

# VOLUNTEERING AT THE WILDLIFE CENTER OF VIRGINIA



*Teaching the world to care about and to care for  
wildlife and the environment.*

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## **Overview**

The Wildlife Center of Virginia is an internationally acclaimed teaching and research hospital for wildlife and conservation medicine. Since its founding in 1982, the nonprofit Center has treated more than 56,000 animals representing more than 200 species of native birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians. The WCV has also shared the lessons learned from these animals with some 1.4 million school-children and adults across Virginia through environmental education programs.

The Wildlife Center provides state-of-the-art medical care for sick, injured, and orphaned wildlife in order for these animals to be returned to the wild and thrive in their native habitat. By caring for individual animals, the Wildlife Center has gained unique insights and perspectives into conservation issues. Most of the Center's patients have problems caused directly or indirectly by people. Their case histories and test results tell us much about our environment and ourselves. The Center strives to inspire others to take greater personal responsibility for preserving wildlife and the environment.

## **Mission Statement**

The Wildlife Center of Virginia, a hospital for native wildlife, teaching the world to care about and to care for wildlife and the environment.

## **Available Volunteer Positions**

Animal Care  
Carpentry  
Environmental Education Docents  
Gardening  
Host Family  
Sewing/Knitting/Crafts  
Transport and Rescue  
Treatment Team  
Vets and Vet Technicians (Professionals)

## **The Role of Volunteers**

The Wildlife Center cannot fulfill its mission without the help of many dedicated volunteers. Volunteers play a vital role in assisting the patients as well as sharing the Center's message. Volunteers serve in many different ways depending on their interests, availability, and the needs of the Center.

The staff of the Center enjoys working with volunteers of different ages and personalities and looks forward to the time, energy and ideas that volunteers bring with them to help further the mission of the WCV.

## **Desirable Qualities of a Volunteer**

- Genuine interest in wildlife and the environment
- Conscientious approach to work assignments
- Willingness to participate in essential training
- Dependability
- Initiative

## **Volunteer Responsibilities**

- WCV policy and procedures must be followed at all times. A copy of these policies will be available for the area in which you volunteer.
- Dependability is essential. With many volunteer positions, the staff depends on those who are scheduled to complete daily tasks and fulfill responsibilities. If you are unable to work as scheduled, please notify the supervisor in your area.
- Orientation and training is provided by departments to help volunteers be effective at their job. Training is required and varies with specific jobs.
- Record volunteer hours every time volunteer services are provided. This not only helps us with our accounting, but also allows us to recognize those volunteers that put in a lot of time!
- Dress appropriately for the job. Supervisors in each volunteer area can guide you on what is appropriate.

- For on-site volunteers, always touch base with a staff member when you arrive and again before you leave.
- As a volunteer, you are a representative of the WCV; however, when speaking to the general public, please do not represent yourself as an employee of the Center.

### **Volunteer Benefits**

- Volunteers are invited to the annual Volunteer Appreciation Party held at the Center in the early spring. All volunteers who have donated their time are invited to bring spouses and children to the Center for this fun social event.
- Mileage may be deducted on income taxes for those who are traveling to the Center to volunteer on-site or are transporting wildlife to and from the Center.
- Of course, the most important benefit is the satisfaction that you are helping to save wild lives!

### **Miscellaneous Information**

- All on-site volunteers will need to attend an orientation and sign a liability release agreement before volunteering at the Center. This agreement between volunteers and the staff states that proper training will be provided for activities that volunteers may be asked to perform; other “staff only” tasks are designated as such and will be made known to volunteers.
- Please do not park your vehicle at the “top” of the driveway or directly in front of the Center. We reserve these spots for those that may be bringing incoming patients. Plenty of parking is available at the bottom half of the circle driveway or along the left hand-side of the parking lot. Please do not park in the 2 spaces at the “top” of the left-hand side.
- Problems and/or questions regarding your work should be addressed to the supervisor of your area.
- If you are an on-site volunteer and have a consistent volunteer schedule, please notify your immediate supervisor(s) if you are planning on taking a vacation or other days off.

### **Notice to Volunteers**

- The Wildlife Center of Virginia is a Drug-Free Workplace. The use, possession, transfer, purchase, manufacture or sale of illegal or controlled substances or drug-related equipment or paraphernalia on the premises of the Wildlife Center, other than for the purpose of providing appropriate care to our patients, is strictly prohibited.
- The Wildlife Center of Virginia is a non-smoking facility.
- If asked to perform WCV-related errands, volunteers are sometimes permitted to use the company vehicles. Volunteers must have a valid driver’s license. There is no smoking permitted in the WCV vehicles.

## **Available Volunteer Position Descriptions**

The following are the areas in which the Wildlife Center needs volunteer help. There are opportunities for everyone; both on-site and off-site positions are available. Volunteers may donate their time in more than one area if they so choose. Please read the following descriptions carefully and indicate your preference(s) on your volunteer application.

### **Animal Care Volunteers**

Animal care volunteers work closely with the rehabilitation staff as they perform daily tasks including meal preparation; feeding orphaned animals including squirrels, opossums, rabbits, and birds; cleaning cages; hosing pens; exercising patients; and assisting the staff with the capture and restraint of raptors. Volunteers who have a special interest in animal enrichment are also wanted to provide activities and “toys” to some of our patients and our permanent residents (see below for more details). Responsibilities will increase with experience and demonstrated commitment. Animal care volunteers are welcome to come throughout the year, although early spring and late summer are the times when there is the greatest need. *Animal care volunteers must be at least 18 years of age.*

#### **Animal Enrichment**

In addition to caring for all of the patients and education animals at the Center, those animal care volunteers with a special interest in animal enrichment are needed to enrich the lives of our patients and education animals (permanent residents). This is a very important and ongoing need requiring dedication, outside research, creative ideas, knowledge about wildlife and natural histories of various species. A background with animals and/or enrichment is not needed but would be useful for the position. Enrichment volunteers spend time researching enriching activities and environmental stimulation for a variety of Virginia wildlife species. If you have a particular interest in this area, please indicate on your volunteer application.

**New Animal Care Volunteers:** After attending a general orientation, new volunteers will be able to begin during most months of the year. *Because of our high case load in the spring, new animal care volunteers are unable to start in May and June.* Due to a low case load, new volunteers may or may not be able to start in December.

**Schedule Restrictions:** While there is no set time requirement for volunteering, a weekly 4-hour shift is encouraged. Volunteers may come in anytime between 9:00 am -6:00 pm; in the slower season (November-February), volunteers are encouraged to come in the morning when there are more tasks to perform.

### **Carpentry**

Those with carpentry skills are needed to build cages, secure doors, build and maintain perches, design enclosures and other carpentry-related odds and ends. Any and all help is greatly appreciated. The hours are flexible and are based on necessity and availability. Carpentry

volunteers must have a general working knowledge of carpentry and tools. The WCV can provide some tools but may not have all that would be necessary for a given project; volunteers who are willing and able to use their own tools are greatly appreciated. Those who would like to volunteer in this area for the WCV should be in good physical condition for any lifting that may be necessary, as well as being comfortable on ladders and creative in their thinking. There are also positions that do not require heavy lifting or using power tools, such as repairing perches or making squirrel/owl boxes. *Carpentry volunteers must be at least 18 years of age.*

### **Environmental Education Docent**

The Wildlife Center has opportunities for volunteers interested in educating the public about the Center's mission and the importance of protecting wildlife and the environment. Our programs promote positive attitudes toward wildlife and emphasize how the personal choices we make affect the health of the environment.

Our on-site programs offer the best opportunities for volunteer participation. We provide a one-hour Wildlife Center tour for a variety of groups including adults, families, school children, scouts, and clubs. Our two-hour Hospital and Habitat program, primarily for elementary and middle school-aged children, combines the Wildlife Center tour with a one-hour guided hike in the neighboring forest. Children explore the forest and participate in a scavenger hunt to help them learn about the animals that live there and what they need to survive in a forest habitat.

Docents should be able to hike a mile-long trail, comfortable with speaking in public, and have weekday availability. This is a great way to help provide a fun, meaningful environmental education experience in the great outdoors! *Docents must be at least 18 years of age.*

**New Docent Volunteers:** Due to program scheduling, new docents will likely begin either March-May or September-November.

**Schedule Restrictions:** There is no set shift requirement for docents. On-site programs are usually scheduled for weekday mornings; open house tours are scheduled on weekend afternoons.

### **Gardening/Landscaping**

Volunteers who enjoy gardening are needed to plant and maintain the flower beds around the Center; the use of native Virginia plants is highly encouraged. Other larger landscaping projects may also be available; the team leader of this area should be able to provide more information. The Wildlife Center will also accept produce items from those that have extensive gardens at home; many of our patients are fed greens and vegetables throughout the summer. Because we are feeding these items to our patients, the WCV prefers produce grown without pesticides or herbicides.

## **Host Families**

Throughout the year, the Wildlife Center provides opportunities for undergraduate and veterinary students to intern at the Center. While the WCV has a house in town to provide housing for these students, often there is a need for additional housing in the summertime. Students come anywhere from 3-12 week periods. Those who are interested in opening up their homes to students for any length of time are needed. Students are responsible for their own meals; host families can work with the Center staff to set guidelines for any student staying with them.

## **Sewing, Crocheting, and Knitting Volunteers**

The WCV relies on volunteers to work on various sewing, crocheting, and knitting projects for the Rehabilitation and Outreach Departments. This position allows for the flexibility of working from your own home or at the Center, is available to people of all ages, and does not require a specific time commitment. Some of these projects include sewing zippers on pillow cases, making rice bags to keep our patients warm, creating hammocks for small mammals, sewing black mesh on the front doors of our patient and education animal crates, sewing crate covers for our education animals' traveling crates, and crocheting and knitting artificial bird nests.

## **Transporters and Rescuers**

Volunteer transporters are needed to drive injured or orphaned animals from rescue sites to the Center, as well as transporting healthy orphans from the Center to permitted rehabilitators throughout the state. Patient transport is on an as-needed basis. Because volunteers are also sometimes needed to assist with the capture of injured animals, those interested in participating as "rescuers" are encouraged to attend the WCV's class on Wildlife Capture, Restraint, Handling and Transport (check website for upcoming schedule). Calls for rescue and transport may come from the Center or from the general public.

## **Treatment Team Volunteers**

Treatment team volunteers will have the opportunity to work hands-on with the patients at the WCV by assisting the veterinary staff with daily medical and diagnostic procedures. Tasks may include patient capture and restraint, weighing, administering medications, positioning and developing radiographs, and some laboratory work. No prior veterinary or animal handling experience is needed; the veterinary staff will provide all the necessary training and supervision. The first day will be spent in an orientation and observing patient care. *Treatment team volunteers must be at least 18 years of age.*

**New Treatment Team Volunteers:** After attending a general orientation, new volunteers should be able to begin during anytime of the year. However, due to shift restrictions (see below), availability may vary due to the number of active treatment team volunteers.

**Schedule Restrictions:** Treatment team volunteers are welcome to volunteer any day of the week. The morning volunteer shift is from 9 am-12 pm, the afternoon shift is from 3 pm-6 pm. *Space is limited to two volunteers per shift so availability may vary.*

### **Veterinarians and Vet Technicians (Professionals)**

Licensed veterinarians and veterinary technicians who are looking to volunteer their professional expertise on non-domestic species will have the opportunity to work with our veterinary staff and expand their knowledge of wildlife medicine and surgery and conservation medicine. Similar to treatment team volunteers, licensed veterinarians and veterinary technicians will be trained to work hands-on with the many patients at the Center and will assist in daily medical and diagnostic procedures.

**New Vet Volunteers:** After attending a general orientation, new volunteers should be able to begin during anytime of the year.