

The Ridgeline

NEWSLETTER OF THE BLUE RIDGE WILDLIFE CENTER

ISSUE 49



Baby Season!

This baby fox was orphaned or abandoned by its family and was brought to the Center for care after a failed reuniting attempt.

BRWC Offers Opportunities to Learn and Discover



Do you remember the thing that sparked your love for wildlife? For me it was in elementary school when my friend and I rescued orphaned bluebird hatchlings so that her mom could take them to a rehabber.

It was after that experience that I began to notice and get excited about birds and frogs and turtles. That made me curious about wildlife and the more

I learned the more I wanted to get involved.

At Blue Ridge Wildlife Center, creating that spark is one of our goals. Maybe it will happen on the **Wildlife Walk** where you can see a falcon, eagle, and opossum up close; or it could happen for a child attending **Wildlife Discovery Camp** who's learning how beavers build dams; or maybe it will happen the same as it did for me—helping an injured or orphaned animal by bringing it to us for treatment.

That is why we are here, to be a publicly accessible place to help wildlife and to teach and inspire the next generation to be good stewards of the earth. This issue of *The Ridgeline* is filled with opportunities to learn and discover. I hope you can visit us soon to find or rediscover your spark!

With gratitude,

Annie Bradfield

Wildlife Walk Opening—Reservation Required!

We are so excited to announce our Wildlife Walk will be opening this spring! Come explore the wooded pathway where many of our Wildlife Ambassadors are housed. To ensure everyone's safety we will require groups sign up for time slots so check our website blueridgewildlifectr.org to reserve your time!



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—Lennep Foundation's property on Island Farm Lane.

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

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Newsletter designed by Dara Bailey Design

Rehab + Corner

Eastern Gray Squirrel



This baby **Eastern Gray Squirrel** was brought to us with the help of Pender Veterinary Centre and Wildlife Rescue League after it had fallen from a tree and sustained a traumatic abdominal wall herniation. Due to the injuries, reuniting attempts were not advised in this case. Our full-time veterinarian, Dr. Jen Riley was able to perform surgery and repair the herniation. This patient is recovering well!

American River Otter



This baby **North American River Otter** was found alone near a low-water bridge in Luray, VA. Reuniting attempts were made, but all attempts failed, so he needed to return to the Center for continued care. Whenever a wild baby is found alone, please call before intervening! Most healthy babies are able to be reunited with their parents, which is always best for them!

American Woodcock



We know Spring migration is in full-swing when we start getting calls about **American Woodcocks**. As nocturnal migrants, they often end up victims of window-strikes in urban areas, just like this well-camouflaged individual. Help migrating wildlife by turning lights off at night, drawing shades to block indoor light, and make windows bird-safe by using decals or markers to break up the reflections.

Red Fox

This Red Fox was brought to our hospital minimally responsive after a vehicle collision. He spent about two months in care recovering from head trauma and nerve damage to the right forelimb before being released earlier this month!



Salamanders!



These six **Eastern Red-backed Salamanders** were brought to the Center for evaluation after they were confiscated from an individual who was keeping them illegally. In Virginia, a permit is required to keep more than five non-threatened or non-endangered reptiles or amphibians. After 30 days in captivity (unless in the care of a permitted rehabilitator) they can never be released. Thankfully, these salamanders were in good health and were able to be released at their original found location.

Overwintering Reptiles and Amphibians

This year, the Center overwintered 13 turtles, six snakes, two frogs, and two toads, covering seven different species. Due to the size of the enclosures necessary to properly house these animals while awake, active, and healing, we've had to dedicate three different rooms to these patients. On May 1st, the first day of the year when overwintering reptiles and amphibians can be released, all of these animals will be returned to their found locations.



Hooded Merganser



Hooded Mergansers are common winter residents in Virginia. This immature male was found tangled in a net in a homeowner's backyard. With the help of Loudoun County Animal Services, the bird was untangled and brought to us for evaluation. Thankfully the bird had no major injuries and he made a quick recovery in just 48 hours! This patient was released back at his home pond, where he joined a small group of other Hooded Mergansers!

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! Please help us help them by making a donation online.

Let's Talk About Rabies!



By Jae Ross

Spring is finally here and summer is quickly approaching. With warmer weather around the corner, it's no surprise that most wild animals become more active. Most people, aside from medical professionals and wildlife experts, have never encountered rabies and oftentimes have a false understanding of how it spreads, what it looks like, and how to prevent it. So, let's spread more awareness and talk about this interesting, yet commonly misunderstood virus.

Quick Facts

- All mammals, including humans, can be infected with the rabies virus, and it's fatal once signs develop. While most animals pass from a rabies infection rather quickly, the virus can lie dormant in an animal's system for weeks, months, or even years before symptoms occur.
- In Virginia, the most common wild species to contract rabies are raccoons, skunks, bats, and foxes, while cats are the most common domestic species to contract and spread rabies. Virginia's Department of Wildlife Resources also considers large rodents (groundhogs and beavers) and all carnivores (including mink, otters, and others) to be "high-risk vectors". However, please be aware that any mammal, at any age, can contract and spread the virus.
- Rabies is found in the central nervous system of infected mammals and is most commonly transmitted via bites or scratches. Less common methods include contact with the saliva or brain tissue of an infected animal via exposure to the eyes, nose, mouth, or in an open wound.



This is one of multiple fox kits that is being raised at the Center this year after failed reuniting attempts.

- While humans can contract the rabies virus, it is indeed rare in our country thanks to diligent reporting of exposures and available post-exposure treatment. In the United States there are, on average, two reported cases of rabies in humans each year (compared to nearly 60,000 deaths worldwide each year). In Virginia, there have only been two cases of rabies in humans since 2009. Don't let this low number create a false sense of security—always take the necessary precautions when coming into contact with wildlife and seek advice from your local health department when needed.

Fact vs. Fiction

- Seeing a nocturnal animal out during the day does not mean the animal is rabid. Oftentimes, animals such as foxes and raccoons will forage for food during the day, especially if they have babies to feed. The most common differentiator between a healthy and sick nocturnal animal that is active during the day is a general lethargy and lack of fear of humans. Most animals are afraid of humans, regardless of the hour; however, be very cautious around animals that appear friendly or unphased

by human presence. This could indicate rabies or another illness, but it may also indicate that someone has been feeding these animals in your neighborhood.

- Aggressive and erratic behavior associated with the "furious" form of rabies is not the only sign of the disease. More common signs of rabies include slow, confused movements, drooling (caused by difficulty swallowing), incoordination, and hind end weakness or paralysis (this is referred to as "paralytic" or "dumb" rabies).
- While the rabies virus is fatal once signs develop, there are means to protect yourself. If you are bitten or scratched by a mammal (wild OR domestic), always clean the wound thoroughly with soap and water. Next, call your local health department and seek medical attention. Emergency rooms are equipped to administer rabies post-exposure vaccinations, but be mindful that these vaccinations are costly and are usually not entirely covered by insurance—it's far cheaper to avoid these exposures when possible. A pre-exposure vaccine series is recommended for those who handle wild animals regularly, and all



This abandoned Striped Skunk kit was brought to the Center and has since been transferred to another permitted rehabilitator to join others of its species!



This infant raccoon is being raised at the Center after multiple failed reuniting attempts.

staff and volunteers who work with rabies-vector species at BRWC are vaccinated.

- Again, all mammals are susceptible to the rabies virus. While rabies is more commonly present in a few specific species, this does not mean that others are immune, such as opossums—this is a common myth. In addition to wild mammals, pets and even domesticated livestock, such as cattle, sheep, and horses can contract the virus.

Protect and Prevent

- There are no valid rabies tests for live animals. In order to test for the presence of rabies in a wild or domesticated animal, the animal must be euthanized. There are no known or acceptable quarantine times for wild species as there are in many domestics. This is particularly unfortunate

when inappropriate human actions cause the exposures. Because human safety is the top priority, all reports of possible rabies exposures must be taken seriously. BRWC is required by law to report any exposures or we would risk losing their permits and be unable to treat any wildlife. Sadly, the Center has had to euthanize multiple clinically healthy animals due to inappropriate handling by well-intentioned finders.

- To prevent your pets from rabies exposure, be diligent about their rabies vaccine and boosters and do not allow pets to come into contact with wild animals, including sharing food and water dishes. In Virginia, dogs and cats are required to receive a rabies vaccination. While farm animals are not required to receive the vaccination, it is highly recommended.

Supporter Spotlight: Ike Eisenhower



We'd like to recognize and highlight one of our longest-standing volunteers, Robert "Ike" Eisenhower. Ike, an active member of the Shenandoah Chapter of the Virginia Master Naturalists, came to the Center back in 2012, and noticed a repair was needed on the porch (of our previous, 800 square foot facility just down the road from our current hospital). He offered to help with the repair, and that was it—he was stuck with us!

Ike has helped us with a large variety of projects, ranging from repairing and constructing new caging, to volunteering during education events like our Annual Baby Shower (now WildFest) and Gala fundraisers, to building the locally-famous birdhouses from reclaimed wood with a variety of finishes and unique shapes, to now, volunteering as a Docent on our Wildlife Walk!

Even though he is not a rehabilitator, Ike gets great satisfaction out of educating the public and seeing the cages he builds go to good use for our wild patients. Ike has seen the Center change throughout his time here, and he's been a huge staple in helping us achieve everything the Center has become. Thank you, Ike—we couldn't have done it without you!



Want to become a volunteer? Check out the volunteer application on our website, now with **TWO NEW** volunteering opportunities! We hope to hear from you soon.

- Never feed or attempt to handle wildlife without first speaking to wildlife professionals. Providing a food source for wild animals promotes interaction and may increase the spread of a variety of diseases, including rabies. Please remember that feeding wildlife puts everybody at risk—other wildlife, your pets, and even you.

- While spring comes with an abundance of new baby animals, such as deer fawns and raccoon kits, it is illegal to raise wildlife in Virginia without a permit. And sadly, even the cutest baby animals are not immune from contracting the rabies virus. Attempting to "rescue", feed, and raise wildlife at any age may put you, your family, and that animal at risk.

When in doubt, reach out! Always seek guidance from wildlife and disease experts, and never take action without speaking to a professional first. Virginia's permitted rehabilitators, including those at Blue Ridge Wildlife Center, are wildlife professionals who can provide you with an abundance of helpful information if you have an animal emergency. Additionally, the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are great resources for learning more about the rabies virus. ■

Educational Opportunities

The mission of the Blue Ridge Wildlife Center is to care for native wildlife by integrating veterinary medicine, rehabilitation, education, and research. We use our experiences in the hospital to educate the public on wildlife issues. Since 2008, BRWC has also been using our knowledge and our animal Ambassador team to educate a new generation of wildlife stewards.

Our education department leads over 100 educational programs each year in the community, in the form of school programs, helping Boy and Girl Scouts earn wildlife and nature-related badges, hosting tables at nature festivals, and running a series of summer camp sessions.

For as many programs as possible, our Wildlife Ambassadors are a key element. We currently have 20 Ambassadors, consisting of 13 different species of birds, mammals, and reptiles. Each of these Ambassadors is not only an important representative for their species, but also has a very important conservation or rehabilitation message to share with the public.

As with so many other organizations, COVID-19 required BRWC to make some changes for the safety of our staff,



Loudoun Classical School students were able to visit the Center for an outdoor educational program this past March.

volunteers, and community. While we were forced to cancel all of our in-person programs, we were able to continue to engage with the community through virtual programs. We developed a series of presentations that were featured on our Facebook page, many of them live, allowing participation from across the country!

With vaccination numbers rising, we have begun to offer small group in-person and outdoor programs again. We are happy to be engaging with the public again!

We are very excited to announce that our on-site public space, the Wildlife Walk, is finally slated to open this spring! Since our move into our current building in 2016, the space has been under constant construction, slowly building enclosures and pathways for the public to come and enjoy our Wildlife Ambassadors in a more natural setting. The space is home to about half of our Ambassadors, while the other half are housed in our classroom space, the Ronald M. Bradley Learning Center. Species-specific informational signs and interactive signs are in development to allow for self-guided walk-throughs. Open hours will be announced on our Facebook page and our website; in keeping with state and CDC health guidelines, reservations will be required to keep potential crowd numbers low.

We will also be resuming our summer program Wildlife Discovery Camp this summer! Information and reservation forms are available on the website. Space is limited, and slots will be filled on a first-come, first-served basis. ■



Our education manager, Jennifer, leads a tour of our Wildlife Walk for a group of students.

Wildlife Discovery Camp!



Looking for some fun in the sun for the kids this summer? Registration is open for BRWC's Wildlife Discovery Camp! We offer camps for ages 6-9 and for ages 10-14. With two separate weeks each per age group, there are plenty of opportunities for young, aspiring naturalists to come learn about all things nature! Sign up for individual days, or for the entire week. Each day features lessons about an environmental topic, followed by games and activities, outdoor excursions in our woods and at our pond, and up-close encounters with our wildlife ambassadors! Visit our website for more information on how to register.

2021 Schedule

Age Group	Week 1	Week 2
6 - 9 years	June 14 - 18	July 12 - 16
10 - 14 years	June 28 - July 2	July 26 - 30

Visit our Education page on our website blueridgewildlifectr.org for full schedule of topics and activities.



Days & Times

Camp runs Monday through Friday, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Drop-off may begin at 8:45 a.m. Before- and after-care may be available for an additional fee; please contact staff for details.

Cost & Scholarships

Each camp is \$60 for individual days or \$250 for the whole week. Each registration for a full week includes a camp t-shirt. Full and partial scholarships are available for the 2021 sessions courtesy of Crescent Cities Charities, Inc., Winchester/Clarke Garden Club, and Greenway Garden Club.

Camper Needs

Campers will need to bring a lunch, snack, and drink (water and a refillable bottle are best) every day. Most camp activities are held outside, rain or shine, so the camper should dress appropriately for the weather. We recommend wearing play clothes and sturdy, close-toed shoes for hiking. A backpack is best to hold these items and should include sunscreen and bug spray.

Programs

Every day will feature short lessons, games and crafts, and potential face-to-face interactions with BRWC's wildlife ambassadors. Each program is designed to meet some of the learning objectives of the Standards of Learning (SOL).



COVID-19 UPDATE: BRWC is committed to maintaining the health and safety of our staff, volunteers, and campers. As such, camp attendance will be limited and instructors will follow all state and CDC regulations. Campers **MUST** register for all desired days no later than one week prior to the start of the camp session; **NO WALK-INS** will be accepted this year. Changes to the camp schedule will be posted on our website if they should occur.

Rehab Intern, Sarah Street



The Center was pleased to have had a rehabilitation intern for the Winter/Spring season (in addition to veterinary and veterinary technology students)! Sarah Street is a resident of New Market, VA, and will be attending Lee's McRae College in the Fall. Sarah is interested in pursuing veterinary medicine after her undergraduate studies.

Vet Tech Intern, Madeline Graham



Madeline Graham is a veterinary technician student completing her last semester at Northern Virginia Community College. She has a strong interest in wildlife medicine and we were lucky to have her at the Center from January through March completing her preceptorship hours! Licensed veterinary technicians are highly-trained professionals and help out in our hospital by performing diagnostic tests, taking radiographs, obtaining blood samples, monitoring anesthesia, and so much more.

Meet Carly!



We are pleased to announce the newest member of our team—Carly Corbin, Administrative Assistant. Carly joined the Blue Ridge Wildlife Center team in February 2021. With our patient numbers growing every year, we needed help! We are very lucky to welcome Carly who will help respond to animal emergencies on the phone, facilitate admission and release of wildlife, and keep several key databases up to date. She also manages our online Gift Shop! Carly grew up in Aldie, VA, and spent her childhood riding and caring for horses on her family farm. She then spent over a decade as a successful hairstylist and ran her own organizing business. Carly has a great passion for nature and wildlife conservation, and we are excited to have her on our team!

Give a Gift. Become a Member. Help Native Wildlife. Online!

As a non-profit with no state or federal funding, Blue Ridge Wildlife Center members are what make our work possible.

Become a Member

With your donation, you will play a critical role in protecting our native wildlife. In addition, you'll receive member benefits, including:

- A one-year subscription to *The Ridgeline*, BRWC's quarterly newsletter;
- BRWC branded membership gift—received when you join and with each annual renewal;
- Discounts on BRWC Education programs and merchandise; and
- Free admission to BRWC's online Education Series.

Minimum amount to receive membership benefits:
\$40 one-time gift or \$5/month recurring gift.

Give a Gift Membership

Share your love of wildlife with your friends and family.

Send a BRWC gift membership to a loved one and they'll receive all the benefits of membership. This makes a great gift for birthday and holidays ... or just whenever!

Gift recipients will receive a package with a notification of their gift and a message from you, the latest issue of *The Ridgeline*, and the annual membership gift.

Gift memberships are \$40—but you are always welcome to give more!

blueridgewildlifectr.org

Teamwork Makes the Dreamwork!

Did you know that April has two very important appreciation weeks? Animal Care and Control Appreciation Week is April 11-17, 2021 and National Volunteer Week is April 18-24, 2021.

Our rehabilitation volunteers outnumber our staff by more than 6:1—they are essential to what we do! But our transportation volunteers are just as essential and rarely photographed as their volunteer efforts are mostly completed on the road. Below are just a few of our amazing volunteer transporters that get wild animals in need to our hospital for care!

Animal Control Officers are such an important part of wildlife rehabilitation! These hard-working and compassionate professionals respond to animal emergencies in their counties and help to safely rescue wildlife in need. Most are extremely knowledgeable about the laws pertaining to wildlife, the safety precautions that must be taken, and even about how to reunite certain species with their parents. There are simply not enough permitted rehabilitators to respond to every wildlife emergency so these officers play the crucial role of rescuing these animals in need and ensuring they get proper care. **Thank you!**



David and Marilynn Pickett have logged more than 80 hours of transporting since they started volunteering in 2019. You guys are amazing!



Greg Brummet, Transporter.

Interested in becoming a volunteer transporter?
Email us at info@blueridgewildlifectr.org for more information.



Lisa Ference, Transporter.



Humane law enforcement officers Henry and Taylor assist with the rescue of orphaned Virginia Opossums.



Loudoun County humane law enforcement officers have assisted in the rescue of dozens of wild animals over the past few years. In the above photo, Officer Stacks and Officer Powers assisted with the release of a lead poisoned Bald Eagle they had saved a few weeks earlier!



Officer Hepperle of Stafford County with a rescued Red-bellied Woodpecker.



Officer Sales of Winchester City Sheriff's Office assisted local homeowners with the removal of this Eastern Ratsnake that had gotten into their home. Though this snake did not come in for care, Officer Sales has rescued over 30 animals since 2018 and have brought them to the Center for care!



DIY Binoculars for Kids!

Materials Needed:

- 2 Toilet Paper Rolls (or 1 Paper Towel cut in half)
- Tape or Glue
- Hole Punch or Scissors
- String or Ribbon
- Colored paper, markers, stickers (optional) to decorate!



Directions:

1. Glue or tape the rolls together side by side.
2. Decorate however you want!
3. Using your hole punch or scissors, cut small holes on the side of each roll (about an inch up from the bottom).
4. Cut your string or ribbon about 20 inches long and tie each side to your rolls (creating the binocular strap).
5. Try them out! What birds can you see out your window?



Backyard Birding

✓ Check list:

- ☐ 1. Northern Cardinal
- ☐ 2. Blue Jay
- ☐ 3. American Robin
- ☐ 4. Northern Mockingbird
- ☐ 5. House Finch
- ☐ 6. Mourning Dove
- ☐ 7. Carolina Chickadee
- ☐ 8. American Goldfinch
- ☐ 9. Ruby-throated Hummingbird
- ☐ 10. Tufted Titmouse



Send a photo of your DIY backyard birding adventures to us at info@blueridgewildlife.org and you may be featured on social media!

FOLLOW US



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

Beaver Makes it Back Home!

This American Beaver was likely the victim of a vehicle collision and he came to the Center with weak hind-end use. Thankfully, with just a few weeks treatment, this beaver made a full recovery and was released back home!

TAIL END