

The Ridgeline

Issue 15
Spring 2011



Newsletter of the Blue Ridge Wildlife Center



We're Expecting!

You Are Invited to Our Baby Shower

This summer the Blue Ridge Wildlife Center expects to rescue and raise more than 800 orphan baby wild animals. To mark the start of this enormous task, we are holding a baby shower at our center on Sunday, May 1 from 2 to 4 pm. Come by with a shower gift, learn how we raise orphan wild animals, and meet some of our non-releasable wild animals. Meet us at the Pavilion at 930 Tilthammer Mill Road, Boyce, VA, or call 540-837-9000 for directions.

Raising more than 800 orphan wild animals is an expensive and time consuming endeavor. We purchase more than \$3,000 of special wildlife formulas and foods for the mammals we raise and another \$2,500 of insects for the baby birds.

If you would like to bring a gift to our shower, we need boxes of

Gerber's rice baby cereal, as well as jars of the following baby foods: sweet potatoes, squash, turkey, and banana.

We also need plain Cheerios, plain rolled oats, Iams kitten chow, Iams puppy chow, chick starter, finch seed, fleece material, pillow cases, boxes of Kleenex, bleach, and one

quart and one gallon Ziploc bags.

Or, if you prefer, you can sponsor the raising of an orphan baby, name it, and receive a picture!

We need Petiatric Nursery Hospital Incubators for our babies and critically ill patients. These incubators are the equivalent of an intensive care unit for small animals. They supply heat, humidity, and oxygen in a controlled environment. We already have two of these and we use them all the time. We need four more. They are available for \$475 each at <http://www.petiatric.com/nursery/hospital2solidstatebrooder.aspx>.



New Rehabilitator to Assist Center During Busy Months

Wildlife rehabilitator Amber Dedrick is joining the staff of the Blue Ridge Wildlife Center to oversee the center's wildlife nurseries during the coming summer months.

With help from summer interns, she expects to raise an estimated 800 orphan wild baby animals.

Amber moved to Virginia from Minnesota where she had worked at the very large Wildlife Rehabilitation Center of Minnesota, which rescues over 8,500 animals a year. She was responsible for raising and rehabilitating more than 2,300 orphan songbirds and waterfowl over the summer months.



Amber Dedrick holding a barred owl.

Center Becomes Winter Resort



Turtle with fractured shell.

Four injured box turtles spent the winter at the Center because they were not completely healed before the cold weather moved in. They will be released in May.

When box turtles are hit by cars, their shells are frequently broken. Made of bone, shells can heal just as any broken bone can heal. But it takes time; sometimes a very long time. Every year we treat 40 to 50 box turtles that have been hit by vehicles; most can be released in two to three months.

Some turtles that are hit in the fall will not be completely healed until late November or December, when it is too cold to release them. Turtles hibernate over the winter in a special spot they have created for themselves called a hibernaculum. If it is too cold for them to find their way to their hibernaculum, we keep them for the winter and release them in the late spring when our native turtles come out of hibernation.

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The Blue Ridge Wildlife Center is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization that was established to provide assistance for native injured and orphaned wildlife and other helpful information to the public in the northern Shenandoah Valley. The Center provides quality rehabilitative care for wildlife and operates the Wildlife Hotline at 540-837-9000.

The Center also presents informative environmental education programs for people of all ages. Schools and organizations are invited to call for scheduling and fees.

The Center relies on private donations exclusively; no governmental funding is available.

People who share concerns for wildlife and the environment can help the Center by becoming individual or family supporters.

Businesses are invited to become sponsors.

Contributions are tax-deductible.

Be Aware; The Need for Wildlife Rescue Can Be Deceiving

● Young fawns found lying quietly on the ground

without a mother in sight. This is normal. A doe will leave her fawn hidden for most of the day while she goes off to browse. Young fawns will not move until their mother comes back, and will frequently let people walk up to them. These fawns do not need to be rescued. The mother will **not** return to her fawn if she senses predators in the area (including people), so if you are not sure the baby is an orphan, leave the area for six to eight hours, then check to see if the fawn is still there. If it is, it may need to be rescued. If you find a fawn that is injured, or whose mother has been killed, call the wildlife center for help. Be aware that new rules regulate the rescue and movement of deer in Frederick and Shenandoah Counties because of the threat of spreading Chronic Wasting Disease.



● **Fledgling baby birds on the ground.** Over the summer, it is common to find young birds with short feathers on the ground that can't fly or can only fly short distances. Most juvenile songbirds (fledglings) will leave their nests a week or two before they can fly. Their parents continue to care for them while they are on the ground, so they do not need to be rescued. The parents will not return to feed their babies if they sense predators in the area (including people). If you see a young bird with short tail feathers on the ground that cannot fly, keep people and pets away from the area so the parents feel safe to resume feeding and teaching their young.

● **Baby cottontail rabbits away from their nest.** Finding a very small cottontail that cannot run very fast does not mean it needs to be rescued. If the bunny's ears are standing up and its body is large enough to fill the palm of your hand, it is old enough to be on its own. Just keep pets out of the area because these bunnies are not yet skilled at avoiding predators such as cats and dogs.



● **Remember, it is always better for wild animals to remain in the wild.** But if they do need to be rescued, seek professional care rather than trying to care for them yourself. It is against the law for the public to possess wildlife without a special permit. This law is designed to protect the public from injury and disease, and to protect these animals from handling by inexperienced people.

Did You Know?

- **Baby birds without feathers can be successfully put back in their nests and the parents will continue to feed them.** If you can't find the nest, or if it was destroyed, there are ways to create a new nest for the babies. Call our center for advice with this problem. If the parents are known to be dead, then the baby birds will need to be rescued.
- **If you or your pets have accidentally uncovered a nest of cottontails, you can cover the nest again and usually the mother will return to raise the babies, or to move them.** If this happens, you must keep your pets inside and only let them out on a leash or they will go looking for the nest again. Baby cottontails will mature and leave the nest in three weeks.
- **If a bird or bunny has been in a pet's mouth, it needs to be rescued even if it doesn't appear to be injured.** Exposure to the bacteria in the saliva in the pet's mouth will make these animals sick, and they will succumb to infection in two to three days if not treated with antibiotics.

NEWS BRIEFS

Hawk Finds New Home in City Park

A small sharp-shinned hawk was found in a yard in Winchester with a broken wing. He had been hunting songbirds at a homeowner's feeder when he somehow fractured his wing.

He was rescued and made flight worthy, but when it came time for release, the homeowner did not want him to return to hunt songbirds at her bird feeder.

Instead, he found a new home in Winchester's Jim Barnett Park where he can help control the growing house sparrow population.

Surgery Saves Hawk

Last fall a red-tailed hawk was shot and suffered five broken bones in her wings. It took surgery and the placement of eight bone pins to repair her wings. Soon the last of her pins will be removed and she will need to learn to fly again.

Kingbird Travels to Ohio

Last summer, a fledgling kingbird was found on the ground, wounded, with a broken wing, and covered with ants. He was rescued and brought to our wildlife center, where he recovered from his injuries, but unfortunately, he was never able to fly.

Laws prevent wildlife from being kept as pets because their caging and food

Don't Cut That Tree

Animals that nest in trees are already raising babies. If you can, please wait until winter to remove trees. We have already received six litters of orphan baby squirrels found in trees that were cut down. Even though we can raise these orphan babies, it is much better for baby wildlife to be raised by their own mothers. Their parents teach them behaviors that we can't, and that will increase their chances of survival in the wild.

needs are so unique. These animals must find a home where they can become part of an education program teaching the public about wildlife, or become part of an exhibit in a zoo.

This kingbird found a permanent home at the Columbus Zoo, where he will become part of a large natural exhibit.

Merlin Waylaid by Injury

Personnel at the VA hospital in Martinsburg WV found a merlin on the ground with a broken wing. Merlins do not live in this area year round but will sometimes spend the winter here. The merlin has recovered and will be released in time to migrate and start a family.



Hawk Overcomes Lead Poisoning

This red-tailed hawk was found tangled in a fence during a snow storm in December. A Good Samaritan freed the hawk, but realized it couldn't fly.



We rescued the hawk in the storm and brought it to the center where the bird exhibited extreme weakness.

Testing revealed a toxic level of lead in the hawk's blood. Birds of prey develop lead toxicity when they feed on carrion that contains remnants of lead ammunition. The digested lead damages the bird's nervous system, leaving them unable to fly or walk.

After months of care, this hawk was finally strong enough to fly around our flight cage. Now she is a strong flier and her legs and talons have become strong enough to catch the rodents she needs to eat to survive. She is finally ready to return to freedom.

If you hunt, please remember not to use lead ammunition.

Do Not Keep Wild Animals As Pets

Last summer five young raccoons were surrendered to us by people who had found them as babies and tried to raise



them themselves. When the raccoons reached the active, mischievous age, the people brought the litter to us.

Wild animal behavior is one of many reasons why it is illegal to possess wildlife without a permit from the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. Wild animals do not make good pets. People who capture and decide to keep a wild animal soon change their minds, but unfortunately, a tame animal cannot be released back into the wild.

Tame animals that approach people to beg for food or attention usually become pests and are often killed. These tame raccoons were a challenge for us. They needed to learn to recognize natural foods, interact with other raccoons, and avoid people. We accomplished this by placing the raccoons with groups of other young wild raccoons we were raising.

Four of the tame raccoons developed a bond with the wild raccoons and a healthy fear of people. They were released as wild animals last fall.

The fifth raccoon remained friendly. Fortunately, he has bonded with another young raccoon in our care. They will be released in the spring in a rural area far from development.

Bats In Your Belfry?

What do you do if you have a bat in your house? Don't call an exterminator—call us instead! We can come to your home and move the bats outside, or if they are sick or injured, we can care for them until they have recovered. If it is late fall or winter, we care for them until spring. We can advise on how to keep bats out of your house. With White Nose Syndrome killing huge numbers of bats, every bat life is sacred! Bats consume huge numbers of insects; bat losses can increase annoying insect populations.

Become a Supporting Member of the Blue Ridge Wildlife Center

The Center depends entirely on private donations to pay for its expenses. It receives no funding from the federal, state, or local governments.

Please consider becoming a supporting member of the Center. Members receive our newsletter, *The Ridgeline*, and invitations to events.

Your donations are 100 percent tax deductible, and are used to supply food, housing, and medical supplies for the animals receiving care at the Center.

We are also in need of volunteers to help care for the animals and to assist with other related jobs. Please call if you are interested in volunteering.

Indicate your membership level on the form below and mail it with your check to the Blue Ridge Wildlife Center, Post Office Box 326, Millwood, VA 22646.

- | | | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|--|--------------------------|
| Individual Membership—\$50 | <input type="checkbox"/> | Turtle or Snake Sponsor—\$25 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Family Membership—\$100 | <input type="checkbox"/> | Songbird Sponsor—\$30 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Patron—\$250 | <input type="checkbox"/> | Bat Sponsor—\$50 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Family Patron—\$500 | <input type="checkbox"/> | Waterbird Sponsor (heron, loon, duck)—\$75 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Eagle Club—\$1,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> | Mammal Sponsor (fox, opossum, etc.)—\$100 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | Owl Sponsor—\$100 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | Raptor Sponsor—\$150 | <input type="checkbox"/> |

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Wildlife Sponsorship \$ _____ Total enclosed _____

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would save us on postage and
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**Want to learn to raise
orphan wildlife?**

Apply for our internship
program. Contact Amber
Dedrick at 540-837-9000 or at
info@blueridgewildlife.org
(must be 18 or older).

**Want to be sure we will
always be here to help
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Remember us in your will.

Le Bal des Betes

A heartfelt Thank You to
everyone who helped with
our successful fundraiser,
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