

WILDLIFE JOURNAL

2018 Annual Review

An Annual Publication of the Mercer County Wildlife Center

TURTLES

BY NICOLE GOLDEN

“203 native New Jersey turtles were admitted”



Eastern painted turtle (*Chrysemys picta*)



Snapping turtles (*Chelydra serpentine*)

“Another first with turtles this year was the harvesting and hatching of turtle eggs” (read more on page 18)

Calendar year 2018 brought a large influx of turtles to the Mercer County Wildlife Center (MCWC). A total of 203 native New Jersey turtles were admitted. Harriet Forrester, a long-time turtle rehabilitator from northern New Jersey, retired so there was a great need for another long-term care facility for turtles in New Jersey. In previous years, MCWC would provide immediate care and temporary housing for sick or injured turtles until they were able to be transported to the Harriet’s facility, The Turtle Rescue of New Jersey. This year the burden fell on us to care for all of the turtles admitted to our facility.

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Wish List



Dream List

\$

Office Supplies

Forever stamps – rolls or sheets
Copier paper: 8 1/2" x 11"
Printing services
Liquid Paper
Ink cartridges for
HP Office jet Pro 8100
HP Office jet Pro 8000
Canon MP620
Surge Protector Strips

Animal Care and Handling

Arm & Hammer laundry detergent
Bleach
Food storage bags-gallon size
Heating pads (without auto-off)
"Kennel Kabs" - any size
Paper towels
Pet bowls
"Pet Taxis" - any size
Receiving blankets

Animal Food

Wellness dry cat food
Canned Wellness Canine
Beechnut jarred baby food chicken -2.5 oz.
Gerbers jarred baby food bananas
Pedialyte

Medical Supplies

Fr feeding tubes: 3-1/2, 5 & 8
Gauze Pads: 4"x4" & 2"x2"
Non-adherent Pad
Hemostats
Kling Wrap:
1" x 60"
2" x 60"
3" x 60"
Latex exam gloves: medium and large
Nutri-cal
Vet Wrap: 2" & 4"
Tegaderm 1620

PLEASE NOTE

WHERE **BRAND** NAMES ARE SPECIFIED WE
CANNOT ACCEPT SUBSTITUTES

Dear Friends,

There has never been a more exciting time to be part of the Mercer County Wildlife Center. Our Wildlife Center is a unique, modern facility that not only allows greater possibilities for treatment and rehabilitation of injured and displaced wildlife, but new opportunities to engage and teach the public about nature. This facility is one of the only sites of its kind in all of New Jersey.

Over the past 35 years, the Mercer County Wildlife Center has provided an invaluable service to County residents and to our surrounding communities. Each year, our staff and volunteers accept and treat more than 2,600 birds, mammals and reptiles at the facility and handle more than 18,000 telephone inquiries from the public. As County Executive, I am grateful for the number of our residents who choose to volunteer their time in the effort to aid the native wildlife of the area, and I'm equally thankful for the many businesses, organizations, veterinarians and others who donate a variety of goods and services. The Wildlife Center would not be operational were it not for this spirit of volunteerism.

Inside this newsletter, you will find a wealth of information on topics such as unfamiliar animals and diseases that threaten our wildlife, as well as facts and insight from our staff and volunteers. Best wishes in the year ahead.

Sincerely,

Brian M. Hughes
County Executive



HOW WE GET IT DONE...



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Brian M. Hughes

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Jane Rakos-Yates, Clinic Supervisor

Nicole Golden, Clinic Supervisor

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L. Paul Lanctot, VMD

Erica A. Miller, DVM

Paul Wagner, VMD

Jason Wilson, DVM

ART DIRECTOR/EDITOR : Jami Arbizu

2017-18 VOLUNTEERS

Clinic Supervisors - Staff

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Megan Morici

Olivia Morpeth

Kristi Schollenberger

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Susan Gallagher

Sandy Garrison

Gabrielle Gardner

Alexa Giannella

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Tim Richards

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Eileen Shellengerger

Joseph Schmeltz

Elizabeth Schroeder

Bruce Scully

Susan Scully

Karen Seehausen

Barbara Solem

Jodi Specter

Patricia Stalter

Tim Steinberger

Frank Stillwell

Ben Strauss

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Aggie Szilaggi

Cathy Szur

Kathleen Tarangioli

Lorrie Topolin

John Vanellis

Harvey Walker

Barbara Warfel

Robert Weston

Mary Anna White

Janet Williams

Kathryn Williams

Brett Wilson

Mary Wood

Christine Wooden

Anne Wysocki

Darren Zatuchney

Sharon Zimmerman

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Elizabeth Bukovec

Alyssa Dalrymple

Susanne Dapparich

Dawson Demi

Faith Edwin

Nikki Harley

Katie Kearney

Thomas Lavery

Kim Mancuso

Jacob Miranda

Marcia Minunni

Shannon O'Mara

Faith Paul

Erin Payne

Ashlyn Rogers

Justine Smith

Amber Wiseman



Mercer County Wildlife Center is owned by the County of Mercer and operated and maintained by the Mercer County Park Commission.

Kevin B. Bannon, Executive Director

www.mercercountyparks.org

A LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

In 2018 the Mercer County Wildlife Center celebrated 35 years of serving the community by preserving and protecting native wildlife and the one habitat we all share.

From humble beginnings, to a state-of-the-art facility, to a promising future of new programs designed to educate, enhance, inspire and engage, the Mercer County Wildlife Center and its supportive partner, Wildlife Center Friends, proudly celebrated our rich history. We saluted and honored our current and former staff as well as the volunteers, donors and rescuers who gave their time to transport animals in need to our facility.

On October 4th, 2018 we commemorated 35 years with a special Anniversary Celebration held in our Outdoor Education Environment Pavilion. It was a lovely autumn evening under the stars. Guests enjoyed tours of our education area with our education animal ambassadors, a beautiful tapas bar generously provided by Inn of the Hawke of Lambertville, NJ and a beautiful selection of wine provided by Clasen Consulting, LLC. of Princeton, NJ.

Gift baskets and auction items were generously provided by Honor Yoga, Hypergraphics, Lawrenceville Home Improvements, Robert Wood Johnson Fitness and Wellness and The Strength Network – AHP.

The night culminated in honoring the two people who made this entire night possible – Joseph Schmeltz, Founding Director of the Mercer County Wildlife Center and Diane Nickerson, Director, Mercer County Wildlife

Center and recipient of the NJAWR Lifetime Achievement Award. Joe and Diane are the heart of the Mercer County Wildlife Center, giving life to our mission and rehabilitating over 57,000 animals in the 35 years of the Centers existence.

Two grants given by the Wildlife Center Friends were named in honor of Joe Schmeltz and Diane Nickerson. They were presented by Brian Hughes, County Executive, Mercer County, Aaron T. Watson, Executive Director, Mercer County Parks Commission, Sharon Lauchaire, Wildlife Center Board President and yours truly .

We sincerely thank the hard work of all the staff and volunteers who helped make this evening a success.

Our deepest gratitude to all of our donors and rescuers – the lifesavers. You are all extraordinary. We continue to serve the community and our mission because of your generosity. Please know that you are making a difference.

Thank you everyone for all you do to **Save Wild!**

Here is to a great 2019!



Jodie Shuster

Executive Director,
Wildlife Center Friends

OBSERVATIONS



BY DIANE NICKERSON

We spent all of 2018 celebrating our 35th anniversary. This newsletter is full of all of the new things we were able to accomplish this year. New species, new success, new volunteers and new programs while at the same time treasuring all things that remain the same. We look forward to 2019 and all of the new adventures to come!

Looking back at our caseload for 2018, some rather unusual cases passed through our care. There were new species, genetic abnormalities, toxins and human interference. Be sure to check out the patient log on page 6 to find out about all of the interesting patients.

As always, our new volunteer article (page 14) shines a light for us on the wonder of working with wildlife for the first time. As staff, we tend to not be quite as awed as we once were. It is good to be reminded how very lucky we are on a daily basis. This year we have also added a spotlight for our college interns. They have a unique perspective and a twelve-week crash course. Look to page 16 for this new feature.

As we celebrated our 35th year, the Wildlife Center Friends planned an event to commemorate the anniversary. Jodie Shuster, Wildlife Center Friends executive director, will tell you all about the evening beginning on page 4. It is an exciting time of growth and planning for the future for this wonderful group. Be sure to catch up and get involved.

Again, I would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to Ron Kobli, owner of the Decoys and Wildlife Art Gallery in Frenchtown. Ron holds an open house every year on the last Sunday in February. He invites us to come, present education programs, solicit donations and memberships and sell raffle tickets. At the end of the day he donates pieces from his gallery for the raffle. It is always a great afternoon of old friends, tasty refreshments and making of new acquaintances. Many thanks to Ron for introducing us to possible, new supporters and the many gifts he sends our way.

As always, more thanks than I can express to our volunteers. They show up week after week, month after month, and many, year after year. We could not do our work and be successful without them. Thanks to their efforts, MCWC treated 2,608 new patients during 2018, releasing 63.2% back into the wild for a second chance. In total, our volunteers provided over 17,000 hours to MCWC and the native wildlife of New Jersey. Big thanks also to our volunteers who do not have the ability to commit to animal care. They write thank you letters, organize and run events, staff the board of directors, design publications, handle donations and stuff envelopes. We would be lost without their help, as well.

Finally, thanks to you, our members. We spoke to over 18,000 of you this year by telephone, trying to answer your questions and concerns about your wild neighbors. We also visited your schools and civic groups and reached out to about 40,000 of you with our education programs. We continue to be here to serve you because you care enough to be there to support us.



PATIENT LOG

MCWC TREATED 2,608 ANIMALS DURING 2018

We will start this issue's patient log with an update from the last publication. Case number 2017-01134 was a nestling bald eagle. This is what we reported at the end of last year:

The nestling eagle had an extra hallux (rear toe) on each foot. It was not able to extend either wing completely. It had double feathers growing out of each primary feather follicle on its wings. We made the bird comfortable and reached out to Erica A. Miller, DVM. When the bird was examined completely, it was decided that it was not ever going to be able to fly. Also, without being able to extend its wings for balance, it would not be suitable for education or display purposes. It was humanely euthanized on the 19th of June 2017. But, its story does not end there. Dr. Miller sent samples for multiple tests to see what could be learned from this young bird about the health of the eco-system. Results are still pending and we will report findings in the next publication.

What we discovered - was not much. According to Dr. Miller "None of the extensive lab work showed anything unusual. It was all just an anatomic anomaly, to the best of our knowledge". Unfortunately, we do not always get answers to our questions.

The first patient of interest for 2018 was an Eastern box turtle (*Terrapene carolina*) who was assigned case number 2018-00337. On a bright sunny day in May, he was minding his own business in a backyard in Millstone, New Jersey. Without any notice he became the unwilling chew toy of a rambunctious golden retriever.

When the turtle arrived on May 2nd, 2018, the back of its carapace (top shell on a turtle) was damaged and the exact whereabouts of its tail was in question. We stabilized the turtle, supplying warmth, fluids, antibiotics and pain medication until it could be seen by a veterinarian on May 5th. Happily, with a little detective work the tail was located, still partially attached. It was completely reattached and the surrounding tissue was also repaired. Bandages were applied and thus began a regular regime of bandage changes, wound cleaning and more bandage changes.

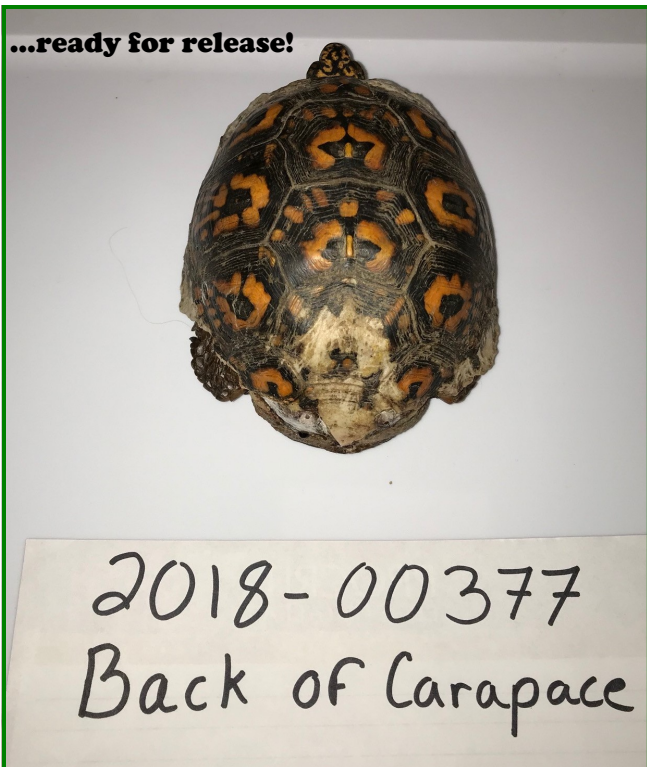




merganser) are among the more delicate of the species we treat. In prior years when we were tasked with raising hatchling mergansers, we would call on our colleague in Pennsylvania, Michele Goodman, VMD of Webbed Foot Wildlife Rehabilitation, for assistance. We would transfer them to her, she would work her magic and we would have healthy mergansers to release.

Finally, after three and one-half months, the skin wounds and shell were healed well enough for this turtle to be released on August 23rd.

In 2018, Dr. Goodman was not available to assist, other than by telephone, to coach us. So, when six just-hatched mergansers arrived on May 2nd, 2018, we were in for an adventure. Case numbers 2018-00364 through 2018-00369 had been following their mother across route 29 at Washington Crossing, headed for the river, when their mother and the other half of their siblings were hit by a car. A car travelling in the opposite direction witnessed the carnage, pulled over and rescued the remaining hatchlings.



Thus began two and one-half months of absorbing everything we were told and procuring live fish for them to eat. Initially, they were in an incubator being tube fed on an hourly basis to ensure weight gain and hydration. Unfortunately, five days after arriving, case number 2019-00366 died. Whether we did something wrong or it had been injured when the others were hit, we will never know. We continued the intensive care that the remaining hatchlings required. The next step was to introduce them to a small area to swim and to start honing skills necessary to catch live prey.

Our location, adjacent to the Delaware River, make waterfowl common patients at the Wildlife Center. Along with wood ducks (*Aix sponsa*), common mergansers (*Mergus*

Initially, we were buying all of the bait fish that the local bait stores could supply – and slowly going broke! The internet saved us when we were able to locate a vendor in Alabama that would supply and ship live fish to us for a fraction of the cost of the bait

(Continued on page 8)

Case#'s 2018-00364 through 00369



Common merganser hatchlings

shops. Over the course of the next eight weeks the hatchlings were moved to ever larger pools to develop their skills. Five merganser hatchlings, in the process of becoming five juvenile mergansers, consumed 3,000 fish each week. Their intake weights, averaging 46g (just shy of two ounces), grew exponentially to their release weights, averaging 2,000g (about 4.5 pounds)!

Finally, on July 20th, with an able assist from Mercer County Park Commission Executive Director, Aaron T. Watson and Superintendent of Parks, Anthony Cucchi, the mergansers were released to the Delaware River – where their mother had been trying to take them two and one-half months earlier.

PATIENT LOG



Aaron Watson (right) and Anthony Cucchi (left)

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!**

Big brown bat (*Eptesicus fuscus*)



Photo credit: Eric Sambol

Those of you, who have read this publication in years past, know that I love bats! And, that love affair has not waned over the years. It has been difficult to watch populations decline as white nose syndrome takes its toll on our only flying mammals. However, I have also been lucky enough to get to know the state biologists who work with these species all year long. We have shared our mutual expertise and worked together to get these most delicate creatures back out to do their job of being Mother Nature's ultimate bug zapper.

On September 8th, 2018 we were presented with an LBJ; short for "little brown job". Case number 2018-02248 was found hanging on an outside wall of a building in Somerdale. It had been there for a few days and the tenants were a little concerned. It did not look quite right for a little brown bat (*Myotis lucifugus*). It did not look quite right for a big brown bat (*Eptesicus fuscus*). It did not look quite right for a tricolored bat (*Perimyotis subflavus*). All are small brown bats, weighing about the same, looking much the same, save some small nuances. But, check out those ears! A bit larger than most of the bats we see regularly. We thought we were looking at a northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*). This was an extra special little bat, as it was a New Jersey threatened species.

Phone calls to Mackenzie Hall, biologist with NJDEP Division of Fish and Wildlife Endangered and Nongame Species Program led us to an assist from Stephanie Feign, Wildlife Ecologist for Conserve Wildlife Foundation of New Jersey. Together we decided that our identification was correct and that he was a juvenile finding his way in the world for the first time. A little dehydrated and a lot tired. The Wildlife Center provided supportive therapy – and a few good meals - for the next few days while Mackenzie and Stephanie researched the best area to release the young bat to give him his best chance for survival.

On the morning of September 12th, Stephanie arrived to provide a ride for our special patient. He had arrived weighing 4.6g. During his short stay we managed to increase his weight to 6.3g. Mackenzie and Stephanie had identified a roost containing other long-eared bats. Working together we were able to

Case# 2018-002248



Long eared bat

provide this smallest of patients, threatened with existence, a second chance.

HBC. Hit by car. An all too common occurrence for patients being presented

(Continued on page 10)

Case #2018-02448



(Continued from page 9)

for care at the Wildlife Center. Case number 2018-02448, an adult female American kestrel (*Falco sparverius*), arrived on October 13th, 2018 after being found in the road by a Good Samaritan. An initial examination and set of radiographs revealed an old fracture of the left leg (tibiotarsas), an injury to the left eye (cornea) and a laceration over the left shoulder blade (scapula).

The laceration was sutured and treatment for the corneal abrasion was started. The leg fracture had happened during an earlier encounter and was healing nicely. It appeared that the leg and foot were fully functional. Hopefully, that would be one less thing to fix. Over the next few weeks the bird was observed and evaluated to determine whether or not it could see and if the laceration had done

lasting damage. The file notes indicate an unexpected flight around the surgery on October 27th, followed by notes to move it outside for pre-release flight conditioning and live prey testing. The final tests to determine releasability.

Thankfully, she passed those tests with “flying” colors and was released on the 7th of November.

Early in December of 2018 there was a petrochemical spill into the Matua Creek in Tall Pines State Preserve in Sewell, Gloucester County. Our colleagues to the south, Tri-State Bird Rescue and Research (TSBRR), were called to respond to the spill. Along with the collection of wintering waterfowl they were pulling from the water, there were two American beaver (*Castor canadensis*) who called the waterway home. Unfortunately, one was too badly affected by the chemicals and died during transport. The other, case number 2018-02590, was cleaned by TSBRR and then transferred to Mercer County for continued care on December 13th, 2018. TSBRR is an avian facility and does not have long-term housing for larger mammals.

During the winter months, the room that we use for hatchling ducks is not in use. So, we made it into a large cage for the beaver. He was lethargic, not wanting to walk. He had a mild discharge from both eyes and appeared to not be using his tail properly. Since he weighed in at 16.5Kg (37 lbs.), we were not overly eager to wrestle him for radiographs or a full examination. Our approach was going to be a few days of observation. During that time he lulled us into a very false sense of security. He was quiet, lethargic, nibbled at his food, willingly let us administer eye drops and ignored us. About a week into the observation tactic, we came in to find he had tried to make a lodge for himself in the wall of the room!



Case #2018-2-02590

...making a lodge



Some rearranging in the room so he could no longer access bare walls and the installation of a large tub for swimming were next. This allowed us to observe the use of his tail and all four legs. It was determined that they all worked appropriately and radiographs (and wrestling) were unnecessary. At about the same time, we noticed that his eyes were also clearing up nicely. It was time to make arrangements to get him home.

...better accommodations



That was easier said than done. Beaver are very loyal to their home ranges and territories and the chemical clean-up was not yet complete. It took about another week for that process to be accomplished. Once the waterway was clean, we transferred the beaver back to TSBRR to be released to his home for the New Year. And then we repaired the wall!

Look forward to seeing you here again next year!



PATIENT LOG

THE EMERGING THREAT OF SNAKE FUNGAL DISEASE

BY ADRIANA MANCHEN

Salutations *sapiens*. Do not know if you know me, but I am a northern copperhead, former resident of New Jersey, and current resident of the great beyond. You and I probably never crossed paths and you might have not ever given my kind a second thought. Or maybe we were all you thought about during warm weather in hopes that we never encountered one another. In any case, I wanted to share my story with you.

One warm spring day in May of 2017, I awoke to beautiful sunshine and birds jauntily singing and tending to their burgeoning households. It was glorious! I had been in my den for seven long months and was in dire need of sustenance. I inhaled a couple of nearby caterpillars and headed over to my favorite rock outcrop to see if I could catch a yummy, unknowing white-footed mouse. On my way over, I passed a small puddle. I happened to glance down and noticed a small crusty patch by the corner of my mouth. I took note, but thought nothing of it. I was on a mission!

Some time passed and I found myself needing another mouse meal. I was headed back to my reliable hunting grounds when I went by the same small water puddle. I looked down and noticed that the small crusty patch on my face had thickened and become bigger. It was a little worrisome, but I continued on with my day. When I got back to my den space, I took a gander at one of my den-mates and noticed that he too had something strange growing on him, but his condition was more advanced and multiple spots on his body had become ulcerated. On my way into the den that evening, I passed yet another den-mate and discovered that she too had similar lesions to the one on my face. However, she also had nodules growing under her skin, her eyes had



crusted over, and her face had begun to change shape!

It was summer now and I was not seeing any of my den-mates all that often anymore. We were out doing our thing at all hours of the day and night. I was hungry and decided a small cicada snack would do the trick. I found the plump little insect I wanted to devour, but was not my usual graceful self. It flew off and landed about ten feet away. I was feeling lousy. I went over to it and when I went to strike, I could not open my mouth! I gave up, not understanding what went wrong. It was now morning and I passed the small puddle in the woods and I looked down. To my horror, I saw that I had crusty lesions and nodules all over my body and my face had become so disfigured, my mouth would be sealed forever. A snake my size, is solely responsible for reducing tick numbers by about 2,500 to 5,000 per year with regular consumption of mice and other small rodents. Those days of indirectly helping humans and other animals were now over. I went back to the den site and began to understand why I had not seen my den-mates these past few weeks. They had succumbed to the same thing that was now taking me. Slowly, I withered away to nothing and had a silent, undiscovered death in the den where I had spent my last five winters

with fourteen other copperheads. It turned out my population had been decimated by snake fungal disease or SFD, an emerging threat to snakes in much of North America. How do I know it was SFD? Well, for starters, I had the characteristic lesions associated with the disease. Additionally, one of my den-mates ended up at Mercer County Wildlife Center the same summer I caught the bug that took me. SFD was confirmed as the cause of her death.

*Although the story above is narrated by a fictional snake, SFD is a very real threat to our snakes in New Jersey. SFD did in fact take a northern copperhead (*Agkistrodon contortrix mokasen*) at MCWC during the summer of 2017. In New Jersey, copperheads live in pockets due to habitat loss and fragmentation. These isolated populations are extremely vulnerable to SFD which is caused by the fungus *Ophidiomyces ophiodiicola*. The fungus was first observed in 2006 in a population of timber rattlesnakes (*Crotalus horridus*) in New Hampshire. It was later confirmed in 2008 when a number of eastern massasauga rattlesnakes (*Sistrurus catenatus*) were dying with skin lesions in Illinois.*



*According to the United States Geological Survey, *O. ophiodiicola* is currently known to be found in 23 states (including New Jersey) and one Canadian province. Researchers suspect it is more widely spread, but data are limited for certain areas and many populations of snakes. The fungus resides in the soil and is spread through exposure to contaminated environments. It is unclear as to why the fungus is resulting in rapidly increasing numbers of SFD cases, but currently scientists believe the rise may be related to increasing average*

temperatures and cooler springs with more rainfall.

If you hike or work around wildlife, it is imperative to remove all organic debris and disinfect clothing and equipment if you suspect you have come in contact with an infected snake. A study conducted at the College of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Illinois, tested the efficacy of disinfectants and published the results in 2016. In short, three disinfectants came out as winners. The winners were a 3% bleach solution, a 10% bleach solution, and a 70% ethanol solution. All were effective at destroying the fungus with a 2-minute contact time. Runners-up included Lysol Power Bathroom Cleaner, Lysol All-Purpose Cleaner, CLR Bath and Kitchen Cleaner, 409, NPD, and benzalkonium chloride, 0.16%. These disinfectants all needed a 10-minute contact time to be effective at killing the fungus. Simple Green, Spectracide, and chlorhexidine were not effective at destroying the fungus. Additionally, the two bleach solutions tested are effective at eliminating another feared disease, Ranavirus, that is currently plaguing both amphibians and reptiles. Bleach is the disinfectant of choice given that information.

Snakes suspected to have SFD should be reported to New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife. Maintain a safe distance between yourself and the snake (at least 15 feet) and if possible, take a photo of the snake while maintaining a safe distance. Request assistance from the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife by immediately calling 877-WARN-DEP (877-927-6337). The snake with the suspected infection will then be taken to a wildlife rehabilitation center for testing and treatment. Be aware out there.



Don't get paid, not because they are worthless, but because they are PRICELESS!

1st Year Volunteer

BY KIM DAWES

When most people, especially friends and family from out of state, think about New Jersey, they do not think of wildlife. Having grown up in the Garden State I took for granted the wild array of wildlife that surrounds me year-round. My real job is a photographer. My obsession is wildlife photography. To see animals out in the wild gives me chills. To capture a beautiful portrait of an eagle, an owl, or a fox makes me happy dance all the way back home.

It is because of this obsession and our responsibility to these animals that I became curious about the Mercer County Wildlife Center. I would pass the building on my way to adventures hiking along the canal or Bald Pate Mountain and wonder what they do there. I thought there was a pretty good chance, from the name, that they were as obsessed with wildlife as me. So, I grabbed my fellow adventurer and friend, Sheryl, and, together, we walked into the building to find out what they were doing to help our beloved wildlife. We were told to come to the new volunteer orientation meeting in early Spring to learn about volunteering at the center and what that would entail.

When we arrived at the meeting, it became clear we were not the only ones obsessed with helping wildlife. LOTS of potential volunteers crowded into the room all eager to show their love and help. It was daunting. What could I have to offer when so many people were waiting to show their love and dedication to our cherished wildlife? We were introduced to some of the staff members and were shown movies about the rescued wildlife. The rules were explained (no peeking in the cages) and we were told what normal duties for a volunteer would entail. Pretty much it involved cleaning cages, dishes and laundry. They wanted to make sure we knew what we were signing up for. I appreciated the no sugar-coating and I



1st Year (CONT.)

could handle cleaning, laundry and dishes. I am a mom. If this is what I need to do to help the wildlife, I would give it a shot. Ok, we signed up, got our tetanus shots and were in!

Things I learned while volunteering at the Wildlife Center this past year:

- Things can get crazy.
- Everyone is busy doing important jobs.
- Keep the laundry going.
- Fold everything as instructed. It feels weird at first but makes sense when you put stuff away.
- Keep the kitchen clean.
- Make sure you document and write down what you do when cleaning cages or feeding any animals.
- Asking if you can help is much appreciated.
- Sometimes just keeping busy and staying out of the way is also appreciated.
- A willingness to do what is asked is always appreciated.
- No talking to the animals, they must not bond with you. The goal is to release them back into the wild.
- Talking to them "inside your head" is fine (Omigod...how cute are you ? You are so precious! I am in love with you!) Shhhhh.... No talking.
- I love talking with Diane, Nicole, Jane and Arie. They know their stuff. Listen to them!

After a few months at the Wildlife Center I became an expert at prepping food dishes, making fawn and raccoon formula, feeding raptors, bottle-feeding baby squirrels, prepping bat "glop" and cleaning baby turtle habitats. Every day is a new experience.

Ultimately what I discovered after volunteering at the Wildlife Center is that every small task helps the animals. The Center would not be able to do the work it does, without clean towels and clean cages. No wild animal can be fed without a clean kitchen and clean bowls. These precious animals are the first and only priority. Caring for them and releasing them back into the wild is a privilege and awe-inspiring. I am grateful for being a small part of this.

My decision to join the Wildlife Center family was a good one. I will be returning next year. Hope to meet you there.

I help save wildlife, what is your super-power?



SUMMER COLLEGE INTERNSHIP

BY ALYSSA DALRYMPLE, INTERN



where I wanted to go after I graduated. I came across Mercer County Wildlife Center and found that they had a Wildlife Technician Internship and the center specialized in the rehabilitation of wild animals. This was my initial introduction into the world of wildlife rehabilitation, so my interest was especially peaked and once I found out that I had been accepted, I could not wait to begin.

During the first week of the internship, I was introduced to all the different things that I would be doing and all of the types of animals that are helped at the wildlife center. It was amazing seeing the variety, from birds to mammals to reptiles. When I got there, the first thing that I noticed was the education center outside of the building, where they had animals that were not able to be released back into the wild. Walking up to the door, the eagle was calling loudly, making it hard to ignore how pretty she was, along with the hawks and falcons that were in other enclosures.

My first duty at the center was cleaning the tubs that the ducklings were in, and to do so I needed to get them out of the tubs and outside into a fenced in area so that I would be able to clean it properly. It was so tricky trying to herd the ducklings into the carrier because they ran so fast and they were super slinky-like, and easily escaped. I was especially careful because they were babies and I did not want to hurt them. Once I got them outside into the grassed, fenced area, I gave them food and water and it was just adorable seeing them all huddle and run around together. I could not believe that on my first day I already got some hands on experience with the animals!

Later on into my internship I started to work

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I have always been extremely passionate about animals and interested in every single detail about them. It was well known that eventually I wanted to work with animals, whether it be dogs and cats or raccoons and opossums, I was not quite sure, yet. I have been exposed to cats my whole life, since I have two of my own, along with dogs, since many neighbors and family friends owned them. In terms of experience with animals, I had not had much of that either, making my career path harder to narrow.

The summer after sophomore year of college I had been looking into internships where I could get some hands on experience with any types of wild animals, thus allowing me to figure out

with the White tail deer fawns, which was one of the most amazing things to do. I had never seen a fawn so young that their legs were wobbly when trying to walk or stand, so seeing this for the first time was amazing. Feeding them formula, cleaning after them, and keeping records of their health allowed me to learn so much that I did not know beforehand. By the end of my internship, I was offered to be a part of releasing fourteen fawns that had survived through the summer, and it was the most rewarding feeling ever. Each of them came out of the trailer hesitant, but once they were out in the field, they were running in circles chasing each other, getting a feel for how free they were and it was amazing.

For the majority of my internship I was lucky enough to be taking care of the raccoons. To start, all of the raccoons that I had first started helping with were all neo-nates. I had never seen a raccoon before this internship, so seeing a small, young raccoon was the cutest thing. At first it was intimidating to be in the raccoon room because there were so many important instructions and specific procedures, like how to pick them up when you are taking them out of their carriers, the way you are to hold them when bottle feeding them and stimulating them. Not to mention their specific diets and how to deal with an especially feisty raccoon. Over time, the raccoons started to get bigger and were eventually moved into the outside enclosures, where each of their personalities developed. It became routine that every day when I went to feed them, cages 5 and 6 were always the loudest and craziest. On the hotter days of July we would give them homemade popsicles for their pool filled with peanuts and grapes, with which they absolutely loved to play. It was even fascinating that when I was filling up their pools, they automatically wanted to stick their face and paws in front of the hose. The first release that I went on consisted of six raccoons, and while it was hard to get them to come out of their carriers, once we did they ran away together or climbed up trees, happy to be in the wild.

Getting the opportunity to have this internship was amazing and truly helpful in determining that after my undergraduate degree I am going to apply for veterinary school. I am also hoping to come back to volunteer at the Mercer County Wildlife Center and continue learning new things each day. I also want to thank the entire staff that helped me throughout my internship and taught me so much. While it was hard work being in the sun during the hottest days of the summer, I would not have traded that summer for anything else.



MCWC OUTDOOR EDUCATION ENVIRONMENT

The Mercer County Wildlife Center's Outdoor Education Environment is open for self guided tours.

September - April: Thursday-Sunday 11AM-3PM

May - August: Wednesday-Sunday 10AM-5PM

TURTLES (CONT.)

(Continued from page 1)

MCWC is currently repurposing an unused storage shed (Thank you to Woodlands Wildlife Refuge for the idea!) to house our overflow of turtles and other reptiles. Who knew we would outgrow our 6,000 square foot building and need more room? Many people have joined our efforts to make this building possible. The expertise of Mercer County carpenters, Billy and Dale, Mercer County electrician Joe and his staff and painters, Joey and Kenny, along with a generous grant from Wildlife Center Friends, we hope to be up and running in no time! This area will give us 360 square feet of heated and air-conditioned space with everything needed to care for the turtles during the summer months when we admit the most patients.

Another first with turtles this year was the harvesting and hatching of turtle eggs. Unfortunately, some injuries are beyond repair and not all turtles are able to be saved. However, we thought we may be able to save some of the offspring. Any female that was gravid (had eggs) was x-rayed to count the number of eggs she was carrying. A veterinarian

would confirm that the turtle was deceased and would carefully remove the eggs and place them in a container. Each clutch of eggs was then buried in separate, labeled nests in a safe pen protected from predators. Female turtles pick their nesting areas carefully, burying them a certain depth, in specific substrate and sun exposure. So, we tried to mimic that to the best of our abilities.



**Common map turtles
(*Graptemys geographica*)**

Snapping turtles (*Chelydra serpentina*)



We harvested and buried a total of fifty eggs in seven separate nests and nineteen hatched successfully. There were twenty-three snapping turtle eggs, one hatched; sixteen common map turtles, fourteen hatched; eleven painted turtles, four hatched. They were all over-wintered and will be ready for release in the spring of 2019. We hope we will make a small contribution to the survival of each of these species.

Look for the next
Wildlife Journal to
check on release
success and the
update on 2019
turtles!

Please Help us Cross the Road!



Safely pull over and move turtles in the direction they were headed.

All turtles have sharp claws and can bite.
DO NOT pick them up by the tail, it hurts!

THANK YOU!

Carry them by the rear of the shell or in a container to safe habitat nearby.
DO NOT take turtles home. Keep wildlife WILD! The ecosystem needs them.




Help Us Help You



If you find an animal in distress, please keep it warm and quiet.


Handle the animal as little as possible, keeping it away from pets and children.


Any attempt to feed or force water may not be in the best interest of the animal.


 Call the Center at (609) 303-0552. An animal may not actually need assistance, and bringing them in may cause them more harm.


Although the Center will gladly offer referrals, domestic animals cannot be accepted as patients.

Unfortunately, the Mercer County Wildlife Center is not equipped to provide a pick-up service.

 Remember...an animal in distress may not know that you are there to help. Extreme caution should always be used when assisting an injured animal.

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Mercer County Wildlife Center - 1748 River Road, Titusville, NJ 08560 (609)303-0552