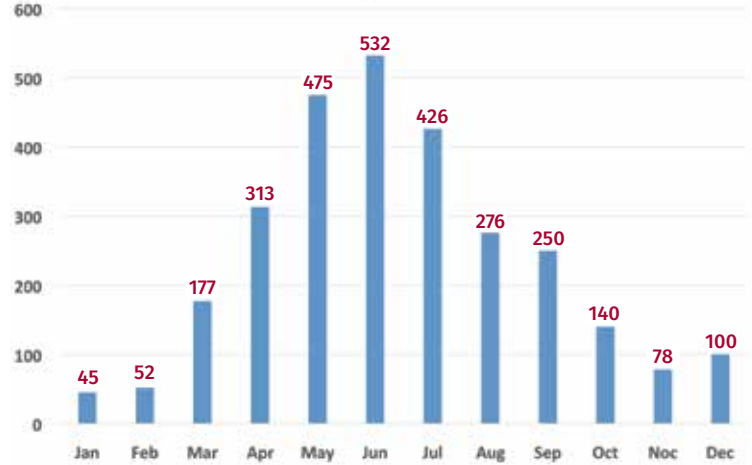
# 2020 in Review

We treated 2,864 patients in 2020, a 26% increase from last year. Similar to previous years, patients that lived through the first 24 hours had a survival rate of 76%!

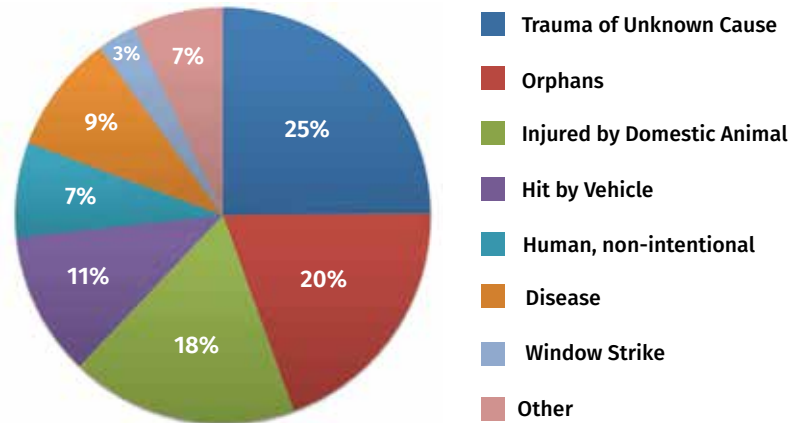
## PATIENT BREAKDOWN



## MONTHLY PATIENT INTAKES

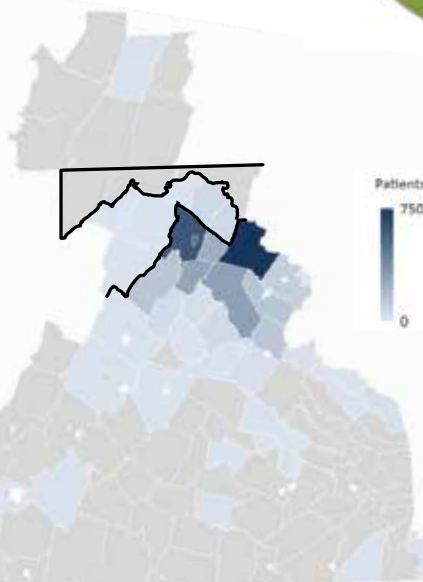


## REASON FOR ADMISSION



## PATIENTS BY COUNTY

• Loudoun	748
• Frederick	599
• Fauquier	285
• Warren	267
• Clarke	229
• Prince William	125
• Shenandoah	123
• Stafford	118
• Fairfax	86
• Jefferson, WV	49
• Berkeley, WV	47
• Culpeper	34
• Page	30
• Rappahannock	20
• Other	104



### TRAUMA OF UNKNOWN CAUSE

Cases with traumatic injuries where the traumatic event was not witnessed. Statistically, these are mostly likely a mix of hit by car and cat attacked cases.

### INJURED BY DOMESTIC ANIMAL

Approximately 65% domestic cat attacks and 35% domestic dog attacks

### HUMAN, NON-INTENTIONAL

Examples include hit by lawnmowers/weed-whackers, caught on barbed-wire fencing or mesh garden netting, stuck on glue traps, covered in oil, etc.

Of the **145** species seen in 2020, **16** were seen for the first time this year!



Orchard Oriole



Blue-headed Vireo



Dekay's Brownsnake



Great Egret



Cape May Warbler



American Redstart



Eastern Spadefoot



Northern Black Racer



Bufflehead



White-crowned Sparrow



Lincoln's Sparrow

# We treated 2,864 animals in 2020—check out a few highlights:



This juvenile Bobcat's injuries indicated a predator attack, possibly an adult bobcat.



Northern Saw-whet Owls are the smallest owl species we see in Virginia!



We took in 17 Bald Eagle patients in 2020—more than twice the number of eagles we've taken in any year previously. Lead poisoning was the PRIMARY issue in 5/17 cases. Of the ten adult eagles tested for lead, all had elevated levels.



Killdeer are an extremely stressful species, and these four hatchlings were no exception. We were able to successfully raise these babies to release after both parents had been accidentally killed in a mowing incident.



This Eastern Copperhead was found tangled in garden netting, our most common cause of snake admissions, and the homeowner was considerate enough to seek help for an animal that is so often persecuted for merely existing.



We treated more than double the illegal gunshot victims in 2020 than any previous year. These three hawks all came to the Center in a single day.



We treated 346 Opossums this year including these guys!



This Northern Watersnake is in care after surgery to repair lacerations caused by garden netting and will be ready for release in the Spring.

# One Health Research at BRWC

**At** Blue Ridge Wildlife Center, we help native wildlife by integrating veterinary medicine, rehabilitation, education, and research. Much of our research has a **One Health** focus, meaning that we make the most of every patient intake by gathering data on issues and diseases that impact humans, wildlife, and the environment. We work with others in related fields to study that data and share results leading to even greater impacts. We are currently involved in nine research projects at the Center and we are constantly collecting data and diagnostics that can be used in future studies! Here are just a few of the ongoing studies that benefit humans, animals, and our shared environment!

## Asian Longhorned Tick Surveillance

We have been participating in this study with Southeastern Wildlife Cooperative Disease Study of The University of Georgia since 2018 and we were the first to find this invasive tick on a bird in North America! Since then, we have continued to collect ticks for this study to better understand their prevalence and distribution. In other countries, this species is known to spread diseases that impact livestock and it has been implicated as a possible vector of diseases that affect humans. We do not currently know if this is the case for our local population, but ongoing research is needed in this area.

## La Crosse Virus in Squirrels and St. Louis Encephalitis Virus in Raptors

La Crosse Virus (LCV) and St. Louis Encephalitis Virus (SLEV) can cause severe encephalitis in humans though

most people show no symptoms at all. Both are spread to humans by mosquitoes, but have reservoirs in wild species (small mammals for LCV, birds for SLEV). We collect blood on our squirrel, chipmunk, and groundhog patients which is tested for antibodies to LCV and we collect blood on our raptors for SLEV testing through the entomology department at Virginia Tech.



Chipmunks are one of the species we sample regularly for La Crosse Virus antibodies.

## Prevalence and Distribution of Tickborne Diseases in Wildlife

Blood is collected from all patients admitted with ticks (as well as the ticks themselves) to look for a variety of viruses that impact humans and animals. This study tests for Powassan, Bourbon, and Heartland viruses in the ticks and antibodies in the blood samples.



Our Licensed Veterinary Technician, Cara Masullo, logs sample information for one of our studies.

## Coronavirus epidemiological research and surveillance

COVID-19 has caused us to make many changes at the Center, but we are also involved in studies to help us all learn more about this virus! Since early on in the pandemic, there have been concerns about the ability of North American bats to catch this coronavirus from humans and potentially spread it. We collect samples from bats admitted to the Center (as do many other facilities across the U.S.) and submit them to the researchers at Tufts Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine where they are analyzed. So far, there has been no indication that these bats are getting COVID from their human caretakers and a recently published study indicates that Big Brown Bats, our most common local species, may not be susceptible at all. ■



Ambassador Big Brown Bat, Bruce, is one of the participants in this COVID-19 study.

**One Health** is the idea that the health of people is connected to the health of animals and our shared environment.

When we protect **one**, we help protect **all**.

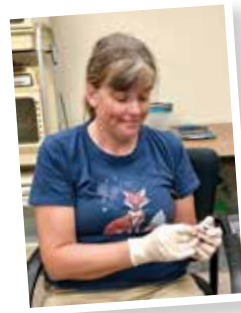


# Volunteers and Training Programs

With the pandemic, the overwhelming majority of volunteers were not able to come into the Center for most of the year. A handful of dedicated volunteers increased their hours to cover multiple days per week and all staff and volunteers adhered to strict safety guidelines. Luckily, we have not had any cases of COVID among staff/volunteers.

## ● Volunteers by the Numbers

- Active Volunteers in 2020: **34**
- Total Volunteer hours in 2020: **6,971**
- Volunteer with the most hours: **Kristi Titus** (pictured right) with **722 hours!** Kristi is also a home rehabilitator and took in 300+ animals herself this year in addition to her volunteer work with the Center. She also assisted with MANY rescues and releases!



Transporters, like Briana Ahawi (above) are an important part of our volunteer team!

## ● Interns by the Numbers

- Total Interns including rehabilitation, education, and veterinary internships: **26**
- Total intern hours: **4,453**
- Intern with the most hours: **Carolina Leonard** with **475 hours!**



Carolina Leonard (third from left) with other 2020 interns who also averaged over 350 hours each!

# Education and Animal Ambassadors



There was a lot of adjusting for our education and fundraising programs due to the pandemic. Before the lockdown, we completed a few education events, including our day-long Open House event in February.



Prior to the pandemic, we were able to teach a day-long course about wildlife medicine for NOVA Veterinary Technology students!



Our Rehabilitation Program Manager and Director of Veterinary Services were each featured in their own episode on *Dirty Bird Podcast*, a series that highlights a variety of birds and those who work with them. Both of these episodes can be heard on Spotify or through iTunes.



In an effort to continue educating, we began to host virtual Facebook and YouTube events—providing a different topic each week with our animal ambassadors and biofacts to allow people to access our educational content virtually—especially for children who were now learning from home. A whole educational playlist is available on YouTube for anyone interested.





With our **Continuing Education** event being virtual this year, we were able to have double the number of attendees! Permitted rehabilitators are required to complete continuing education hours annually, so these conferences are critical to our state's rehabilitators and those interested in becoming rehabilitators!



In 2020, we sadly lost our ambassador Groundhog, **Harley**, due to severe fungal pneumonia that did not respond to treatment.



We took in a surrendered Northern Diamond-backed Terrapin, **Scuter**, who was previously a pet. This turtle, a protected species, will now serve as an ambassador where she can educate the public about her kind.

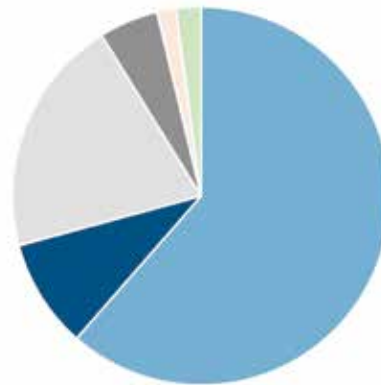
From August to October, we were finally able to open our outdoor **Wildlife Walk** area, despite the pandemic, to reserved and limited groups for pre-arranged guided tours. These events allowed small, socially-distanced, masked people to attend tours of our wildlife walk and learn more about native wildlife and our ambassadors!



# Financials

## FY2020 Revenue

Contributions	\$498,462
Grants	\$75,610
Events	\$165,326
Program Service Revenue	\$41,180
Retail Sales	\$13,115
Other	\$17,390
	<b>\$811,083</b>

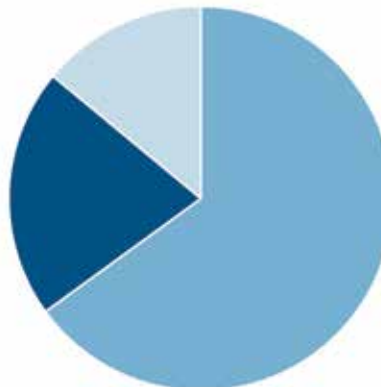


## REVENUE

- Contributions
- Grants
- Events
- Program Service Revenue
- Retail Sales
- Other

## FY2020 Expenses

Program Services	\$440,933
Administrative	\$49,799
Fundraising	\$56,635
	<b>\$547,367</b>



## EXPENSES

- Program Services
- Administrative
- Fundraising

Revenue less expenses: **\$263,716**

Blue Ridge Wildlife Center operates on a fiscal year.  
The financials above reflect fiscal year 2020 from July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2020.

# Thank you BRWC!



"I first learned of Blue Ridge Wildlife Center at a photography class, where Ambassador Blossom the Opossum took center stage and my heart. My husband—vision-impaired and in declining health—adored a photo of Blossom, so I asked then Director, Hillary Davidson, if he could come meet Blossom. She graciously agreed, and hosted us for an afternoon to meet Blossom—also vision-impaired—and tour the facility.



Photo of Blossom courtesy of Helen Louise Noyes.

We were both taken with Hillary's pride in and passion for the Center, and with the loving care so obvious among the staff and volunteers. On the way home we agreed that Blue Ridge Wildlife Center would be a permanent feature in our annual philanthropy. It was an indelible memory, the shared struggles of this small creature and my fading spouse. He spoke of the experience often in the ensuing months.

Additional photo opportunities brought more Ambassadors "into" our home as their photographs adorned more and more of our walls. Since that original visit, I have returned from time-to-time to bring supplies and refresh my soul. Many rescue and rehabilitation centers across this country work tirelessly saving cohabitants of our planet who cannot always heal without help, but Blue Ridge Wildlife Center does so with levels of compassion and elan unmatched elsewhere. My husband asked me to be sure to include Blue Ridge Wildlife Center as a beneficiary in my own will; I had no trouble complying.

I recently visited again, and met a new guest—a very young opossum, still nameless, who instinctively knew this was a good place to call home. The memories of Blossom flooded back, along with the vision of the wonderful staff, volunteers, and new Executive Director, Annie Bradfield. A worthy investment indeed". - Helen Louise Noyes

# Donor Appreciations

Blue Ridge Wildlife Center is very grateful for the approximately 2,500 supporters—from all over the US and beyond—that help us provide life-changing services to the native wildlife in our community. We receive gifts of all sizes and in different forms—through direct mail, Facebook, in-kind donations, family foundations, etc. We have included here a list of those supporters that have invested \$1,000 or more during 2020. For a more complete list of donors, please visit *The Ridgeline* section of our website.

Every effort has been made to provide an accurate listing of supporters. Please contact Annie Bradfield ([annie@blueridgewildlifectr.org](mailto:annie@blueridgewildlifectr.org)) with any errors or omissions.

\* Our monthly donors who provide ongoing support throughout the year.

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(\$10,000 and above)

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Become a BRWC Member to continue receiving our quarterly newsletter, *The Ridgeline*.



- Visit [blueridgewildlifectr.org](http://blueridgewildlifectr.org) and click on the Membership & Giving tab to view member benefits and get started.
- Or you can mail a check payable to Blue Ridge Wildlife Center at 106 Island Farm lane, Boyce, Virginia 22620