



THE WILDLIFE CENTER OF VIRGINIA

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

SMALL IN SIZE, LARGE IN IMPACT: THE ALLEGHENY WOODRAT

Endangered Species at the Wildlife Center of Virginia Help Conservation Efforts Nation-wide

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Waynesboro, Virginia – September 20, 2023 While the Allegheny Woodrat’s population is considered stable within the Commonwealth, the squirrel-sized rodent is categorized as Endangered in several nearby states, including Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Ohio.

Nine of these unassuming animals, also known as packrats, paid [a brief visit to the Wildlife Center of Virginia](#) after being live-trapped by Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources biologists in Rappahannock County.

Soon after, they were transported to Ohio and released into a predetermined area where their numbers have significantly declined – adding to the gene pool and boosting the overall health, resiliency, and diversity of the regional population.

Before their departure from the Wildlife Center, small tissue samples other medical data were collected. Researchers from several academic institutions and government agencies – including Radford University, Virginia Tech, Northern Virginia Community College, Towson University, and the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources – are currently analyzing the samples that will contribute to three separate projects:

- External parasites (bot flies and fleas) were collected and added to an unprecedented survey spanning eight different states. Bot flies previously collected from Allegheny Woodrats in Virginia do not match the genetic signatures of any known bot fly species in the eastern United States – possibly indicating a new, undescribed species.
- There are clear, geographic barriers that prevent woodrats from mingling and mating with different populations. DNA extracted from tissue samples will help determine which populations are in need of improved genetic diversity – achieved by relocating individuals such as these.



THE WILDLIFE CENTER OF VIRGINIA

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

- DNA samples will also be used to identify woodrats that, when added to captive breeding programs at several zoological institutions, will provide increased genetic diversity in areas of their release into the wild.

For more information and to arrange an interview, contact Public Affairs Manager Alex Wehrung. A collection of high-quality photographs of these Allegheny Woodrats and other interesting patients 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 interviews about patients, online events, and their education and outreach work. A collection of high-quality photographs of patients and ambassador animals are available upon request.

#####

PRESS CONTACT

Alex Wehrung

Public Affairs Manager

awehrung@wildlifecenter.org

540.932.9614, Ext. 1102

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.