

Wildlife Watch

News from the Wildlife Center of Virginia

Fall 2007

The Patients of the Wildlife Center

So far in 2007, the Wildlife Center has treated more than 2,000 animals, from virtually every corner of Virginia. Our goal is simple: provide quality, humane, and effective treatment to every animal that comes to our door so that it may be returned to the wild.

Some of these animals stay at the Center for many months and may go through intricate surgeries and long periods of physical therapy and rehab before they are ready for release. Others need only a wee bit of TLC and may be in our care for only a few days or hours.

Here are some of their stories.

#07-089 [Cooper's Hawk]
Admitted: February 15
Released: August 30

On Valentine's Day 2007, an immature Cooper's Hawk crashed into a building in Poquoson, Virginia. The bird was examined at the Poquoson Veterinary Hospital and then brought to the Center's clinic in Waynesboro — a one-way trip of more than 150 miles — by longtime volunteer wildlife transporter Gloria Diggs.

The hawk was unable to stand on its left leg and had an eye injury. X-rays found no broken bones, although it appears that the bird had suffered an earlier broken bone in its chest that had healed. [That's not uncommon. Nearly one-quarter of the Cooper's Hawks examined in one recent study had healed chest fractures. Many of the Cooper's Hawks seen at the Wildlife Center each year are "crash victims" — having hit windows, tree limbs, or other obstacles while pursuing small birds, their major prey.]



Wildlife Center Outreach Coordinator Amanda Nicholson (left) and Colonel Gloria Diggs prepare to release the Cooper's Hawk

The hawk was given anti-inflammatories and cage rest. Within a week, the bird was able to stand on its leg, but still could not fly well and had several broken feathers. The bird could not be released until those feathers grew back in.

That took until the end of August.

The Center generally prefers to release wildlife back into the area where the animals were first found. In this case, however, rather than risk further feather damage during a long transport back to the Poquoson area, the Center's veterinary staff decided to release the Cooper's Hawk close to Rockfish Gap, a major pathway for migrating hawks across the Blue Ridge Moun-

tains that's only a short drive from the Center.

Colonel Diggs once again made the trip to the Wildlife Center — this time to celebrate the successful release of the hawk she had first transported to us back in February.

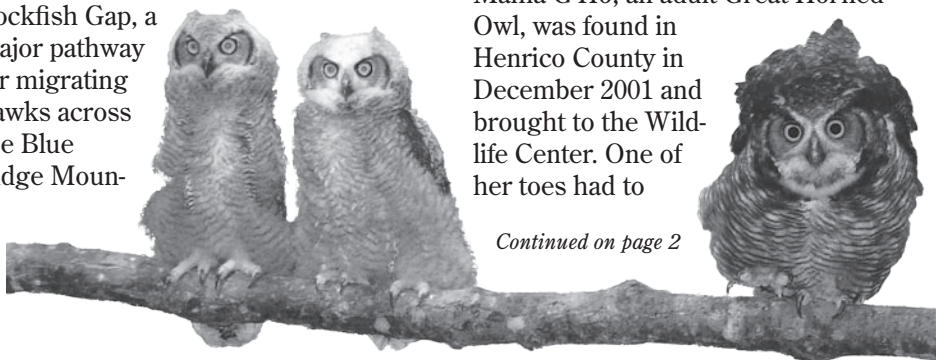
Help Wanted: Volunteer transporters like Gloria Diggs are the critical "ambulance drivers" of wildlife medicine — they help the Center help animals by bringing them to the Center's Waynesboro clinic. If you would be willing to help occasionally by providing transportation for an injured, sick, or orphaned animal from your area, please contact Amanda Nicholson at 540.942.9453 or anicholson@wildlifecenter.org.

07-201 [Great Horned Owl]
Admitted: March 24
Released: July 19

07-220 [Great Horned Owl]
Admitted: March 27
Released: July 19

In March, the Center admitted two baby Great Horned Owls that had fallen from their nests — one from near Roanoke, the other from the Forest Park Country Club in Martinsville. The birds were healthy but in need of special care — the perfect assignment for Mama G'Ho.

Mama G'Ho, an adult Great Horned Owl, was found in Henrico County in December 2001 and brought to the Wildlife Center. One of her toes had to



Continued on page 2

Patients...

continued

be amputated, and she had sustained injuries to her wing that prevent her from flying silently — an important criteria for an owl's ability to hunt in the wild. Although non-releasable, Mama G'Ho now has a vitally important job at the Center. She serves as a surrogate mother to many of the orphaned Great Horned baby owlets who come to us each spring.

After an introductory period, these two baby owls shared a large flight pen with Mama G'Ho — minimizing human interaction with the impressionable little birds and giving them the opportunity to learn the skills and traits they would need to survive in the wild.

"She's a terrific surrogate mother," says Wildlife Center veterinarian Dr. Dave McRuer. "She will teach them

how to be a **great** Great Horned Owl — big, mean, and cranky."

By mid-July, Mama G'Ho's work was done. The two owlets were able to fly, hunt on their own, and had acquired a healthy wariness of humans. On July 19, the two small owls were released — both near the sites of their original nests — by wildlife rehabilitator Sabrina Garvin.

Through the Wildlife Center's *Caring for Critters* programs, supporters may "adopt" Mama G'Ho or one of the other 20 animals that are permanent residents of the Wildlife Center [the list includes eagles, hawks, owls, opossums, snakes, a Russian Tortoise, and a Black Vulture]. *Caring for Critters* donations help support the feeding and care of these animals and the Center's environmental programs. *Caring for Critters* sponsorship information is available by calling the Center at 540.942.9453 or online at www.wildlifecenter.org.

toad's skin is critical for breathing, water absorption, and self-defense. Mr. Dodo's wound was carefully cleaned, and he was treated with antibiotics, anti-inflammatories, and pain medication. After three days of treatment, Mr. Dodo underwent surgery and received more than 20 sutures that closed the wound.

Mr. Dodo was a great patient. The day after his accident, for example, his medical chart indicates that he had a hearty appetite and ate four beetles.

By early May, after he successfully shed his skin [something adult toads do about four times a year], Mr. Dodo was ready to return to the Dell garden. Royanne Dell reports that "the neighborhood came out to welcome him home!"

07-403 [African Spurred Tortoise]
Admitted: April 22
Transferred: June 12

Nearly all of the patients treated at the Wildlife Center are native or naturalized animal species. But there are always a few exceptions.

So imagine the surprise of the homeowner in Albemarle County who found a 30-pound African Spurred Tortoise — a bushel basket-sized reptile — strolling up the driveway. Center vets believe that the animal escaped from captivity or, more likely, was turned loose by an owner.

"Every year, thousands of animals are 'released' by owners who have purchased an exotic pet without really thinking through the consequences," Center President Ed Clark explains. "That cute baby turtle, snake, or lizard that fit nicely into a counter-top aquarium when it first came home from the pet store

Coming Soon! Call of The Wild

On October 27 and 28, the Wildlife Center will host the 12th annual *Call of the Wild* Conference on Wildlife Rehabilitation. This conference gives wildlife rehabilitators, veterinary professionals, wildlife biologists, environmental educators, and wildlife enthusiasts the chance to share ideas and experiences in the evolving field of wildlife rehabilitation.

Additional information is available on the Center's website [www.wildlifecenter.org] or by contacting Amanda Nicholson at anicholson@wildlifecenter.org or 540.942.9453.



07-206 [American Toad]
Admitted: March 25
Released: May 5

In most cases, the individuals who bring animals to the Wildlife Center for treatment don't know much about the patient's history or life story. In the case of an American Toad who came to us in March, however, the animal was something of an old friend.

For several years, the toad had lived in the yard of the Dell family in Crozet. Daughters Emilia and Victoria named him Mr. Dodo. "He reminds us it's spring when we first see him," Royanne Dell reports, "and continues to assure us that our yard is healthy and nature friendly when we see him in the summer."

While working in the garden this spring, Jim Dell inadvertently discovered Mr. Dodo's winter hibernation home and severely sliced the toad's back with the tiller. The Dells quickly brought the toad to the Wildlife Center. For a toad, having a large skin wound is serious business — the



loses its charm when it weighs 30 pounds or is five feet long.”

The introduction of exotic animals into Virginia’s habitat is often fatal for the former pets, which may not be adapted to Virginia’s climate or available food supply. Non-native species that do survive may also carry foreign parasites and diseases and may compete with native species for critical nesting sites and habitat.

But this tortoise was lucky. He was found and brought to the Center. The tortoise was given a complete examination by the Center’s vets and was healthy and in good shape. Thanks to the Anheuser-Busch Adventure Parks, the tortoise now has a new permanent home in an appropriate ecosystem at Discovery Cove in Orlando, Florida.

07-619; 07-620; 07-621; 07-622 **[Carolina Wrens]**

Admitted: May 7
Transferred: May 7

On May 7, Mary Harvie Williams left her home in Gibsonville, North Carolina, on a trip to New York. Throughout her drive, she thought she heard birds chirping, but it wasn’t until she reached Lexington, Virginia that she realized that there was a bird nest lodged in her car’s rear bumper. Ms. Williams got directions to the Wildlife Center and made a quick detour.

In the Center’s driveway, wildlife rehabilitator Suzy Doell reached up under the bumper, and removed an intact nest with four Carolina Wren babies. The vet staff found that the birds were bright and alert, in good condition, and ready for their next trip — a short ride over the Blue Ridge Mountains to wildlife rehabilitator Nathou Attinger, who provided foster care for the orphans.

When she arrived at the Center with the wrens, Ms. Williams completed a Patient Admission Form. In response to the question, “Care Given”, she wryly noted, “Drove fast.”

07-1783 [Bobcat]

Admitted: August 3
Released: August 21

On August 2, a dump-truck driver at a sand quarry in the Barbours Creek



region of Craig County, Virginia saw a Bobcat being chased by two dogs. The Bobcat ran under the truck and disappeared from sight. The truck driver then drove about 30 miles to Covington, stopped, and decided to check under his truck. That’s when he again spotted the Bobcat — hiding up in the truck’s undercarriage.

An Alleghany County animal control officer captured the Bobcat and transferred it to wildlife rehabilitator Joyce Forbes. The Bobcat was checked over by a local veterinarian, transported to the Wildlife Center, and admitted on August 3.

The Bobcat was given a full physical

examination, including x-rays and laboratory tests. The cat, an adult male, had multiple abrasions, lacerations, and dog bites — some of which became infected — but no broken bones. The animal was treated with antibiotics and was examined every few days [under anesthesia] by Wildlife Center veterinary staff.

By August 20, the Bobcat was ready to be returned to the wild. Joyce Forbes released the animal back in the Barbours Creek area, identified by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries as an area of the state with the highest concentration of Bobcats.

Bobcats are unusual patients at the Wildlife Center. From 2002 – 2006, the Center admitted five Bobcats; two have been admitted thus far in 2007.

The Wildlife Center often gets calls from citizens who are convinced that they’ve heard a Bobcat in their area. Could be, Ed Clark responds, but more likely they’ve heard either [1] a domestic cat or [2] a Screech Owl — either of which can produce a hair-raising array of sounds.

The Wildlife Center of Virginia

Celebrating 25 Years of Service to Virginia’s Wildlife

Founded on November 9, 1982 in a horse stable in Waynesboro, the Wildlife Center of Virginia has transformed wildlife veterinary medicine. Through the support of a generous group of supporters, the Wildlife Center has:

- Treated almost 50,000 wild animals;
- Presented compelling, life-changing programs to more than 1.4 million children and adults and introduced these audiences to feathered, furred, and scaled representatives of Virginia’s wildlife; and
- Trained a generation of wildlife healthcare professionals — across the United States and around the world.

Please help us continue the vital work of the Wildlife Center of Virginia with a special contribution.

Thank you!





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You Are Invited ...

On **Friday, November 9** and **Saturday, November 10**, the Wildlife Center will mark 25 years of service to Virginia's wildlife with a special two-day Gala.

Friday night is the **Grand Reunion** at the historic Stonewall Jackson Hotel in Staunton. The evening will feature:

- A **Silent Auction**, with an array of wonderful delights ... one-of-a-kind jewelry ... restaurant, B-and-B, and "night-on-the-town" gift certificates ... the works of talented artisans and crafters ... and gifts for kids of all ages.



- A presentation of 25-Year Recollections, with special musical guest **Adrienne Young**; and
- Dancing with music by **Wanda and the White Boys**.

On Saturday, the celebration moves to the restored R.R. Smith Center in Staunton for a black-tie **Cocktail Reception and Live Auction**. Among the items to be offered are:

- A South African photo safari, including all ground transportation, lodging, and meals;
- A stay for two at The Homestead, the historic luxury resort in Hot Springs;
- Selected art by featured artists, including John Banovich, Thomas D. Mangelsen, and P. Buckley Moss;
- A private Chesapeake Bay charter cruise;



- A Capitol Hill lunch and tour with Representative Bob Goodlatte;
- A getaway vacation at a private retreat on the Abacos, the Bahamas;
- Stunning estate jewelry; and
- A week for two at Habitat Dive Resort, Bonaire, Netherlands Antilles

Tickets for both events are \$175 per person. Tickets for Friday evening are \$50 per person; tickets for Saturday evening are \$150 per person. Special sponsorship packages are available.

All proceeds benefit the Wildlife Center!

For additional information or reservations, contact Adam Patterson at apatterson@wildlifecenter.org or 540.942.9453.

Africa and Bonaire photos courtesy of Kurt Plowman.