



## THE WILDLIFE CENTER OF VIRGINIA

P.O. BOX 1557 • WAYNESBORO, VIRGINIA 22980 • 540-942-WILD • FAX 540-943-WILD

### THE WILDLIFE CENTER OF VIRGINIA ADMITS FIRST HATCHLING RAPTORS OF 2022

Two hatchling Great Horned Owlets receive a second chance at life in the wild

#### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE ####

Waynesboro, Virginia – March 9, 2022 On March 3, the Wildlife Center of Virginia admitted two young Great Horned Owlets, the first hatchling raptors seen as patients during 2022. A private citizen found the hatchling owlets alone on the ground near a Greer and Associates construction site in Albemarle County on March 2, after the birds had likely fallen from their nest. A private citizen observed an adult Great Horned Owl flying in the area, as well as the owlets' nest. The following day, the Center's Wildlife Rehabilitation Intern Ben Cole rescued and transported both owlets to the Wildlife Center of Virginia.

A thorough exam performed by Center veterinarians did not reveal any major physical injuries, and radiographs showed the owlets had stomachs full of food -- signifying the parents were still caring for and feeding these young birds. Hatchlings have the best chance of survival when cared for by their wild parents; Center staff prioritized re-nesting these owlets in their original nest.

On March 5, Center staff transported the owlets back to their site of rescue and attempted to re-nest the hatchlings with help from the Greer and Associates construction crew and their equipment. While the initial attempt was successful, within 36 hours one of the owlets had fallen to the ground again. Center staff heard and saw the adult owl nearby, as well as signs of the owlet feeding. Center staff placed the owlet inside a temporary artificial nest attached to the same tree on March 6, and contacted Greer and Associates' site manager on March 8 to check on the owlet's status. The artificial nest had remained in place, neither owlet was seen on the ground, and an adult Great Horned Owl was possibly seen in the area that same morning, indicating that the second re-nesting attempt was likely a success.

One of several native species of owls found in Virginia, Great Horned Owls typically mate and lay eggs during late January and early February, with incubation periods lasting about 30 days. These hatchling owlets, the 177<sup>th</sup> and 178<sup>th</sup> admissions to the Center during 2022, are likely less than one month in age.



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Members of the public should never attempt to treat or raise a baby bird on their own. Despite best efforts and intentions, most hand-raised birds will die. Attempting to raise orphaned birds without proper training also presents a risk of human-imprinting; Imprinting is a form of learning in which an animal gains its sense of species identification. Birds do not automatically know what they are when they hatch – they visually imprint on their parents during a critical period of development. After imprinting, they will identify with that species for life. For more information on imprinting, visit <https://www.wildlifecenter.org/human-imprinting-birds-and-importance-surrogacy>. Additionally, raising a wild animal in captivity is illegal without proper permitting. For more information on how to help orphaned birds, visit <https://www.wildlifecenter.org/baby-bird>

For more information and to arrange an interview, contact Public Affairs Manager Alex Wehrung. A collection of high-quality photographs of these owlets are available upon request.

**Press Availability: To schedule an interview, contact Public Affairs Manager Alex Wehrung. Wildlife Center of Virginia staff are available Monday through Friday during regular business hours for virtual interviews about bird patients, online events, and their education and outreach work. A collection of high-quality photographs of patients and ambassador animals are available upon request.**

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### PRESS CONTACT

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*The Wildlife Center of Virginia is an internationally acclaimed teaching and research hospital for wildlife and conservation medicine. The nonprofit Center has cared for more than 85,000 wild*



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*animals, representing 200 species of native birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians. The Center's public education programs share insights gained through the care of injured and orphaned wildlife, in hopes of reducing human damage to wildlife.*