



THE WILDLIFE CENTER OF VIRGINIA

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HENRICO COUNTY RESIDENTS RALLY AROUND RED FOX

Mange-infested fox overcomes the odds and returns to the wild

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Waynesboro, Virginia – February 7, 2024 Staff at the Wildlife Center of Virginia – a non-profit teaching and research hospital for native wildlife located in Waynesboro that cares for 4,000 animals each year – are celebrating one patient's return to the wild this week.

On December 1, 2023, a family from Richmond brought in a juvenile Red Fox. They had spotted the fox on their property a month prior to admission, and said that he was in such rough shape that they "could hardly tell he was a fox ... we realized he needed help, and after speaking with Center staff, we bought a humane trap and set it up with sardines as bait. The fox seemed scared the first time he approached the trap, but we covered it with leaves on our second attempt and had immediate success." Once captured, the family quickly transported the fox to the Wildlife Center.

On admission, the veterinary team determined that the young fox had a severe case of sarcoptic mange. Not only had the fox lost roughly 60% of its fur, but he was also emaciated, dehydrated, and had several open wounds on his face and body. Most of the fox's skin was crusted and hardened as a result of a secondary bacterial infection.

Veterinary staff treated the fox with a combination of anti-parasitic, antibiotic, and anti-inflammatory medication. The prognosis for recovery was initially guarded due to the fox's poor condition. Thankfully, after three weeks in care, the fox made significant improvement.

Front desk staff at the Wildlife Center were thrilled to update the rescuers on the fox's progress, and were touched to learn that the fox has a large following in the community who are rooting for him to recover. "I shared this fox's story and received so many heartwarming responses," the rescuer said. "I also learned that I'm not alone, others said they've seen foxes just like this one."

The veterinary team administered the final doses of antiparasitic medications on January 27, noting that the condition of the fur had been continually improving during treatments. On February 2, the alopecia and other mange-related symptoms had been completely resolved – his fur was thick, clean, and in good condition, and his skin was healthy and wound-free. Zero parasitic mites were found on a skin scrape analyzed by the Center’s veterinary technicians that same day, and Red Fox #23-3911 was officially cleared for release.

On February 4, Center staff transported the fox back to his original site of rescue in Henrico County, but they weren’t alone. Several members of the local community – who were involved with the fox’s rescue and had been staying updated on his recovery throughout treatment – gathered to witness Red Fox #23-3911’s successful return to the wild.

As Lisa Ligon, the private citizen who initially rescued the fox, shared with Center staff after the release: "We were so full of joy to see this beautiful creature run into the woods, back to his home."

For more information about this fox, videos of its release, how to help wildlife suffering from mange in Virginia, and the Center and its work, visit <https://www.wildlifecenter.org/critter-corner/current-patients/red-fox-23-3911>

Press Availability:

Wildlife Center of Virginia outreach staff are available during regular business hours for interviews about unusual patients, wildlife rehabilitation, and their education and outreach work.

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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.