

The Ridgeline

PUBLICATION OF BLUE RIDGE WILDLIFE CENTER

ISSUE 44



2019 Annual Report

This Gray Tree Frog has recovered from his surgical amputation and is hanging with us until May 1.

Vector-borne Diseases | Overwintering Reptiles and Amphibians | Rehab Corner | Reuniting Wild Babies | Education Updates



This issue, our annual report for 2019, is special for Blue Ridge Wildlife Center as it marks our 16th year of *The Ridgeline* publication—sharing stories about our native wildlife, human-wildlife conflicts, and the positive impacts we have in our community and beyond.

With each passing year, the need for a wildlife hospital in northern Virginia is reinforced. For 2019, we had an increase in our patient admissions over 2018 and a 40% increase since moving into our wildlife-exclusive hospital in 2016. Impressively, in 2019, we helped 2,282 wild animals from 29 counties.

Last year we focused on reducing the intake of young, healthy wildlife, working instead to educate the community on how to reunite healthy babies with their parents when possible. This means that a greater percentage of the wildlife we admitted had a critical need for our hospital services and required more radiographs, surgeries, medications, and laboratory diagnostics.

Our rehabilitation staff focused on providing services for those that have been injured or sick to help them to regain the health and strength they need to rejoin the wild—versus being a surrogate parent when the real parent is still in the wild. We do not kid ourselves—we are totally bested by natural parents when it comes to raising healthy babies!

We handled over 10,000 phone calls in 2019 from people not only in Virginia, but across the US, answering their concerns of what to do when a wildlife issue presents itself. These calls allow us to coach citizens on how to reunite babies with parents, to provide clear guidance for animals that need medical care, and to alleviate concerns over normal wildlife behaviors.

BRWC does not charge for our veterinary and rehabilitation services. If you are a guardian of a dog, cat or other domestic pet, you know what happens when one of yours becomes sick—you take it to a doctor and expect to pay for services rendered. When Mother Nature’s children become sick or injured, no one is obligated to pay—so, we must all step up to cover the costs of care for her children—the native wildlife!

Please consider a gift to help cover the costs of the critical veterinary care and rehabilitation services we provide for the most overlooked members of our community—native wildlife—and to continue educating citizens on good environmental stewardship for the benefit of all living things.

Most 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.

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

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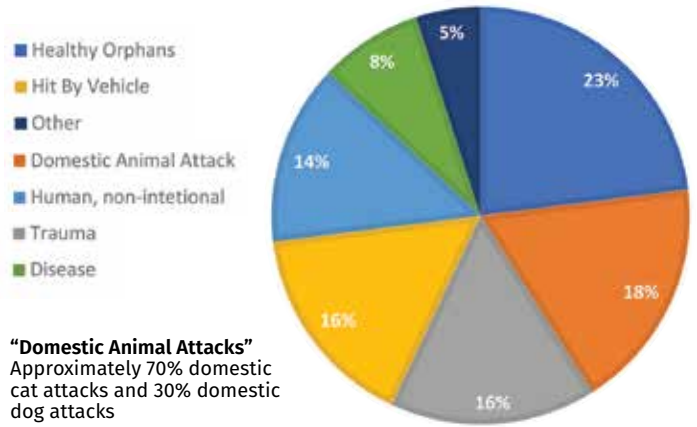
2019 in Review

We admitted 2,282 patients at BRWC in 2019 and had a survival rate (excluding the first 24 hours) of approximately 70% (similar to previous years). Though not as dramatic a patient load increase as last year, we have continued to take in more patients each year with this year showing a modest 3.5% increase from 2018 and a 40% total increase since moving into our hospital in 2016.

Patient Breakdown



Reason for Admission



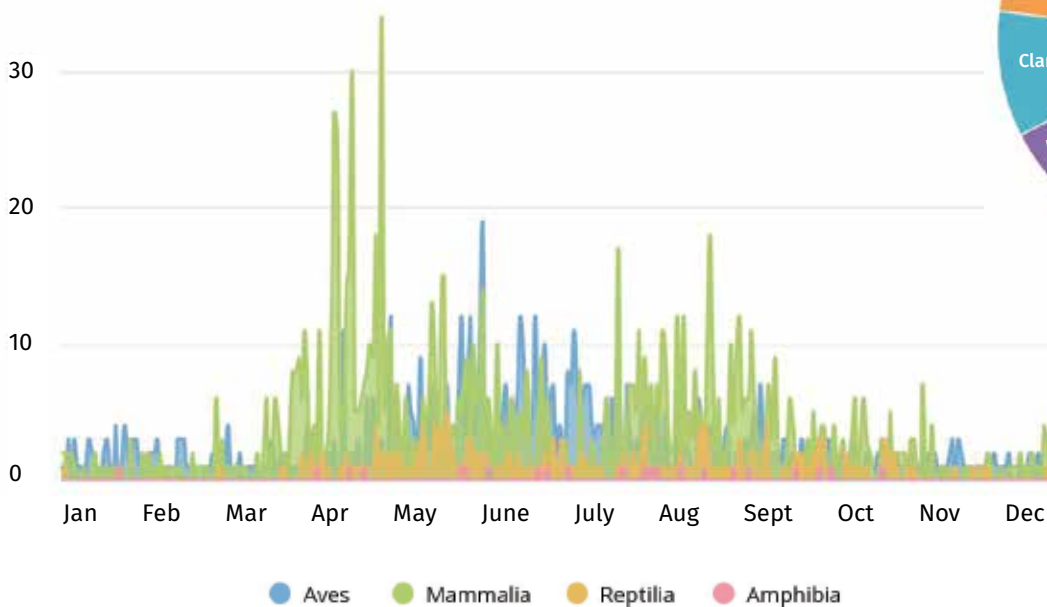
“Domestic Animal Attacks”
Approximately 70% domestic cat attacks and 30% domestic dog attacks

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

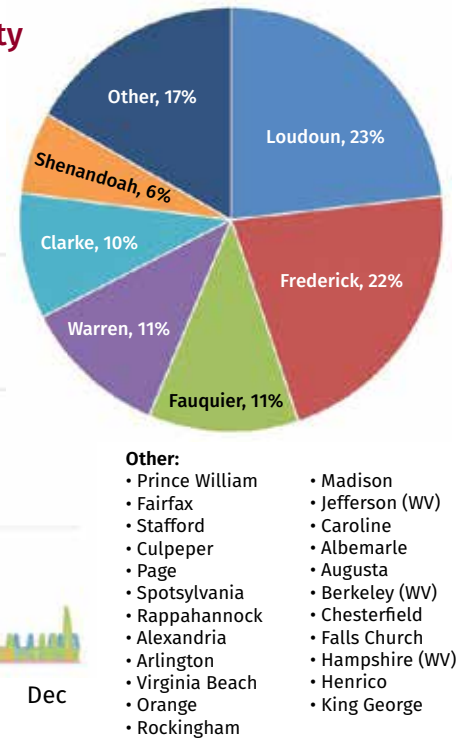
“Human non-intentional” Examples include hit by lawnmowers/weedwhackers, caught on barbed-wire fencing or mesh garden netting, stuck on glue traps, covered in oil, etc.

“Other” Examples include window strikes, gunshots, cases of toxicity, etc. We see a massive amounts of lead toxicity in our scavenging species, but most of these cases come in due to trauma with toxicity as a less direct cause of admission. These toxicity cases are already accounted for in the trauma/hit by car sections.

Monthly Patient Intakes



Intakes by County



- Other:**
- Prince William
 - Fairfax
 - Stafford
 - Culpeper
 - Page
 - Spotsylvania
 - Rappahannock
 - Alexandria
 - Arlington
 - Virginia Beach
 - Orange
 - Rockingham
 - Madison
 - Jefferson (WV)
 - Caroline
 - Albemarle
 - Augusta
 - Berkeley (WV)
 - Chesterfield
 - Falls Church
 - Hampshire (WV)
 - Henrico
 - King George

2019 Highlights



We treated 134 unique native species—14 of which have never been treated at the Center before, including a Least Weasel (above), a Golden-crowned Kinglet (above right), and a Northern Goshawk (right).



We took over 600 radiographs and performed over 130 surgeries.



We treated twice as many amphibians as any previous year and are currently overwintering several patients including this American Bullfrog. As finders continue to see that rehabilitators can and do successfully treat and release these species, we expect our amphibian numbers to continually rise each year.



We presented nearly 90 educational programs to >7,000 people including our first annual WildFest event (shown above) and our summer Wildlife Discovery Camp (right).



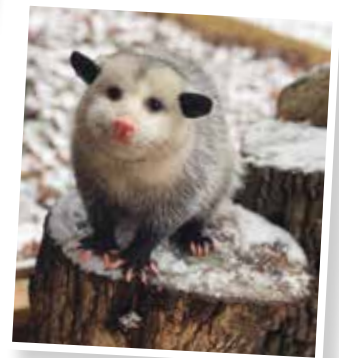
In 2019, in addition to training dozens of volunteers, we trained over two dozen future wildlife professionals as rehabilitation interns, veterinary students, and veterinary technician students.



Our staff attended various conferences throughout the year so that we can continue to provide the highest-quality care with the most current knowledge. We attended conferences for the American Association of Zoo Veterinarians, the Veterinary Meeting and Expo, the National Wildlife Rehabilitators Association, and the International Association of Avian Trainers and Educators. Our veterinarian and rehabilitation program manager also presented multiple lectures at conferences including the North Carolina Regional Wildlife Medicine Symposium and our own annual continuing education event (above right).



The Center has been involved with five research projects in 2019! One involves looking for La Crosse virus in our squirrels. Here you can see our veterinarian and veterinary technician collecting blood from a squirrel for this study. Learn more about this project and others on page six.



We welcomed two new wildlife ambassadors this year—Vega, our Turkey Vulture, and Nigel, our Virginia Opossum (shown above), whom YOU helped name. Both of these ambassadors were unable to be released, but they will teach countless people appreciation and the importance of our native wildlife species.

Fewer “healthy” babies is a good thing!

While patient numbers have increased, we’ve actually seen decreases in some areas—such as the percentage of healthy babies brought in for care. In 2016, the first year in our full-service hospital, 72% of our 843 “baby” patients were healthy—typically orphans or abductions, the terms we use for babies inappropriately separated from their parents. Though the number of babies we take in each year increases, the number of healthy babies has gone down dramatically with 2019 showing that just 42% of 1,199 babies were healthy babies and only 5% of those were abductions. Though our patient load AND number of babies has increased by about 40% in this timeframe, we actually saw FEWER healthy babies this year!

Though healthier is usually considered “better”, in the case of a wildlife hospital, “healthy” often means that inadequate attempts were made to reunite babies with their parents. Yes, there will always be many true orphans—youngsters whose parents have been confirmed as dead. However, in our experience, this is NOT most wild babies that enter rehabilitation facilities. Most babies are kidnapped by well-intentioned finders who want to help a seemingly struggling baby.

In the past few years, we have made it a goal to reduce these abductions and encourage reuniting/re nesting as much as possible. Our staff worked tirelessly to educate finders over the phone about reuniting/re nesting to help prevent healthy babies from being unnecessarily separated from their families. And it worked! We are confident we can continue to lower this percentage each year until abductions reach 0%.

Education is a key part of our mission and it is helping keep healthy babies out of the hospital so they can be raised by the very best—their parents! ■

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Recycle? Consider leaving your past copies of The Ridgeline at your doctor’s office, local coffee shop, or hair salon. Sharing our newsletter with others helps us all care for native wildlife!

Supporter Spotlight: Kristi Titus

Kristi has been a volunteer and supporter for the last six years, making her one of our longest-running volunteers. Kristi has evolved throughout her time here, going from a Center volunteer, to becoming a permitted home rehabilitator! This past year, not only did Kristi put in the MOST hours of all our volunteers (more than 500 hours!), she also did a multitude of rescues and transports, and cared for 63 patients in her home until they were old enough to be transferred back to the Center for pre-release conditioning. We want to share her story with you—so we asked her a few questions:



What's your favorite native wildlife species?

Definitely a Barred Owl. They have such a beautiful, serene face and their call is pretty cool too.

What got you interested in volunteering at a wildlife center?

At the school where I teach, the science teacher showed her students a live barn owl webcam because we dissected owl pellets every year. I started watching the webcam too. Then, I started watching a webcam for a wildlife rehabilitation center in Malibu, California. I made friends with the moderator. I went out to visit. The rehabber taught me how to feed baby squirrels. Little did I know, I was really good at it. The most ironic part is that as I grew up afraid of all animals—dogs, wildlife, everything. Now, I prefer to be surrounded by animals. I look forward to my weekly volunteer day. Even when I spend most of the day doing dishes, cleaning, and doing laundry, I still know I make a difference.

What's your favorite memory while volunteering?

I had a really hard time with this question because there are so many memories. It is hard to pick one. I have been fortunate enough to do raptor releases for BRWC, and I just love to watch the owl/hawk fly off into the great blue yonder. I think I can remember almost every release I have done—raptor, songbird, turtle, opossum, skunk, squirrel, and the list goes on.

What fun things do you do outside of rehab?

I have a full-time job as a teacher. That involves a lot of homework. I volunteer all day on Saturdays, so there is very little free time—only one day a week! When I am rehabbing at home, too (March - November), I'm even busier. However, when there is time, I love to read, spend time with friends, watch baseball (Nationals ... even before they won the Series) and football (not even going to admit to the team I like), listen to podcasts, walk, and quilt.

This year, you rehabilitated more opossums than anything else— what's your favorite fact about them?

I love my opossums. Their ears are their best feature! However, I like to impress people with the fact that they are North America's only marsupial, and they also have more teeth than any other land animal.

Thanks Kristi, for all your hard work and support all these years!

Vector-borne Diseases

By Jen Riley, DVM

Though we provide medical care for over 2,000 wild patients each year, the physical treatment of individual animals is only one part of what we do at the Center. We also help protect human health! But what role could a wildlife hospital play in protecting and promoting public health?

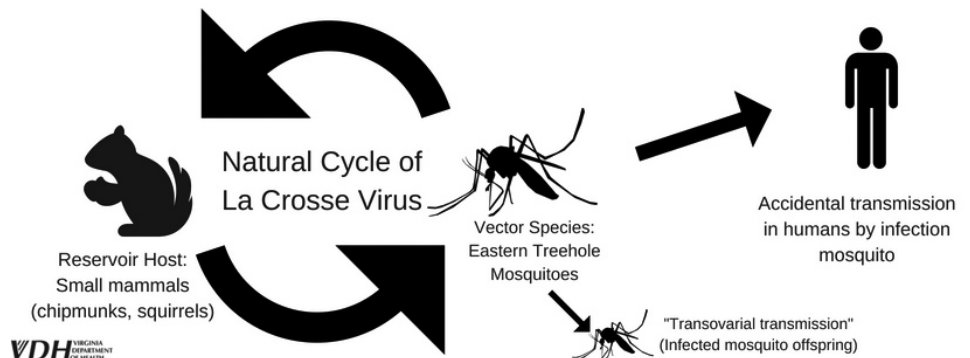
Many diseases have the power to impact human, animal, and environmental health. Wildlife hospitals are in a unique position to gather data that can help all living things.

At BRWC, we study a variety of these One Health issues including vector-borne diseases. As global temperatures continue to rise, many disease vectors, such as mosquitoes and ticks, are expanding their ranges and bringing diseases with them. We are working with Virginia Tech and Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study (SCWDS) to look into some of these vectors and diseases to gather information which will ultimately be used to make more informed decisions about public health management.

We collect ticks from patients for SCWDS in an effort to determine the hosts and range for the invasive Asian Longhorned Tick, a tick native to the far east that has been a challenge for livestock in Australia/New Zealand where it is also invasive. This tick was first discovered in the U.S. in 2017 in New Jersey, but after re-examining earlier tick samples, was confirmed as early as 2010 in West Virginia. It is unclear how the tick made it to the U.S., though a domestic animal importation is the most likely cause. As males are not needed for reproduction in this species, a single introduced female tick can create a

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

When we protect one, we help protect all.



La Crosse Virus is primarily maintained in a cycle between the Eastern tree-hole mosquito (*Aedes triseriatus*) and small mammals, such as chipmunks and squirrels. The mosquito is the vector in this case. Humans are considered "dead end" hosts because they do not develop enough virus in their bloodstream to re-infect mosquitoes and continue the transmission cycle. Credit: Virginia Department of Health—vdh.virginia.gov.

sustainable population in a new area on her own.

The Asian Longhorned Tick is known to transmit the agents of certain livestock and human diseases in other countries including: anaplasmosis, babesiosis, ehrlichiosis, theileriosis, rickettsiosis, and multiple viruses. The first step to learning more about the tick is to determine its hosts and range. We have identified this tick on many patient species throughout Virginia and we were the first to find this tick on a bird in North America—a Red-tailed Hawk! The tick has since been found on other birds. A flighted host has implications for how this tick might be able to spread more quickly than expected. In 2019 and into 2020, we are continuing to work with SCWDS to learn more about this tick and prepare ourselves for its potential impact on humans and other animals.

We also collect ticks for identification for Virginia Tech. This study is not only looking at the species of ticks seen on various wild species, but also at the viruses those ticks may be carrying, including Po-

wassan virus. Powassan virus is a relatively rare neuro-invasive disease, though cases have been reported in humans each year and the number of reported cases has been increasing. Impacted humans have most commonly been reported from the Great Lakes area, but there has been a human case in Virginia as well. By collecting both ticks and blood samples from patients, researchers at Virginia Tech are able to look for Powassan and other viruses to see if it can be found in the ticks or in the serum of the tick's host.

We also collect blood from squirrel and chipmunk patients specifically to look for La Crosse Virus, a mosquito-vector disease for which squirrels and other small mammals are a *reservoir* (a population in which the infectious agent normally lives and multiplies). Like Powassan, there have been relatively few cases, however, multiple cases have been reported in Virginia in the last decade. By learning more about these diseases and their vectors, we can better track who is most likely to be exposed and start targeting ways to prevent human cases.

Having information about emerging vector-borne diseases can be essential for physicians and veterinarians to help them choose which diagnostics to run. Next time you receive an accurate diagnosis from your personal doctor, think about what enabled them to draw that conclusion—your diagnosis may have been reached with the support of a wildlife hospital and a local squirrel! ■

Overwintering Reptiles and Amphibians

By Jessica Andersen

October 1st is a special date for rehabilitators in Virginia—it is the last date reptiles and amphibians can legally be released until the following spring. Any reptiles or amphibians still requiring care after October 1st must stay in care until May 1st, when the weather is reliably warmer, and food is plentiful.

We are currently overwintering 12 Eastern Box Turtles, 1 Eastern Painted Turtle, 2 Eastern Ratsnakes, 1 Gray Tree Frog, and 1 American Bullfrog. These patients are housed individually in one of our temperature-controlled patient rooms so that the room can be kept warm during the colder months. Patients cannot heal well while brumating (an energy-conserving state that some animals use in the winter), so our reptiles and amphibians stay warm, active, and awake until healing is complete! Learn more about three of our patients that came to us after October 1 and are currently overwintering at the Center.

Eastern Box Turtle (19-2015) has come a long way since her intake in early October. She came in with a serious upper respiratory infection and mucoid discharge from her nose and eyes, causing her eyes to be swollen shut. She was started on a nebulization treatment, where she was placed in a chamber with medication dispersed in the air around her. With treat-



Gray Tree Frog recovering from a severe leg injury, displaying excellent camouflage capability.

Photo by Dr. Jen Riley.

ment, she eventually regained her vision however, she refused to eat and needed to be tube fed periodically. Finally, on a day in mid-December, our staff offered her an earthworm—and she ate it! Since then, her appetite has returned, and she is now eating regularly on her own and looking much brighter and more active!

Gray Tree Frog (19-2064) came to us with a severe injury to its right hind leg—the tissue and bone had already died and could not be saved. Surgery was successfully performed to amputate the dead tissue, and the wound healed in under three weeks. Despite missing its right hind foot,



This Eastern Ratsnake required care after a Red-tailed Hawk attack. *Photo by Miranda McCleaf.*

this frog has displayed excellent climbing abilities throughout its enclosure—climbing on and hanging from branches, maneuvering into small hollow logs to hide, etc. We are excited to release this patient back to its home in the spring!

Eastern Ratsnake (19-2154) was admitted in late October—after an attack by a formidable predator—a Red-tailed Hawk! The finder of this snake looked out their window and saw a hawk, on the ground, entangled with its intended meal. Eventually, the hawk freed itself and flew off. When the hawk did not return for a second attempt at its prey, the finder brought the snake in for examination. This snake had suffered some lacerations as well as a wound inside the mouth and was treated with pain medications and antibiotics. We do not recommend interfering in a native predator attack, as predators expend large amounts of precious energy to find and catch food, but since the hawk did not return after a length of time, this snake required care to prevent further suffering. ■



This Eastern Box Turtle was treated for a serious upper respiratory infection but is now eating regularly on her own and feeling much better. *Photo by Dr. Jen Riley.*



**Blue Ridge Wildlife Center
Combined Federal Campaign
CFC# 54098**

Rehab + Corner Interesting Cases

By Jessica Andersen



Swamp Sparrow (*Melospiza georgiana*)

This Swamp Sparrow was the first of its species to come into our hospital. This passerine was found unable to fly with head trauma, most likely from striking a window. After just a few days in care, this bird had regained its ability to fly and was released.

These sparrows overwinter in our area and breed north of here. Migratory birds face many dangers, but windows are one of the most challenging, especially in areas along migratory flyways (such as the east coast). Windows can look like clear pathways through buildings, or even reflect natural areas behind birds. Depending on the amount of speed at impact and the distance the bird falls, window strikes can kill instantly, or leave a bird too injured to flee from predators or survive inclement weather.

You can minimize the probability of window strikes by drawing curtains in front of windows that provide a visual tunnel through a home, apply decals or screens, or paint the outside of a window to break up confusing reflections.

Photo by Jessica Andersen.



American Robin (*Turdus migratorius*)

This American Robin may look small, but she has the blood of a predator—in this case, the blood of a Red-tailed Hawk!

This patient came in with packed cell volume (percentage of red blood cells) of 4%. Normal for this species is about 40% and we generally consider performing a blood transfusion around 15%. Her packed cell volume was the lowest we had ever seen at the Center in a live animal. Unfortunately, we did not have any other robins or more closely related birds in care that would have been an appropriate donor, so one of our Red-tailed Hawk patients was the best option. Luckily, we have had good transfusion successes with birds of different species.

Though hardly responsive on intake, this robin responded well to the transfusion and quickly became alert and even started eating on her own. It is important to remember that transfusions are not a simple fix, but rather a procedure that allows us time to address the underlying cause. Unfortunately, this patient passed

away in care as we were not able to find an underlying cause and she was not able to generate her own blood cells with time after the donated cells began to die off. Despite the loss of the patient, the transfusion itself was a great success and the first successful transfusion we have done across such a large taxonomic gap. From a perspective of education and innovation, this case was one of our most important cases of the year.

Photo by Jessica Andersen.



American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*)

This female American Kestrel was found on the ground, unable to fly and trying to hide in the finder's driveway. While she didn't have any obvious injuries on intake, she was having difficulty flying and was in poor body condition. After gaining strength, she was moved into an outdoor enclosure where she continued to improve, making longer and longer flights each day. After about a month in care, she was finally cleared for release.

American Kestrels are North America's smallest falcon. They are also one of only a few raptors that display

sexual dimorphism (color differences between sexes). Males will have gray-blue coloration on their wings, while females have a rusty brown coloration over their back and wings, dotted in black.

Photo by Jessica Andersen.



Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*)

This year we saw increases in many different types of animals. We admitted four times as many Bald Eagles in 2019 as we did in 2018, coming from locations in Alexandria, Fairfax County, Stafford County, and other areas throughout Virginia. We were even lucky enough to end our year with a Bald Eagle release, after an eagle with a coracoid fracture finally recovered enough to be released back in Oakton where it was originally found. As an adult with a full white head and tail, these birds likely have mates, territories, nests, and potentially eggs or hatchlings at this time of year (November – January), so getting them back to their found location is an important step we take to give them the best possible chance of long-term survival.

Photo by Michael Oak.



Virginia Opossum (*Didelphis virginiana*)

While lead poisoning is often paired with photos of eagles, hawks, and vultures, we've recently started to test a different type of animal—Virginia Opossums. So far, every opossum that has come into care since we began testing has had some level of lead in its system. As the CDC notes, for humans there is no “safe” level of lead, and even minimal levels can have serious impacts on a person’s health. The same is true for our wildlife. Opossums are opportunistic scavengers, so leftover carcasses that had been shot with lead bullets pose a threat to them just as it does to any other animals who take advantage of a free and easy meal, which include eagles, vultures, hawks, owls, and many others. If you are a hunter or know any hunters, encourage the switch to non-lead ammunition to help prevent unnecessary suffering for our local wildlife! ■

Photo by Jessica Andersen.

BRWC is dependent on your donations to help us care for so many patients. The Center does not receive state or federal funding for wildlife rehabilitation. We are so thankful to those who have generously made it possible for us to help with so many animal emergencies!

BRWC Internships

Calling all wildlife enthusiasts! Want to get hands-on training with a variety of wildlife? Come intern with us at the Center! We offer unpaid Wildlife Rehabilitation Internships, Wildlife Education Internships, and Wildlife Veterinary/Veterinary Technician externships throughout the year. We have both full-time (five days per week) and part-time internships (three days per week) and may have housing for qualified out-of-state applicants. If the internship time commitment is too much for your schedule, consider volunteer opportunities. Check out our internship flyers on our website under the “How to Help” tab.



Not interested in interning, but still want to help the Center? Consider hosting an out-of-state student in a guest bedroom, cottage, or other housing arrangement you're not currently using. We can only offer students from outside of Virginia the opportunity to learn at our teaching hospital if we can provide temporary housing while they're here—and you might have exactly what they need. Please contact us at the Center by phone or email (540-837-9000 or info@blueridgewildifctr.org).



Preparing for Baby Season

By Jessica Andersen

AS we march steadily towards spring, we are preparing for yet another busy “Baby Season”—the season where, as the weather gets warmer, animals are laying eggs or giving birth in their nests, dens, tree-hollows, and maybe even your attic!

The “Baby Season” rush is nothing new for rehabilitators, but for many people, finding a baby animal in their yard or on a hike can be exciting, terrifying, or both. With our human instincts and the fact that most babies are “designed” to look cute to us, it can be easy to want to take that animal home and provide care, but is that the right thing to do?

The guidance presented here should help YOU be better prepared this year—and help wild babies at the same time.

There are a few things to keep in mind when you come across any animal, regardless of age. If an animal is obviously injured or ill, lethargic or nonreactive, or has been in a cat’s mouth, it will need immediate care. You should NEVER handle any animals bare-handed, for the protection of all involved, and never try to feed any wildlife. Keep humans and domestic animals away from wildlife, especially when attempting to renest or reunite babies with parents. Always call a permitted rehabilitator AS SOON as you find an animal that requires help, not hours, days, or weeks later, even if the animal only needs to be re-nested. And remember—it is illegal to keep any wildlife if you are not a permitted rehabilitator! We can advise you on whether an animal needs help or not, and how to renest or reunite babies with their parents, if that is our recommendation.

Squirrels

These are some of the first baby mammals we see each year—sometimes as early as February! They often form nests in tree hollows or in branches of loosely-clustered leaves, making them susceptible to being blown out of their nest by storms, or being evicted from their home due to tree-trimming. The good news: squirrel



Squirrels are some of the first baby mammals we see each year. Photo by Jessica Andersen.

mothers are very dedicated to their babies, and typically have multiple nest sites. If a baby squirrel is found out of a nest, is uninjured, warm to the touch, and is reactive/alert, reuniting is usually successful! Leaving these babies in a blanket-filled, open-topped cardboard box, either at the base of a tree close to where they were found or off the ground in the next lowest branch, gives mom a safe place to retrieve her babies. It is important to only attempt reuniting during the daytime when it is not raining or storming. Giving babies a full day to reunite with mom is best, but if the squirrel’s disposition begins to decline, call a rehabilitator right away for further advice.

Opossums

Baby opossums cannot be reunited with mom if found alone. If she gets spooked or attacked, she will flee and is very unlikely to return for any dropped babies. Opossums greater than 6-7 inches from nose to butt (not including tail) are fine to be on their own and do not require assistance, barring any health issues. If you find an

opossum smaller than this, or one that is suffering from health issues, such as a predator attack (including cats), that animal needs immediate assistance from a permitted rehabilitator. Live babies found inside of a dead mother should be taken to a rehabilitator immediately.



Healthy opossum joeys nursing while mom is treated for wounds. Photo by Dr. Jen Riley.



Eastern Cottontail nests can be found underneath grass, often in your lawn or backyard.

Photo by Dr. Jen Riley.

Cottontails

Cottontails breed from early spring into late fall, and generally nest just underneath grass, often in your lawn or backyard. If you find a nest of cottontails, barring health concerns, it is best to cover them back up and leave them there. Mom only feeds them twice a day, at dawn and dusk, and generally stays away to prevent drawing predators to the nest. If you are concerned about a nest being discovered by your pets, it is best to use a laundry basket with a small hole or other contraption that blocks your pet from getting to the nest and also provides an opening for mom rabbit to enter. Cottontails do much better with their mother than they do in even the best rehabilitation settings—“If You Care, Leave Them There!” Babies, whose eyes are still closed, found crawling out of a nest is an indication that mom has not returned to feed them— these babies will need professional help!

Raptors

Most raptors begin nesting in winter or early spring. Baby raptors often end up out of a nest due to damage to their nests, fallen trees, or eviction from the nest by larger, older siblings. Renesting is similar to the process used for squirrels—a plastic

box/container with nesting material and drainage holes in the bottom can be put up off the ground either in the original tree/open structure, or one within 20 yards or so. Young should be left for at least a full day (night for owls). Young owls strong enough to stand and perch are often able to climb back up their tree from their makeshift nesting box to the original site on their own! If the bird appears to have health issues, is unresponsive, or has been attacked by another animal, it will need the care of a rehabilitator.

Baby Birds

If a baby bird is naked, only partially feathered, or is unable to stand/perch but is otherwise healthy, it can be easily renested in a makeshift nest if the original nest is not accessible. We recommend a plastic berry container, or other container with holes in the bottom, lined with natural materials like grass



Above: Barn Owl renested in its silo.

Photo by Michael Oak.

Below: A healthy Barred Owl nestling is returned to its original nest to join its siblings after falling from the cavity. Photos by Heather Shank-Givens.





Renesting Carolina Wrens: (L) A makeshift nest using a plastic berry container, or other container with holes in the bottom, lined with natural materials like grass or leaves. (R) Secure the nest as high as possible in the original tree. If you do not have a ladder, place the nest as high as you can reach from the ground. *Photos by Dr. Jen Riley.*

Healthy American Robin fledgling hiding near a bush. Spending a few days on the ground before learning to fly is an important developmental stage for birds. Please do not disturb them or attempt to renest at this size.

or leaves. Nests should be secured as high as possible in the original tree/building, or in a nearby area off the ground at least 4-5 feet. Baby birds should be left for at least a full day to assess whether adults are returning—if you see an adult feeding the baby, or if the baby remains warm and alert after 24 hours, this is a success! In cases where you do not see any parent, we recommend monitoring the babies for a few days as they will certainly begin to get quiet/lethargic if the parents are not feeding. It is not uncommon for parents to monitor you and avoid feeding if they see you watching. Because of this, many people will not see parents even if they are actively feeding. If the baby starts going downhill during the first 24 hours, it can be assumed that the bird needs help.

When birds reach fledgling age, they will naturally jump out of their nest and be on the ground, unable to fly fully. As long as the bird is mostly feathered and is able to stand and hop, and has no other health issues (including being in a cat's mouth), fledglings should be left alone on the ground—their parents will continue taking care of them, and this is an important learning stage in their life!



L to R; Top to bottom: The key lifestages of American Robins: eggs, hatchlings, nestlings, and late-stage nestlings about to fledge from the nest in 1-3 days.

Waterfowl

Ducklings and goslings are often found when they've been separated from their parents. Parents are usually nearby, and if found soon enough, can be reunited by simply releasing the duckling or gosling near the adult. If the gosling or duckling is injured, or there are no adults in the area, these babies will require care by a professional.

High-risk Rabies Vector Species

Foxes, raccoons, skunks, groundhogs, and bats are some of the most common high-risk rabies vector species, so touching these animals without gloves or trying to care for them can be detrimental to both you AND them! If babies are found, leaving them outside overnight (either in an open-topped box or open carrier) will give mom the opportunity to return to get them. Sometimes, mom will leave babies behind on purpose—if the animal is not as healthy as the rest, or she doesn't have the resources to care for them. If the baby is still there after attempting to reunite, that animal will need care from a permitted rehabilitator. Note: if anyone is bitten or scratched by one of these animals, regardless of its age, you



A healthy orphaned raccoon raised at the Center.

should call your local Health Department immediately for them to assess if the animal should be tested for rabies. Rabies is a 100% fatal disease in all animals, including humans, once symptoms develop.

Whenever you find an animal that you believe is in need of reneating or emergency care, please give us a call so we can assess your specific situation, and give you the best advice! ■

#GIVINGTUESDAY



Success

This Giving Tuesday, December 2, 2019, was a huge success, thanks to supporters like YOU! It was our most successful Giving Tuesday fundraiser to date, bringing in over \$20,000 in a single day, including matches by Facebook and private donors. This money will cover the costs of medications, species-specific formulas, surgical supplies, special dietary items, and everything else that is required during an animal's stay with us. Since we do not charge for our veterinary or rehabilitation services, and since we receive no state or federal funding, this money is crucial to allowing us to give the best possible care to our patients. Thank you!

Volunteers Make it Happen

2019 was another year of increased intakes and new species, but we couldn't have done it without the dedicated help of our awesome volunteers! This year, our volunteers put in a combined 11,277 hours of service!

As a nonprofit organization, it is only through the kindness and generosity of our volunteers that we are able to help as many animals as we do. They put in the time to wash never-ending piles of dishes and laundry, clean and maintain cages, feed the thousands of hungry mouths that came through our doors, and so much more!

Are you interested in helping wildlife? Consider volunteering with us! You can find our volunteer application under the "How To Help" tab on our website.



BRWC volunteer Heather Shank-Givens explains different animal diets during last year's Open House event.

Education 🍏 Updates

Teaching Veterinary Technicians

This January our veterinary staff had the opportunity to provide training in wildlife medicine to veterinary technician students from Northern Virginia Community College.

During two six-hour sessions, we taught 20 veterinary technician students with a combination of lectures and labs at the Center. They even got to witness some patient intakes and meet some of our ambassadors!

We are privileged to have wonderful vet staff at the Center including a wildlife veterinarian and a licensed veterinary technician, who are able to provide training opportunities such as this. We hope that more technicians are now better prepared for the challenges of working with wildlife.



Dr. Jen Riley pointing out landmarks for catheter placement. Photo by Jessica Andersen.

2020 Wildlife Discovery Camp Dates

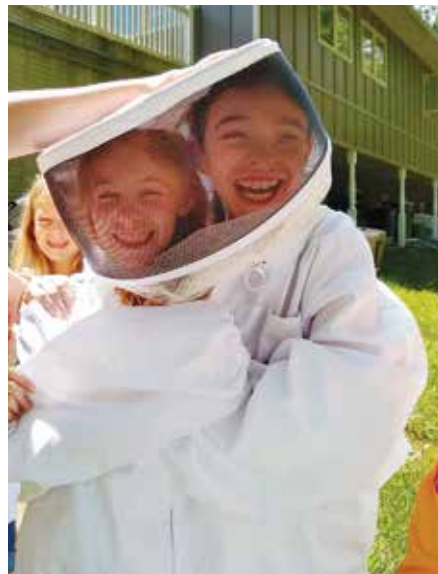
Looking for a wild adventure this summer? Wildlife Discovery Camp dates are set for 2020! Keep an eye on our website for more information about topics and registration as it becomes available.

Age groups and sessions include:

6-9 year-olds: June 15-19 and July 13-17.

10-14 year-olds: June 29 -July 3 and July 27-31.

We are also looking for volunteers to help with the following aspects of camp: teachers and coordinators, Counselors-in-Training (ages 14-17), and Education Interns (over 18). Please email education@blueridgewildlifectr.org if you have any questions.



Donor Appreciations!

Blue Ridge Wildlife Center is very grateful for the approximately 2,500 supporters—from all over the US and beyond—that help us provide life-changing services to the native wildlife in our community. We receive gifts of all sizes and in different forms—through direct mail, Facebook, in-kind donations, family foundations, etc. We have included here a list of those supporters that have invested \$1,000 or more through direct or in-kind donations during 2019. For a more complete list of donors, please visit our website (search for Donor Appreciation).

We are also grateful to those individuals, schools, civic organizations, and others that held an education program, attended a program in our Learning Center, purchased an item in our Center, or participated in our WildFest event!

Every effort has been made to provide an accurate listing of supporters. Please contact Hillary Davidson (hillary@blueridgewildlifectr.org) with any errors or omissions.

+ Denotes Recurring/Sustaining Donors * Denotes Corporate Sponsors to our 2019 Annual Gala

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We are unable to identify all supporters that donate through third parties—such as Facebook, Network for Good, and the Combined Federal Campaign, to name a few. PLEASE KNOW—WE APPRECIATE YOUR SUPPORT!

In 2019, we had over 1,000 unique donors contribute more than \$50,000 through Facebook! WOW. We are so grateful to these supporters—especially since Facebook charges no processing fee—100% of your gift goes directly into caring for our native wildlife!

FOLLOW US



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



Sunday, June 7, 2020

Mark your calendars and come join the BRWC crew for our Second Annual WildFest—a wild celebration of our environment! Meet representatives from local environmental organizations, enjoy wild-themed games and activities, and get face-to-face with some Wildlife Ambassadors! This event will be held at the Clarke County Ruritan Fairgrounds in Berryville VA, Sunday June 7th, from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. More information will be available on our website and Facebook page as the date approaches.

TAIL END



Photos by Dara Bailey.