



THE WILDLIFE CENTER OF VIRGINIA

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

CELEBRATING WORLD TURTLE DAY AT THE WILDLIFE CENTER OF VIRGINIA

Learn about how to best help wild turtles on World Turtle Day, this Tuesday, May 23

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Waynesboro, Virginia – May 23, 2023 Each May, the Wildlife Center of Virginia releases dozens of turtles back into the wild that have been in long-term recovery over the winter months. This release often happens to coincide with World Turtle Day on May 23. Many new turtle patients are arriving at the Center, too; it's the time of year when many are emerging from hibernation and are becoming more active. This year, the Wildlife Center of Virginia is reflecting on the lessons that can be learned from the stories of countless turtles that have been rehabilitated at the non-profit teaching and research hospital throughout their 40-year history.

From 2011 (the year the Center's patient record keeping system went digital) to 2023, nearly 5,000 individual turtles were admitted in need of care, often on an emergency basis. Many of the species represented are commonly seen throughout Virginia – the Woodland Box Turtle, for one – and totaled in the thousands. Others were much rarer, like the six Bog Turtles admitted – a species listed as Endangered in the Commonwealth of Virginia by the IUCN Red List. [Treating and rehabilitating](#) these animals -- and releasing them back into the wild -- represents a critical aspect of wildlife conservation that the Wildlife Center of Virginia is proud to be a part of.

Another noteworthy turtle patient at the Center was an Eastern River Cooter admitted from Roanoke County during October 2022. The most likely circumstance of its injury was all too common (being hit by a vehicle while crossing a roadway), but its size was extraordinary. As Veterinary Intern Dr. Marit noted during its intake exam, “[the Eastern River Cooter's] standard carapace length is at least 12.5 inches. If we're talking about curved carapace length, then it's 13.5 inches.”

The largest Eastern River Cooter [formally documented](#) by the Virginia Herpetological Society within the Commonwealth had a carapace length of 12.2 in. While the official measuring equipment wasn't available to Center staff during this particular turtle's time as a patient, it's entirely possible that this record was (unofficially) broken!

While no two turtle patients' cases are exactly the same, many similarities exist in their circumstances of injury and rescue. The Wildlife Center invites the public to read and share a recent post to their homepage, [Celebrating World Turtle Day 2023](#), to learn more about these amazing animals and how to help them.



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For more information and to arrange an interview, contact Public Affairs Manager Alex Wehrung. A collection of high-quality photographs of turtle species seen at the Center is 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 in-person or virtual interviews about turtle 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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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 90,000 wild 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.