

WILDLIFE CENTER

OF VIRGINIA

ANNUAL REPORT 2022



President Ed Clark
prepares to release
Great Horned Owl
patient 22-0508 back
to the wild.



PRESIDENT'S YEAR IN REVIEW

Dear Friends:

2022 was a banner year for the Wildlife Center of Virginia, as we kicked off the festivities celebrating our 40th year of operation. It is a great milestone for this organization—and a testament to the enduring commitment of our supporters.

Reflecting on our 40 years brings to mind some stark contrasts—between the early days when we operated out of a barn (and we actually had to put things in the refrigerator to warm them), and our current status as a state-of-the-art veterinary hospital. Forty years ago, we did not have access to technology that is routine in our clinic today (such as the sophisticated equipment needed to monitor patients during surgery or to test blood lead levels).

But some things never change. 2022 found us doing what we have always done—working hard to find room to accommodate an ever-increasing patient load, and to find new ways to engage and inform audiences about the challenges facing wildlife.

Another thing that has not changed over our 40 years is that we approach the future with all eyes facing forward—as we have always done. With your continued support and faith in the strength of the organization that YOU have helped to build, the prospects are bright for the Center to continue to lead the advance of wildlife and conservation medicine for the next 40 years.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature of Ed Clark in black ink.

Ed Clark, President

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ON THE COVER:

2022 Bear Cub enjoys time in the Large Mammal enclosure.

Celebrating 40 Years of the Wildlife Center of Virginia

On November 9, 2022, we kicked off a year-long series of celebrations looking back on the first 40 years of the Wildlife Center of Virginia. That date was the anniversary of our incorporation in 1982. Over these 40 years, the Wildlife Center has seen incredible accomplishments and growth—in patients treated, in students trained, and in lives touched by the power of the lessons we teach about the creatures with whom we share our world.

As we continue our year-long celebration, we are most thankful for the colleagues, partners, supporters, and friends who have shared this remarkable journey with us.



Inside the horse barn in Augusta County that served as the first home of the Wildlife Center.



Center co-founders Dr. Stuart Porter and Ed Clark, with U.S. Senators John Warner (R-VA) and Eugene McCarthy (D-MN) at the 1985 dedication of our second facility in Weyers Cave.

**IN 40
YEARS**

90,000+
wild animal
patients

**1.5
MILLION+**
educational
program
attendees

1,500+
veterinary
professionals
trained



40th Anniversary Video Warms Hearts, Stirs Memories

Our 40th Anniversary Video premiered on November 9, 2022. It features reminiscences from a few of the people whose lives were touched by their experiences at the Wildlife Center.

You can watch the video at:
<https://bit.ly/40thVideo>



JOIN US IN
celebration

HOMECOMING: A 40TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

May 6th at Staunton's Hotel 24 South
support.wildlifecenter.org/HOMECOMING

For more details about HOMECOMING, and about other upcoming events, please visit: wildlifecenter.org/events

ANNUAL GALA & BENEFIT AUCTION
online, October 13th

CALL OF THE WILD CONFERENCE
hybrid online and in person
November 17th-19th

On behalf of the Board and staff of the Wildlife Center:

THANK YOU for all you have done to make these first 40 years so meaningful.

2022 Patient Admissions

TOTAL:
3,703

Passerines (Songbirds)

811 PATIENTS

American Crow	46	House Sparrow	40
American Goldfinch	17	Indigo Bunting	4
American Redstart	1	Lincoln's Sparrow	1
American Robin	107	Marsh Wren	1
Baltimore Oriole	3	Northern Cardinal	47
Barn Swallow	14	Northern Mockingbird	13
Black-and-white Warbler	1	Swallow	1
Black-capped Chickadee	1	Orchard Oriole	1
Blackpoll Warbler	1	Ovenbird	2
Black-throated Blue Warbler	2	Purple Finch	1
Blue Grosbeak	1	Purple Martin	21
Blue Jay	44	Red-breasted Nuthatch	1
Brown Thrasher	11	Red-eyed Vireo	4
Brown-headed Cowbird	3	Red-winged Blackbird	1
Cape May Warbler	1	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	2
Carolina Chickadee	2	Scarlet Tanager	2
Carolina Wren	89	Song Sparrow	8
Cedar Waxwing	17	Swainson's Thrush	2
Chipping Sparrow	4	Tennessee Warbler	1
Cliff Swallow	1	Tree Swallow	3
Common Grackle	26	Tufted Titmouse	15
Common Raven	2	Undetermined Bird	11
Common Yellowthroat	1	White-breasted Nuthatch	4
Dark-eyed Junco	6	White-crowned Sparrow	1
Eastern Bluebird	38	White-eyed Vireo	1
Eastern Kingbird	4	White-throated Sparrow	7
Eastern Meadowlark	2	Winter Wren	3
Eastern Phoebe	14	Wood Thrush	3
Eastern Wood-Pewee	1	Yellow-throated Vireo	1
European Starling	59		
Fish Crow	3		
Golden-crowned Kinglet	4		
Gray Catbird	17		
Hermit Thrush	3		
House Finch	63		

Raptors and Vultures

374 PATIENTS

American Kestrel	5
Bald Eagle	34
Barn Owl	2
Barred Owl	28

Black Vulture	27
Broad-winged Hawk	6
Cooper's Hawk	26
Eastern Screech-Owl	50
Great Horned Owl	38
Merlin	1
Mississippi Kite	1
Osprey	10
Peregrine Falcon	5
Red-shouldered Hawk	45
Red-tailed Hawk	61
Sharp-shinned Hawk	2
Turkey Vulture	33

Other Birds

295 PATIENTS

American Coot	1
Belted Kingfisher	2
Canada Goose	33
Chimney Swift	23
Chuck-will's-widow	1
Clapper Rail	1
Common Goldeneye	1
Common Loon	4
Common Merganser	4
Common Nighthawk	4
Domestic Waterfowl	5
Double-crested Cormorant	2
Downy Woodpecker	11
Great Blue Heron	10
Great Egret	3
Green Heron	3
Killdeer	1
Lesser Scaup	1
Mallard	29
Mourning Dove	65
Northern Flicker	18
Pied-billed Grebe	2
Pileated Woodpecker	11

Red-bellied Woodpecker	15
Red-headed Woodpecker	1
Rock Dove	6
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	17
Sora	2
Wild Turkey	6
Wood Duck	4
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	4
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	5

Mammals

1,903 PATIENTS

American Black Bear	6
Big Brown Bat	54
Black Rat	1
Deer Mouse	13
Eastern Chipmunk	22
Eastern Cottontail	622
Eastern Fox Squirrel	1
Eastern Gray Squirrel	352
Eastern Mole	1
Eastern Red Bat	14
Eastern Small-footed Bat	1
Eastern Woodrat	1
Evening Bat	2
Fox Squirrel	2
Hispid Cotton Rat	1
House Mouse	37
Little Brown Bat	2
Meadow Vole	1
Northern Long-eared Bat	1
Northern Short-tailed Shrew	3
Norway Rat	6
Raccoon	77

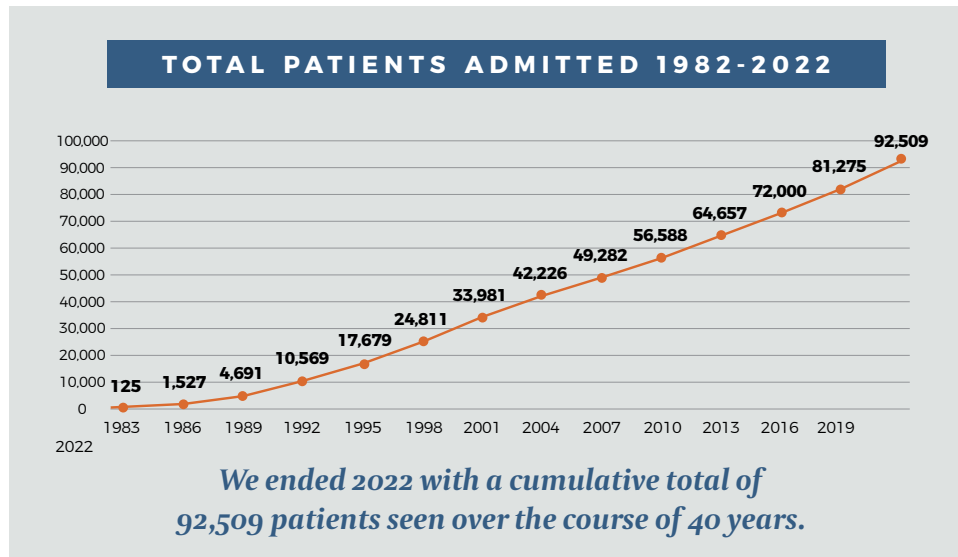
Red Fox	21
Silver-haired Bat	8
Southern Flying Squirrel	21
Striped Skunk	50
Tri-colored Bat	1
Undetermined Mammal	13
Virginia Opossum	421
White-footed Mouse	37
White-tailed Deer	86
Woodchuck	25

Reptiles and Amphibians

320 PATIENTS

American Bullfrog	1
Eastern American Toad	9
Eastern Gartersnake	6
Eastern Hog-nosed Snake	1
Eastern Kingsnake	2
Eastern Musk Turtle	1
Eastern Painted Turtle	23
Eastern Ratsnake	20
Eastern River Cooter	5
Eastern Wormsnake	1
Gray Treefrog	2
Green Frog	1
Green Treefrog	1
Northern Red Salamander	1
Pickering Frog	1
Red-eared Slider	8
Snapping Turtle	18
Southeastern Mud Turtle	1
Woodland Box Turtle	206
Yellow-bellied Slider	1

Our 40th Year—Our 90,000th Patient



Our 40th Year—Our 90,000th Patient

Our anniversary year also brought us a major milestone patient. May 20th was the ninth busiest day of the year. We admitted 31 animals that day—11 of them were young cottontails, and one of those tallied up to be the 90,000th patient seen at the Wildlife Center in our 40-year history. By the end of 2022, our cumulative total of patients stood at 92,509.



Even after 40 years, we still get “firsts.” In July, a fledgling raptor was found by the road in Henrico County with a wound to the flank. As it grew, it became clear that this was in fact a Mississippi Kite, the first ever admitted to the Wildlife Center. Mississippi Kite #22-2251 was treated, raised, and successfully released in September near Coveseville, where local bird watchers had recently spotted a number of other kites passing through the area.



One special Canada Goose patient in 2022 gained a benefactor, a following, and a new lease on life. In September, Roger Warden and his son found the goose near death after having been caught in a discarded fishing lure. Three months later, after gaining fans on one of the Wildlife Center Critter Cams, the goose was released back to the wild. And Roger was there to help.

VETERINARY SCIENCE AND REHABILITATION

It Takes a Village

A. Peregrine Falcon “Hack”

In June, a fledgling Peregrine Falcon from the Richmond Falcon Cam nest was found grounded not far from the nest by the **Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR)** personnel who monitor the cam. After examination and flight testing at the Center, DWR decided to attempt a “hack”—to introduce the bird back to the wild at a location in Shenandoah National Park where biologists are working to re-establish the population. Five days after release the falcon was seen at the site in the company of other falcons.

B. Purple Martins Renested

A group of 17 young Purple Martins, whose nests were destroyed in a storm, required quick action in June when they were brought to the Wildlife Center. Vet staff found them to be healthy, and so the search was on for a new colony to foster the birds. Center staff reached out to the **Purple Martin Conservation Association**, and found a landowner in Charlottesville who hosts a colony that could receive the nestlings. The 17 newcomers were successfully spread among numerous nests to avoid overstressing the parents.

C. Woodrat Traveler

An Allegheny Woodrat caught in a glue trap became the second patient of the species to be successfully treated at the Wildlife Center and transferred to Ohio for release. **Virginia DWR** arranged this second transfer because the woodrat population in Ohio is under severe stress. Erin Hazelton, a biologist at the **Ohio Department of Natural Resources** said that the partnership with the Wildlife Center of Virginia and Virginia DWR has “been a lifeline for Allegheny Woodrats in Ohio. The hope is that this guy is successful in contributing to the gene pool!”

D. Bear Cub Surgery

A young Black Bear cub found with a fractured leg in Nelson County became the fourth brought to the Center in 2022. Dr. Karra reached out to **Virginia Veterinary Specialists** in Charlottesville for an orthopedic surgeon, and **Dr. Kevin Stiffler** volunteered to perform the surgery (the third he has performed for Wildlife Center patients since 2012). After a period of strict rest in a cast, the patient was introduced to the other cubs at the Center.

Each year, the Wildlife Center partners with hundreds of volunteers and professionals—from rescuers and transporters to credentialed wildlife rehabilitators; from state and federal agencies to fellow wildlife conservation and research facilities. Here are just a few stories from 2022 about ways that Wildlife Center staff used partnerships to deliver positive outcomes for wildlife patients.



GoPro photograph of hack site by Katie Fowler.



Active collaborations multiply our impact.

You can see video of his first steps out of his crate here:
<https://bit.ly/bear-patient>.





Veterinary Intern Dr. Marit Bakken examines a box turtle patient with student externs.

Meet our Interns

The Wildlife Center is a major training ground for veterinary and rehabilitation professionals. Each year the Center offers post-doctoral and post-graduate internships for two veterinarians, a licensed veterinary technician, and a wildlife rehabilitator advancing in their careers.

Director of Veterinary Services Dr. Karra Pierce, says “Teaching the next generation of wildlife veterinarians and wildlife professionals is without a doubt the most impactful part of my role at the Wildlife Center of Virginia.”

We asked each of our 2022 interns to describe their experience:



Dr. Marit Bakken graduated from the Veterinary School at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She said: “I love the emphasis on education as well as on animal care. I love having student externs and being able to teach them, and I love everything that the Outreach department does to educate the public. It has been a perfect combination of both learning new things all the time, and being able to teach others.”



Dr. Olivia Schiermeyer earned her veterinary doctorate at the Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine. She said: “[Directory of Veterinary Services] Dr. Karra, and [Licensed Veterinary Technician Supervisor] Jess have been so supportive and have taught me so much. The things we get to do—the range of species we treat and the advanced procedures we perform—there are very few facilities that have the ability to support that kind of work.”



Licensed Veterinary Technician **Rachel Wolffe** pursued her degree in Veterinary Technology at Blue Ridge Community College. She has worked at the Center as a volunteer, a student extern, then as an intern, and now as a full-time staff member. She said: “It was a memorable year for me. I am so grateful for the opportunity to work with such fabulous people on such an important mission.”



Wildlife Rehabilitation Intern **Katie Bacall** first came to the Center as a student extern and stayed through a year-long internship. She said: “My internship gave me a much deeper understanding of the work of the Wildlife Center. It was a year full of incredible ‘firsts’ that I will never forget. Some were small, some were bigger, but all of them were very memorable and significant.”

ADVANCING THE FIELD OF WILDLIFE AND CONSERVATION MEDICINE

In 2022, we provided training for:

- 35** Veterinary Externs
- 1** Veterinary Technician Extern
- 16** Rehabilitation Externs

Throughout 2022, the Wildlife Center actively gathered data for:

- 17** scientific studies
- Subjects include: parasitic infection surveillance in eagles and other raptors, baby bird identification, emerging disease surveillance in box turtles, mange in Black Bears, rabies in woodland species, and tick-borne disease surveillance

In 2022, veterinary staff delivered:

- 21** lectures, presentations, and papers
- Subjects included: toxoplasma in raptors, wildlife triage, lead toxicosis, public health concerns of bat / cat interactions, and the handling, physical examination, radiology, and bandaging of wildlife

OUTREACH & EDUCATION

FOND FAREWELLS

Female? Male? With owls, it can be hard to tell.

Owls have almost no external indicators of their sex other than size. We often make an educated guess based on size and weight, but the only definitive ways to tell are invasive physical exam, or DNA testing. In 2012, we had the chance to do DNA testing on Papa and Gus, and were told that Papa was male and Gus was female (contrary to our original guesses). And that's how we talked about them for the next 10 years. Well, even DNA testing can be wrong sometimes. Post-mortem exams proved definitively that Papa was female and Gus was male. (?!?) In our memorial communications about them, we've kept the same gender designations that we've used for the past 10 years, because that's the way that thousands have come to know and love them.



Ambassador animals are the heart and soul of our Education program. We lost three of these colleagues in 2022, two within the space of a single week in December: Papa G'Ho, the Great Horned Owl surrogate parent who had been at the Center for 21 years,

passed away due to heart failure; Gus, Barred Owl, was humanely euthanized at age 28½ to avoid suffering due to deteriorating arthritis. During the course of their lives each of them touched thousands of people through Critter Cams and public programs.



Papa in flight. 2018 photo courtesy Shelly Hokanson.

Papa G'Ho (Great Horned Owl)

Papa came to the Center as a mature owl in 2001, with an injury that made silent flight impossible. Without that ability an owl cannot hunt successfully in the wild. He could not be released, and his wild behavior made him unsuitable for human handling and public presentations. Fortunately, there was another role he could fill: that of surrogate parent to young Great Horned Owlets.



Papa's protective instincts, 2020.

Over the course of his 21 years at the Center, Papa raised **53 owlets**—teaching them how owls behave, socialize, and hunt.

Despite never being involved in education programs, Papa gained quite a bit of fame and a following. Scenes of his foster families perching, preening, and eating together were viewed far and wide through Critter Cam, winning him many fans. And with each release of one of his “children,” word spread of this remarkable surrogate parent who taught dozens of young owls how to be wild and free.



The last of Papa's 53 foster owlets to be released was patient 22-0508, released in October in Orange County.



< You can see a video of the release here: <https://bit.ly/GHoRelease>.

Gus (Barred Owl)

Gus lived the life of a more typical animal ambassador. She arrived at the Center in 1994 as a young owlet who had been found outside the nest and kept for a time by her rescuers. She was very comfortable around humans, making her unsuited for a return to the wild.

Through online education programs, Gus was able to connect with students and adults worldwide. Her Outreach and Education colleagues

estimate that in the past 15 years alone, she participated in more than 1500 public programs attended by more than 93,000 people. Twenty eight years is a very long and productive life for an owl.



Gus in 2008. Photo courtesy Jack Looney.



Fan mail to Gus in 2021.

Albus (Eastern Ratsnake)

We said goodbye to another ambassador animal in 2022. Albus was diagnosed with a cancerous growth and was humanely euthanized in April.



Being gentle and easy-going are good qualities in an animal ambassador. Albus's demeanor earned him many fans over the years, and helped to win over many people to understanding and accepting snakes as wild neighbors.

2022 Outreach at a Glance



PROGRAMS

66 in-person programs
to 3,253 people

76 online programs
(52 open to public
Facebook Live, streamed events,
moderated discussions, etc
24 sponsored, private to 2,175 people)



WEBSITE

402,513 unique visitors



FRONT DESK

9,600 phone calls received
7,950 animal-related calls (82.6%)
400 animal-related email
inquiries answered



CRITTER CAMS

13,026 visitors



PRESS

104 media appearances
75 online/print
17 television
12 radio

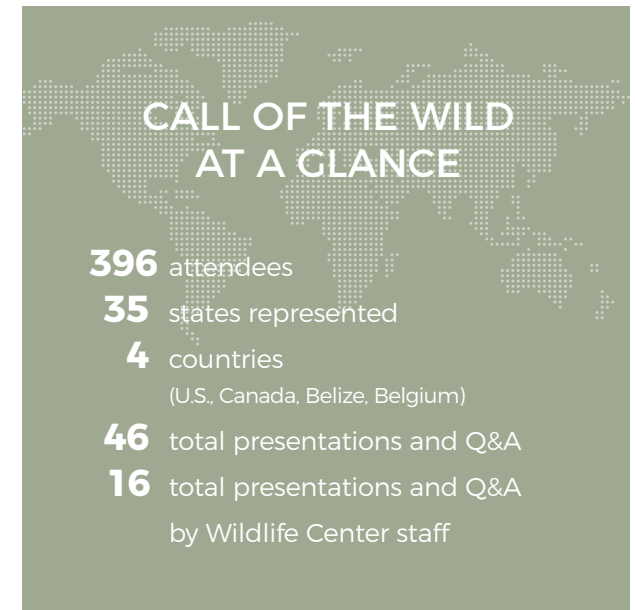
OUTREACH & EDUCATION

Call of the Wild 2022

Every year, the Wildlife Center's *Call of the Wild* conference brings together wildlife rehabilitators, veterinarians, veterinary technicians, and wildlife educators to share insights, techniques, standards, and best practices in wildlife medicine and rehabilitation. Once again, the conference was held online. Planning is already underway for a hybrid event 2023, combining in-person and online options.

In 2022, Wildlife Center board and staff shared their expertise on the following subjects:

- Karra Pierce, DVM - *Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) Panel Discussion*
- Marit Bakken, DVM - *An Overview of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza*
- Olivia Schiermeyer, DVM - *Adult Songbird Triage*
- Jess Ransier, LVT, Rachel Wolffe LVT, Karra Pierce, DVM - *Principles of Bandage Placement in the Avian Patient: Lecture & Demonstration*
- McKenzie Stewart, CWR - *Snakes of Virginia: Using Natural History as a Foundation for Rehabilitation*
- Liz Noderer, CWR, Elka Hutcheson - *Raising Fawns*
- Alex Wehrung - *Storytelling in Wildlife Education; Working with the News Media in Wildlife Rehabilitation*
- Connor Gillespie - *Collaborative Online Programs*
- Michael Adkins - *I Just Hung Up to Say I Love You: A Front Line Panel Discussion*
- Julie Barron Morrill, WCV Board Chair - *Emergency Preparedness 101*



Outreach Programs Promote Citizen Science, Student Participation

Two of our favorite programs of the past year (one online, one in person) sum up the range of audiences and subjects that the Center's Outreach and Education program addresses.



To mark **World Turtle Day** in May, Outreach Coordinator Connor and Wilson the Woodland Box Turtle visited the students of Rockfish River Elementary School in Nelson County. The students had created 100 unique turtle paintings (see photo for an example), which they offered to the first 100 people to make a donation either to the Wildlife Center or to a turtle conservation organization in Nicaragua. Student art became student activism in the cause of wildlife conservation.

In February we were honored to host Becca Rodomsky-Bish from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, who is the Project Leader for the **Great Backyard Bird Count**. Each year more than 300,000 participants from 192 countries log sightings for thousands of bird species. Becca spoke to our Wildlife Center audience about the value of citizen science and the incredible range of information gathered every year in the Bird Count.



UNTAMED Receives Silver Telly Award

Once again in 2022, UNTAMED: Life is Wild, the public television series co-produced by the Wildlife Center and VPM, was honored with a Telly Award in the General category for Nature / Wildlife. This marks the third Telly (to accompany one regional Emmy nomination) won by the series. The award-winning episode from Season 3 is entitled "Habitat Islands and Wildlife Corridors." You can view it on the Season 3 UNTAMED pages of the Wildlife Center website: <https://www.wildlifecenter.org/episode-302-habitat-islands-and-wildlife-corridors>

Unfortunately, because of budget constraints, VPM made the decision to discontinue production of the series after Season 4. But all four seasons are now in distribution through American Public Television, where they can continue to be viewed and enjoyed by audiences nationwide.

FINANCIALS

2022 Revenues

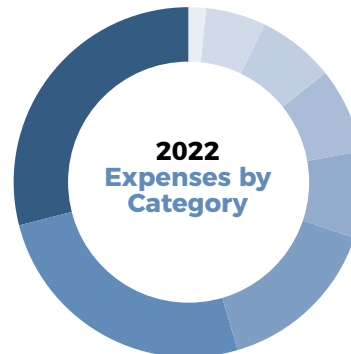
Individuals	\$1,589,175
Bequests	\$528,448
Events [net]	\$193,090
Corporations/Foundation	\$182,827
Programs Fees/Sales	\$54,697
Wildlife Center of VA Foundation	\$49,000
TOTAL:	\$2,597,237



- Individuals **61%**
- Bequests **20%**
- Events [net] **8%**
- Corporations /Foundations **7%**
- Programs Fees/Sales **2%**
- Wildlife Center of VA Foundation **2%**

2022 Expenses

Outreach/Conservation	\$752,537
Treatment	\$663,539
Training	\$397,931
Administration	\$207,097
Fundraising	\$205,578
Capital Expenditures	\$185,117
Future Projects/Reserves	\$143,940
Mortgage	\$41,498
TOTAL:	\$2,597,237



- Outreach/Conservation **29%**
- Treatment **26%**
- Training **15%**
- Administration **8%**
- Fundraising **8%**
- Capital Expenditures **7%**
- Future Projects/Reserves **5%**
- Mortgage **2%**



A financial statement for the most recent fiscal year is available upon request from the State Division of Consumer Affairs, P.O. Box 1163, Richmond VA 23209, 804.786.1343. Financial statements are also posted on the Center's website.



Red Fox, patient #0386 of 2022.

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LEADERSHIP

(as of March 1, 2023)

WILDLIFE CENTER OF VIRGINIA

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Amber Buck, *Operations Manager*
Maliah Carroll, *Front Desk Coordinator*
Ed Clark, *President*
Ben Cole, *Seasonal Wildlife Rehabilitator*
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Kristen Sluiter, *Special Projects Coordinator*
Mac Stewart, *Wildlife Rehabilitation Team Lead*
Lauren Swinson, *Hospital Administration Assistant*
Alex Wehrung, *Public Affairs Manager*
Rachel Wolffe, *Licensed Veterinary Technician*



40th Anniversary Eagle Release

A crowd of more than 100 gathered at Claytor Lake State Park in Pulaski County VA on November 16th to watch the release of Bald Eagle patient 22-3402, an event which took place during the week of the kickoff of the Center's 40th Anniversary celebrations. The eagle was found on October 14th and was diagnosed with lead toxicosis. The patient responded quite quickly to treatment, and within a month was judged ready to be released, to the great pleasure of the crowd.



Photograph courtesy of Woody Mallory



**WILDLIFE
CENTER**
OF VIRGINIA

A hospital for native wild animals,
teaching the world to care about, and care for,
wildlife and the environment.

MAIL: P.O. Box 1557 Waynesboro, VA 22980 • LOCATION: 1800 South Delphine Ave Waynesboro, VA 22980 • 540.942.9453

wildlifecenter.org