



Friends of Wildlife



Winter 2019–20 Newsletter

From the May Wildlife Rehabilitation Center
(MWRC) at Lees-McRae College

Nina's Notes

From the Director, Nina Fischesser

I am proud to be working with so many caring humans who work hard to help the animals who come to us in need of rehabilitation and medical treatment. All of the staff and students at the May Wildlife Rehabilitation Center know what a powerful experience helping an injured wild animal actually is. For the finder, transporter, student, veterinarian, and everyone in between, this can be a life changing experience that will be remembered for a lifetime. When someone helps another living being for the first time, it can change their entire paradigms from viewing animals simply as living creatures to realizing that animals are living beings who feel fear, pain, and all the same things that we humans feel. Suddenly there is a connection to those animals that we help, and people feel empathy for their experience.

We are eager to share the stories of people who have made a difference in the native wildlife we strive to help, and hope you enjoy them.



Recent News from the MWRC

MWRC sets record admissions in 2019

The center admitted the 1,500th patient of 2019 (a red-shouldered hawk) on Nov. 19. For comparison, here are the last three years' annual admissions:

- **2018: 1,402 patients**
- **2017: 1,167 patients**
- **2016: 1,311 patients**

It's been a great year. Here are a few favorite photos from our work in 2019.



MWRC Hosts First Veterinary Student Intern

In April, the MWRC hosted fourth-year veterinary student Kimberly Wingfield as she completed a three-week wildlife medicine/academia clerkship in Banner Elk. Visiting from the Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine (VMCVM), Kimberly fulfilled dual roles during her clerkship: working with MWRC staff on various medical cases and attending seated courses taught by Dr. Amber McNamara. Classes observed included Advanced Clinical Wildlife Rehabilitation and the capstone senior research course for biology and wildlife biology students. Kimberly assisted with an Advanced Clinical lab session, led students through a necropsy of a snapping turtle, and delivered a lecture highlighting the interface of veterinary medicine and public health. She assisted in the medical management of numerous cases during her tenure, including a great horned owl with wing trauma (barbed wire entanglement), mass removal surgery from a cedar waxwing, anesthesia monitoring on a Virginia opossum, retinal exams on several owls, and more. In addition, she gave feedback on student presentations and assignments, reviewed radiographs and laboratory specimens to aid in diagnoses, and authored a structured externship plan for future veterinary students who are also interested in academia.

Since leaving the MWRC, Dr. Wingfield graduated from VMCVM in May and is on track to complete her master's degree in public health in December. Per a recent correspondence, Dr. Wingfield wrote, "My wildlife medicine/veterinary academia rotation with you was hands down my favorite!" Her professionalism, knowledge, and enthusiasm for both wildlife medicine and teaching certainly set the bar high for future veterinary interns at the MWRC. Great job, Dr. Wingfield!



A Successful Finder Rescue and Release



Sometimes people find a wild animal in trouble and need guidance on how to resolve the situation. In this case, the finders—Kathryn and Sam Hester—found an owl in their chimney and needed to know how to rescue it. They first called their animal control department in Hudson, North Carolina who referred them to us. The students working at the MWRC directed them to Nina at home while she was 'on call' for the center. Dr. McNamara and Nina alternate weekends to be 'on call' for emergencies like this.

Nina asked if the owl was above or below the flue in the fireplace and how large the owl was. They said it was below the flue and sent a photo, which was blurry, but Nina could tell it was a small eastern screech owl. Plan A was to put on a pair of leather gloves and simply grab the owl. When they tried, the owl went up too high to reach. Plan B was to get a long branch and gently push the owl up to the top and out to freedom. Plan B didn't work because it

came down and hunkered into a corner. Sam was then able to reach up and grab the little one and release it! They named the owl St. Nick after Santa, of course.

We love these success stories where we can simply coach the public to help wildlife on their own. Kathryn, an elementary special education teacher, was able to share this story with her students who just happened to be studying owls at the time.

Welcome New Ambassadors!

We would like to introduce our new wildlife ambassadors. These are animals that cannot be released back into the wild, and are able to handle being in captivity with human educators. These animals have been trained using positive reinforcement techniques and will serve as educators on our team.



Gollum
*Virginia Opossum
(Didelphis Virginiana)*

Gollum came from a finder who had kept him for a couple of months. He was very tame. We tried to put him with other opossums to "wild him up" but he attacked one of them. Whenever we actually tried to release him, he would not go. No matter how much we stomped and clapped out hands, he just would not "wild up." He has now joined our fleet of animal ambassadors, and we're happy to have him.



Loki
Peregrine Falcon (Falco Peregrinus)

We welcome this sweet, shy bird from Susan Ahalt, Director of Ironsides Bird Rescue in Cody, Wyoming. Loki was hit by a car and suffered a badly fractured wing and leg. The leg healed while the wing had to be partially amputated. He is at the very beginning stages of training at the center and we are excited to develop a relationship with Loki.

Eastern Box Turtles: Healers Extraordinaire

Eastern box turtles are arguably one of the most anatomically fascinating species in our care. Their shoulder blades have evolved to take residence on the inside of their ribs, they can breathe adequately while completely boxed up, and are unbelievably adept at healing a variety of fractures and wounds. Surgery, antimicrobials, wound management, and LASER therapy help support injured turtles. Here are some before, during, and after photos of recent eastern box turtle patients at the MWRC.

Patient 2019-0665

Fractured plastron, bridge, and lower jaw. Hopeful for release in Spring 2020.



Patient 2019-0867

Fractured carapace, likely punctured lung. Returned home after 81 days of treatment.



Patient 2019-0588

Abscesses in both ears. Returned home after successful surgery and 19 days of treatment.



Patient 2018-0366

Fractured (missing) carapace and bridge fracture. Returned home after 106 days of treatment.



Patient 2019-1160

Fractured bridge and rear legs. Carrying 5 eggs. Returned home after 74 days of treatment.



Turtles have an incredible homing instinct. If you find an injured box turtle in need of help, please do one of the following: drop a pin on your smart phone at the location found, take a photo of cross streets or mile markers, or take note of distinguishing surroundings. When you transport the injured turtle to a licensed rehabilitator, this information will be critical to share, allowing the best chance to return the turtle home when he or she is ready.

A Raven's Story

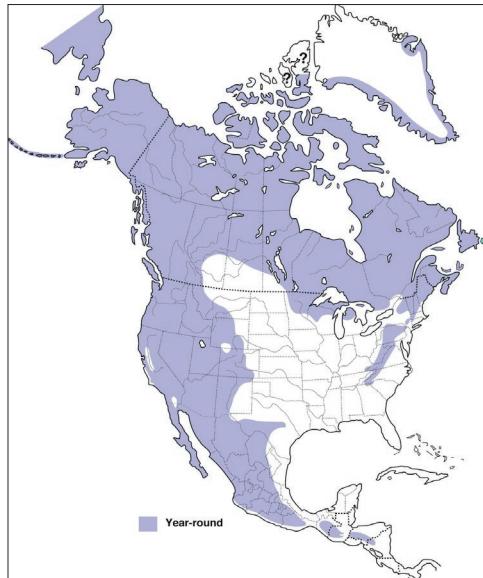
The May Wildlife Rehabilitation Center admits 1,500 injured and orphaned native wildlife annually. The more common species include animals like eastern gray squirrels, Virginia opossums, American robins, box turtles, and all types of sparrows. Every year, however, we admit species that we don't often see. This year was a not-so common raven (*corvus corax*). It was a juvenile who had been passed from one wildlife center to another before landing at our doors.

As you can see by the map below, their range in our southeastern region is limited to the ranges of the Smokies and Blue Ridge Mountains. The common raven, like all the corvidae such as American crows and blue jays, are highly intelligent birds. They can solve problems, remember human faces, and have a sense of play.

This particular young raven was old enough to be scared and very wild, which is how we want to see them as birds that are able to survive in the wild. He started his journey being found by a good-hearted person who picked him up, put him in a box, and started making phone calls. It can take time to find a center or licensed rehabilitator to provide care. Appalachian Wildlife Refuge was willing to temporarily care for him until they could find transport to a more permanent situation. They found transport to Carolina Waterfowl Rescue near Charlotte, North Carolina who could at least provide care until he was ready to move to an outdoor enclosure.

It's rare for rehabilitators in North Carolina to see ravens in rehab because common ravens—although not extremely uncommon—are very good parents, and family groups take care of each other. Sometimes a fledgling will fall from the nest or get in trouble when they fledge from the nest. That's when humans find them. When he arrived to the MWRC, he was ready to go into an outdoor enclosure. We are usually maxed out with new baby patients in the summer season, so outdoor enclosures are not readily available. We decided to try him out with some young crows, who are similar corvids, that were getting ready for release. It did not go well and they did not get along, so we put him into an enclosure by himself to get some flight time and adjust to the weather.

The next question was how we were going to introduce him to other ravens. We knew that ravens frequently hang around the bear enclosures up at the Grandfather Mountain animal habitats during feeding times to clean up scraps of bear food. We brought him to Grandfather Mountain and put him in a temporary chain-link bear cage near the bear habitats. When the animal habitat staff fed him, they could leave a dish right outside his enclosure, so that the ravens might be tempted to eat near him as well. We left him there for a week, and we don't actually know for sure if he joined the wild flock but at least we gave him the best chance we possibly could. We took care of his medical and nutritional needs and gave him a safe place to recover, then released him in a place where he might find a new family. That's the best we can do for the lonely orphan common raven. We hope he made friends on the top of Grandfather Mountain.



Common raven migration map (AllAboutBirds.org)



Raven release cage

Quotes from 2019 Summer Clinical

Summer Clinical is the crux of the Wildlife Rehabilitation program. It incorporates all the learning from the classroom and the MWRC shifts into a three-month experiential learning opportunity that turns students into confident leaders in the field of wildlife rehabilitation and education. It's where they find their niche in the world of wildlife. Following the Summer Clinical, most students become mentors and supervise the hourly and weekend shifts throughout the fall and spring semesters. They also enroll in the leadership class where they earn certifications in first aid and CPR, learn to job search, and sell themselves on resumes and cover letters. The following are excerpts from a few of our students' essays about their experience.



Ashley Garman

Ashley has an uncanny ability to gently train the smaller songbirds.

"I got to participate in Summer Clinical 2019 at the May Wildlife Rehabilitation Center at Lees-McRae College. What is Summer Clinical? It's when you stay for a little under four months and use what you learned over the semester. You get more hands on with the wildlife, including helping with surgeries, giving and pulling up medications, doing physical exams, and feeding/tubing baby animals. These are just a few things we got to do over the summer. The hands-on experience I got during my time at Summer Clinical has been nothing but rewarding. I stepped out of my comfort zone and grabbed animals that I thought I would never touch. I made myself proud with my math calculations for fluids and medications. I got out of my social awkwardness by making friends with everyone there, when I never really talked to anyone before. Before Summer Clinical, I had terrible stage fright. I can now stand in front of almost a hundred people and give a presentation. I found something I truly loved, which is wildlife education and rehabilitation."



Jared Knaus

Jared holds a high level of emotional intelligence in how he works with humans and animals alike.

"Summer Clinical has proven to me that I'm reliable and I have faith that, upon completing my degree, I will be able to receive recommendations that will help whatever job I go into understand what my intentions are with them and what I expect of them, as well. I have a naturally business-savvy mind and I couldn't help but play with the idea of having my own non-profit rehab center. It made me think about what it would take: how much time it would consume, making ends meet, living comfortably with the lifestyle and pay, etc. Then I catch myself daydreaming about opening a rehab center and I think about how much more I can do for the community of wildlife rehabbers. I feel confident in myself that I would be able to create an interface for the rehabbers across the country and help them be their ultimate best."



Tiffanie Bailey

How does someone participate in Summer Clinical while raising a baby? With the quiet strength of Tiffanie Bailey!

"The things I have learned about animals and their anatomy, needs, and abilities is more than I could have imagined—the fact that you check a deer's temperature in its mouth like a child's; that even with a missing foot, a baby bunny can get out of a box with mesh over it and no one will find it; and the interesting need that some baby birds have for you to just speak their own language first in order to want to eat.

I have also learned some things that I did not want to learn—like sometimes a glove is not enough to keep you from getting taloned but just enough to let you keep it; deer have pretty good aim from the back end to your shoe; when you release animals they do not always want to leave so you must be mean to them and even that does not always work."



Casey Brone-Hammer

Casey earns the 'spends most of her time at the center' award!

"The Summer Clinical experience has definitely helped me decide that I would really love to be able to work with raptors after I graduate. I hope I will get to work with the rehabilitation of them, as well as using raptors of all kinds in education. Doing programs all throughout the summer has helped me gain confidence in educating the public about our wildlife and I have fun doing it as well. While in the center, I definitely had my favorite kinds of animals to work with from each room—such as hawks, fawns, chimney swifts, and barn swallows—but I appreciate being able to work with and learn about caring for every single species we received this summer."



Thank you!

We are grateful to all who have given to the May Wildlife Rehabilitation Center, helping to provide rehabilitative services to the animals in need of our help. Our greatest legacy is the students who participate in the Wildlife Rehabilitation program and make it a success story. They are the energy and passion behind what goes into caring for more than 1,500 injured and orphaned native wild animals. They are the ones who will go on to make a difference in the world.

Providing quality care for injured and orphaned wildlife requires proper diets and medicine. We work with songbirds, mammals, raptors, waterfowl, and wading birds. Each species requires unique food, medicines, caging, etc. Please remember the MWRC and these opportunities in your giving this year.

To make a gift online, visit lmc.edu/give.

With questions about making a gift, contact Tariana Nguyen, director of annual giving, at nguyent@lmc.edu or 828.898.8754.