

# The Ridgeline

NEWSLETTER OF THE BLUE RIDGE WILDLIFE CENTER

ISSUE 38

## Mission and Values Matter

*Orphaned opossums raised at the Center*

Virginia Wildlife Laws | Rehab Corner | Tips for Discouraging Wildlife | Interns | Wildlife Discovery Camp



# What You Can Expect From Us



**Another** successful year is behind us as we start our third year in our new hospital! In March, the Board of Directors, staff, and a few guests came together in a strategic planning session. Our discussions were passionate, lively, respectful, and productive! During this meeting, we revised our mission statement as well as collaborated on the key goals for the organization for the next 3-5 years.

**Our new mission statement is as follows:**  
*To care for native wildlife by integrating veterinary medicine, rehabilitation, education, and research.*

Pretty simple and straightforward. Every day, the staff and volunteers show up to do the best we can do for our native wildlife. And we do so by operating within a set of core values that guide how we do our work.

### Our core values are:

- **Compassion**  
We treat people and animals with empathy and sensitivity always.
- **Professionalism**  
We conduct ourselves to the highest standards in our field and work competently, ethically, and respectfully. We follow all state and federal laws and regulations that pertain to wildlife, our hospital facility, equipment, and staff.
- **Dedication**  
We are dedicated to creating the best future possible for native wildlife through rehabilitation and release in the near term, and inspiring others to protect wildlife and their habitat needs through education.
- **Honesty**  
We are open and honest with the public, staff, and volunteers and provide information that is accurate to the best of our knowledge.
- **Innovation**  
We seek to use the most up-to-date, evidence-based treatments to enhance the care of our patients and to create new approaches based on proven treatments, as necessary. Creative and novel approaches are frequently needed to treat the diverse and often under-studied species that come in for care.

Whether you're a finder, transporter, volunteer, donor, program participant, partner, or visitor, you can be assured that our staff will do all we can to best serve you and our native wildlife, while respecting the law and our values.

In this issue of *The Ridgeline*, we will share with you some wildlife stories, some happy, some sad, and other articles that illustrate how we fulfill our mission and work within our core values to make our region a welcoming one — for humans and native wildlife alike.

Sincerely,

**Hillary Russell Davidson**



Cover photo by Cara Masullo.

## The Ridgeline

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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—Lennap Foundation's property on Island Farm Lane.

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Designed by Dara Bailey Design

# Living with the Laws that Govern Wildlife Rehabilitation in Virginia

By Jennifer Riley, DVM and Hillary Davidson

**As** discussed in our core values, our staff operates with great professionalism and we are committed to providing the best possible patient care within the legal framework provided by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF) and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). We are dedicated to providing the best possible future for our native wildlife by educating citizens on these laws and the benefits of their existence. VDGIF is the permitting body for wildlife rehabilitators in our state and we must follow their guidelines to maintain our permits. Without these permits, we would be unable to help any wildlife.

While their guidelines are broad, some pertain to non-native species while others address animals that are found outside of Virginia. We are always honest and compassionate with finders about what can be done legally in various situations. Many people disagree with various wildlife-related laws; though some may seem unfair or cold at first glance, please consider the facts and explanations below before passing judgement on lawmakers and law-abiding rehabilitators. Those involved are only trying to do what's best for all native wildlife.

## Common Non-native Species in our Region

European Starlings, House Sparrows, and Pigeons are the most common non-native species of birds that are found in this area.

European Starlings were introduced to our country through New York City in 1890 and have done very well for themselves. The USDA has estimated the cost of European Starlings at over \$1 billion per year in the U.S. alone, due to their damage to agricultural crops and trans-



European Starling nestling that had been abandoned by its parents. Photo by Abigaille McCue

mission of diseases that infect humans and livestock.<sup>1</sup> From a native wildlife standpoint, these animals are highly destructive and lethal to many of our native birds as they usurp nesting sites and out-compete native species in multiple ways.

A second non-native species that has wreaked havoc on native bird populations is the House Sparrow. One of the first House Sparrow introductions to the U.S. from England was through New York City in the 1850s and they have

been doing well ever since! They are even better than starlings at outcompeting native birds for nesting sites. Males typically stay year-round and begin defending territory early in the season. This can prevent other birds from nesting in a territory altogether. If a native bird has already nested, House Sparrows will often evict these birds from their nest (as frequently seen with heavily monitored Eastern Bluebird nest boxes), destroy eggs, kill nestlings, and occasionally even kill adults at the nest. They are more successful than our native species at raising large numbers of young and ultimately lead to the decline of the natives.



Many people confuse House Finch fledglings (right) with House Sparrow fledglings (left). House Finches are federally protected and can be treated and released according to the state laws, while House Sparrows cannot. Photo by Dr. Jen Riley



Eastern Bluebird fledglings. Photo by Jessica Andersen





A Sharp-shinned Hawk with trichomoniasis. This protozoan disease is spread by pigeons and others which causes plaques to form in the mouth. Over time, this can prevent normal eating and cause starvation for infected raptors. Photo by Dr. Jen Riley

Feral pigeons, the descendants of Rock Doves, now have well-established populations all over the world. They do well in cities as skyscrapers often replicate the cliffs that their ancestors preferred and adapted to in the wild. Like the European Starlings and House Sparrows, pigeons also carry diseases that can infect humans and other animals. The costs associated with pigeons on human structures and agriculture is cited at over \$1 billion per year.

The most common non-native reptile we see at the Center is the Red-eared Slider. While it is native to the southern U.S., its explosion into other areas is due to the pet-trade industry and their release to the wild by turtle owners who no longer wished to keep them. Red-eared Sliders reach maturity at a younger age and produce greater numbers of offspring, making it harder for our native populations to compete, thrive, and flourish. As with the European Starling, the Red-eared Slider is listed in the top 100 of the world's worst, invasive alien species.<sup>2</sup>

VDGIF does not allow any permitted rehabilitator nor wildlife hospital to treat or release any non-native animals. Since we cannot treat non-native species and it is unlawful for non-permitted individuals to possess them, the best we can do when a non-native is in our custody due to illness, injury, or parentless, is to euthanize it. As animal lovers, most rehabilitators find

it emotionally challenging to euthanize animals simply because they are not native to our region. Legalities and emotions aside, treating and releasing these animals would harm native species and their habitat and would take scarce hospital resources away from the native wildlife that truly needs our care.

Virginia law also prevents us from treating White-tailed Deer from Clarke, Frederick, Shenandoah, and Warren counties. This decision was not made because lawmakers are cruel, but rather due to the presence of a dangerous and highly infectious cervid disease known as Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD). CWD is a progressive disease that slowly causes worsening neurologic signs over years until it becomes so debilitating that the animal will die.

CWD has been documented in the deer population in the four counties mentioned above. To prevent further spread, rehabilitation of fawns in these counties has been shut down entirely. State-wide, it is illegal to rehabilitate deer over 6 months of age for a variety of reasons, primarily safety. Adult deer are very strong — with one well-placed kick, a deer's powerful legs and sharp hooves can severely injure a person. Also, deer that have been habituated to people are more likely to approach and potentially injure people.

Luckily, over 95% of the calls we receive about deer are about healthy fawns that finders suspect have been abandoned. In these cases, we tell the finder to do nothing — a doe only feeds her fawn(s) every

12-24 hours and otherwise leaves it unattended to prevent drawing the attention of predators. She will come back for it when it is time to feed. If mom has been killed, there is a chance another lactating doe will “adopt” the baby if she finds it alone and hungry. If the baby is truly injured AND from one of the counties mentioned above, we recommend calling your local sheriff's office so that they can humanely dispatch the animal to prevent further suffering. If it is from any other county in Virginia, please call the Center so that we can direct you to potential fawn rehabilitators in your area.

Rabies is another fatal disease of major public health concern as it is zoonotic (can affect humans or animals). ANY mammal can become infected with the rabies virus. This includes tiny, eyes-closed orphans and animals like the Virginia Opossum that have a high degree of natural immunity to the virus.

Rabies is most common in the five “rabies vector species” (RVS): Raccoons, Foxes, Groundhogs, Skunks, and Bats. In situations where people report an exposure (bite or scratch from a mammal), or if the finder has been caring for the mammal for an extended period, the local health department must be contacted. Rules regarding exposures vary by state, but in Virginia, authority is given to local health departments to make decisions on potential rabies exposure cases.

Professionals at the health department talk to the finder and ask specific questions to help determine the likelihood of a rabies exposure. If the health department believes an exposure may have occurred, they notify us to prepare that animal for post-mortem testing. Regardless of whether the animal is exhibiting signs of rabies, that animal may be carrying the virus — a virus that is fatal to humans once signs develop. Human health must always be the priority.

Though VDGIF may assist with confiscations or other legal aspects related to a case, neither VDGIF nor BRWC has the right to decide whether the animal in questions can be treated or if it must be euthanized for rabies testing. This decision is made by the local health departments in Virginia and we must act in accordance with their decision.



White-tailed Deer fawn. Photo by Jessica Andersen



Though opossums are much less likely to get rabies than many other mammals, it is important to remember that ANY mammal can get rabies.

Photo by Dr. Jen Riley

### Other State Regulations on Wildlife Rehabilitation

Due to a very recent clarification from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, we may accept, treat and rehabilitate migratory birds brought across state lines to our facility. We still recommend that people check with rehabilitators in their state first for their availability before bringing these birds to us. Non-avian wildlife may not be transported across state lines. When a reptile, amphibian, or mammal comes to the Center from out-of-state, we contact VDGIF for guidance on the disposition of that patient.

Luckily, there are multiple wildlife rehabilitation facilities in Maryland. There are also two avian centers in West Virginia, but both are about 4 hours from our facility. Mammal, reptile, and amphibian rehabilitation is not permitted anywhere in West Virginia. Occasionally, people who know these laws will intentionally give a found location in Virginia when they know the animal is not from our state. Oftentimes, this is discovered through the finder's friends, law enforcement, or social media. We always remind people that lying about a found location is NOT in the animal's best interest.

We typically try to release an adult animal (except RVS animals, which must be released in the county where rehabilitated) back to where it was found. If that found location is not accurate, then disease

*"It is vitally important that we protect the Commonwealth's ecosystem and one of the primary ways to do that is to ensure that we do not intentionally import disease from other states' wildlife populations; we can't stop natural wildlife migration nor would we want to, however, we can prevent humans from artificially migrating non-avian wildlife and non-migratory avian species."*



**Randy Francis**  
Wildlife Permits Coordinator  
VDGIF

spread is always a major concern, especially in reptiles where a novel species of a disease introduced to a new area can cause the death of entire populations. Similarly, introducing a healthy animal into an area with a known disease prevalence, can be a death sentence for that animal. Some animals, such as turtles, have very small home ranges and will spend the rest of the life searching for their home again. Many starve or are struck by vehicles on their attempted journey home. Similarly, mammals learn to survive in their home range. If you move a city squirrel who is used to eating from trash bins and bird feeders to the country, that animal will likely starve to death. Many people who find orphaned or injured non-avian wildlife out of state and know the laws think that getting the animal medical care is the solution, but typically, even when these animals survive care, this results in that animal being released far from its true home, scared and alone with no idea where to find food or shelter. It is a cruel end for these animals.

### What's at Risk?

As expressed in one of our core values, we operate within the laws and regulations that govern wildlife rehabilitation. To do otherwise would jeopardize our ability to care for ANY native wildlife. That scenario would be tragic for all — the public who care about wildlife, the rehabilitators who care for wildlife, and the wildlife itself.

### What should you do?

If you come across an injured or orphaned wild animal, your first step should be to call the Center for further guidance. If that animal truly needs help, then it should be brought to the Center or your local rehabilitator. Regardless of the species or state it is from, that animal should not

be left to suffer in the wild until death. For each patient we admit, we carefully assess the situation and do the best we can for each individual while continuing to follow the state regulations. ■

Footnotes:

<sup>1</sup>Homan, H.J., R.J. Johnson, J.R. Thiele, and G.M. Linz. 2017. European Starlings. Wildlife Damage Management Technical Series. USDA, APHIS, WS National Wildlife Research Center. Ft. Collins, Colorado. 26p.

<sup>2</sup> Global Invasive Species Database (2018). [http://www.iucngisd.org/gisd/100\\_worst.php](http://www.iucngisd.org/gisd/100_worst.php)

## Meet Cara



Cara Masullo joined the Center in April 2018, with experience in avian research, rehabilitation and small animal medicine. After receiving her

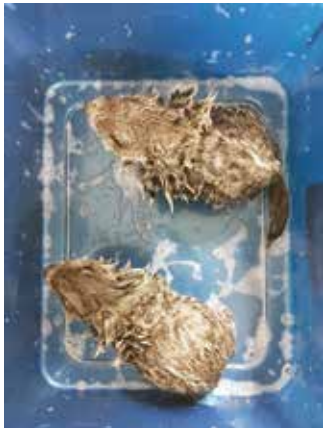
B.S. degree in Wildlife Ecology in 2012 from University of New Hampshire, she worked as a wildlife technician performing research for multiple avian management and conservation studies. Cara earned a A.A.S. degree in veterinary technology from Camden County College, interned at Tri-state Bird Rescue and Research in Delaware and worked with domestic animals as a certified veterinary technician at Garden State Animal Hospital for two years, gaining medical experience with hopes of eventually bringing her skills back into the field of wildlife conservation. We are so excited to have her as the newest addition to our veterinary team!



# Rehab + Corner Medical Edition

By Jennifer Riley, DVM

## SKIN DISEASE!



### GROUNDHOG (*Marmota monax*)

We get a lot of calls about “mangy” animals, but there are actually many types of skin disease that can cause hair loss, itching, and inflamed skin! When animals with these signs come to the Center, we perform necessary diagnostics to make sure we are treating the correct disease.

These Groundhogs came to the Center with patches of hair loss and dry, flaky

skin. Skin scrapes for mites were negative, but culture revealed that this skin issue was caused by dermatophytosis, or “ringworm”. This is a relatively common fungal infection and, luckily, it is treatable. After 30 days of oral antifungal treatment and regular baths, their skin lesions improved and these two were able to move to outdoor caging in preparation for release! ■

*Photos by Dr. Jen Riley*



### RACCOON (*Procyon lotor*)

This Raccoon came to the Center with hair loss and inflamed skin which turned out to be caused by lice. The patient was also suffering from numerous internal parasites. The raccoon responded very well to treatment and was released after 5 weeks of care. ■



*Photos (clockwise) by Dr. Jen Riley, Jessica Andersen and Leah Dunston.*

### RED FOX (*Vulpes vulpes*)

These two juvenile Red Foxes had confirmed sarcoptic mange. This is the type of mange most people are referring to when they talk about mange in wildlife. Both responded well to treatment, which included miticides (drugs that kill mites), antibiotics for secondary skin infections, and baths. Antibiotics and baths are important as the skin issues and associated infections are typically what make these cases fatal. *Photos by Leah Dunston*



Please remember that many skin issues, including sarcoptic mange and ringworm, are zoonotic — they can be spread to humans. Never handle any wild animal without proper protective equipment and if using humane traps on your property, be sure to clean traps between uses. Keep in mind that it is illegal to relocate wildlife in Virginia. If you trap something that requires treatment, we can treat that animal and release it back on your property (or in Clarke county, in the case of rabies vector species) once it is healed. If you trap something that does not require treatment, it should be released right back where it was found.

If you see a “mangy” looking animal, please call the Center, local rehabilitators, or your local animal control department for further advice. Do not attempt to handle these animals and please do not attempt any sort of treatment. Skin issues in animals should be evaluated by professionals and treated by licensed veterinarians when treatment is necessary. ■

## INNOVATIVE TREATMENTS



### EASTERN BOX TURTLE (*Terrapene carolina carolina*)

Wildlife medicine is a constantly evolving field and treatments that were used 5 or 10 years ago may no longer be the standard of care today. At BRWC, we pride ourselves on keeping up with the times and providing the highest quality of care currently available.

For many of our turtle patients, simple fractures can be healed with a variety of techniques that pull pieces of bone together. For shell fractures that are missing bone entirely, vacuum-assisted closure is an excellent option! Negative pressure,



provided by our suction unit, is used to pull discharge and contamination away from the wound bed. This reduces swelling, removes bacteria, and stimulates the growth of new tissue, all of which help the wound heal faster. Once clean and healing well, use of the vacuum is discontinued and the area is given time to harden prior to release. *Photos by Dr. Jen Riley* ■

### VIRGINIA OPOSSUM (*Didelphis virginiana*)

For this juvenile Virginia Opossum, care includes hydrotherapy! This patient was attacked by a dog and suffered from



spinal trauma. Luckily, the spine was not fractured and the cord had not been severed. Though this patient could not use his legs on intake, he has progressed slowly but steadily over time with the help of physical therapy. Water can be extremely useful in physical therapy as it allows animals to use their limbs without having to support their full weight. Since we do not have a tiny underwater treadmill, we used a sling to help hold this patient up while he practiced walking in shallow water. He has been making excellent progress and we are hopeful that he will make a full recovery! *Photo by Dr. Jen Riley* ■

## Saying Goodbye to a Wildlife Ambassador



This spring the Center lost Lucy, our ambassador Red-shouldered Hawk. Lucy came to the Center in 2006 as a fledgling. A well-intentioned finder, not understanding the laws and thinking he would raise her, fed a diet that lacked necessary nutrients and as a result, she had weak and permanently malformed bones. Lucy's multiple folding fractures caused bowing of the limbs which increased her risk of developing arthritis, foot lesions, and other abnormalities.

As our staff knew that this would be a long-term issue for Lucy, we monitored her closely for any signs of pain. About two years ago, it became apparent that she was uncomfortable. We took radiographs to help determine how severe her joint disease had become and to give us a baseline for further progression. We started her on pain medications and reassessed the efficacy of these drugs regularly.

As time progressed, doses needed to be increased and Lucy began developing pressure sores on one foot. When one leg is more painful than the other, birds will shift their weight to put more on their "good" leg. In Lucy's case, neither leg was completely pain-free, but one side was worse than the other. Despite changes to the pain control regimen, Lucy began developing lesions on her "good" foot.

After treating these lesions for multiple weeks and reassessing newer radiographs, our veterinarian and staff became increasingly concerned about Lucy's level of comfort and overall quality of life. After exhausting all other medical options, the decision was made to euthanize Lucy.

Over the past 12 years Lucy has been a great ambassador for the Center, teaching thousands of people about Red-shouldered Hawks, their natural history, and the problems they face. Those who have attended our educational programs and events have developed a greater love and appreciation for these hawks after meeting Lucy. We are sure she will be well-remembered by many! *Photo by Jessica Andersen*



# Discouraging Unwanted Wildlife Around Your Home



**While** many of us enjoy watching the wildlife that live on our property, sometimes these animals venture a little too close for comfort — either denning beneath our sheds, making nests in our attics, or finding shelter inside our basements. While human safety is always a priority, perspective can go a long way. As humans encroach on wildlife habitats, it's not surprising that wild animals are adapting to our human structures.

Handling wild animals in spaces we'd prefer them to vacate can be tricky and even dangerous. We never encourage people to handle wildlife directly to remove them. Wildlife that feel cornered and have no escape are more likely to lash out and bite in self-defense.

Here are some easy, hands-off tips to try to encourage these animals to move out of these shared spaces:

- 1.** Household ammonia soaked in rags or tennis balls. Household ammonia replicates the scent of a predator marking its territory. This simple repellent technique can help encourage mammals that are denning or nesting in unwanted areas to leave. Placing soaked rags around the entrances of these den sites makes the area seem dangerous or undesirable and puts the animal on high-alert. Most often this will encourage these animals to move to another den site by their own accord. Mammals like groundhogs, foxes, skunks, and raccoons will make sure to take their babies with them as they leave. Give these animals 2-3 days to fully exit before sealing up the area they had been denning in — whether that's filling in holes beneath sheds or fixing access holes in roofs or siding. If you do not seal the access point, that animal (or another animal) will likely move in after the ammonia wears off.

- 2.** Shiny balloons, wind chimes, pin wheels, and/or loud music. Wildlife for the most part are shy creatures; they don't want to be in an area where they feel threatened or constantly must look over their shoulders. Putting items in your yard that move in the wind, make noise, or throw around light can overwhelm a wild animal's senses and make that location undesirable. Groundhogs are especially nervous in areas of loud noise and a lot of movement. Make sure to move these distracting items and adjust the music or noise level every few days to prevent animals from becoming desensitized.

- 3.** Physical sealing of access points after removal of babies. The time of year is very important when considering this eviction technique. When not with babies, many animals, like bats and raccoons, are more active at specific times of day. If you are trying to remove bats, wait until evening when the bats have left the roost. Find the exit and seal it over so they cannot return. Raccoons are also most often during the evening — wait until the animal has exited, then seal the entrance.

If it is spring or summer, then many of these animals may have babies. If you are sealing up an entrance and preventing animals from entering, you are also preventing them from getting to their babies. Animals should not be excluded from their den/nest/roost until after summer to ensure babies are able to leave with their parents.

- 4.** Havahart Traps. Live traps such as Havahart traps can be used to physically remove an animal from inside a home or near an undesirable area. However, keep in mind — trapping an adult does not solve the problem if there are babies in the area. Trapped wildlife must be released on the

homeowner's property — they CANNOT legally be relocated to another property in the state of Virginia. The State/VDGIF has made this law for many reasons — one being that relocation is often a death sentence for wildlife. They often get into fights with animals already living in that new area or end up putting themselves into more danger crossing roads and other human-dense areas trying to return to where they came from. It can also be extremely stressful for these animals to be placed in a new, strange place, where they don't know where to find food, water, and shelter. Relocation of animals can also cause the spread of disease to the animal populations in that new area. If there are other homes nearby, relocation often just creates a nuisance issue for residents of that area.

If eviction and other non-lethal methods have not worked, keep in mind that some lethal options are far more humane than others. Lethal methods of pest control should only be used as a last resort and should be placed in a way that avoids the death or injury of non-target species. "Snap traps" are generally the most humane lethal method of rodent control, but like many other methods, they are nondiscriminatory, meaning that non-target animals can succumb to or be injured by these traps. If used, these traps should be placed in areas where other wildlife, pets, and children have minimal exposure risk. This includes confined areas such as a closed kitchen cabinet or area of the house blocked off to people and pets. They should never be placed outside a home where other wildlife is likely to get caught. These traps must be checked multiple times daily in case of any releases of the trap where a non-target animal may be injured and require care.

While pests can cause structural damage to homes and health concerns to humans,



we do not condone inhumane methods of pest control. These methods include poisoning and glue traps. Poison is not only incredibly painful for the animals that consume it, but it can also affect non-target animals. Domestic animals and wildlife may come into contact with the poison directly or with the poisoned pests, causing suffering and unnecessary death to them as well. We have received multiple animals suffering from secondary rodenticide poisoning, mostly raptors, who prey on rodents that have ingested poison. By the time these predators are found

and brought to the Center, it is often too late for us to reverse the lethal effects of secondary poisoning. Glue traps, even for intended targets, cause death via starvation, dehydration, or stress myopathy, and can take days to kill the suffering animal. With multiple humane options available, inhumane options are never warranted.

As always, if you ever have questions or would like advice on how to humanely exclude wildlife from human areas, please call the Center to discuss your unique situation with a staff rehabilitator. ■

## Renesting Success!

**You** may recall in Issue 37 of *The Ridgeline*, we encouraged the practice of renesting healthy baby birds who were found outside of their nest or their nest was destroyed. This year we have had incredible successes with renesting! While many mammal and songbird reunions are advised and successful, this year over 60% of young raptors that we have received have been successfully renested. These babies were brought in because they were found out of the nest. Some required a short stint of treatment — subcutaneous fluids to rehydrate, a few good meals to maintain weight, and then sent back out with a staff member to assess and renest where they were found. Some cases did not require coming to the Center; in these cases, a staff member or volunteer reha-

bilitator went out and assessed the bird in the field, and healthy animals were quickly put back in the tree they came from, or a makeshift nest was created to get the bird off the ground.

Often, we put these birds back and don't normally learn of their progress, but a few Barred Owl fledglings became quite popular among the residents of Purcellville, Virginia when they fledged from a tree along one of its main roads. Purcellville residents affectionately named these owls "Oscar" and "Olivia". Residents erected signs to notify citizens that BRWC staff had assessed the owls as healthy and to expect the birds to be seen on tree limbs or on the ground. We received updates as this Barred Owl family continued to thrive and do well. It is heartwarming to see a community come together for the well-being of their wild neighbors!

Young wildlife always do better under the care of their natural parents, and while we do the best that we can, we cannot rep-

licate the same experience or knowledge that a wild parent can pass on to their offspring. If renesting is a viable option, it should always be tried first, and is often even tried again after the animal has been brought in for care. Thank you to all those involved with renesting attempts and successes so far this year! ■



Caleb Epperson, with support of Hillary Davidson, creates an area to renest a fallen Eastern Screech Owl. Photo by Julie Epperson



Renesting a Barred Owl fledgling in Purcellville. Photos used with permission from Paul Kakol



A closer view of the manmade nest in which a fallen Eastern Screech Owl was placed. Photo by Hillary Davidson

# Internships

**Spring** is a busy time for the Center. Over half of our annual patient load comes in between April 1st and July 1st — over just three months!

This includes many orphaned babies, but also many injured patients. In the spring, we average 10 intakes per day and at least one surgery per day. With a patient load this high, we need all the help we can get! Luckily, each year, we fill 12-15 intern posi-

tions to help us with our day-to-day tasks. Most are rehabilitation interns, those that help with the feedings and cleaning, while others are veterinary interns (veterinary students who assist our veterinarian), education interns (those who help our education manager with programs and summer camp), or administrative interns (those who assist the Executive Director).

If you're interested in helping wildlife,

please consider applying for our internship program or consider housing one of these summer interns! Many are from out-of-state and require housing provided by local families with a room to spare. Without these interns (and those who house them), we would not be able to care for the large number of intakes we get each spring and summer!

## Meet some of our interns

### **RACHEL DURRWACHTER** Veterinary Intern



I'm Rachel and I have been one of the veterinary interns at BRWC this summer. This internship has helped me immensely by allowing me to not only learn new skills, but also by allowing me to see information from the classroom applied in a clinical setting. I have really enjoyed working with Dr. Jen; she is great at teaching and very patient! I have especially enjoyed learning how to repair turtle shell fractures and assisting in many interesting surgeries. I have a special interest in radiology, so I have really enjoyed getting to take and interpret x-rays on patients. I have had a great time here and would strongly recommend this internship to any veterinary student looking to get lots of hands-on experience with wildlife!

*Rachel Durrwachter, University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine, VMD Candidate, Class of 2020*

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### **HAILEY MACARTHUR-SENEDEK** Education Intern



My name is Hailey MacArthur-Senedek and I am the Wildlife Education Intern at Blue Ridge Wildlife Center. I am a third year Natural Resources Management major at The Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio. My career goals for the future include working as a wildlife educator at a National or State Park to help the public learn about wildlife and the importance of conservation. I came to the Blue Ridge Wildlife Center to gain hands-on experience caring for the native wildlife brought in for rehabilitation and to gain experience educating the public about native wildlife. It has been a dynamic and diverse learning environment for me and I look forward to spending the rest of my summer here learning more!

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### **JESSIE KOERNER** Administrative Intern



I am Jessie Koerner (Accounting major at Western Carolina University) and this summer I interned for Blue Ridge Wildlife Center as an Administrative Intern. I have learned so much over the course of this summer and was thrilled to find out that I could be helping this outstanding non-profit organization without wanting to be a vet. In this journey, I have learned many things about how a successful business should be run. I've also learned how important doing the little things right is, as well as expanding my knowledge on other business matters. I think this internship will really help me as I continue to grow in my career. The people here are super nice and devoted to what they do, and I feel very fortunate that I was able to experience it first hand as well as assist them. Although, I have only been here a short amount of time I really feel like I've really gotten some critical skills that I will be needing as I further in my degree.



**TABOR THWING** Rehabilitation Intern



Hey! I'm Tabor Thwing from Winchester, Virginia and I am currently an intern at the Blue Ridge Wildlife Center. I graduated from John Handley High School in 2016 and will be a junior this fall at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee. While working at the Center, I have been lucky enough to help so many species, many of which I have never seen up close before. However, the animals at the Center only make up part of the entire experience of working there. The people here are incredible! Staff, interns, and volunteers work together to get every job done, whether it's laundry or an emergency surgery. One thing I've learned while working here is that every species must be cared for differently, meaning you have to think outside of the box and improvise to treat different animals. For example, there was a snapping turtle with a fractured shell that couldn't be sutured together, so the head vet, Dr. Jennifer Riley, attached massive zip-ties to the shell fragments with epoxy and tightened them together to allow the shell to heal correctly. Working with so many species and seeing the inventive ways that the staff members care for them make this internship very exciting! ■

# Baby Shower



Despite the rain, the Center's 8th Annual Baby Shower was held as planned, and was a success! Over 500 guests enjoyed games, activities, and appearances by our Wildlife Ambassadors Beeker, Grills, Rufio, and others! Guests also had an opportunity to learn about bees and other pollinators, and native plants from our event partners. We are grateful for the Museum of the Shenandoah Valley, the Shenandoah Valley Discovery Museum, and the Northern Shenandoah Valley Master Gardeners Association for helping the BRWC staff and volunteers make this event successful. We would also like to thank our food vendors, Pirate Rooster Pizza and Sweet Elephant Bakery for braving the weather to provide food and desserts for our attendees. Lastly, we are thankful to our event sponsors for their wonderful support of the BRWC and its efforts to help native wildlife in need: JCS Home Services, Cardinal Technology Services, and Kim T. Smith Insurance. ■



# Wildlife Discovery Camp

Our annual Wildlife Discovery Camp ended mid-July, after four weeks of wild fun. Campers learned about many aspects of the natural world from pollinators to the mechanics of flight to conservation. One week of camp had the opportunity to work with the veterinarian daily on a wild patient case study similar to those handled by the BRWC on a daily basis; another week met conservation police officers and other wildlife warriors. Campers took a silent walk in the woods around the Center, listening for birds and other wildlife after learning about animal communication; they observed tadpoles and the other life stages of frogs at the pond; and had daily face-to-face encounters with our Wildlife Ambassadors. The BRWC staff are proud



to continue the tradition of providing nature-based learning for the next generation through our summer camps held on the Burwell-van Lennep Foundation Island Farms property. *Photos by Jessica Andersen*



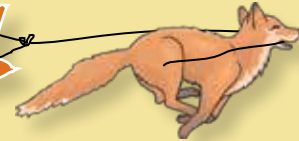
## Social Media



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](http://www.blueridgewildlifectr.org) | [info@blueridgewildlifectr.org](mailto:info@blueridgewildlifectr.org)

~ Save the Date! ~



BLUE RIDGE WILDLIFE CENTER INVITES YOU TO

# BORN to be WILDlife

2018  Gala

• A GALA TO BENEFIT OUR NATIVE WILDLIFE •

**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 29**  
LOCKSLEY MANOR • MILLWOOD, VIRGINIA

*The home of our Honorary Chairs, Danielle and Ronald M. Bradley*

Be prepared for a night of beautiful landscapes, wildlife surprises, local food and live music.

More than the animals will be wild!



For more information about the Gala, contact Event Chair, Lisa Goshen [lisagoshen18@gmail.com](mailto:lisagoshen18@gmail.com)