



THE WILDLIFE CENTER OF VIRGINIA

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

SAVING A SPECIES, ONE PATIENT AT A TIME

How wildlife rehabilitation works – and why it matters – on National American Eagle Day 2023

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Waynesboro, Virginia – June 20, 2023 Created by the American Eagle Foundation in 1995, American Bald Eagle Day is celebrated each year on June 20. On this day, wildlife professionals and enthusiasts alike are taking the time to celebrate our national symbol and appreciate these amazing animals.

In 1985, the Center admitted its very first Bald Eagle patient, an individual that had been poisoned by carbofuran, a potent pesticide. The eagle was fully rehabilitated and released, but the work was far from done – the Center led a long but ultimately successful campaign to ban the most common form of carbofuran in Virginia and across the United States. That single policy change has saved the lives of millions of birds, including Bald Eagles, every year.

During the past 38 years, the Center has admitted hundreds of wild Bald Eagles, with an average of 45 individual eagle patients being admitted each year since 2011. Some of those eagles had been [hit by vehicles](#) or had sustained physical injuries from [territorial disputes with other eagles](#). Other eagles were [juveniles failing to thrive on their own](#), or young eaglets discovered after [storms destroyed their nests](#). Some eagle patients had been suffering from [the devastating effects of lead toxicosis](#). Despite the differences in their circumstances of rescue and the treatments they receive, each Bald Eagle that arrives at the Wildlife Center of Virginia is treated with the same goal in mind: release back into the wild.

Historically, gathering information on rehabilitated eagles post-release was a difficult task. Biologists, researchers, and wildlife professionals working together with various government agencies have been banding wild birds, including eagles, for more than a century. Permanently affixing metal or plastic anklets with unique identification codes to a bird's leg offers a definitive – but limited – method of tracking an individual's movements and life span.

Thanks to recent advancements in technology, collecting data on the movements, life spans, and behaviors of Bald Eagles in the wild has become much more sophisticated. During the past 13 years, Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources biologists have fitted almost two dozen Bald Eagle patients at the Center [with GPS transmitters](#) prior to their release as a part of an ongoing research project. For the Wildlife Center, having access to the data on tracked eagles is a fantastic opportunity for post-release studies. Simultaneously, this data affirms a crucial message worth sharing with the public – wildlife rehabilitation works!



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The time, energy, and resources spent rehabilitating Bald Eagles are investments worth making. Tracked eagles released from the Wildlife Center have gone on to live full, healthy, and productive lives. Each individual that returns to the wild helps to bolster the Bald Eagle population, supports healthy ecosystems, and ensures that future generations of Americans will have the opportunity to feel a personal connection to these magnificent raptors. Visit the Center's [YouTube channel](#) to watch a special National Bald Eagle Day video created by the Center's Outreach and Education staff that highlights these messages.

How to Celebrate American Bald Eagle Day:

- Learn more about the veterinary and rehabilitative care of Bald Eagles at the Wildlife Center by visiting our [Current Patients](#) page.
- Watch [Untamed: Life is Wild](#), Episode Two: Bald Eagles – and be sure to check out the accompanying Untamed Compendium resources!
- Look for opportunities to volunteer with wildlife and environmental-based organizations. The Wildlife Center would not be capable of fulfilling its mission – including the care and rehabilitation of Bald Eagles -- without the help of our incredibly dedicated [volunteers](#)!
- [Donate](#) to the Wildlife Center to help provide life-saving and emergency medical care to Bald Eagles, or sponsor Buddy the Bald Eagle through the Center's [Caring for Critters program](#).

For more information and to arrange an interview, contact Public Affairs Manager Alex Wehrung. A collection of high-quality photographs of Bald Eagles at the Center is attached to this email.

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 eagle 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 95,000 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.