

The Ridgeline

NEWSLETTER OF THE BLUE RIDGE WILDLIFE CENTER

ISSUE 36



Short-eared Owl's Return to the Wild

*Short-eared Owl poised
for take-off in flight cage.*

Looking Back on the Year



Dear Friends of Wildlife –

With the bomb cyclone behind us, we will hopefully settle down to some normal winter weather! We ended the year — the first full calendar year in our new facility — on a quiet note given the extreme temperatures.

However, during these quieter months, our education programs continue to be a draw in the nearby schools. We are actively designing new materials and classes to expand our offerings.

This is the time of year when we begin planning for the intense activity of the spring and summer months. We are accepting applications for interns to join our team for three to four months to learn the basics of wildlife rehabilitation and help with all aspects of raising baby birds and mammals and designing and delivering education programs. Some of these interns come from out of town and need housing for the summer. Please contact us should you have an extra room for an intern or two.

We held our first ever open house on January 13 to allow the public to tour the hospital facilities and meet some wildlife ambassadors. We had stations within the hospital attended by dedicated volunteers and staff to describe the work we do in each of those stations. We had planned for 200-300 people to attend. At the end of the day, approximately 1500 people of all ages, most unfamiliar with BRWC, had walked through the building and learned about our mission. It was a truly spectacular day, exceeding our expectations. It was a good day for wildlife too, as more members of the community are aware of who to call when they come upon a wildlife emergency.

In this issue, you will find a summary report from Dr. Riley on the patient load we carried in 2017 — another very busy year for BRWC! Dr. Riley also discusses lead poisoning — one of the worst illnesses that we see in our raptors in the fall and winter months.

An exciting new development to share is the appointment of Hillary Davidson to the leadership position of Executive Director. Hillary has a Master of Business Administration from William & Mary and a Master of Computer Science from Colorado State University. She has been involved with BRWC for seven years as a volunteer working with wildlife and has been secretary on the board of directors for three of those years. A Virginia Master Naturalist, she has a passion for wildlife and habitat conservation and also has a working knowledge of raptors and other birds — in fact she spent one of her recent vacations learning to band birds and identify their age and gender. Hillary grew up in The Plains, VA and now resides with her husband John in Warrenton, VA. They have two grown children, a number of horses, dogs, and cats. Hillary is also the permitted caregiver of a non-releasable Great Horned Owl named Wisdom who is used in a variety of education programs. The board of directors is so pleased to have Hillary at the helm of the organization, especially as we enter the next growth phase for the Center. You can gain greater insight into Hillary's beliefs by reading her article — found on the next page.

Thank you for all you do to help us help our native wildlife survive and thrive!

*With best regards,
Lisa Goshen*

The Ridgeline

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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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Looking Forward — 2020 and Beyond



I am humbled and delighted to serve the community as the Executive Director of the Blue Ridge Wildlife Center.

I believe that our native wildlife is under assault — from climate change, from habitat loss, and from other changes generally caused by humans. The news stories abound: monarch butterflies stranded in Canada and the northeast in November due to unseasonably warm temperatures and unfavorable winds; the number of flying insects rapidly declining around the world, which does not bode well for plant pollination or wildlife that depend on insects to live; and diving ducks frequently landing on pavement thinking it is a body of water due to nighttime light pollution.

BRWC is here to reduce the impacts of these pressures in two key ways: **(1)** to care for the injured and orphaned native wildlife and get them back to the wild where they belong; and **(2)** to inform our community on how to be good stewards of the environment — for the benefit of all wildlife and ourselves!

I believe that when we take care of wildlife and the habitat it needs to survive, we are actually taking care of ourselves. Studies show that getting out into nature is rejuvenating to the soul. But, what is nature without wildlife?

I believe in working for what you love and believe in. I have volunteered with BRWC as a wildlife rehabilitator for over seven years. I have also been honored to serve on the Board of Directors as its Secretary for three years. Both commitments have been rewarding to me personally.

I believe timing is everything. My love of nature and wildlife and a recent life-changing event made it easy for me to leave the IT industry in which I worked for 32 years and come to work at BRWC. It was time for me to turn my avocation into my vocation! BRWC is not new to me. What is new is the opportunity to apply my management talents to guide the Center into its next phase of service to the community and to our wildlife.

We have met most of the long-range objectives established in 2013, most notably that of building and moving into a new hospital facility. We could only do this with the community's strong support and generosity — **we thank you so very much!** This spring we will begin work on our next 3-5 year strategic plan.

We believe that an informed and active community is vital to our success and benefits all that live in this beautiful region we call home. I welcome your thoughts as we develop our objectives for 2020 and beyond — please send me an email (hillary@blueridgewildlifectr.org) with your feedback.

Hillary Russell Davidson

Lead Toxicity in Wildlife

Story by Jennifer Riley, DVM

During the fall and winter seasons, the Center sees multiple patients that have ingested lead. These patients are primarily scavenging raptors such as vultures, hawks, and eagles, but there are reports of greater than 120 avian species being affected by lead poisoning. Low levels of lead, though not causing overt signs, may still cause enough disorientation that the animal flies into a car or building. This winter, we tested all scavenging raptors that came to the Center regardless of clinical signs. Over half were positive for some level of lead in the blood.

Though lead has gotten into our environment through many human-related activities such as mining, smelting, coal combustion, battery processing, and lead paint, the biggest concern now is lead used in ammunition and fishing tackle. Hunting and fishing gear is the most important part to focus on as it is not only the most common cause of exposure, but it is also lead that can easily be replaced with less toxic alternatives.

How do we know lead ammunition is the major cause of lead toxicity in birds?

Many research groups have looked at the positive correlation between hunting season and lead toxicity cases in wildlife — it is significant. Knowing that correlation is not the same as causation, many researchers delved deeper. Specific lead isotope ratios tested in feathers are one strong suggestion that ammunition is the primary source of exposure. Another study showed elevated copper concentrations in eagles in addition to lead poisoning, suggesting the use of copper-jacketed lead bullets. Radiographs and necropsies performed at wildlife centers all over the country also frequently prove that lead ammunition has been ingested.

Raptors do not go out of their way to eat metal. When a lead bullet hits an animal,



This Turkey Vulture was found at a scrap pile of deer meat where someone had been butchering a hunted carcass. Blood tests revealed a moderate lead level and radiographs revealed a non-metal foreign material in the gastrointestinal tract. The patient had also ingested a large hand towel, which we suspect had blood or meat scraps on it as well. Unfortunately, this patient died due to complications associated with the surgery that was necessary to remove the towel. Please remember to dispose of any food scraps properly as raptors and other wildlife will get into easy available trash. As we have seen many times at the Center, trash like this can be lethal. *Photo by Dr. Jennifer Riley*

it expands and fragments as energy is released, since lead in bullet form is a soft metal. Studies show that these fragments can be found 18" and possibly further from the wound channel. The scattered fragments increase the likelihood that the raptor will ingest lead as it swallows large chunks of prey, and small lead fragments are not deterrents when surrounded by delicious food.

When grit-seeking birds, like doves and quail, ingest lead shot around a shooting range, they themselves may become

disoriented becoming easy prey for nearby raptors. Raptors often swallow organs and parts of the gastrointestinal tract whole, making it difficult to avoid this type of lead ingestion. Waterfowl can also become easy targets when they ingest lead sinkers that were abandoned in lakes and wetland areas. Though lead in the environment like this has not been as impactful as lead left in hunted carcasses, it is still a situation where humans could make a big impact by changing their practices.

What happens to a bird that ingests lead? Ingested lead fragments are broken down by stomach acid and absorbed into the bloodstream. Any amount of lead in the blood is abnormal and it may affect the bird long before we notice it clinically. Once levels are high enough, we begin to see obvious signs of toxicity in the nervous system and in the gastrointestinal tract. Affected birds are typically admitted with poor balance, weakness, diarrhea, and emaciation. Some are unable to stand, exhibiting tremors and respiratory distress. Most birds that are admitted with severe clinical signs will not survive despite the intensive care we provide.

Most patients we treat are presented to us due to human-wildlife conflicts (for example, hit by vehicle or cutting down a tree with a nest). Few of these issues are as deadly as lead toxicity. Still, there is hope. Lead toxicity is one of the most easily preventable diseases we see at the Center.

How can you help? Since most studies suggest that lead ammunition is the most significant cause of lead toxicity in raptors, we must focus our efforts on lead ammu-

nition and ways to prevent it from being consumed by raptors.

- **Switch to non-lead ammunition.** Years ago, non-lead ammunition meant “steel shot”— a type of ammunition that was less effective than lead and damaged guns. Ammunition has come a long way in the past few decades. Non-lead shot is now as effective or more effective than lead and the price difference is minimal.

- **Recover and remove all shot game from the field.** It is important to remember that lead fragments can migrate 18” or more from the wound channel — removing visible fragments alone is not adequate. The whole carcass should be disposed of appropriately.

- **Bury the remains of butchered carcasses.** Scavenging birds and mammals will eat remains that you leave out in the open. They will also find remains if not buried deep enough or not covered effectively with thick brush.

- **Keep the conversation positive and educational.** Being anti-lead does not equate to being anti-hunter. Hunters are not choosing lead shot because they want to kill eagles. The use of lead is simply

an issue of education. Hunters are often some of the most influential conservationists and outdoor enthusiasts and, most importantly, they can fix this problem directly with their actions. Becoming argumentative or accusatory will not encourage hunters to consider changing their methods.

Conclusion

Lead toxicity is a human-caused problem — one that humans can choose to solve or perpetuate. For years society has accepted that lead is a dangerous metal — that’s why we have taken it out of paint, gasoline, and many other products. It is damaging to us even in small amounts and lethal to many wild animals at the levels they ingest. We encourage you to get involved, educate others, and discontinue the use of lead ammunition and lead sinkers in favor of safer alternatives. It will prevent suffering and death for many wild animals and allow the Center to use our limited funds on patients whose injuries could not be so easily prevented. ■

Poisoned Bald Eagle Rescue



Photo by Dr. Jennifer Riley

Late in 2017 we received a call from Warrenton, VA about an eagle that was down and not attempting to fly when approached. One of our staff rehabilitators was available to go out quickly and assess the situation. She found this eagle quiet, depressed, and making no attempts to run off as she placed a net over the bird and gently scooped it into a crate. Once back at the Center, we found that this patient was trembling, had

difficulty breathing, and was very pale. Our team quickly placed an intravenous catheter so that the eagle received fluids while in an oxygen cage that allowed for easier breathing. While the eagle rested, we ran bloodwork and found that the lead level in this case was >0.65ppm, higher than our in-house machine can read. Birds with this level of toxicity rarely survive despite treatment. Though this bird did well for a few days, the poison ultimately caused respiratory failure and the eagle passed away. Deaths from lead are so frustrating for the staff as this is something that is completely preventable. Please avoid the use of lead shot and help educate others on the damage that this metal can cause.



Photo by Dana Ek

Blue Ridge Wildlife Center 2017 Stats

By Jennifer Riley, DVM | Statistical Analysis by Michael Oak

In 2017 we admitted over 1800 patients representing 124 species. **Figure 1** illustrates the breakdown of patients admitted.

Nearly half of our patients were babies, most of which were orphaned or abandoned, but a quarter were admitted due to illness or injury. We received 100 more injured raptors than last year and the number of turtle admissions increased by more than 55%! **Figure 2** illustrates the common types of presenting diagnoses.

The first 24 hours are the most critical for any patient. Those that have been determined to have a very poor prognosis (<10% chance of release) are humanely euthanized immediately to limit their suffering. Others die in the first 24 hours despite our best efforts. In 2017, those patients that made it through the first 24 hours at the Center had a survival rate of 74%!

“Other” includes all diagnoses that were less than 4% of all the intakes. In order of frequency, this includes: Infectious diseases, natural events such as storms or maternal/reproductive problems, non-infectious diseases such as cancer, metabolic bone disease, or congenital defects, window strikes, non-domestic predator attacks, abduction of healthy adults, gunshots, fishing line injuries, toxicities.

BRWC is open 365 days a year and there are very few days in which we don't receive at least one patient. **Figure 3** illustrates the monthly intake of patients. As you can see, we receive most of our cases in the spring and summer due to the large number of babies. ■

Figure 1 – Patient Breakdown

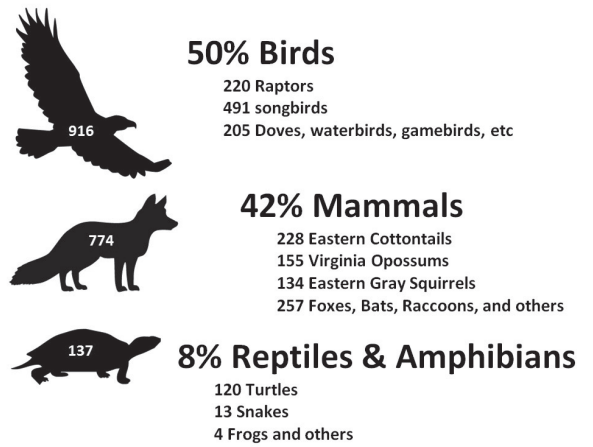
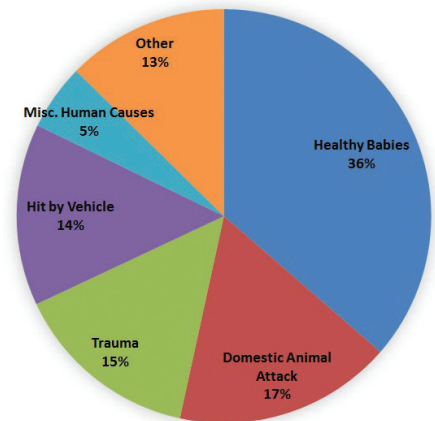


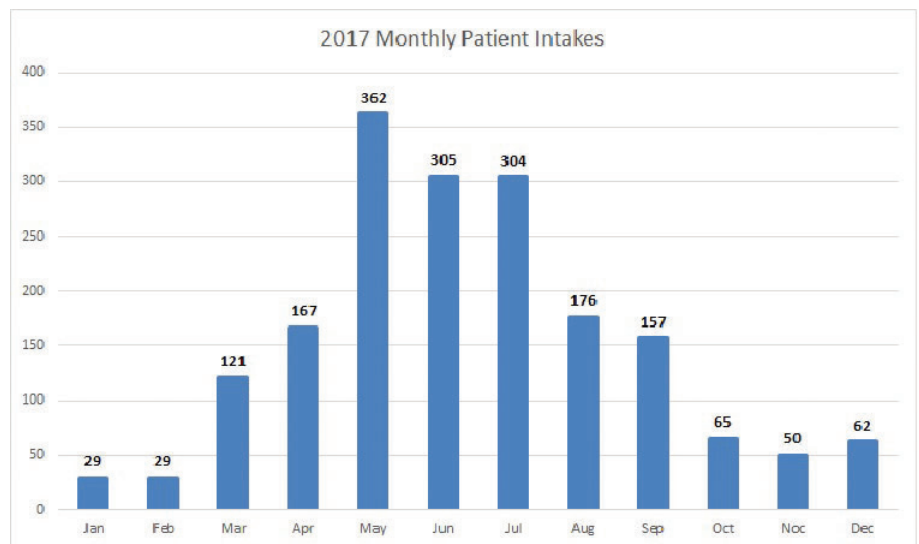
Figure 2 – Diagnoses



Patients per Virginia Counties

Arlington	13
Chesterfield	1
Clarke	161
Culpeper	19
Fairfax	81
Fauquier	157
Frederick	539
Henrico	2
Loudoun	385
Madison	1
Middlesex	5
Orange	1
Page	17
Prince William	58
Rappahannock	19
Richmond	3
Rockingham	2
Shenandoah	98
Spotsylvania	6
Stafford	15
Surry	1
Unknown/Other	57
Warren	186

Figure 3 – Monthly Intake of Patients



2017 Patient Details

1,827 patients, 124 species **Domestic animals are not intentionally admitted and are not released to the wild*

Birds (83 species)	Count	Birds cont.	Count	Mammals (26 species)	Count
American Crow	17	Indigo Bunting	1	Allegheny Woodrat	5
American Goldfinch	12	Lesser Scaup	1	American Mink	1
American Kestrel	5	Mallard	27	Big Brown Bat	40
American Robin	66	Mourning Dove	34	Coyote	1
American Woodcock	3	Mourning Warbler	2	Deer Mouse	5
Bald Eagle	3	Northern Bobwhite	1	Eastern Chipmunk	4
Barn Owl	1	Northern Cardinal	31	Eastern Cottontail	228
Barn Swallow	8	Northern Flicker	10	Eastern Fox Squirrel	4
Barred Owl	32	Northern Mockingbird	8	Eastern Gray Squirrel	134
Black Vulture	12	Northern Rough-winged Swallow	2	Eastern Mole	1
Blackburnian Warbler	1	Osprey	2	Field Mouse	2
Black-capped Chickadee	3	Ovenbird	2	Gray Fox	3
Blue Jay	19	Peregrine Falcon	3	Groundhog	20
Broad-winged Hawk	4	Pied-billed Grebe	1	Hoary Bat	1
Brown Thrasher	5	Pileated Woodpecker	5	House Mouse	13
Canada Goose	14	Purple Martin	3	Meadow Vole	4
Carolina Wren	20	Red-bellied Woodpecker	1	Northern Raccoon	68
Cedar Waxwing	8	Red-eyed Vireo	1	Norway Rat	1
Chimney Swift	47	Red-headed Woodpecker	2	Red Bat	1
Chipping Sparrow	7	Red-shouldered Hawk	37	Red Fox	33
Common Grackle	22	Red-tailed Hawk	46	Southern Flying Squirrel	3
Common Loon	1	Red-winged Blackbird	3	Striped Skunk	36
Common Nighthawk	2	Ring-billed Gull	2	Tri-colored Big-eared Bat	1
Cooper's Hawk	16	Rock Dove	5	Virginia Opossum	155
Dark-eyed Junco	6	Ruby-throated Hummingbird	6	White-footed Mouse	5
Domestic Duck*	1	Ruddy Duck	1	White-tailed Deer	5
Domestic Turkey*	6	Sharp-shinned Hawk	4	Total Mammals	774
Downy Woodpecker	3	Short-eared Owl	1	Reptiles & Amphibians (16 species) Count	
Eastern Bluebird	15	Song Sparrow	3	American Toad	1
Eastern Kingbird	2	Tree Swallow	3	Fowler's Toad	1
Eastern Phoebe	3	Tufted Titmouse	7	Green Tree Frog	1
Eastern Screech Owl	32	Turkey Vulture	10	Black Rat Snake	8
Eastern Wood Pewee	7	Unidentified Bird	9	Common Garter Snake	1
European Starling	96	White-breasted Nuthatch	7	Common Snapping Turtle	13
Fish Crow	3	White-throated Sparrow	4	Eastern Box Turtle	92
Gray Catbird	16	Wild Turkey	20	Eastern Musk Turtle	1
Great Blue Heron	4	Wood Duck	2	Eastern Painted Turtle	2
Great Horned Owl	12	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	1	Garter Snake sp	2
Hermit Thrush	4	Yellow-billed Cuckoo	4	Green Anole	1
Horned Grebe	1	Yellow-rumped Warbler	1	Northern Water Snake	1
House Finch	12	Total Birds	916	Painted Turtle	10
House Sparrow	52			Red-eared Slider Turtle	1
				Ring-necked Snake	1
				Wood Turtle	1
				Total Rept. & Amphibians	137

Interesting Cases Rehab + Corner

Stories and photos by Jessica Andersen



MANGE SQUIRREL (*Sciurus carolinensis*)

Mange is common in wildlife. It's most often observed affecting foxes and bears, but mange can affect many species — including this squirrel!

This melanistic Eastern Gray squirrel was brought to the Center after being

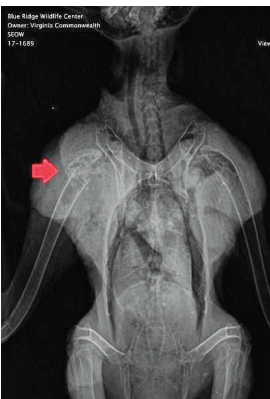


found motionless on the sidewalk. A skin scrape confirmed our suspicion of sarcoptic mange. Both of his corneas (the clear, outermost layer of the eye) had abnormalities, which prevented him from being able to fully see. On top of that, he had a severe bacterial skin infection.

After three weeks of care, this patient

seemed like a completely different squirrel. His skin condition had improved dramatically, and his eye issues resolved with treatment. He was moved to an outdoor enclosure to acclimate to the weather before he was released.

It's important to remember that sarcoptic mange is caused by a specific species of mite that can be spread to any mammal. NEVER attempt to treat mange in the wild. The medications used to kill the mites can be fatal at improper doses or if ingested by other species. For these reasons and others, medicating these animals in the wild isn't legal. If you're concerned about an animal that appears to have mange or another skin disease, please contact the Center for advice. ■



SHORT-EARED OWL AND PEREGRINE FALCON

We were able to take in and successfully treat two less commonly seen birds of prey this winter: a Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*) and a Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*).

Both birds suffered from injured wings that had guarded prognoses for return to full flight. The Short-eared was most likely struck by a car, causing a break in the right humerus (upper wing bone) near the shoulder (see above x-ray). These birds are migratory, coming down to our area and further from Canada during the winter. In order to make these long-dis-



tance journeys, this owl would need to fly perfectly. It was on cage rest for six weeks, with bandage changes two to three times per week. During this time, it was treated with pain medication and physical therapy. Once the bone was stable, the owl was moved to one of our large flight cages.

Our Peregrine patient suffered from a fractured coracoid (a bone associated with the shoulder) before it was found on a homeowner's driveway unable to fly. The wing was bandaged, and the bird was treated with pain medication and physical therapy to ensure full range of motion wasn't lost while the wing healed. Through this intensive care, this bird made a full



recovery and was able to be moved outside to a larger enclosure where it could practice regaining its flight strength. Peregrines rely on their flight to chase and hunt primarily birds, flying high above their prey and diving at speeds of more than 200 mph. Some Peregrine populations migrate as well and must be able to make the full journey to their wintering grounds. We're confident this bird will be released in the upcoming weeks. ■



BARRED OWL WITH BROKEN BEAK

(Strix varia)

This Barred Owl was struck by a car and, while its wings and legs were fine, ended up suffering from a fracture along the tip of its beak. We carefully stabilized his fractured beak, and the owl was kept inside until the beak was strong enough for the bird to eat on its own. After spending time in our circular flight cage building to improve its endurance, the owl was released successfully back where it was found. ■



VIRGINIA OPOSSUM

(Didelphis virginiana)

During the winter, opossums don't hibernate. Instead, they wander in search of food, hunkering down in warm areas on especially cold days. This behavior can cause trouble for opossums, such as this one, which ended up becoming trapped in a trash can while most likely searching for food. The finders called a Frederick County Animal Control officer. While attempting to release the opossum, she noticed an injury at the base of the tail and



brought it to the Center for care.

Due to the wound's location, keeping the site clean was challenging. The opossum required antibiotic medications and a thorough cleaning of the site daily. Our veterinarian was able to suture most of the wound closed at first, leaving an opening to allow for drainage. After a few weeks of healing, she was able to suture the rest of the wound closed.

With a fully healed wound, this opossum rang in the New Year back where she was found after being successfully released. ■



WREN AND BAT CAUGHT IN GLUE TRAPS

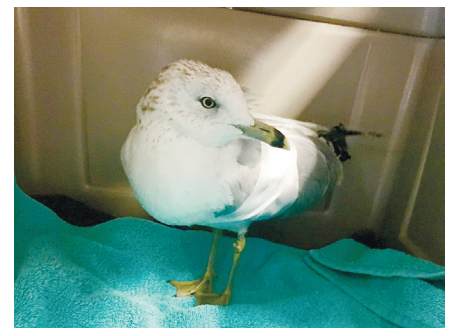
This Carolina Wren (*Thryothorus ludovicianus*) and Big Brown Bat (*Eptesicus fuscus*) were brought to the Center after being removed from glue traps by their finders. Despite best intentions, these animals were doused in oil by their rescuers to remove them, causing additional health issues for these two patients.

We always recommend that you call the Center BEFORE intervening in any wildlife situation and never remove a stuck animal from a glue trap yourself. Though oil-based substances are sometimes used to remove

animals from glue traps, the removal should be done by a professional using the smallest amount of removal agent possible (ideally, a non-toxic, oil-free product that's been made specifically for these cases). Wildlife professionals are able to appropriately handle animals to prevent further injury, unnecessary stress and ensure these animals aren't suffering from dehydration, starvation or other ailments that must be treated before being released.

Both the wren and bat had multiple baths to remove the oil covering their bodies. Unfortunately, oiled wildlife have a worse prognosis than glue trapped ones. The Carolina Wren passed away shortly after intake due to complications caused by the oil. The Big Brown Bat was able to be cleaned and didn't have any further oil complications. Bats brought to the Center in the winter must be kept until spring.

If you find an animal stuck to a glue trap, please keep the animal covered, warm, dark and quiet, then call the Center right away. If you're still using glue traps or know others who are, please encourage them to look into less harmful pest control alternatives. ■



GULLS! (Larus delawarensis)

Ring-billed Gulls are more commonly found along the coast and so aren't typically brought to the Center. Two gulls were transported from an animal hospital in Fredericksburg for treatment of an injured wing and fungal pneumonia, respectively.

Water birds and other aquatic animals, such as some turtles, enjoy our heated, waterbird-specific room, which has two bath tubs in which they can swim and, in the case of birds, bathe themselves to encourage natural waterproofing. ■

Community Matters

By Juselyn Tupik (College of William and Mary, Class of 2020)

My internship with the Center during the summer of 2017 allowed me to not only learn more about Virginia native wildlife, but also about the Piedmont and Shenandoah Valley communities. During my full-time internship, I was enrolled in an online summer class with the College of William and Mary that focused on studying action research. This encourages the researcher to become involved with his/her new community to better understand it.

Immediately after starting my internship, I realized that to understand the Center, I would have to understand those individuals that make its work possible—the public. Because the public is essential to alerting the staff to wildlife in need, I developed a survey to learn more about how people relate to the Center, as well as how the Center can better present their information to suit the needs of its community.

My survey featured three sections: background information, knowledge-based questions to see where education about wildlife is needed, and interest-based questions to see what the public wants to learn about wildlife rehabilitation. My survey results showed that the public is mostly involved with the Center through social media (primarily Facebook) and with the Center’s informative frequent posts. The knowledge-based questions of the survey received a success rate of 84% correct. We were very impressed with this percentage, though it is biased as the survey was given to people who came to the Center or engaged with the Center via Facebook and presumably love wildlife. The survey also showed that public wishes to learn most about the birds that come into the Center, as well as more about wildlife diseases.



Juselyn with an orphaned Opossum.

My experience as an intern allowed me to learn more about wildlife rehabilitation and medicine in order to achieve my dream of becoming a veterinarian in the future. Most importantly, it allowed me to learn about the people and communities that make work like this possible. ■

Wildlife Veterinary Externship

By Ryan Broyles (Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine, Class of 2018)



Caring for wildlife is a responsibility we all share as veterinarians, regardless of whether you work in a small animal hospital, ride in an ambulatory equine truck, or drive farm to farm treating food animals. The skills and knowledge we gain in school provide us with the capability, and therefore the responsibility, to rescue and treat sick or endangered wildlife. Unfortunately, we have limited exposure to wildlife medicine in veterinary school, as the core curriculum revolves mainly around domesticated animals. Consequently, I feel we have an obligation to seek out opportunities to learn about basic treatment and care of wildlife.

The Blue Ridge Wildlife Center hosted me for a three-week externship at their impressive new facility, where I had the opportunity to practice restraint, physical exams, and basic triage of wildlife patients. Dr. Jennifer Riley is an incredibly skilled and knowledgeable veterinarian and her team of certified wildlife rehabilitators do an amazing job not only working with the animals, but also educating the community about the importance of wildlife conservation. The dedication of their volunteers is unlike anything I have seen before. People take time out of their daily lives to help transport animals, care for patients, prepare meals, and keep the hospital looking great. Without their efforts, there is no way the hospital could run as smoothly as it does.

I had the opportunity to participate in a variety of clinical cases involving waterfowl, reptiles, raptors, and even marsupials. By the end of my externship, I truly felt that I could safely and effectively evaluate injured wildlife and take the necessary steps to ensure it receives proper medical care. I thoroughly enjoyed my time at BRWC and I hope other veterinary students in the future take advantage of such a great learning experience.

SCBI Interns

Summer is when we receive most of our interns who help with the increase in patient admittance. In the fall and spring, we work closely with the Smithsonian-Mason School of Conservation who refers students from the fall or spring semester of their Conservation Biodiversity and Society program. Students in this program spend one day per week in a practicum experience (in addition to their coursework) where they can gain practical experience working alongside zoo keepers, researchers, rehabilitators, and veterinarians to learn about careers in conservation.

We had two interns, Shabria Witcher and Dana Ek, spend one day per week with us during the fall semester. Both women were able to learn about wildlife husbandry, wildlife medicine, and conservation by assisting our rehabilitators and veterinarian



Dana Ek with a Black Vulture patient.

with daily tasks including feeding, cleaning, bloodwork and fecal exams, as well as surgeries and medical treatments.



Shabria Witcher with an injured Barred Owl.

If you are interested in a volunteer or intern position with the Center, please see our website for application details! ■

Intern Housing

It's that time of year when we are looking for individuals who are interested in opportunities to learn new skills and gain experience in wildlife rehabilitation. Every year we receive many applicants from the local community as well as from across the country. These interns learn up close what it takes to rehabilitate wildlife, from daily feedings to veterinary care. The spring and summer are our most busy seasons, and interns are the only way we can accept and care for the number of animals that we receive during this timeframe.

The number of out-of-state interns that the Center can accept is entirely dependent on housing, graciously donated by our supporters like YOU. If you or someone you know may be able to donate a room or two in your home for aspiring wildlife stewards, please contact the Center by phone (540-837-9000) or by email Info@blueridgewildlifectr.org. The future of our native wildlife depends on the education and involvement of the next generation! ■

#Giving Tuesday

By Jessica Andersen

Giving Tuesday, the Tuesday after Thanksgiving, is a day to break from the frantic holiday shopping and give back to not-for-profit charities.

This year, the Blue Ridge Wildlife Center embarked on a major Giving Tuesday campaign. Our #GiveAChance campaign highlighted the cost of medical supplies and equipment that are necessary to treat our patients and give them the best chance at a release back to the wild. These medical supplies include radiographs, surgery supplies, anesthesia, pain and antibiotic medications, bandaging materials, fluids, and much more.

The goal of our campaign was \$6,000. This year, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation pledged to match all donations that came through Facebook's donation button on every non-profit organizations' Facebook page (up to \$2 million total). We also received support from our board, who pledged to match over \$3,000 given throughout the day.

At the end of the day, the Center blew past its \$6,000 goal. We received \$1,334 from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. We also received the full amount pledged by our board. In total, we were able to raise over \$12,000 in 24 hours.

We could not #GiveAChance to so many wild lives without the support of people like you. Thank you for caring so much about these animals and providing them the chance to go back to the wild once again!



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.

BRWC HOTLINE: 540.837.9000 | www.blueridgewildlifectr.org | info@blueridgewildlifectr.org

Open House

By Jennifer Burghoffer



The Center was excited to host its first Open House on January 13. The event allowed the public to tour the hospital and wildlife rehabilitation areas, a unique experience for most. Center staff members and volunteers in the Bradley Learning Center, the surgical suite, and kitchen areas were available to describe the work we do. The doors opened at 12:00 p.m., and the response was overwhelming — nearly 1,500 people visited the Center that day! A constant flow of people meandered through the building, learning about education programs, day-to-day care of our wildlife patients, treatments and therapies for injured wildlife, and so much more. The Center sends a huge thanks to all the volunteers who helped make the event happen smoothly, and all who came to learn about and support BRWC. If you missed your chance to see the hospital, join us on Facebook for information about future events!

ABOVE: BRWC volunteer Heather Shanks-Givens explains diet prep to a family that came for the open house. RIGHT: Guests learn about bird wings as they observe and touch one of our biofacts, a Great Blue Heron wing. Photos by Ginger Perry / Winchester Star

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