

# The Ridgeline

NEWSLETTER OF THE BLUE RIDGE WILDLIFE CENTER

ISSUE 54



## Remembering Snow, the Arctic Fox

# Fall Happenings



AS baby season winds down, we are already gearing up for a busy fall. We will be holding many events in the next few months, and there is something for everyone...

First, we are overjoyed to finally bring back our annual fundraising gala for the first time since 2019! The special **Mask-Querade Celebration** is on **September 17th** at Muster Lane Farm, the beautiful home of Nicole Watson and Jason Paterniti in The Plains, Virginia. Our wildlife ambassadors will be there, as will our highly skilled and dedicated staff. It will be a wild and wonderful

night for all including local fare and drink, music, and a live auction. This is our biggest fundraising event of the last two years—join us and help make it a huge success!

Also coming this fall, we are very excited to be offering a new **Wildlife Lecture Series** at our Center in the **Ronald M. Bradley Learning Center**. In addition to our staff, we will have visiting experts in a variety of related fields. You are guaranteed to learn something new with topics ranging from a wildlife patients journey, native plants, to ways to be good stewards to our natural land.

And after we had such a great time last year, we are bringing **WildFest** back this September! This is a free, family-friendly event held at the **Clarke County Fairgrounds** on **September 10th**. Come spend your afternoon with us and learn about our native wildlife through fun games and presentations featuring our ambassadors.

This season is full of opportunities to learn and discover. I hope to see you there!

*With gratitude,*

Annie Bradfield

**P.S.** Tickets and more information for all upcoming events can be found on our website at [blueridgewildlifectr.org/events](http://blueridgewildlifectr.org/events).



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### ABOUT BRWC

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.

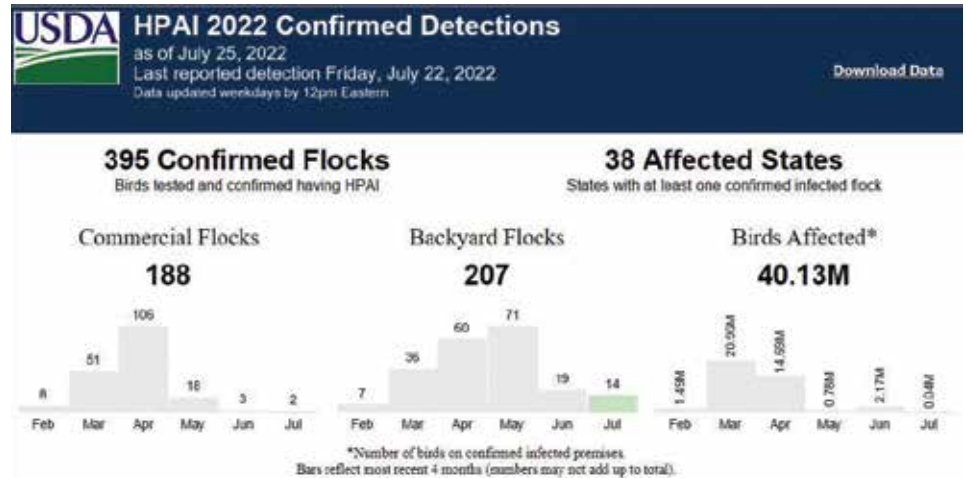
The Center relies on private donations exclusively. Contributions are tax-deductible.

# HPAI: Where are we now?

Since this past winter, our hospital and many others have updated our protocols in an effort to keep our patients safe from Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI). This zoonotic disease has impacted over 40 million domestic birds this year and thousands (likely more) of wild birds in the U.S. alone. This is not the first time we have had HPAI in the U.S., in fact, there are cases most years. However, this outbreak is the largest scale HPAI outbreak we have seen in many years.

HPAI is an influenza A virus, and there are many subtypes. Subtype H5N1 is responsible for the current outbreak. This subtype also caused hundreds of human deaths between 2003 and 2018 in over a dozen countries with a >50% death rate. Luckily, there have only been two known human cases associated with the current outbreak and only one in the United States.

Though there have only been two human cases, it is important to understand



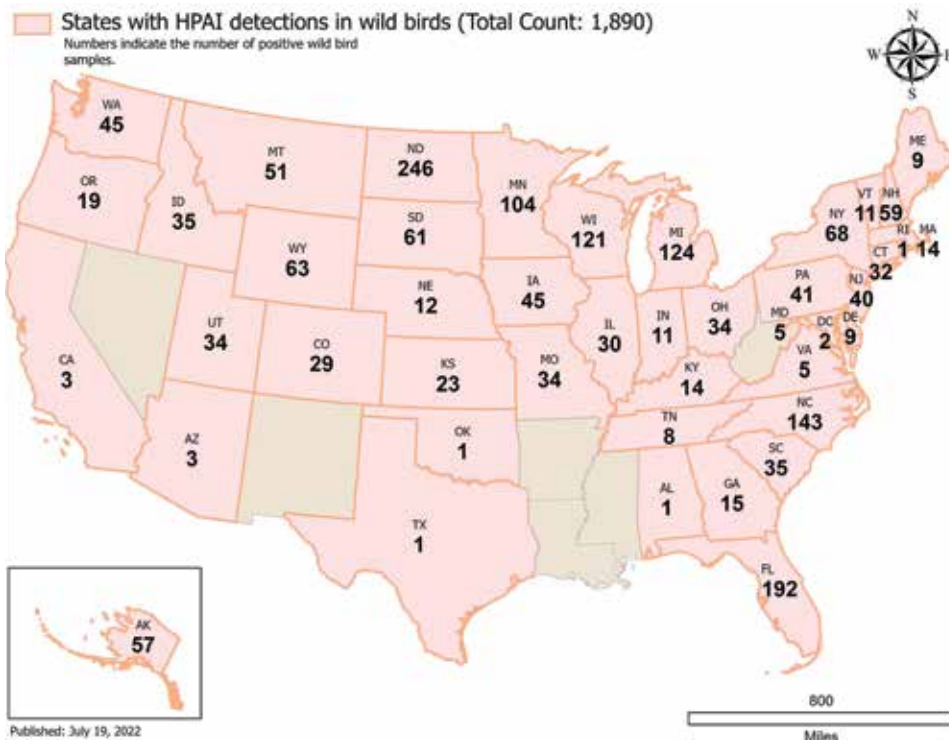
The number of domestic flocks impacted by HPAI have been decreasing since the peak in May, but this disease continues to be an issue.

that the pandemic risk of HPAI is high. Influenza viruses are excellent at mutating quickly to become more virulent and infect different species. This is an important **One Health** issue that we should all be

taking seriously. Locally, HPAI cases have been found as close as Fauquier County, VA and Washington D.C. and these are only the birds that have been tested and come back positive. Most wild birds are NOT tested. Even in large outbreaks, only a handful of birds from the group of deceased animals will be tested, so the positive numbers represent outbreak areas, not necessarily the total number of infected birds.

With COVID-19, backyard poultry ownership has increased. If you own poultry, it is incredibly important that you follow outbreaks and understand the signs you may see in your birds. Take precautions to protect yourself and your animals and be sure to involve your birds' veterinarian in these discussions. With backyard poultry becoming more common and close interaction between these birds and their owner, zoonotic disease spread risk increases and it is important to protect your family and your pets by staying vigilant. More information about how to protect your poultry can be found on the USDA website at [https://www.aphis.usda.gov/publications/animal\\_health/card-defend-the-flock.pdf](https://www.aphis.usda.gov/publications/animal_health/card-defend-the-flock.pdf).

Hunters, zoo keepers, rehabilitators, and others working with wild birds should also be aware that unlike poultry, wild



This map shows the number of positive cases in wild birds in each state. It is important to remember that these numbers do not show all infected birds, simply the ones that were tested and came back positive, proving that the virus is spreading in those highlighted states.

## Why ONE HEALTH is Important

As Earth's population grows, our connection with animals and the environment changes:



People live closer together



Changes in climate and land use



More global travel and trade



Animals are more than just food

These factors make it easier for diseases to spread between animals and people.

A One Health approach tackles shared health threats by looking at all angles—human, animal, plant, and environmental



As humans continue to come in closer contact with animals and with each other, the threat of spillover events will continue to increase. It is important that veterinary professionals, human medical professionals, epidemiologists, policy makers, and the public work together to monitor diseases and predict and prevent spillover.

birds with HPAI are often asymptomatic. That is why our protocols include intensive personal protective equipment (PPE) with all susceptible species and multiple rooms for different levels of quarantine. Hunted

waterfowl should be field dressed while wearing appropriate PPE and as always, we encourage hunters to practice good biosecurity when handling raw meat and cook meat well before consuming.

Diseases like this also have massive economic impacts. So far, it is estimated that this outbreak has cost the U.S. over \$3 billion and that number is likely to increase. Consumers will see this in increased egg and poultry prices as mass poultry culling reduces the number of poultry products available. When added to other supply chain issues and general inflation, this impact becomes even more extreme.

We have all dealt with the effects of a global pandemic over the past few years. COVID is not the first, nor will it be the last. However, the more we can do to monitor diseases in wildlife and domestic animals that may spillover, the more prepared we can be to minimize the impact of the next pandemic. The surveillance that our governmental wildlife agencies, research institutions, and wildlife hospitals do is so important in the protection of human, wildlife, domestic, and environmental health. Support researchers and wildlife hospitals and support legislation that protects One Health.



At this time, all intake exams for high-risk species are done in our triage tent with full PPE (gloves, gowns, masks, and shoe covers) to help us keep this virus out of our hospital whenever possible.

# Rehab + Corner

## Eastern Painted Turtles

In early May, we received a hit-by-car Eastern Painted Turtle. The severity of her injuries necessitated humane euthanasia, but her genetics got a second chance as we were able to carefully harvest her eggs and incubate them until hatching. In mid-July, all five eggs hatched, and these babies were promptly released back at their mom's found location. Remember, turtles are ready to be on their own as soon as they hatch—please don't interfere if you find these babies on their own!



## Acadian Flycatchers

We had a species first for our facility this summer—a nest of Acadian Flycatchers! These three were found on the ground in Shepherdstown, WV on a hike near the C&O canal. Upon exam, they were quiet, cold, and breathing heavily. With the help of supplemental oxygen, fluids, and supplemental heat, these three bounced back quickly, and were successfully raised to release!



## Finder-raised Birds

This baby bird season has been a busy one, full of a variety of challenges! The most challenging cases have been the birds brought to us after being raised for extended periods of time by well-meaning finders. Despite best intentions, these babies often came in with untreated injuries or illnesses, were suffering from metabolic or nutritional issues, or were already showing inappropriate behaviors from being raised alone and overhandled by people. Most had all the aforementioned problems. Some of these patients were beyond saving, but most were able to slowly recover with proper nutrition, pairing with conspecifics, and medical intervention. Most of these cases could have been avoided if brought to our attention immediately and those with medical issues would have spent much less time in human care had they been treated right away. We hope these stories serve as reminders

of why raising wildlife yourself is never appropriate, and it is always in their best interest to be cared for by a licensed and trained rehabilitator. We understand that it can be challenging in some areas to find a rehabilitator. If you're having trouble finding a licensed professional, please call us so that we can provide care or help you get in touch with local resources!



This fledgling Cedar Waxwing had feather and bone issues from poor nutrition, but ultimately recovered sufficiently to be released.



This American Robin fledgling came to us with severe burns down its neck, possibly from adhered food or inappropriate lighting.



These House Finches were raised by their finders for two weeks. As you can see in the photo, food was not properly cleaned from the mouth/feathers leading to bald patches and burned skin.



## Baby Bats

The Center has been caring for three baby Big Brown Bats and one juvenile Eastern Red Bat! All four were found alone, and reuniting attempts had failed. Now these babies are growing up and will soon be getting flight conditioning so they can be released soon!



## Juvenile Bald Eagle



This older fledgling Bald Eagle was brought to us after being found on the ground acting abnormally, with no parents in sight caring for it. Upon admission,

this bird was found to be very skinny and anemic with an abnormal mental status. Our first concern was HPAI, so this bird was kept separate and isolated from our other patients. HPAI tests were negative, but little improvement was seen with supportive care and antibiotics over the first week. After nearly two weeks of care, this bird slowly began to recover. The anemia improved and the patient became more alert and active each day. Due to size and continued increase in activity, we moved this patient to our outdoor flight ring while continuing to closely monitor behavior and bloodwork. Within just a few weeks, this once-weak eagle was beginning to fly and reach our higher perches. After about two months in care, this eagle was cleared for release and returned to their found location in Fort Belvoir.

## Great Horned Owlets

This season we raised three Great Horned owlets from nestlings until they were old enough for release! Because young raptors are highly susceptible to imprinting, staff wore camouflage suits and fed with a species-appropriate puppet until the chicks were old enough to begin self-feeding. After more than two months of care and several weeks in various outdoor flight enclosures, these three juveniles were released at their found locations.



Erik Brito.

# Summer Interns

This summer, we had ten rehabilitation interns and two education interns that helped us through a very busy season! In addition caring for the 1,600+ animals that were admitted between May and July, these individuals also completed intern projects! These



Rehab Intern Virginia Lee Lucey (right) assists our veterinary extern with a Belted Kingfisher patient. This summer's interns got an extra lesson in biosecurity given our current HPAI outbreak!

projects were on topics of their choice that related to wildlife, conservation, or rehabilitation. Projects included a children's book detailing why people should keep cats indoors, preventing HPAI in backyard flocks, a presentation about zoonotic diseases, a proposal for new flight enclosures, and so many more!

We're so thankful for our interns this season and we wish them the best of luck in their future endeavors as they continue to pursue their passions!

### 2022 REHAB INTERNS:

Kristin Delclos; Jacob Dragovich; Matt Flacksenburg; Saylor Hart; Caroline Hronik; Virginia Lee Lucey; Miya Lupashunski; Shelby Ramos; Paige Vasser; and Rachel Wright.



Rehab intern, Shelby Ramos.



Rehab intern, Jacob Dragovich.



Rehab intern, Saylor Hart.



Rehab intern, Paige Vasser.



Education interns, Bri Alzamora (L) and Audrie Wieber (R).

## Call for Volunteers!

Have you always wanted to work with wildlife, but don't have the time or resources to dedicate to becoming a home rehabilitator? Want to educate people on the issues surrounding wildlife and help our communities become better stewards of the environment? Love working on simple or complex construction and building projects? Consider becoming a volunteer!

Volunteers help us in many different areas

around the Center—Docenting, Rehabilitation, Construction, Administrative, Transport, and so much more! Volunteers only need to commit to a minimum of five hours a week, and we're accepting new volunteers for most days throughout the week! Checkout our application online and e-mail it into us—we can't wait to hear from you!



[blueridgewildlifectr.org/volunteer](http://blueridgewildlifectr.org/volunteer)



# Veterinary Externs

We had seven veterinary externs join us this summer to complete rotations and get additional experience in wildlife medicine. Although wild animals are frequently dropped off at local veterinary offices, most schools still have very little wildlife medicine in their curriculum and most do not have any mandatory rotations through wildlife hospitals. Externships like this are so important in the training of future wildlife vets!



We have externships available for graduate veterinarians too! In this photo, Dr. Lyndsey Lynn is seen with a Virginia Opossum patient recovering from surgery.



Veterinary externs Grace Kline and Alex Kriak repair lacerations on an Eastern Hognose Snake.



Veterinary extern Jill Wallace assists with the intake exam and radiographs of a Red Fox patient.



Veterinary extern Julia Utting assist with surgery to remove a hook from the stomach of a Snapping Turtle.

**Did You Know?** BRWC does not receive state or federal funding? We are dependent on donations to care for the thousands of patients we treat each year. Please help us help them by making a donation today!

# Snow, the Arctic Fox Ambassador

We're heartbroken to announce the passing of our Ambassador Arctic Fox, Snow. Snow came to us as a six-month-old kit in 2012. Law enforcement discovered her being held illegally and brought her to the Center after confiscation. As we only work with native wildlife, the plan was to transfer her to a zoo setting. However, our employee at the time, Heather, (shown holding Snow) felt the community could benefit from learning about her as an Ambassador of her species. Over the past ten years, Snow has helped educate hundreds of thousands of people on why keeping wildlife as pets is inappropriate, how the wildlife trade affects entire populations, and the unique winter adaptations of Arctic Foxes.

Due to poor breeding and inappropriate care by private individuals, Snow had multiple health issues when she arrived. While she'd been able to live a relatively healthy life in our care, our staff noticed a sharp decline in her condition over the past year. Her care was adjusted to help manage these changes, but in mid-July it became clear that her quality of life was significantly impacted to a level where our staff decided the kindest option was to euthanize Snow and prevent further suffering.

Snow will truly be missed, and our hearts go out not only to the staff and volunteers who were privileged to work with her, but especially to Heather, her "person", whose love and dedication allowed her to provide Snow with the best life possible!



Gary Sousa photo.



Katie Hertrich photo.

## Venomous Snake Handling

The Center recently undertook training with K2C Wildlife Encounters LLC, to learn more about venomous snake handling! This training included nearly 20 staff members, volunteers, and interns to further our education on snakes and how to provide the best (and safest!) possible care. Thank you to K2C Wildlife for being such a wonderful asset to our wildlife community!



**ABOVE:** Mark of K2C Wildlife Encounters demonstrates how to safely handle this Copperhead. **LEFT:** Dr. Emily Hsieh practices a safe restraint of this Cottonmouth using a snake tube.

## Wild Foods for Wildlife!



**Do you have fruits around your property?** Consider harvesting some to donate to our facility! Many of our wild babies benefit from learning what natural foods to forage for after they're released, and feeding 150+ patients every day takes a LOT of food, so every little bit helps! We're happy to take pokeberry on the vine, wineberries, blackberries and raspberries, blueberries and strawberries, pawpaw, persimmons, serviceberries, and many more! Plus, we're happy to take any extras from your garden

for feeding out, to include fruits and vegetables like tomatoes, cucumber, squash, melons, carrots, greens and any others you may have grown too much of!

**Our patients will appreciate it!** (L) Wineberries; (R) Clover.



# Wildlife Discovery Camp!



**Campers** had a blast during our 13th annual Wildlife Discovery Camp! Along with walks in the woods and wading in the pond, campers learned about Virginia reptiles and amphibians, forest succession and trees, DNA and genetics, and MORE! We

painting with mud using natural brushes, went on a virtual tour of the BRWC hospital before learning how to treat our own “patients”, and discovered fossils showing how our landscape has changed over the millennia. We even built shelters in the woods to learn about wilderness survival! Each week also featured daily meet-and-greets with our permanent resident Ambassadors, and a special appearance from Vega, the Turkey Vulture, and some exotic reptiles!

This year, Wildlife Discovery Camp was run by our Seasonal Education leaders Alysa Everly and Jake van Schilfgaarde. Alysa is a recent graduate from Shenan-

doah University with a bachelor’s degree in Environmental Studies, and minors in Biology and Music. She loves spending outdoors and with animals, and she plans to work in a field that allows her to work with animals, help conserve natural habitats, and teach people to coexist with wildlife. Jake has a degree in wildlife conservation from Virginia Tech. He spent years working in wildlife and forestry in Virginia, South Africa, and the American Southwest. Now he puts his experience towards public education both professionally and as a volunteer with the Virginia Master Naturalists. Together, Jake and Alysa made our camp a success.



Camp leaders Jake van Schilfgaarde and Alysa Everly with Animal Ambassadors Dopey, the Eastern Screech Owl, and Slim, the Eastern Ratsnake.





# Who Am I?

Connect the dots in order of #1-48 to reveal this native species

**HINT:** Despite my name, I have orange fur and the tip of my tail is white.  
When I am young, I am called a kit. I usually live alone and call a den “home”.  
Sometimes people confuse me for a dog or large cat!





# Wildlife Crossword Puzzle

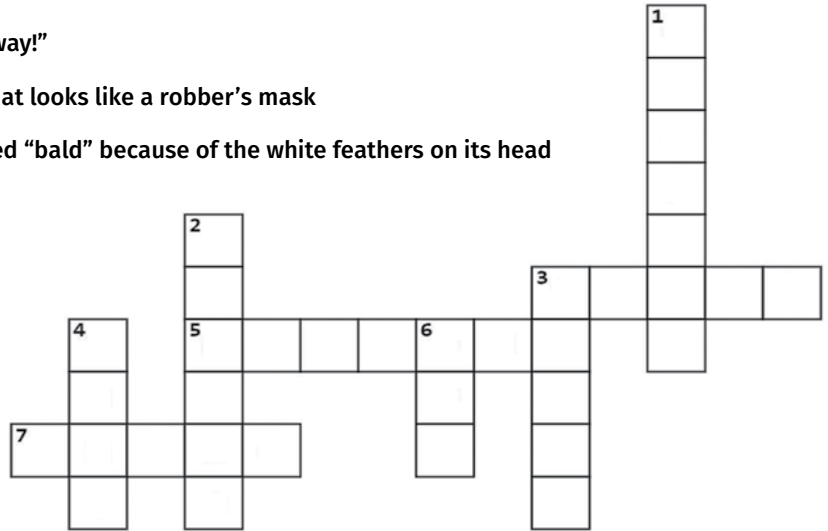
Can you name the animals from the clues below?

**ACROSS**

- 3. Its stinky spray means “stay away!”
- 5. Has dark fur around its eyes that looks like a robber’s mask
- 7. Sometimes this big bird is called “bald” because of the white feathers on its head

**DOWN**

- 1. North America’s only marsupial, mama carries her babies in a pouch
- 2. Might hide in its shell when scared
- 3. Sticks out its forked tongue to “taste” the air as it slithers around
- 4. Hops, croaks, and has lots of warts
- 6. Silent in flight, and cries “hoo, hoo” at night



# Feathered Friends

Each of the bird species listed below is hidden in this puzzle. Can you find them all?

R N C Y C Z V N I S X L V W K  
 N K U H T B M Z A D O W M N J  
 W R E N I N R V I R N E C E X  
 D S J C P C E K E S T R E L T  
 I R I J P A K A D O V C C D G  
 C C R O W N V A G U H H X E V  
 O O X W G A B W D N K V K Z S  
 W I O I R E E T D E L R V P C  
 B O R R A O B P T P E L O O A  
 I X L C C I P L U I X Y S F R  
 R R S K K E P Z U A X O Q Q D  
 D O L S L S T A F E T J G P I  
 A B R N E J Z D P O J Y R N N  
 P I H Z O S P R E Y J A X N A  
 N N S B P G E D E L O O Y W L

- chickadee
- kestrel
- osprey
- cardinal
- grackle
- robin
- wren
- bluejay
- cowbird
- crow

**ANSWER KEY**

Feathered Friends

Crossword Puzzle

- 1) opossum, 2) turtle,
- 3) snake, 4) toad,
- 5) raccoon, 6) owl, 7) eagle

Who Am I?  
 Red Fox

FOLLOW US



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# Save the Date!

Sat., Sept. 10, 2022 | 11:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Clarke County Ruritan Fairgrounds | Berryville, VA

Mark your calendars for our Annual WildFest event! The event is free and open to the public and will feature Ambassador wildlife shows, activities, games, and crafts for the whole family! Food and drinks will be made available thanks to Schaeffer's BBQ.



TAIL END

Photos by Cathy Kuehner