

The Ridgeline

NEWSLETTER OF THE BLUE RIDGE WILDLIFE CENTER

ISSUE 68 | WINTER 2026

A photograph of four raccoons in a field of tall, green grass. One raccoon is standing upright in the center, looking to the right. Three other raccoons are lying down around it. The background is a dense line of trees under a clear sky.

**2025
Annual Report**



Twenty-Five Years of Care, Science, and Community

In 2025, Blue Ridge Wildlife Center (BRWC) marked 25 years of caring for and protecting native wildlife. What began as a small education effort has grown into a regional center for wildlife medicine, research, education, and professional training, grounded in the understanding that the health of wildlife, people, and the environment are deeply interconnected.

Each year, thousands of injured, ill, and orphaned animals arrive at our doors. Their stories reveal patterns of human impact, environmental change, and opportunity. Over the past quarter century, we have learned that treating individual animals is only the beginning. What truly creates change is what we learn from them, how we apply that knowledge, and how we share it with others.

This annual report is organized around the core pillars of our work. Together, they tell the story of how BRWC responds to harm, builds solutions, and works toward a future where fewer animals need our help at all.

*With gratitude,
Annie Bradfield*

Our 2025 Annual Report takes you through our Comprehensive Approach to Wildlife Conservation:

Wildlife Medicine	pg. 4	Why animals arrive
One Health Research	pg. 6	What we learn
Wildlife Rehabilitation	pg. 8	How we return animals to the wild
Professional Training	pg. 10	How we build capacity
Public Education	pg. 12	How we prevent future harm

2025 At a Glance

4,005



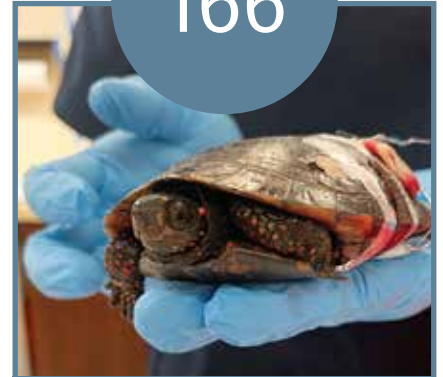
Animals Admitted

49,686



Hotline Calls

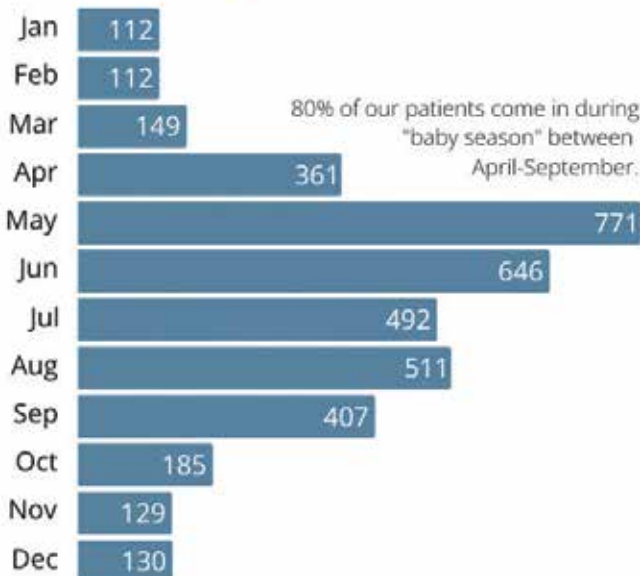
166



Species Admitted

For every 12 calls, one patient is admitted. Behind every admission are dozens of questions from concerned community members. Our front office experts provide real-time guidance that often prevent unnecessary capture, reduce human-wildlife conflict, and keep healthy animals in the wild.

Intakes by Month



71%



Release Rate*

*Excludes patients who died or were euthanized within 24 hours.

Top 5 Counties

Two-thirds of our patients came from just five counties in Virginia. While we are located in Clarke County, Clarke didn't even make our top five!



Wildlife Medicine

We treated **4,005** patients of **166** species in 2025!

Patient Breakdown by Class



43.5% Birds

1,182 Songbirds
298 Raptors
263 Doves, waterbirds,
gamebirds, etc.

Total: 1,743



38.4% Mammals

530 Foxes, Bats, Raccoons,
and others.
421 Eastern Cottontails
309 Eastern Gray Squirrels
276 Virginia Oposums

Total: 1,536



17.1% Reptiles

531 Turtles
137 Snakes
10 Skinks
4 Other

Total: 682



1.0% Amphibians

27 Toads
12 Frogs
5 Other

Total: 44

Causes for Admission

Upon admission, our veterinary team assesses each patient, provides emergency care, and develops an individualized treatment plan. We treat more than **4,000** wildlife patients annually; almost are admitted due to human activity.

Hit by Vehicle



HLEO Gibson, LCAS

Vehicles kill hundreds of millions of wild animals every year in the United States.

660 (17%) of our patients are victims of vehicle collisions.

Vehicle strikes often cause severe internal injuries, fractures, head trauma, and internal bleeding. Even animals that appear alert may deteriorate rapidly due to shock or internal damage. Slowing down in wildlife crossing areas, especially at dawn and dusk, saves lives. Never toss food from your car. Even items like apple cores and banana peels attract wildlife to roadsides and significantly increase the risk of vehicle collisions.

Orphans



Most wild babies found alone are not orphaned and do not need help.

590 (16%) of our patients were admitted as orphans.

Many of these animals were healthy babies that could not be successfully reunited with their mothers, or were truly orphaned due to deceased parents or abandonment by parents. Many wild babies are left alone for much of the day and in many cases, intervening does more harm than good. Observing from a distance and contacting a licensed wildlife rehabilitator before intervening gives babies the best chance to stay in the wild where they belong.

Unknown Trauma



Many of the most serious wildlife injuries happen without anyone ever seeing what caused them.

582 (15%) of patients were admitted with unknown trauma.

Based on injury patterns, the vast majority of these cases are likely the result of vehicle collisions or cat attacks. Slowing down on roads, keeping cats indoors, and reducing everyday hazards directly lowers the incidence of these unwitnessed but preventable injuries.

Cat Attacks



Cats kill BILLIONS of native wildlife each year in the United States.

483 (13%) of our patients are victims of cat attacks.

Even small puncture wounds from a cat's teeth or claws can introduce bacteria that lead to life-threatening infections within hours. Many victims appear unharmed initially but succumb to infection without prompt treatment. By keeping your cats indoors or in enclosed outdoor spaces like catios, they will live longer, healthier lives and prevent unnecessary wildlife deaths.

Windows Strikes



Each year, an estimated 1 billion birds die from hitting a window in the U.S. alone.

176 (5%) of our patients are known window strikes.

Birds don't perceive glass as a solid barrier. High-speed collisions cause brain injury, eye trauma, internal bleeding, and fractures, often resulting in death even if the bird flies away initially. Apply external window treatments such as dot patterns, decals, or films spaced < 2 inches apart to break up reflections.

Other Human-caused Causes of Admission (Non-intentional)



While vehicle collisions, cat attacks, and window strikes are all human-caused threats to wildlife, we use the above cause as a catch-all to describe slightly less common reasons for admission that were caused by humans who were not intentionally trying to harm the animal. This includes things like lawnmower injuries, garden netting injuries, and glue trap victims. **305 (8%) of our 2025 patients fell into this category.**

One Health Research

In 2025 we were involved in ten research studies and one of these studies ("Eastern cottontails [*Sylvilagus floridanus*] as hosts for ticks infected with *Borrelia burgdorferi*, *Anaplasma phagocytophilum*, and Powassan virus in Virginia, USA.") was published in 2025 in the *Journal of Medical Entomology*.

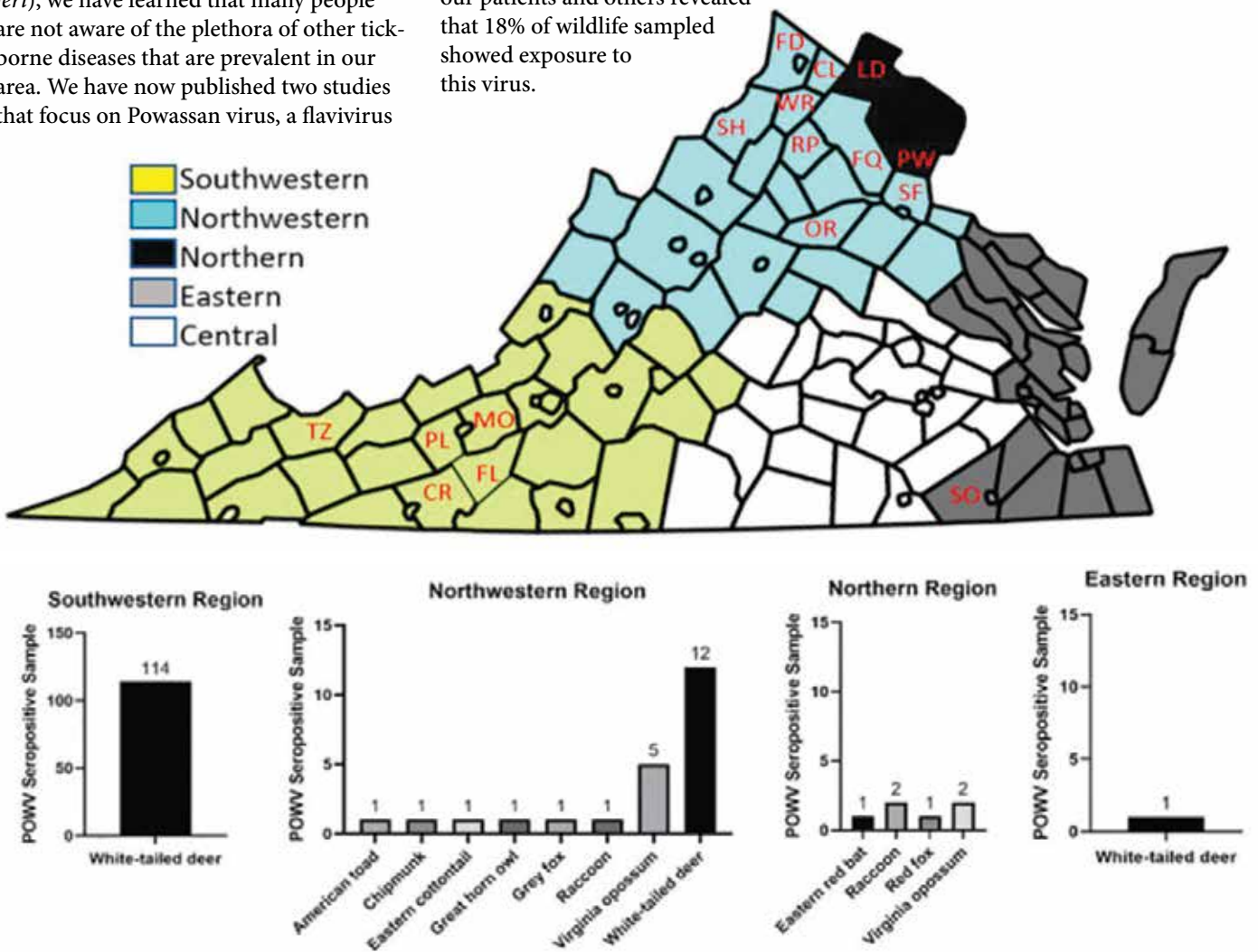


Photo: Uppereast iNaturalist Account with permission.

Tick-borne disease

Tick-borne disease is a popular topic of study at BRWC given how common these diseases are in wildlife, humans, and domestic animals. While many people are aware of Lyme disease (*Borrelia burgdorferi*), we have learned that many people are not aware of the plethora of other tick-borne diseases that are prevalent in our area. We have now published two studies that focus on Powassan virus, a flavivirus

spread by ticks that can cause life-threatening neurologic disease in humans and animals. Although this disease is primarily seen in the great lakes region and the northeastern U.S., studies like ours show that it is absolutely in our area! Data from our patients and others revealed that 18% of wildlife sampled showed exposure to this virus.



This map shows the positive samples that were found across Virginia in our study with the Eastwood Lab at Virginia Tech. Map and graphs from "Widespread Circulation of Tick-Borne Viruses in Virginia—Evidence of Exposure to Heartland, Bourbon, and Powassan Viruses in Wildlife and Livestock" by Ahmed Garba et al. in *Microorganisms* 2024.

Powassan virus

Powassan virus is maintained in the environment by ticks (primarily the black-legged tick) and small mammals and spreads to humans and other species when they are bitten by an infected tick. This virus is considered rare, but reports of the disease are increasing. This is likely a combination of increase in actual prevalence and increase in awareness of the virus among physicians and veterinarians. Ultimately, studies like those conducted at BRWC provide veterinarians and physicians with information regarding the prevalence of tickborne diseases like Powassan virus and knowing that these diseases exist in our area means that doctors are more likely to order the right test and come to a diagnosis more quickly. This is one way that one health research creates optimal health outcomes for all of us. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), there have been 400 cases (53 deaths) of Powassan virus infections in humans in the U.S. between 2004 and 2024. These cases primarily arise in the summer, when tick activity is the highest. Although this makes it rare, it is important to note that these cases are likely to be extremely under reported. Surveillance data like this relies on physicians not only requesting the appropriate test and making a diagnosis, but also reporting that positive result to their health department. Mild cases are also much less likely to be reported.

How to Protect Yourself from Tick Bites

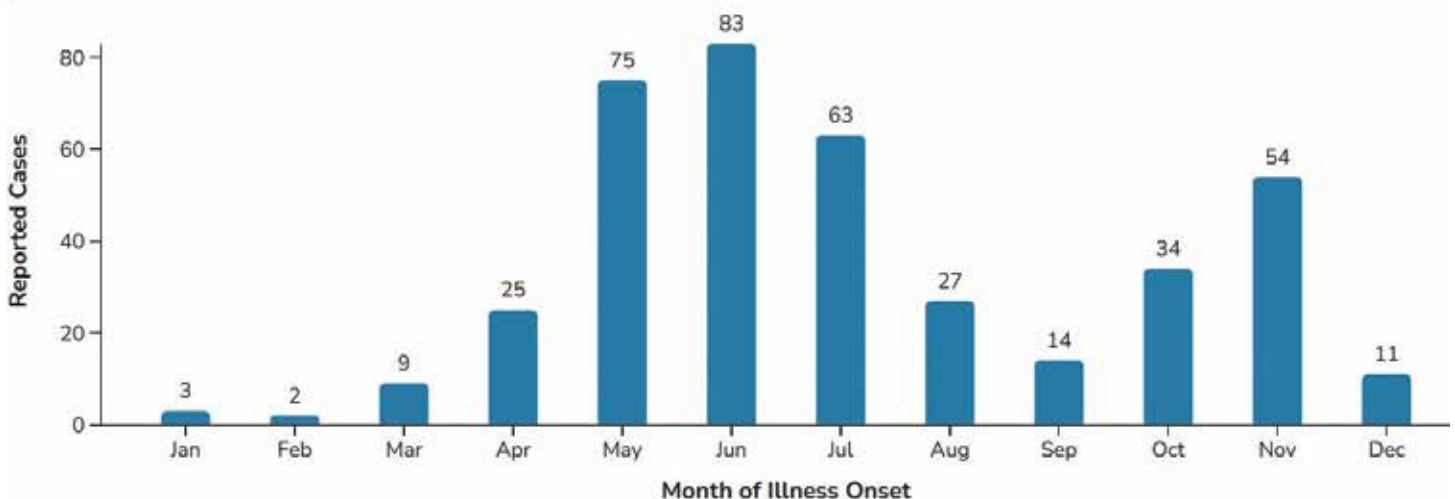
There is no vaccine for Powassan virus, but the best way to prevent tickborne infections of any kind is to protect yourself from tick bites.

- Use insect repellents (this should be applied AFTER sunscreen)
- Wear long sleeves and pants and tuck pants into your socks
- Avoid bushy and wooded areas
- Perform thorough tick checks on your gear, yourself, and pets after spending time outdoors
- Shower within two hours of coming back inside (this has been shown to reduce your risk of contracting Lyme disease and likely other tickborne diseases)
- Follow your veterinarian's guidance on tick control preventatives for your pets to keep them safe and keep ticks out of your home.

If you do get bitten by a tick, save that tick (frozen in a ziplock bag or between two pieces of clear tape) so that it can be identified if needed later. Then, follow up with your primary care provider.






Powassan virus human disease cases reported by month of illness onset, 2004-2024, All disease cases



This graph from the CDC shows the seasonality of Powassan infections in the human population.

Wildlife Rehabilitation

Top 3 Species

-  **Eastern Cottontail** (421)
-  **Woodland Box Turtle** (351)
-  **Eastern Gray Squirrel** (309)

Release Rates

for patients surviving the first 24 hours of care



Amphibians	82%	Mammals	78%
Birds	58%	Reptiles	80%

Species First!

American Coot



This funny-footed shorebird was a species first for us after this bird was found unable to fly next to a warehouse in Woodbridge, VA. These birds are often found in marshy and water-front habitats, like nearby Occoquan National Wildlife Refuge.

Black-billed Cuckoo



While we often get Yellow-billed Cuckoos throughout the summer, this Black-billed Cuckoo was a first for us after being a victim of a window strike—the number one reason we receive Yellow-billed Cuckoos as well.

Least Bittern



This Least Bittern was an exciting surprise to our staff when the finder rescued the bird after a suspected window strike.

Fisher



A first for our Center, this Fisher, a member of the weasel family rarely seen in Virginia due to their elusive nature, was brought in after a suspected vehicle strike.

Interesting Cases

Entrapped Raccoon

This Raccoon was brought in after the finder discovered him with his head stuck—in the hub of a car tire! Thankfully, this was a straightforward situation—the raccoon was sedated, and slowly worked out of the tire. Luckily this raccoon had no injuries from this situation, and after fully recovering from sedation and after a good meal, this guy was released back home!



Red Fox Hit by Vehicle

This Red Fox was rescued by the finder after they witnessed the fox hit by a vehicle. Safely containing the fox in the early morning hours, they met us at our door as soon as we opened to get this fox the care she needed. On intake she was barely responsive, and was showing clear signs of internal trauma. Thankfully, she had no major wounds or fractures that required more serious intervention. After multiple days on oxygen support to help alleviate internal bleeding in her lungs, she was moved to normal hospital caging with continued pain medications and anti-inflammatories. She improved rapidly, moving to outdoor caging as her last test, and within two weeks she was successfully released!



"Shark Fin" and "Chainsaw" Opossums



We had two unique Virginia Opossum cases come in at the tail-end of the year—one opossum we affectionately called “Shark Fin” due to the shark fin bandage we initially placed on him to keep his large

abdominal wound clean and inaccessible to him, and another we called “Chainsaw” due to her wounds being caused by a tree-trimming company chainsawing down a dead tree in which this female opossum

was denning. Thankfully, both of these opossums’ wounds were treatable, and after over two months in care, they were successfully released back home!

Sora

This seldomly-seen wading bird was brought to us after a suspected window strike left them unable to fly and easily able to be contained in Fairfax, VA. While initially we were concerned about a soft tissue injury at one of the shoulder joints, this bird healed and recovered well with anti-inflammatories and pain medications alone. After just two weeks of care and a make-shift wetland enclosure built to help keep this bird comfortable and stress-free, this bird was released back home to an appropriate habitat!



Professional Training

We are very excited to have launched our expanded **professional training program** in 2025. Adding much needed, well-trained, talent to the wildlife conservation workforce!



Veterinary Fellow, Sydney Lewis, DVM started her fellowship in July 2025 and will be with us through June of 2026.



Our first **Education Fellow, Rena Klapp**, completed her year-long training during 2025.



Rehab Fellow, Sydnie Matda successfully graduated from our program, and has moved on to a job working with the Carolina Raptor Center just outside of Charlotte, NC!

We also welcomed **13 Summer Rehabilitation Interns** to help us get through baby season and gain valuable experience! Combined, these interns provided over **7,000 hours**.



Intern **Zach** helps our Associate Veterinarian **Dr. Emily** with a **Red-tailed Hawk**.



Anna, a second-year intern, gives a northern watersnake an injectable medication while **Morgan**, a summer intern, restrains.



Callie and **Marisa**, two rehab interns, help prepare diets for outdoor patients.



Rehab intern **Karina** bottle feeds one of our many infant raccoon patients.

We also welcomed **20 Veterinary Externs** who are licensed veterinarians, veterinary technicians, and veterinary and vet tech students. This externship provides intensive training in wildlife and conservation medicine. Externs will gain competencies in anatomy, wildlife diseases, triage, anesthesia, surgery, and more.



Juselyn (l)—who was a rehabilitation intern with us in 2017—came back as a final year veterinary student in 2025.



Nora prepares a central ratsnake for the surgical removal of a ceramic egg foreign body.



Maya (l) assists Dr. Emily with a fishing lure removal from a raccoon patient.

Professional training prepares the next generation of wildlife and conservation professionals through hands-on, mentored experiences.

Our structured programs equip trainees with the skills needed to perform high-quality wildlife care and sustain the future of wildlife conservation.

BUILDING THE WILDLIFE WORKFORCE

veterinary medicine • wildlife rehabilitation • conservation education



**CREATING TRAINING
PIPELINES**



**EXPANDING
FIELD CAPACITY**



**IMPROVING PATIENT
OUTCOMES**

Education Programs

In 2025 we presented **78** programs and events reaching over **5,000** people!



Sr. Education Specialist, Alysa Everly, gives a presentation at the **St. O'Possum's Day** event held at Lake Frederick in March.



Partnership with Shenandoah University on the virtual learning **Wood Turtle Project**.



WildFest, hosted by Seven Bends Nursery in Berryville, VA, included 17 conservation based vendors with over 400 guests attending raising over \$1,000 in donations.



Ambassadors: Kevin, the American Kestrel and Wednesday Addams, the Black Culture. Thank you to Powhatan School for letting us use your facilities to help these ambassadors practice their skills!



Day camps for kids featuring reptiles, mammals, and birds and our first ever adult day camp.



Trick or Treating in the Wildlife Walk.



Electrically heated boxes were installed for all raptors. Thank you to Waterloo Electric for donating their labor saving us \$2,000! The Keep Our Birds Warm Campaign raised \$10,676 out of \$7,000 and private flight demonstrations were given to 14 generous donors who gifted \$500 or more. Kevin, our American Kestrel Ambassador, enjoys his heated box.



Education intern, Charlie Holder.

Safeguarding the Future Through Legacy Giving

Because generations are deeply interconnected, the decisions we make today have far-reaching consequences for wildlife, people, and the quality of life we leave to those who come after us.

At some point, many of us begin to reflect on the legacy we will leave behind, how our values, passions, and care for the world might endure beyond us. For those whose values include conserving the natural spaces we love, protecting the wildlife that live among us, and fostering a healthier future for all, a planned gift to Blue Ridge Wildlife Center (BRWC) offers a meaningful way to protect what matters to you.

Legacy gifts, such as bequests, provide a stable foundation for the Center's future at a time when threats to wildlife, the environment, and public health are increasingly complex. By including BRWC in your estate plans, you help ensure the continuation of essential work in advancing wildlife conservation, educating the public, training future professionals, and supporting research that explores the interconnected health of people, wildlife, and the environment. Through this thoughtful act, you help ensure a healthier, more resilient future for wildlife, people, and the natural world we all share.

If you plan to include BRWC in your estate plan or would like more information, please let us know by contacting **Trish Carter, Director of Development**, at Trish@blueridgewildlifectr.org or by calling the Center at (540) 837-9000, option 3. **You may also complete the Legacy Intent Form on our website or by scanning the QR code below.** We will be honored to thank you for your generosity, welcome you into the Legacy Society, and share the benefits of membership.

All of the information you provide is kept confidential and helps ensure your wishes are carried out as intended.



Blue Ridge Wildlife Center is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization (EIN 54-1996991). Contributions may be tax-deductible as allowed by law. This information is not intended as legal or tax advice. Please consult your attorney, financial advisor, or tax professional when considering estate planning options.



Donor Spotlight:

Lisa Vella & Baileywyck Antiques

When Lisa Vella, owner of **Baileywyck Antiques** located in The Plains, VA, visited the Blue Ridge Wildlife Center with her son Matt and granddaughters Riley and Hailey, the experience became a meaningful family moment rooted in curiosity, compassion, and connection to wildlife.

For Riley, 7, the visit left a lasting impression.

“It was special to see all of the amazing animals and how well they were cared for.”

“We loved that they each had their own special toy and liked to show off for visitors.”

Those moments are exactly what Lisa hopes will shape how her granddaughters see the world.

“It makes us want to help more animals and take care of them,” Riley explained.

“It’s important to learn what to do if an animal is hurt or lost.”

Lisa’s commitment to community care extends well beyond her family. As Baileywyck Antiques celebrates 20 years in The Plains, giving back has always been central to the shop’s mission.

“Being part of the community is what we love most,” Lisa said. From operating Golden Dreams Therapeutic Riding at her home for a decade to supporting local nonprofits, generosity has been a throughline, and this year, Baileywyck Antiques proudly served as the **lead sponsor of BRWC’s 25th Anniversary Gala.**

What inspires Lisa’s support of BRWC is the Center’s direct impact. ***“You’ve helped create awareness and respect for wildlife and their environment,” “The respect shown to every being—human and animal alike—will not be forgotten.”***

Blue Ridge Wildlife Center is deeply grateful to Lisa Vella and Baileywyck Antiques for their leadership sponsorship, their belief in our mission, and for sharing the Center with the next generation of wildlife stewards.



Lisa Vella’s granddaughters Riley and Hailey Lantosca with BRWCs Sr. Education Specialist, Alysa Everly and Kevin, the American Kestrel ambassador.



Special Thanks to our 25th Anniversary Sponsors



Financials FY2025

Blue Ridge Wildlife Center operations on a fiscal year.

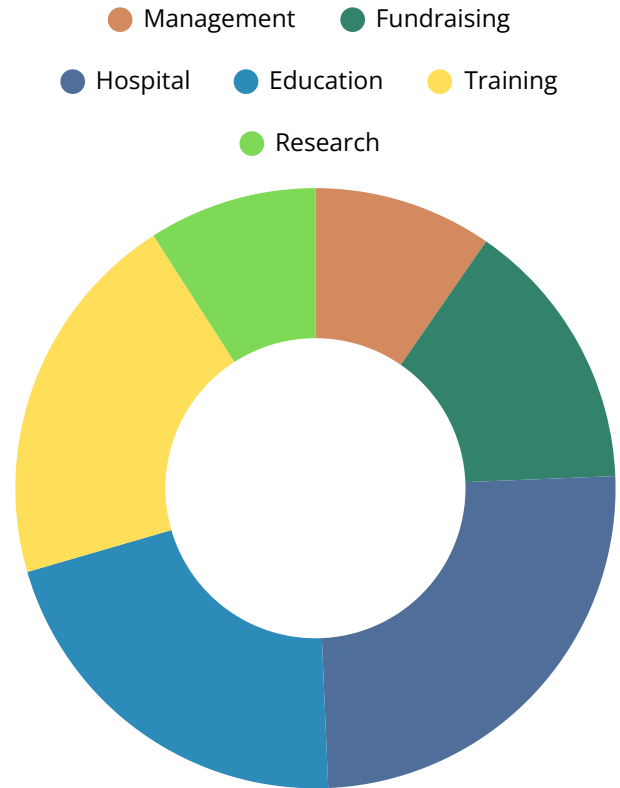
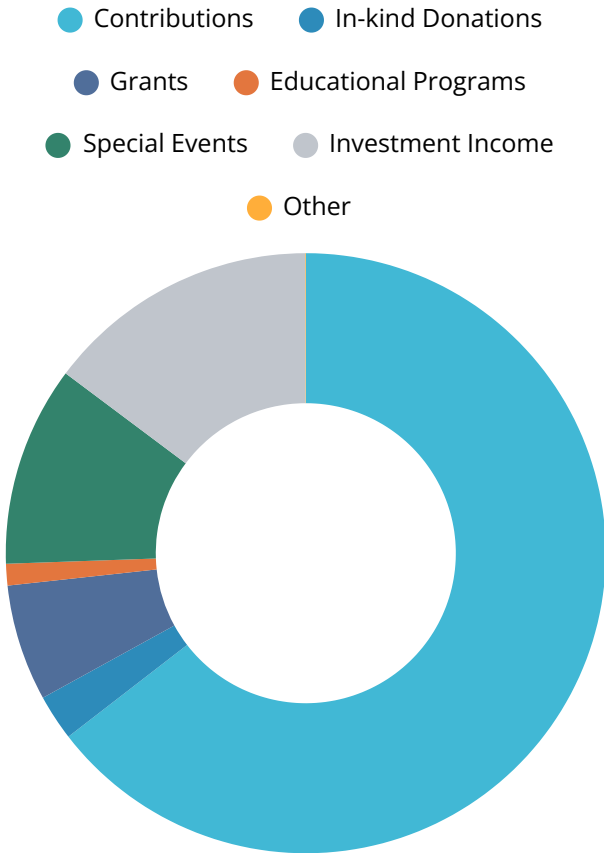
Financials reflect fiscal year 2025 from **July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025**

REVENUE

Membership Donations	\$1,927,453
Investment Income*	\$440,634
Special Events (net)	\$322,275
Educational Programs	\$34,744
Grants	\$187,501
In-kind Donations	\$73,766
Other	\$1,064
Total	\$2,987,437

EXPENSES

Hospital	\$399,664
Education	\$339,109
Training	\$326,998
Fundraising	\$235,801
Management	\$154,158
Research	\$145,332
Total	\$1,601,089
<i>Change in net assets</i>	<i>\$1,386,348</i>



* Built from contributions made over many years, our investment account supports long-term stability and capital needs, including repairs, maintenance, and other infrastructure needs.

Your membership support funds daily wildlife care and ensures we can meet every patient's needs.



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As we mark 25 years, we are deeply grateful to all who made this milestone possible. To steward our resources responsibly, this list reflects donors at the \$500 level and above, while our website recognizes every contributor whose generosity has made such a meaningful difference.

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We are truly honored to be the chosen recipient of these heartfelt donations.

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Thank You!

Thank you to everyone who provides us with food, medical supplies, blankets, newspaper, and more each year! Although we were unable to list everyone, your contributions make a significant impact on wildlife rehabilitation.

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Volunteer Appreciation

In 2025 we had **48** volunteers donate a total **6,800** hours.

BRWC could not function without our amazing team of volunteers.

Thank you all for making our work possible!



Emily Crisp.



Abbey Harney.



Jess Tornabene.



Mackenzie Cropper.



Officer Schultz transporting a patient he rescued.



Anne Staszecki and Cami Lee.



Ava Hardy.



Transport volunteer, Cecile Richard.



Elizabeth Schelin.

Thank You!

In 2025 we lost five of our beloved educational ambassadors. These animals played an important role in teaching the public about their species and conservation issues. They will be greatly missed.



Scuter, the Northern Diamond-backed Terrapin.



Jessie, the Wood Turtle.



Tugboat, the Wood Turtle.



Beetle, the Fish crow.



Cannoli, the Virginia Opossum.

ABOUT BRWC

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E-mail: info@blueridgewildlifectr.org

Web: blueridgewildlifectr.org

BRWC protects and conserves native wildlife by integrating veterinary medicine, rehabilitation, public education, professional training, and research.

BRWC is a 501(c)3 organization (EIN 54-1996991) and relies on private donations exclusively. Wildlife Centers may not receive payment to treat animals, nor do they receive state or federal funding. Contributions are tax-deductible.

BRWC is located on the Burwell-van Lennep Foundation (BVLf) property in Boyce, Virginia. The mission of the BVLf includes preserving the diverse ecology of this land, protecting wildlife, and environmental education. BVLf generously provides the land to BRWC at no cost.

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