

The Ridgeline

NEWSLETTER OF THE BLUE RIDGE WILDLIFE CENTER

ISSUE 35

Raptor Observation Deck with Handicap Access

Up Close and Personal with our Ambassadors

Behind the Scenes | Winged Migrations | Building with the BRWC | Rehab Corner | 2017 Soirée

New Members added to the Board of Directors



Four new members joined the Board of Directors earlier this summer, bringing the total number of members to eleven. The BWRC Board is comprised of residents across the region. Susan Galbraith and Judy Landes are from Frederick County. Russell McKelway is from Clarke County, and Timothy Bates is from Loudoun County.



Susan Galbraith is a graduate of St. Mary's College, Notre Dame, IN. Her husband's commitment to the U.S. Air Force required numerous relocations and opened up for her various work and volunteer opportunities, including political activism, service in hospitals, a veterinary clinic, a rescue-rehab-release center, therapeutic horseback riding schools, primary and secondary schools, theaters, historic preservation movements, a children's museum, and domestic and international housing for humanity. From early childhood, "giving back" was an expectation that became a way of life.

Judy Landes has degrees in school psychology and taught at Shepherd University and Shenandoah University, retiring after 18 years. She has served on the boards of many social service organizations in Winchester and New York State where she has a summer home. She currently serves on the board of the Lake Placid Symphonetta in the Adirondacks. Non-profit management and governance are her particular interests and expertise in her board service.



Russell McKelway grew up in northwest Arlington and met his wife Lori while at medical school and residency at the University of Virginia. They moved to the Shenandoah Valley in 1990 where Dr. McKelway is a practicing psychiatrist. They live in Clarke County and have two daughters. Dr. McKelway has served on local boards including the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute and the Preservation of Historic Winchester and has supported BRWC's work in numerous ways, including for several years housing summer interns.



Timothy Bates, a transplant from Maryland, received a bachelor's degree in Political Science from the University of Maryland, College Park. His career following graduation began with a large homebuilder and at age 28, Bates achieved the distinction of becoming the youngest Division Manager in that company's history. In 2016, Bates joined CalAtlantic Homes as President of the mid-Atlantic Division. A self-taught naturalist, Bates is affiliated with numerous groups such as Ducks Unlimited, Quail Forever, Virginia Native Plant Society, American Chestnut Foundation and

The Arbor Day Foundation.

BRWC Board Chair Lisa Goshen said, "We are extremely fortunate to be able to attract board members whose interests are so intertwined with ours. Their dedication to the local community, including interests in education and protecting and preserving wildlife and habitat, will help to guide and promote our recent expansion of programs, and the increase in our wildlife patient population."

These new board members join Tricia Booker, Loudoun County; Hillary Davidson, Fauquier County; Andrew Ferrari, Clarke County; Lisa Goshen, Clarke County; Michael Morency, Fauquier County; Patricia Robinson, Arlington and Clarke Counties; and Beatrice von Gontard, Warren County.

Committed to our region's native wildlife all year long!
- The Board of Directors

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- Hillary Davidson, Secretary
- Mike Morency, Treasurer
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- Susan Galbraith
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The Blue Ridge Wildlife Center is a 501 (c) 3 charitable organization established to provide quality rehabilitative care to native injured and orphaned wildlife and other helpful information to the public in northern Virginia. The Center operates the **Wildlife Hotline at 540-837-9000.**

The Center also presents environmental education programs for people of all ages. For more information contact education@blueridgewildlifectr.org.

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Behind the Scenes in the Wildlife Hospital

Article and Photos by Jennifer Riley, DVM

Many people who drop off wildlife patients ask us what we do at the Center. The short and partial answer is that we treat orphaned and injured native wildlife with the goal of releasing them back into the wild. Many have the impression that medical treatment and recuperation is straightforward — simply feed and release. The reality is that these patients require daily treatments and labor-intensive feedings in the days, weeks, or months between their initial treatment and their release. Below are some of the common tasks we perform daily to make sure our patients heal well and as quickly as possible.

Bandaging

Bandages are used to cover or treat wounds, rest a wing or leg with muscle trauma, or even heal minimally-displaced fractures. It is one of the most common treatments in the rehabilitation world, but it is certainly not a one-time thing. Many bandages, specifically those covering open wounds, need to be changed daily. Blood is an excellent growth medium for bacteria and infection would spread quickly if these bandages were not changed daily. Given the



stress associated with bandage changes and the need for the patient to be still, most of our bandage changes in birds are done under gas anesthesia. The old bandage needs to be removed, the wound cleaned thoroughly, flushed with sterile saline, and re-banded with topical antibiotics and multiple absorbent layers to draw any fluid away from the wound. For fractured bones being managed with bandaging, the staff needs to change these bandages at least once per week for physical therapy to ensure that the joints maintain their normal range of motion while the fractured bone heals.

There are multiple types of bandages. Some are cotton-based, meant to absorb discharge from wounds to keep the animal clean and dry. Wet-to-dry bandages, consisting of a moistened cotton gauze layer topped with dry gauze, help to debride dead tissue. As the dry layer absorbs water from the layer touching the wound, dead tissue on the wound adheres to the moist gauze. When the bandage is removed, the dead tissue that prevents proper healing is removed as well.

Honey is another tool we commonly use with bandaging wounds that we cannot close surgically to encourage healing. Oftentimes, honey bandages are used after a wet-to-dry bandage. In addition to having antibacterial, antifungal, and anti-inflammatory properties, honey encourages wound contraction and epithelialization (covering the area with new skin) by bringing blood vessels to the wound. We have had great success with honey, as illustrated here with a Red-tailed Hawk's lower back wound and an Eastern Box Turtle's shell fracture.

LEFT: Eastern Box Turtle with a honey bandage.

RIGHT: Red-tailed Hawk open wound healing stages. From top to bottom: this is the wound at day 1, day 14, day 40, and day 61 (release).





ABOVE: American Robin with torticollis in a neck brace.



ABOVE: Red-shouldered Hawk having his legs stretched.

Physical Therapy

Physical therapy is a requirement for many of our patients and people seem shocked to learn about how much of it we do! All animals being treated for a fracture will undergo physical therapy while in our care, generally in concert with bandage changes. Animals with spinal trauma or other neurologic deficits unwilling or unable to use their legs on their own benefit greatly from physical therapy. Torticollis (heading tilting), often caused by trauma, has been shown to resolve more quickly with the addition of physical therapy to standard treatment plans. In these cases, it is performed one to three times per day, typically when the animal is handled for feedings and cleaning.

Though most wildlife patients should and do resist being handled by humans, many tolerate physical therapy surprisingly well. As you can imagine, having your legs or head stuck in one position all day is not only annoying, but can be very painful. Stretching these muscles and tendons during physical therapy relieves pain immediately and improves healing in the long term.

Baths and Soaks

Though medications are essential in the treatment of many of our patients, baths or soaks can be an important adjunct treatment, just like physical therapy. Many of our reptile patients receive daily soaks in a dilute betadine solution. This antimicrobial solution is typically used to prepare skin for surgical procedures, but it is gentle on skin in soaks and even safe if the reptile drinks some of the dilute solution. This dilute soak helps our snake and turtle patients keep their skin wounds clean — especially in the hard to reach cracks in turtle shells. Other patients, like the American Toad seen below, can even receive antibiotics in their soaks. Reptiles that do not require betadine/medicated soaks to treat external lesions are still commonly soaked daily in regular water to help maintain hydration. Reptiles soaking in water will drink on their own and will urinate and defecate to keep their gastrointestinal tract moving.



ABOVE: Garter Snake relaxing in a betadine soak.



ABOVE: American toad receiving an antibiotic soak.

Mammals suffering from mange or other skin conditions will also receive baths at the Center. We use medicated shampoo to treat these animals (in addition to oral medication) in order to help the skin heal faster from secondary infections.



ABOVE: This fox presented with sarcoptic mange and received many medicated baths in addition to a course anti-mite treatment prior to release.

Yes, even birds are often given baths at the Center! For our avian patients, medical baths are reserved primarily for oiled birds. That said, birds love water and will use kiddie pools provided to them to bathe on their own. This is excellent enrichment and also encourages them to preen and maintain good feather quality. Seeing them bathe also give rehabilitators the opportunity to ensure that the birds are waterproofing well and will be able to handle the elements once released. Baths are for everyone!



ABOVE: Jefferson, our Ambassador Bald Eagle, cools off in his pool.



ABOVE: Red-tailed Hawk perched on the side of a pool.

Hand, tube, or force feeding

Sometimes you just put food in with a patient and it eats right away. This is every rehabilitator’s dream, but it is rarely a reality. Many patients need food presented in a certain way in order to eat. Other times we must hide and arrange food in a specific manner to encourage foraging skills. These “food presentation” considerations are only a concern for patients that can or will eat on their own.

In many cases, animals come to the Center emaciated and cannot be started on normal diets. If starving patients are fed whole prey immediately, a number of electrolyte abnormalities can ultimately impair organ function and cause death. This condition is known as refeeding syndrome. We prevent it by feeding a diluted critical care diet by tube initially, slowly upgrading to soft food pieces, then eventually offering whole prey. This is why we request that the finder refrain from feeding rescued animals — even if it “looks very hungry”.



ABOVE: Red-shouldered Hawk being tube-fed a critical care diet.

Other patients refuse to eat throughout their stay at the hospital and must be force fed multiple times per day just to maintain weight. Many Snapping Turtles, for example, do not like to eat while they are in care, especially if “dry docked” to keep their wounds from being contaminated by water. In these cases, we surgically place feeding tubes so that we



ABOVE: Red-tailed Hawk being hand-fed.

can provide these animals with nutrition until they are eating on their own. Baby animals often need to be hand-fed for the majority of their stay with us. Making sure that all of our patients are provided with a healthy, well-balanced, species-appropriate diet is not easy. Making sure that the patient eats that diet and does not just select the tastiest pieces is even more difficult.



ABOVE: American Crow being hand-fed.

Summary

Treating wildlife rarely involves a quick fix. Though we try to limit handling of patients as much as possible, many of them require significant personal attention to ensure their nutritional needs are met. The treatments mentioned above are just a few of the things that our staff members spend their time doing, but they are critical to the success of our patients! ■

Building with the BRWC

The Center has been busy working on enhancing the educational experience for our community this past year. We are now nearing the completion of our Raptor Observation Deck, an elevated walkway with handicap access that will allow the public to easily view and observe our Birds of Prey Ambassadors, including our resident Bald Eagle, Jefferson. Further cage building is underway to provide outdoor housing for more of our educational residents, all non-releasable, such as our Ambassador Groundhog, Harley and our Eastern Gray Squirrel, Rufio, and even a turtle pond for our three educational Wood Turtles. We have not set an opening date for the Observation Deck, so keep a close eye on our Facebook page or website for announcements!



Jefferson monitoring the construction of the Observation Deck. Photo by Jessica Andersen

Looking Skyward: Winged Migrations



By Jennifer Riley, DVM

Each fall many bird species migrate from or through our area as they head southward to their wintering grounds. The dangers associated with migration mean that we end up seeing some of our least commonly treated species during this time. Over the past few months, we received many migrants including Broad-winged Hawks, Yellow-billed Cuckoos, Common Nighthawks, Eastern Wood-Pewees, Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, and Eastern Kingbirds, as well as many species of swallows and warblers.

Some of these birds spend the entire summer in our area, so why is it that we see them almost exclusively during the shorter migration window? In some cases, the answer is simply that they are out in areas where humans can find them. Many of these species spend their summers deep in the woods or in areas where humans have limited access. Once they begin migration, they end up over roadways and in areas more heavily trafficked by people.

In addition to being easier to find during migration, these birds fall victim to many dangers during their journeys. Though migrating birds prepare well nutritionally for their trips, food shortages and starvation or exhaustion can impair their judgment or even be severe enough for them to end up at our facility. When they are hungry and exhausted, it is more likely that these birds will end up colliding with cars, buildings, windows, or other obstacles. If they are not killed on impact, stunned or down birds are more susceptible to predators such as outdoor cats, foxes, raccoons, scavengers, and others. Starving birds can also become more susceptible to disease, which can be especially dangerous at a time when so many birds are congregating together to migrate in flocks.

Natural disasters such as hurricanes, wild fires, and storms can cause heavy losses to migrating flocks. Though there

are many stories of birds surviving these weather-related disasters in unique ways such as riding out hurricanes by taking advantage of the calmer winds in the eye while they are carried away to a new location, these types of storms are often fatal for migrating birds. In addition to the dangers of the winds alone, these storms can destroy important food sources in areas birds commonly use to refuel during migration



Indigo Bunting getting a checkup and then some needed rest. Photo by Dr. Jen Riley

or prevent them from landing altogether.

Human-caused challenges like pollution and hunting also make migration a dangerous time. Migration season often overlaps significantly with hunting season. Being shot intentionally or due to misidentification happens, but the worst effect of hunting season is often lead poisoning that we see in many of the scavenging raptors. When lead bullets are used, large and even microscopic fragments of lead are ingested by animals feeding on the remains. Lead, oil (small puddles on personal property or

large-scale spills), fertilizers, pesticides, and other human-caused pollutants can cause life-threatening problems for migrating birds. One major human pollutant that many do not think about is light pollution. Light from cities and other human activity can greatly disrupt migration for nocturnal species, some of which use the stars in addition to landmarks to guide their routes. In many cases, the biggest challenge for migrating birds is inexperience. Many birds do not survive their first migration — we receive many juveniles that did not put on enough weight in preparation for their travels. They come to the Center weak and anemic with low stores of body fat. In many cases, though not all, these birds recover quickly with supportive care.

Here are some ways you can help our fall migrants have a successful journey:

- Consider making your backyard a nutrient-rich rest stop for birds by planting native plants and providing fresh water daily.
- Keep your feeders and baths clean to help prevent the spread of disease.
- Keep cats inside and dogs on leashes, for their safety, as well as the safety of exhausted migrating birds.
- Reconsider your use of pesticides, rodenticides, and other toxic substances.

Migration will always be a dangerous time, but there are things you can do to help! Now that you are more knowledgeable about the migrating birds you can see in the fall and the threats they face, be sure to get outside and appreciate the various species and how hard they are working to survive! ■

Looking Skyward:

Monarch Butterfly Migrations



By Jennifer Burghoffer

This summer staff members, interns, and visitors witnessed an amazing thing: the full life cycle of the Monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*). With the help of interns, over 30 eggs and caterpillars (the butterfly's larval stage) were raised at the Center and released. Monarchs are one of many helpful insects that pollinate — distributing pollen from one flower to another, prompting plants to make seeds.

Pollination

Plant pollination is achieved by many methods. In addition to butterflies, pollinators include species like bees, moths, wasps, birds, flies and even mammals in some areas! For these animals, pollination is an accidental outcome from their search for nectar or pollen to eat. As they land on the flowers in search of food, pollen sticks to their bodies or feathers and is transported to the next flower they visit. All seed plants require pollination, though some can self-pollinate. Plants use a variety of methods to attract pollinators, including color, scent, petal shape or positioning, and nectar guides, which are petals that have ultraviolet lighting to guide pollinators to the nectar.

Pollinators

Monarch butterflies are among the later season pollinators in our area. They migrate up to our area in the spring, after a long hibernation in the Sierra Madre mountain range in Mexico with smaller wintering sites in Florida and California. The Oyamel trees of the Sierra Madre cluster about two miles above sea level in a microclimate warm and moist enough to prevent the butterflies from needing to use fat reserves to survive the winter. You can find tens of thousands of Monarchs hibernating on one tree! As the weather warms in early spring, the butterflies restart their development and begin to migrate north,



FIGURE 1: Near-mature caterpillars eating milkweed; dots on paper towel are frass — their excrement. **FIGURE 2:** Monarch emerging from a chrysalis. **FIGURE 3:** Female Monarch enjoying native flowers.

Photos by Hillary Davidson

maturing enough to mate and lay eggs as they reach Texas. From there, successive generations, usually 3-4, hatch and develop and continue to head north up to New England and even Canada.

As the summer winds down, most moth and butterfly species halt their development and spend the winter in limbo as either larva (caterpillars) or pupae (chrysalis). Monarchs are unable to survive in our winters and instead make a unique 3,000 mile journey south to Mexico. Along the eastern coast, smaller flyways converge to form one massive gathering of Monarchs in the southern U.S. The insects are funneled along the flyways by thermals and breezes, amassing along the coast to wait for a strong enough breeze to carry them across the Gulf.

This intense and distinctive migration pattern comes with many dangers. Harsh weather patterns cause damage to the hibernation grounds in the mountains and warmer winters prevent the butterflies from conserving enough energy to survive. These issues result in less adults at the start of the spring, and can affect the overall population of Monarchs for the year. In addition, increased use of pesticides, ornamental or “double bloom” flowers in gardens, and a lack of natural food sources for both caterpillars and adults greatly influences the number of individuals of each generation as they travel up the country. Fewer adults that begin the spring migration coupled with fewer adults traveling to the wintering grounds have resulted in an almost 90%





decrease in the population in just 20 years. That number continues to drop.

There are ways that you can help:

- Create a butterfly habitat in your backyard by removing invasive plants and leaving areas of your land to grow wild.
- Choose native species that butterflies are known to eat when creating new landscapes.
- Reduce pesticide use and allow parts of your yard to grow wild to create a natural landscape, providing food sources for a variety of larval and adult insects. An assortment of brightly colored native plants will attract many different species of pollinators.
- Add water sources and nesting sites for native bees, butterflies, and birds.
- To assist Monarchs specifically, plant milkweed (*Asclepias* genus) in conjunction with nectar plants to provide food for caterpillars as well as the adults. Wide, flat flower “landing pads” or cone-shaped petals are the most attractive for these insects.

For more information about Monarchs, their plight, and information about gardening for wildlife, please visit the USDA website at https://www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/pollinators/Monarch_Butterfly/index.shtml. ■

Social Media



If you enjoyed the stories found in this newsletter, don't forget to like our Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/BlueRidgeWildlifeCtr/>) where we share stories about the Center, interesting patients, and educational information. You can also find us on Instagram @BlueRidgeWildlifeCtr for more pictures and videos about our patients and daily life at the Center.

Interesting Cases

Rehab + Corner

Stories and photos by Jessica Andersen



BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER
(*Setophaga fusca*)

This Blackburnian Warbler was admitted to the Center after being attacked by a cat. It sustained puncture wounds to its chest and dorsum, but responded well to antibiotics and pain medications. It was released just a week after intake. ■



OVENBIRD
(*Seiurus aurocapilla*)

This Ovenbird, a large warbler species, was found outside of a local Walmart, trapped in a ball of human hair. The bird had become entangled and broke its leg trying to free itself. This bird required hand feedings seven times per day in order to maintain weight while in care! ■



BROAD-WINGED HAWK
(*Buteo platypterus*)

This Broad-winged Hawk was struck by a vehicle during its migration, resulting in the luxation (dislocation) of its right shoulder. This was quickly repaired and after weeks of bandaging and physical therapy, the hawk is now flying again! ■



COMMON NIGHTHAWK
(*Chordeiles minor*)

This Common Nighthawk came to the Center as a cat attack victim. Like our Ovenbird, this patient required hand feeding of insects at frequent intervals to maintain weight. After two weeks on antibiotics, this nighthawk's wounds had healed well. ■

August Programs

This summer the Center was excited to test a potential new education opportunity: single-day family events hosted in the **Ronald M. Bradley Learning Center**. With the help of former intern and 2017 Wildlife Discovery Camp leader Ms. Abbey Bierman, the Center launched a few wildlife education programs in August geared towards families. Our most popular programs were the **Nocturnal Adventures!** and **All About Birds**. Both programs included a discussion about the topics, a short hike along the property's wooded trails, and face-to-face meetings with our wonderful Wildlife Ambassadors.

Feedback from these programs has been encouraging and we expect these to become regular events on the Center's



calendar. If you missed the opportunity to join us for one of these events, or are looking to join us again, please keep an eye on

our Facebook page and website for news and updates. ■

Volunteers are Critical to our Success!



We are extremely fortunate to have many dedicated volunteers and interns, including some from the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute (SCBI), engaged in our work throughout the year! In addition to our popular Wildlife Rehabilitation volunteer opportunities, the Center is accepting applications for Docent volunteers to help with our public educational areas. Docents will tell the stories of our Wildlife Ambassadors and discuss the natural history of Virginia native species. They will be available to answer any questions guests may have regarding rehabilitation, human-wildlife conflict, and ways the public can help our wildlife. Docent volunteers may also help with office duties such as paperwork and light cleaning as needed. If interested in volunteering with the Center, please refer to the information and application materials on the "How to Help" section of our website.

LEFT: Bill Hicks installing a squirrel box while Ike Eisenhower steadies the ladder.



ABOVE: Bill Hicks dressed 'to the nines' attending one of our galas.

The Center is deeply saddened by the recent passing of an incredible volunteer, Bill Hicks, who dedicated years of time and effort to the building, maintenance, and overall community of the Blue Ridge Wildlife Center. Bill helped to build many of the cages that are in use today, both for our wild patients and our Wildlife Ambassadors. He was passionate about providing for injured and orphaned animals, and was always warm-hearted. We will miss him dearly! ■

Hills Are Alive! 2017 Soirée Recap

Hills Are Alive! was the theme of this year's annual Blue Ridge Wildlife Center Soirée, organized by Lisa Goshen and Beatrice von Gontard, co-chairs, and their able committee of twelve volunteers. The September 16th Saturday evening was a beautiful night at a magnificent location in Clarke County: Montevento, home of Drs. Laura Dabinett and Russell McKelway.

Guests were greeted with the jazz strains of the band, Mick the Stick, whose time was generously donated by Russell McKelway. The views of the Blue Ridge mountains and the thoughtful flyover of an uninvited hot air balloon added to the festive mood.

The goal of the night's bidding was the upgrade or replacement of up to twelve pre-release cages in the Rehabilitation area, two new exhibition cages on the soon-to-be-opening Raptor Observation

Deck, and a new turtle pond! And in a final flurry of bidding, supporters also generously helped to underwrite food for the animals to help celebrate the dedication of the culinary center (aka kitchen) in honor of Franny Crawford and her work with the Center.

By every measure, the evening was a huge success with additional enthusiastic bidding on four learning excursions, including a guided river/flora/fauna trip donated by Greg Ellison, a wildflower/birding excursion donated by Beatrice and Adie von Gontard, a behind-the-scenes vineyard tour

donated by Linden Vineyards, and a visit /picnic at Chapel Hill Farm to learn about the Randall Lineback heritage breed cattle and best-farming practices, donated by Lucia and Joe Henderson.



LEFT: Our gracious hosts Drs. Laura Dabinett and Russell McKelway. *Photo by Gary Sousa*

ABOVE: Lisa Goshen presents Franny Crawford with a culinary mixing bowl. *Photo by Gary Sousa*

BELOW: The beautiful grounds of Montevento. *Photo by Dara Bailey*

We are so grateful to all who supported the event with donations, patron tickets, ticket purchases and generous bidding. For this magnificent night of generosity, the hills were indeed alive. ■



* Denotes Society of Wildlife Guardians member



(From left) Danielle and Ron Bradley*, Beatrice von Gontard*, and Robin and Reagan Duncan*. Photo by Gary Sousa



Jennifer Burghoffer with Beeker, the Striped Skunk. Photo by Dara Bailey



Marjorie Lewis, Carolyn Farouki, and Dana Hand Evans. Photo by Gary Sousa



Susan Galbraith* and Lisa Goshen*, BRWC Board of Directors. Photo by Gary Sousa



Tyson Gilpin and Ann Randolph of the Burwell-von Lennep Foundation and Susan Galbraith*, Board of Directors. Photo by Gary Sousa



Barbara Pennington and Jeanne Morency*. Photo by Gary Sousa



Louise (left) and Carey Crane (right) with friend. Photo by Gary Sousa



Richard and Michele Dynes, and Dr. Margit Royal and Dr. Jerrold Wolford Photo by Gary Sousa



Jessica Andersen and Snow, the Artic Fox with guests. Photo by Dara Bailey



Montevento pond life. Photo by Dara Bailey



Kristi Titus and Blossom, the Opposum. Photo by Gary Sousa



Photo by Gary Sousa



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Back to the Wild

Heather Sparks released this juvenile Broad-winged Hawk at the Soirée. These hawks migrate from their summer breeding grounds in the northern U.S. and Canada to their wintering grounds in South America. The hawk had come in just days earlier after being struck by a vehicle while on its first migration south. Fortunately, this hawk had no injuries and we are hopeful the hawk will make it safely to its wintering ground!

TAIL END