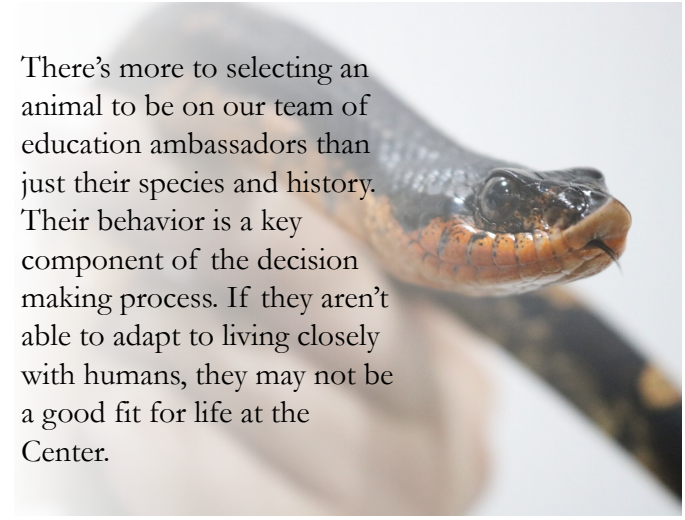
Animal Ambassadors

Season Three, Episode Three

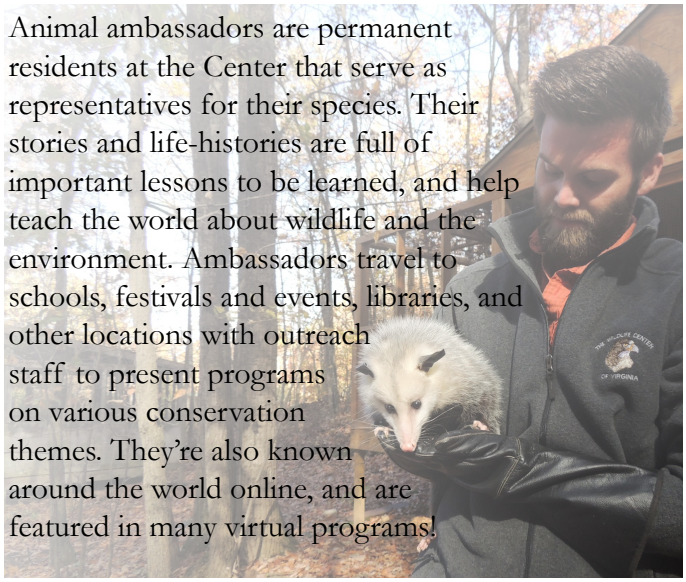
Thousands of wild animals arrive at the Center's doorstep every year in need of care. Occasionally, those patients are deemed non-releasable, meaning physical or behavioral conditions prevent them from thriving in the wild. If those non-releasable animals are able to live comfortably in captivity and adapt to working with human trainers, they may be a good fit for our team of education ambassadors.

Not every patient treated at the Center is able to be fully rehabilitated and returned to the wild. If a physical injury or behavioral condition results in permanent damage that would prevent an animal from thriving in the wild, it would be unethical to release it. Not every non-releasable animal is a good fit for our team of education ambassadors either. Some species need large amounts of space to live in captivity, some are too prone to unhealthy levels of stress near humans, and others would be unsafe to handle for their human trainers. The Center's ambassadors will live with us for the rest of their lives, and the decision to add them to our team is an important choice that involves years of planning into the future.



There's more to selecting an animal to be on our team of education ambassadors than just their species and history. Their behavior is a key component of the decision making process. If they aren't able to adapt to living closely with humans, they may not be a good fit for life at the Center.

Unlike patients, animal ambassadors are given special names. Sometimes their names are given in honor of a famous historical or cultural figure, or their names come from the area where their species may be found in the wild. Whatever it may be, there's always a reason for their chosen name.



Animal ambassadors are permanent residents at the Center that serve as representatives for their species. Their stories and life-histories are full of important lessons to be learned, and help teach the world about wildlife and the environment. Ambassadors travel to schools, festivals and events, libraries, and other locations with outreach staff to present programs on various conservation themes. They're also known around the world online, and are featured in many virtual programs!

The Center's mission is "teaching the world to care about and to care for wildlife and the environment." Animal ambassadors are real-life examples of their wild counterparts, and make connecting to wildlife easier.

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Animal Ambassadors

Faces of Conservation

Find the story of a specific ambassador animal at the Wildlife Center of Virginia. Read the ambassador's history and consider the following questions https://www.wildlifecenter.org/critter-corner/education-animals

Animal: _____

What circumstance or injury originally brought this ambassador into human care? How was it determined that this animal would not be able to be returned to the wild?

Each Wildlife Center of Virginia ambassador animal is given a carefully chosen name, how does this ambassador's name connect to their story?

What did you find about this ambassador's role at the Wildlife Center?

How does this ambassador's story help teach conservation?

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An Ambassador's Impact

Math activity based on number of programs, average attendance, years as an ambassador, etc, what is the potential impact of an ambassador

Gus the Barred Owl has been an animal ambassador at the Center longer than any other individual -- even compared to most of her human co-workers! The table below shows how many programs Gus has been featured in for the selected years, and how many total people she met.
Use the information to answer the questions in the next section.

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Number of Programs	112	114	99	115	124	96	115	93	99	18
Number of People	4,753	6,927	3,299	3,252	3,418	7,296	5,082	6,242	4,847	1,574

Fill in the blanks using the information above:

- The total number of people that Gus saw during years that end in **even** numbers is _____
- The total number of people that Gus saw during years that end in **odd** numbers is _____
- That **average** number of programs that Gus participates in each year is _____
- The year that Gus saw the most **people** was _____
- The year that Gus participated in the highest number of **programs** was _____

- What is the **total number of people** who met Gus from 2011 to 2020? _____
- If each of those people shared Gus's story with three friends, how many people will have heard her story? _____

Consider the impact that Gus has on conservation by representing her species and helping us share her story. What would be lost by not having animal ambassadors to help us tell these stories?

Gus is just one individual, and this data represents just ten years of her life, what do you think are the potential impacts of education animals as a whole in facilities across North America and the world?

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