

WILDLIFE JOURNAL

2020 Annual Review

An Annual Publication of the Mercer County Wildlife Center

SMILING BEHIND THE MASK

BY KIMBERLY DAWES

I had been tasked with writing an article about the pandemic. A lighthearted article, I was told. You know, nothing too serious and foreboding. Let us just stick to the funny things that happened during the pandemic. Wait, were there lighthearted, funny things that happened? I started to think about my time working at the Mercer County Wildlife Center during a global pandemic. The entire state of New Jersey had shut down. Mercer County had shut down. Everyone was told to stay home. Okay. Home. I could handle staying at home. But wait... what about the animals? It was March; young, displaced animals were showing up by the boxful. What was going to happen to them? Staying home was not an option. Things had to be figured out quickly.

The first blow was finding out that our volunteers were no longer allowed in the Center. The staff was then split in half, made into two separate teams, and told to mask up and stay six feet apart. All the news stations were talking about sickness and death. All of this was new and very scary. Fortunately, the staff had no time to think about all these things. There were already many animals at the center and many more were on the way. There was no time to panic.

One great thing that happened immediately was a special bond within the staff. It did feel like



the world was ending. Surprisingly, that did not matter. We had no time to worry about our ending world. We had animals that needed our care. We were here and we were going to do what needed to be done. Not showing up -- was not an option. We were nervous and we were scared... but we were there.

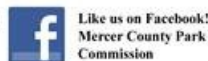
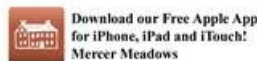
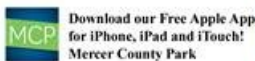
One amazing aspect of the situation we were forced into was my team's strengthened connectedness. It happened so quickly. I have never been more impressed with a group of team members in the face of adversity. Their

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Check out our new website!
www.mercercountyparks.org



wish list

Office Supplies

Forever stamps – rolls or sheets
Copy paper: 8 1/2" x 11"
Liquid Paper

Animal Care and Handling

Laundry detergent
(perfume and dye free, any brand)
Bleach
Trash bags (13 & 38 gallon size)
Food storage bags (gallon size)
Pet carriers – medium size only
Paper towels
Receiving blankets
Heating pads (no auto shut-off)

OTHER SUPPLIES

Pens
Surge protector strips
Scrub brushes

Animal Food

Gerber's jarred baby food:
chicken -2.5 oz.
Gerber's jarred baby food:
beef -2.5 oz.
Pedialyte
Wild bird seed

Medical Supplies

Fr feeding tubes: 3-1/2, 5 & 8
Gauze Pads: 4"x4" & 2"x2"
Latex exam gloves:
medium and large
Tegaderm (any size)

*****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 38 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 an average of 3,000 birds, mammals and reptiles at the facility and handle more than 16,000 telephone inquiries from the public. As County Executive, I am grateful for the number of our residents who, in the past, have chosen to volunteer their time in the effort to aid the native wildlife of the area, and I am equally thankful for the many businesses, organizations, veterinarians and others who donate a variety of goods and services. The past year has been a challenge for all of us. The Wildlife Center staff worked to maintain a high standard of care for patients in spite of not being able to utilize the normal cadre of volunteers.

The Outdoor Education Environment, which was officially opened to the public in 2016, has educated thousands of citizens, of all ages, about the various wildlife that are located in our own backyards: the bald eagle, Virginia opossum, and peregrine falcon, to name a few. I encourage you to visit during operating hours for a free, self-guided tour.

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 interns. Best wishes in the year ahead.

Sincerely,

Brian M. Hughes
County Executive



HOW WE GOT IT DONE...

One of the changes brought about by the pandemic was our ability to utilize a volunteer staff. On March 17th the County closed. The scheduled new volunteer orientations for 2020 were canceled and our volunteer staff was asked to not come for shifts at the Center. After the July 4th holiday, we sent a letter to all of our current volunteers along with self-assessment guidelines regarding the advisability of returning to the Center. After doing their own self-assessments, the first group to venture back in July numbered twenty-four, seven of which were not able to continue – but will hopefully be returning at pandemic's end. August and September brought fifteen more hearty souls. Our hope is that as vaccines are approved and administered, and herd immunity is reached in the population, that the remaining volunteers will be able to return and we will once again be able to invite new volunteers! We miss our volunteer staff and look forward to their safe return!

2020 VOLUNTEERS

COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Brian M. Hughes

MERCER COUNTY PARK COMMISSION

James J. Schulz, Jr., President

Marissa Davis, Vice President

Sharon Gardner

Amber L. Forrester

Dominic V. Longo

Kelly A. Mooij

Walter D. Smith

Aaron T. Watson, Executive Director

R. David Blake, Esq., Park Commission Counsel

STAFF

Diane Nickerson, Director

Jane Rakos-Yates, Clinic Supervisor

Nicole Golden, Clinic Supervisor

WILDLIFE CENTER FRIENDS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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JillAnn Murphy, Treasurer

Linda Proefrock

Paul Renner, JD

Bruce Stout, PhD

Jodie Shuster, Director WCF

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Jerome M. Glickstein, VMD

L. Paul Lanctot, VMD

Erica A. Miller, DVM

Paul Wagner, VMD

ART DIRECTOR/EDITOR : Jami Arbizu

Clinic Supervisors

Elizabeth Bukovec

Kimberly Dawes

Nikki Harley

Lisa Hewitt

Adrianna Manchen

Megan Morici

Kristi Schollenberger

Kim Wickenden

Volunteers

July Return

Bonnie Baker

Kathy Bascio

Catherine Beans

Bob Bowden

Marjorie Caddy

Sarah Carey

Linda Covello

Nancy Derrico

Kim Eschbach

Janet Forgrieve

Susan Gallagher

Helen Golden

Marie Hendricks

Elizabeth Kuziel

Elizabeth Moran

Beth Morpeth

Wendy Most

Jeanne Out

Shari Rexroad

Tim Richards

Sussi Riggelman

Jodi Specter

Diane Turner

Kathryn Williams

August Return

Reese Buckley

Ann Church

Robin Haines

Kim Mancuso

Michele Mariano

Adrienne Pitrelli

Aggie Szilagyi

Barbara Warfel

September Return

Daniel Buckley

Shelby Coulton

Stephanie Foy

Geoffery Peters

Janice Quillia-Budd

Frank Stillwell

Brad Zerler

Spring/Summer/Fall Interns

Wildlife Warriors

Samantha Cruz – *Mercer County Community College*

Jack Dreger – *Mercer County Community College*

Laura Egan – *University of Glasgow Veterinary School*

Ashley Emmel – *Holy Family University*

Kathleen Hunter – *Queens University Charlotte*

Kayla Suiter – *The College of New Jersey*

Veda Wendell – *Sarah Lawrence College*

Gabby Youngken – *University of Maryland*

Team Tenacity

Kelsey Bellomia – *Saint Joseph's University*

Jaime Jelliffe – *Delaware Valley University*

Molly Granahan – *University of Massachusetts, Amherst*

Connor Penrod – *New Jersey Institute of Technology*

Carolyn Schultz – *University of New England*



Mercer County Wildlife Center is owned by the County of Mercer and operated and maintained by the Mercer County Park Commission.
Aaron T. Watson, Executive Director
www.mercercountyparks.org



Wildlife Center Friends

Supportive Partners of the
Mercer County Wildlife Center

A Note From The President

It is hard to put the last year into words, and while there are many aspects of it that we may be happy to forget, it has provided us with a strange opportunity to slow down and to connect with each other and the nature around us in ways that we may not usually do. The worldwide pandemic also forced us change the way we do many things. Director Diane Nickerson and her team worked tirelessly - and creatively - to come up with new procedures at the Mercer County Wildlife Center - whether it involved a new process to intake injured animals, how to manage without our steadfast army of volunteers, or the how to unmute ourselves for a zoom meeting.

The non-profit board, Wildlife Center Friends, was amazed - and incredibly thankful - that so many individuals were able to continue to generously support the work of the Center. At a time when there was so much need, so much uncertainty, and for some so much heartbreak, we were touched, honored and grateful that

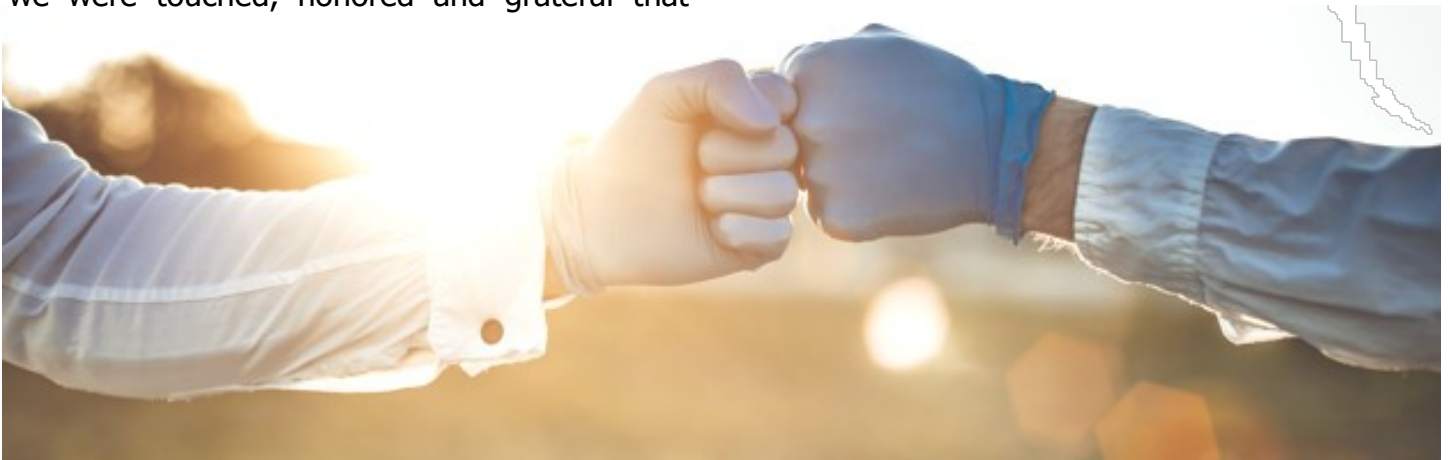
you understood our need and believed in our work. Thank you.

Jodie Shuster, the Executive Director of Wildlife Center Friends, is always finding creative ways to help communicate the great work that takes place at the Center. Her energy and her commitment are second to none, and we are so lucky to have her working on behalf of the Board and in support of the Mercer County Wildlife Center.

Along with our dedicated Board members, Bruce Stout, Paul Renner, JillAnn Murphy, and Linda Proefrock, we hope that 2021 brings a sense of normalcy, and renewed hope for the great world that we share with our amazing wildlife.

Sharon Lauchaire

President, Wildlife Center Friends



OBSERVATIONS

BY DIANE NICKERSON

In all of the years that I have been writing this page for our annual publication, 2020 was not a year that I ever could have imagined. I am guessing you are all silently nodding your heads – none of us could have imagined the world changing in such drastic measure. With the possible exception of Anthony Fauci!

The year began as most do here at the Wildlife Center - recovering from the busy spring, summer and fall seasons and regrouping and adjusting for the upcoming seasons. Two of us traveled to the national symposium the last week of February for continuing education, we planned for new volunteer orientations, started sending out requests for summer college interns, and talked about implementing things we learned about patient care over the last season into what we might change for the upcoming season.

Then on the 17th of March, Mercer County, and most of the east coast, closed. Literally, closed! Decisions needed to be made. How would we safely stay open to care for the current patient load? Would we be able to accept new patients? What would that look like? Would there be new parameters and protocols? Because our staff constantly adapts to new situations, we did just that. We split into two teams (Team Wildlife Warriors and Team Tenacity), we assigned the limited number of college interns to teams, we accepted patients by appointment only, we secured the lobby for our safety and client safety, and then we continued our work. During the pandemic, MCWC treated 2,730 new patients, encompassing 127 species, and released 62% back into the wild for a second chance. Check out Kim Dawes' article on page 1 for the lighter side of 2020.



Looking back at our caseload for 2020, 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 8 to find out about all of the interesting patients.

Since we had no new volunteers this year, there is not a new volunteer article for this publication. Instead, we asked two of our college interns to provide their unique perspectives on the twelve-week crash course that they navigated. It is normally an intense internship, made all the more challenging by Covid protocols. Their articles shine a light for us on the wonder of working with wildlife for the first time – in a pandemic! 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.

Staff members Megan Morici, Nikki Harley and Adriana "Arie' Machen take a look at ways we can all help our wild neighbors. Look for articles on Wildlife Highways (page 20), Birds and Windows (page 27), and managing your bird feeders (page 24) for things you can do to help. Nicole Golden added some information on one of our native species, the Eastern box turtle, for this publication (page 16). Libby Bukovec took some time to explain the effects of non-native species on our environment (page 14).

The collaboration between the Wildlife Center Friends, the Mercer County Park Commission, Conserve Wildlife Foundation, and PSE&G continued in 2020 with the *Eyes on Eagles*

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introducing us to possible, new supporters and the many gifts he sends our way.

This is where I normally thank all of our volunteers for their service throughout the year. The pandemic changed volunteering for us, as well. In an effort to keep staff safe, keep volunteers safe and keep the center functioning, we were not able to let our volunteer staff be part of our efforts in 2020 for the better part of the year. Normally, they show up week after week, month after month, and many, year after year. Though we always believed in the integral part they played in our success, that fact became abundantly clear this year. Our teams worked twelve and fourteen hour days to do the bare minimum to keep patients safe and treated. Nothing, *and I mean nothing*, extra was able to

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program. Some quick thinking and adaptations and the programs were done virtually. Plans for 2021 season are underway for limited in-person combined with virtual programming. Check the Park Commission website for updates. <http://www.mercercountyparks.org/#!/activities/eyes-eagles>

Our last education outreach program of 2020 was held at the Decoys and Wildlife Art Gallery in Frenchtown on February 23, 2020. As always, I would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to Ron Kobli, the owner of the gallery <http://www.decoyswildlife.com/>. 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 the making of new acquaintances. And, 2020 was no different. However, 2021 will be very different. It will mark the first time in twenty-seven years that we will not be able to attend this event. We will look forward to the norm changing and being able to, once again, present outreach programs in the community. Hopefully, February of 2022 will see us back at Ron's gallery. Many thanks to Ron for



TEAM WILDLIFE WARRI-



be accomplished. We were glad, at the end of July, to be able to allow volunteers, who fell within certain strict parameters, to return. Out of over 100 volunteers the first to return numbered twenty-four, seven of which were unable to continue. At the moment, we are up to thirty-one and facing the upcoming season – a repeat of restrictions of 2020. However, this year we will have thirty-one more sets of hands.

Finally, thanks to you, our members. We spoke to over 16,000 of you this year by telephone, trying to answer your questions and concerns about your wild neighbors. We met many more of our neighbors this year, as staying at home meant more time outside for so many people. We hope you will continue along our journey with us in the years ahead. We continue to be here to serve you because you care enough to be there to support us.

Director, Joseph Pizza, Deputy Director and Anthony Cucchi, Superintendent of Parks.



Seasonal employee Adrianna (Arie) Manchen was presented the Rising Star Award given by the New Jersey Association of Wildlife Rehabilitators. The award was presented by Denise Hassinger, president of NJAWR, at the January 2020 membership meeting.

The entire staff was presented with the Employee of the Month award for August of 2020 by the Mercer County Park Commission. This was given in recognition the extra effort of the entire staff during the shutdown. The staff worked in two separate teams, four days on and three days off for 10 to 14 hours a day, to cover seven days a week. They answered an average of 80 telephone calls a day and admitted over 2,700 new patients. All of this without the assistance of the over 100 volunteers that normally are at the center during the busiest seasons. The full time staff was no longer able to handle "business" responsibilities during work hours as their attention was needed to care for patients. So, all of the non-animal care work

was done at home on days off. And, without the volunteer staff, the seasonal staff stepped up to the plate and worked hour for hour alongside the full time staff.



Congratulations

AWARDS

Although most of 2020 was lost in the haze of coping with a worldwide pandemic and rearranging everything we do on a daily basis, there were a few bright notes for the staff at the Center. Three separate awards were received in recognition of the work we do here on a daily basis all year around, year after year.



The Wildlife Center was presented with the 2020 Gregory T. Marshall Excellence in Parks and Historic Resources Award by the New Jersey Recreation and Park Association. Jane Rakos-Yates was on hand in Atlantic City to accept the award. She

was joined by Aaron T. Watson, Executive

PATIENT LOG

MCWC TREATED 2,730 ANIMALS DURING 2020

The unusual circumstances of 2020 continued with the patient load this year. The first noteworthy case to arrive was a red shoulder hawk (*Buteo lineatus*) nestling, case number 2020-00403. It was found on the ground in a condominium complex. If you have read these pages in years past, you will know that every attempt

the bird back in the nest – sixty or so feet above the ground! Enter Jamie’s friend with the tree trimming business and the bucket truck!

On a bright and sunny Saturday morning, we all returned to the nest tree. With instructions on technique and a well-placed hard hat, Lee Stocker from Stocker Tree Service and Landscaping returned the nestling to the nest, its siblings, and parents. He did get a few close fly-bys from the parents, but it seemed to add to the adventure as far as he was concerned. Thanks to everyone who helped to get this youngster back where it belonged.



Case #2020-00403
Red shoulder hawk nestling (*Buteo lineatus*)

is made to get young animals, especially raptors, back with their parents. Wild animals do a much better job raising their young. We are a poor substitute.

Unbelievably, the bird had no injuries from its fall. Thankfully, animal control officer Jamie Fazzalore was able to make some inquiries and located the nest. The next task? Why, getting



Case #2020-00850 and 00851
Black vulture (*Coragyps atratus*)

Case numbers 2020-00850 and 00851 arrived at Mercer County Wildlife Center on May 28, 2020. The black vulture (*Coragyps atratus*) nestlings had been removed from a barn during renovation and dumped in the woods. Black

vultures usually nest in dark cavities such as caves, hollow trees, abandoned buildings, brush piles, thickets, and stumps, laying their eggs directly on the ground. So, the old barn must have looked like an ideal location. In fact, since pairs reuse successful sites for many years, it may have been a location previously used.

The third nestling, case number 2020-01286 came from the Raptor Trust on June 22, 2020 to be placed with conspecifics.

Conspecifics. *noun, plural: Another organism of the same species.*

Adjective. Pertaining to another organism (such as an animal) of the same species, or that has similar appearance as another. It is always better to raise young animals with others of their own species, so we introduced this nestling to the others.

When they reached three and a half to months of age, they were all ready for release. Unable to locate a flock to that was suitable for introduction we reached out to our colleague at the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife ENSP. Biologist, Kathy Clark, assisted with releasing them at a feeding station in Cumberland County where they could be around other vultures.



The station had been set up to assist first year eagles and any rehabilitated eagles that needed a little extra help working their way back to the wild. It was stocked

every other day to supplement their diet until they were able to hunt on their own. As vultures and other scavengers will do, they found the "buffet". Game cameras allowed monitoring post release. The three juveniles were identifiable by the ring of down feathers around their necks.

In 2019, two pair of nesting bald eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) chose the County Parks as their new home. As you may remember from last year, a bald eagle nestling, very unceremoniously rolled out of the lop-sided, sagging nest to the ground below. Well, 2020 proved to be a repeat of

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PATIENT LOG



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

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2019. Though the adult pair had made repairs to the nest and it appeared much sturdier, a second nestling found its way to the ground.

Once again, volunteer nest watcher, Kevin Buynie, retrieved the recalcitrant fledgling and brought it to the Wildlife Center. Case# 2020-00987 arrived on June 6, 2020 and was pronounced clinically healthy. Fortunately, this young patient needed nothing more than a few good meals and some time to work on flying and landing accurately. It was placed in a pre-release conditioning enclosure and subsequently released on June 16, 2020, with an able assist from Kevin Buynie, Nicole Golden from MCWC, and Parks Superintendent Anthony Cucchi.



On July 29th case number 2020-01897 arrived for care. The pouch young Virginia opossum (*Didelphis virginiana*) had been found alone on a sidewalk in Bordentown. Too young to be on its own, it was hypothermic, dehydrated, and emaciated. It was also white!!!

Leucism (/ˈluːsɪzəm, -kɪz-/) is a term used to describe a wide variety of conditions which result in the partial loss of pigmentation in an animal—which causes

white, pale, or patchy coloration of the skin, hair, feathers, scales or cuticles, but not the eyes. The opossum is all white with black eyes and ears. While the markings are distinctive and particularly striking, they make him stick out like the proverbial sore thumb. Lacking appropriate coloring for camouflaging, he would be a delectable dinner for a predator – and an easy one to find!

It was decided to add him to the collection of education ambassadors for the wildlife center. He is learning to target train and will be moving outside to an enclosure in the Outdoor Education Environment once the winter weather is behind us.

Coyotes (*Canis latrans*), case numbers 2020-01920 and 2020-02321, arrived July 31, 2020 and September 6, 2020, respectively. The mother had been hit by a car in mid-July and the staff from the Associated Humane Society in Ocean County worked tirelessly to trap the orphaned juveniles.

Case number 2020-01920 had not been fending for itself very long. However, it arrived emaciated, dehydrated and with a case of sarcoptic mange. By the time case number 2020-02321 arrived, along with all the issues that had plagued its littermate, it had fractured its pelvis and a few ribs. Both needed medical care and supportive therapy. The mange was treated with an anti-parasitic, the fractured pelvis and ribs were allowed to heal by limiting movement. Emaciation and dehydration were managed through supportive care of the littermates.

In late September they were moved outside into prerelease conditioning enclosures. After a couple of weeks of exercise and opportunities to practice hunting and foraging skills, they were both released together near their original den location on October 13, 2020 - without as much as a glance back!

Ruby throated hummingbirds (*Archilochus colubris*), are Mother Nature's flying jewels – and very often the bane of our existence! After all, they weigh three grams. What, exactly, are you supposed to do with something that weighs three grams!!!

Case number 2020-02446 was brought to us on September 26, 2020 after being found in a yard unable to fly. Not very good news for a bird that needs to migrate thousands of miles over the upcoming month. One wing drooped slightly, so radiographs were taken of the bird. As mentioned earlier, she weighed three grams. Under normal circumstances, little birds are difficult to x-ray. Smaller birds, more difficult, yet. At any rate, we were not able to find anything that appeared to be fractured. Our hope was a few days of rest and some pain medication – and please let her be good at self-feeding – she might have a chance.

A chance she had, indeed. On October 4th, after a few days of good nutrition and exercise in an outdoor aviary, she was ready to go. She was released and wished well on the long journey ahead.

The last few cases to share this time all have a take home message that we hope you will pass along. They are each very short tales, and have an equally short and simple message regarding peaceful co-existence.

First is great horned owl (*Bubo virginianus*), case # 2020-02471. It arrived on October 1, 2020, after being found entangled in a soccer net that had been left in an upright position over night. The East Windsor animal control officer cut netting and transported owl to MCWC. It was anesthetized and extracted from the netting and its wounds were treated. A little time to heal and some pain medication and it was released on October 17, 2020 by the animal control officer who had initially rescued it.

**Take home message-
Collapse soccer nets when they
are not in use.**



Case #2020-02471
Great horned owl (*Bubo virginianus*)

Second is big brown bat (*Eptesicus fuscus*), case number 2020-02558. It arrived October 12, 2020 after being found, rather rudely, stuck to a glue board. It arrived hypothermic and exhausted. Under anesthesia, it was removed from the glue using a veterinary solvent. Then it was bathed to remove the solvent. Medications were administered for pain and to promote blood circulation in the fragile wing membranes that had suffered from a lack of circulation for more than twenty-four hours. Fortunately, on November 4, 2020, the bat was able to be released.

(Continued on page 12)

Case #2020-02558 Big brown bat (*Eptesicus fuscus*)



**Take home message-
Make sure glue boards are set so
that non-target species do not
have access to them.**



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Finally is a great blue heron (*Ardea Herodias*), case number 2020-02591. It arrived on November 8, 2020 after being rescued by Mercer County Park Commission rangers. It had become entangled in discarded monofilament fishing line. The line was wrapped around both legs and the right wing, leaving it incapable of flying, feeding or defending itself. Under anesthesia, the line was removed and properly disposed. The heron was provided pain medication and a few days of rest in an outdoor aviary. It was released on November 10, back to the park it called home.

***Take home message-
 Make sure to take all lose fishing line and tackle with you when you
 leave your favorite fishing hole.***



Great blue heron (*Ardea Herodias*)

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

INTERNING DURING A PANDEMIC

BY CAROLYN SCHULTZ

As lockdown set in across the country, many people found themselves searching for new hobbies and activities to fill their time. Since colleges sent students home, I decided to revisit my internship site: Mercer County Wildlife Center. I had missed the animals and people I had worked with previously. However, due to the pandemic, my experience did vary from the first time I had interned here.

Aside from getting used to the strange feeling of working with a mask on, it was far busier than expected. With only a handful of us on one of two teams that split the week in half, there was plenty of work to go around each day. I had wondered if the pandemic would mean less animals would be brought in, but this did not seem to be the case. Rooms filled up quickly, as did the enclosures outside.

As hectic as it may have felt to begin with, I soon found myself settling into somewhat of a routine. Most of my mornings were filled with raccoon duties, either cleaning and feeding groups of juveniles inside or the ones big enough to be outside. Other interns and staff members had their hands full with hungry fawns, numerous raptors and birds, as well as waterfowl and reptiles. We tried to split tasks so that all the animals got cared for in the most efficient manner.

When the morning bustle ended, lunch provided a welcomed break to eat and discuss the animals so that everyone was up to date on how they were doing. It was strange trying our best

to sit apart for a socially distanced lunch break, but we still managed to bond as a team.

After lunch, our afternoons were a bit more relaxed than the mornings. This allowed us to deal with any food preparation, miscellaneous tasks like inventorying donations, as well as an opportunity to observe intakes and examinations of new patients. This was one of the most memorable parts of my internship; that no matter how busy the day seemed, there was always a few minutes to learn or see something new.

It was also always so rewarding to be able to be part of different releases for animals that were ready to return to the wild. So many different kinds of cases are seen, such as infant animals without mothers. It is amazing to be able to witness and be part of helping them grow and heal, and eventually return to where they were found.

Overall, interning this past summer proved to be just as amazing an experience as the first time. It was really great to be part of a team that even as the pandemic worsened, still tried their best every day to help each and every patient we saw.



Carolyn



WHY YOU SHOULD NOT CHEER FOR THE VISITING TEAM: *HARMFUL NON-NATIVE INSECT SPECIES*

BY LIBBY BUKOVEC

Imagine this: after a long stressful day of working at home, the weather is finally warm enough to sit outside for a relaxing breath of fresh air. The sun is still shining; a warm breeze hits your face. You go to sit down in your favorite lawn chair and find it covered in sticky sap. What is this? You look around for the culprit and find none other than hundreds of little red and black polka-dot insects looking back at you. The dreaded spotted lanternfly (*Lycorma delicatula*) strikes again!



These little (big) guys took the summer of 2020 by storm, literally. Red and black polka-dots covered the trees, littered the ground, and even camped out on cars in a deluge of invasiveness! In addition to their horrifying tendency to jump in your face when you try to kick them off your trees, spotted lanternflies pose a serious threat to the local ecosystem and economic balance. These insects will eat the sap from over seventy species of plants, including important economic trees like grapevines, maples, birch and other ornamental trees. These trees look like Thanksgiving dinner to a spotted lanternfly. Economic impact studies estimate that if the bug



continues to spread, it could cost New Jersey more than \$290 million in damage annually. Talk about expensive taste! The lanternfly also oozes sap which can build up and cause mold and fungus to grow, further harming the tree's health.

But, let us not give the new guy *all* the credit. New Jersey and the surrounding areas are not immune to other non-native insects. In fact, one of the most easily identifiable insects that you have seen in your own garden and thought to yourself "wow, it really does look like it is praying" has probably been a culprit! That is right, we are talking mantises. There are three common mantis species in New Jersey: Carolina mantis (*Stagmomantis carolina*), Chinese mantis (*Tenodera sinensis*), and European mantis (*Mantis religiosa*). Appropriate to their names, only two of these species are non-native: the Chinese and European mantis.

While their coloring is not the most helpful way to distinguish between species — they all range from green to brown to grey in color — the easiest way to distinguish them from each other are their sizes. The native Carolina mantis is the smallest (only three inches long), the Chinese mantis is the largest (up to five inches long) and the European mantis sits comfortably in the middle (about four inches long). However, if you do not have a ruler handy when you come across one of these guys, another easy way to distinguish them is by their egg sacs. During the late summer/early fall mantises will lay their eggs in an insulated protected sac — called the ootheca — until they hatch in the spring. The Chinese mantis ootheca appears round/cube shaped and solid brown color. The European mantis ootheca is slender and elongated in shape, but also a solid brown color. Finally, the native Carolina mantis ootheca is also slender and elongated but has light and dark brown stripes.

But they are so serene, you may be saying. How could they be harmful? For as tranquil as they may appear, they are equally as ferocious and ravenous! The non-native Chinese and European mantis have an appetite for absolutely anything and everything they can get those big arms around. Not only will they eat all types of insects - yes, including each other! - they also feast on small vertebrates such as amphibians, lizards, snakes, and even small birds. Hummingbirds are no match against the iron grip of a mantis's claws. And remember those spotted lanternflies? At the wildlife center, we have seen a mantis chowing down on a lanternfly in a twisted fate of poetic justice.

Other than disturbing acts of cannibalism next to the roses in my garden, the harm these invasive species have on the ecosystem links to their nondiscriminatory appetite. They eat valuable pollinators, as well as the native Carolina mantis. If the away team was allowed to eat the home team at a soccer match that would not exactly be a fair game.

But there is still hope! The most effective way to reduce the spread of non-native insects is to eliminate the egg sacs. If you find a spotted lanternfly or non-native mantis egg sac in your garden, simply remove it and destroy it. The egg sacs can be cut open and submerged in water to kill the eggs inside. Or, if you want to really stick it to them, you can even feed the mantis egg masses as a tasty snack to your pet reptiles. Take that, you big predator! **But remember to avoid the striped egg sacs, since we want to help boost the native Carolina mantis species.** If you see one of their sacs, instead of removing it, you can whisper words of encouragement to the eggs inside like, "you can do it!" or "you got this!" As for the lanternflies, check your vehicle (and yourself) for any hitchhiking insects before you travel anywhere, especially across county or state lines.



With the help of large scale management plans as well as individuals, we can help control the effect these harmful invasive bullies have on our native ecosystem. So remember to always root for the home team, even if it they are the underdog.

Editor's Note:
Libby began her time with Mercer County Wildlife Center as a college intern. She then joined us as a seasonal employee. We wish her well as she leaves us and accepts a new position outside of Seattle, WA. Looking forward to what the future holds for her in her new adventure.

Eastern box turtle (*Terrapene Carolina*)



EASTERN BOX TURTLES

BY NICOLE GOLDEN

The Mercer County Wildlife Center received 278 native turtles in the 2020 calendar year, 80 of those intakes were Eastern box turtles. Box turtles are a terrestrial species found in every county in New Jersey. They are now considered a species of special concern with the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife due to habitat loss, car strikes and illegal pet trade. Remember - it is illegal to keep any wild animal as a pet, including turtles.

Mature box turtles can range anywhere from four inches to eight inches long and weigh between one and two pounds. Males and females both have a domed carapace (top shell) that can vary in color but the plastron (bottom shell) of male box turtles is concave while the female's plastron is flat. The plastron is hinged, which gives them the ability to close their shells completely when faced with danger. Box turtles also have the remarkable ability to regenerate damaged shells. A fact we have witnessed at the center numerous times this year!

Typical life span is twenty-five to thirty-five years, but turtles up to one hundred years old have been documented. Box turtles can reproduce beginning between four and five years old and females lay eggs usually between May and July. Mating season is spring through the summer, as females can store sperm for four years they do not need to mate every year.

Box turtles brumate from late October until the beginning of April. Brumation is a period of dormancy in reptiles, similar to hibernation in mammals. During brumation, their bodies shut down to conserve energy. Injured or sick turtles will not heal during brumation. So, they must be kept overwinter at the center where healing can continue so they are healthy and ready to be released in the spring.

Home range for a box turtle is very small; most forage and stay within an area the size of two football fields for their entire life. Anyone who has brought turtles to a rehabilitator knows how we agonize over finding out EXACTLY where they were found!

Habitats are generally woodlands, marshes and open fields where their carapace colors of browns and oranges camouflage them in the environment. Box turtles are omnivorous, but hatchlings and juveniles are mostly carnivorous while adults are mostly herbivorous. Favorite foods of any age box turtles are earthworms, slugs, strawberries and fungi. The Wildlife Center Friends buys 1,000 earthworms every few months from a facility called Uncle Jim's Worm Farm to keep our patients eating natural foods while in care. The wildlife center currently has ten Eastern box turtles overwintered with hopes they will be released in the spring.

Points to remember:

- Never relocate a wild turtle. They have a small home range and will spend their lives trying to get back home.**
- If you pick up an injured turtle, put them in a box with a clean towel, write down your exact location and call a rehabilitator.**
- If you stop to help a turtle cross a road be aware of your surroundings; keep yourself safe and always put the turtle on the side of the road in the direction they were headed.**
- Never keep any wild animal as a pet.**
- Always call a rehabilitator with any questions- we are always happy to help!**

New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife

link to all New Jersey licensed rehabilitators

https://www.njfishandwildlife.com/pdf/rehab_list.pdf



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SMILING... (CONT.)

(Continued from page 1)

tenacity, positivity, and ability to band together was something that I will never forget. We had each other's backs. If the ship was going down, we were going to be playing our music till the end. I apologize for my romantic Titanic reference. Seriously, though... we were going to take care of the animals that needed us. It did not matter that there were so many of them and so few of us; that once the first feeding was done and cages were cleaned, we were immediately starting the next feeding. Did it matter that there were days that I did not leave the raccoon room? No. What mattered was that my team could joke that they always knew where to find me. They laughed that I should just set up a cot and move in there. I would just pretend I could not hear them over the insanely loud raccoons, while smiling behind my mask, thankful that they cared. Knowing that my team had my back and could laugh with me at the insanity made it okay. Animal care was our focus. To be honest, we did not have time to focus on anything else. I think that was a good thing.

It became quickly apparent that intake must be reorganized. There were many patients on their way and safety protocols needed to be put into place. Figuring out how to separate ourselves from the public dropping off patients was a challenge. How many people get to watch their boss climb up on a reception desk to zip-tie and

duct tape clear shower curtains between the ceiling and countertop to create a barrier? Diane was probably not laughing...but we were chuckling behind our masks. We started taking patients by appointment only. This turned out to be a lifesaver. How had we never thought of that before? Genius. We will be continuing that practice.

Of course, the phones started ringing off the hook. Suddenly people were home. They were looking out their windows and walking through their neighborhoods and the woods. Many seemed confused. It may have been the first time that some realized that our world was filled with wildlife. The word was out...there were creatures other than humans that were living amongst us. Diane could be heard on the phone too many times patiently explaining that "This is a natural behavior. Leave it be." She would joke about urging people to stay home and stop hiking through the woods and not to bringing us every animal encountered. On the flip side, many animals were saved due to all the extra pairs of vigilant eyes watching our wildlife. For that, we were grateful.

If there ever was a time in our lives that our wildlife team could use a smile or good laugh, it was probably now. We all appreciated any lighthearted banter we could muster. The world around us was in crisis. This was serious. Our jobs were serious. However, being able to connect with others going through the same things, made it bearable and allowed us all to feel human again. It was fun chatting about getting away from our husbands/significant others/family members that were now working from home and always around. Laughing about setting up sleeping bags and just staying here. Wait... that might have been just me. The team was forced to figure out something as simple as how to eat lunch. Could we still eat lunch together? No?



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Okay, we will sit outside at different picnic tables and yell to each other. That worked. Turns out that we were willing to do anything to stay connected with each other... even from six feet away.

Our teams were working twelve-hour days to give these animals the care they needed. Everyone was tired and stressed, yet we were all here. Taking a moment to check in on a co-worker and sharing a silly joke became as essential as our personal protective equipment. Laughing about an impatient bird "yelling" that food was not coming fast enough, or the hijinks of a juvenile raccoon prancing about with a food dish on his head began to have significant benefits to our well-being. We discovered the psychological benefits of a smile. Smiles that no one could see because of the masks on our faces, but smiles we could all feel.

**USE YOUR
SMILE TO CHANGE
THE WORLD,
DON'T LET THE
WORLD CHANGE
YOUR SMILE.**

Humor was still alive, even during a pandemic. It helped unify us, made us feel we were a part of a team, and not so isolated in a lonely time. Although things in the world were - and continue to be - serious and the cases we were encountering on a daily (hourly?) basis were serious, there was something truly special about surrounding yourself with a team that cherishes you enough to laugh with you... *or at you.*

Same thing, right?

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-4PM





Photo by WikiPedant at Wikimedia Commons

WILDLIFE CROSSINGS: THE ROAD TO COEXISTING

BY MEGAN MORICI

People have radically altered the face of the earth to a degree likely unfathomable to our ancestors. The space we occupy is ever-increasing with each new retail store and housing development we construct. Roads cut through the landscape, branching and reaching like the veins of some expansive, inorganic organism. Our encroachment into previously wild spaces has the consequence of diminishing and fragmenting the habitat of the animals living there, whom are then endangered by the necessity of crossing our roads.

Unfortunately, dead animals on the roadside are a familiar sight. Every year, we admit numerous

patients who have suffered gruesome injuries caused by collisions with vehicles. They are the unintended casualties of human technological advancement. If there is a silver lining to this year's pandemic, it is that wildlife have benefitted from the reduction in human activity. According to a report by University of California - Davis, vehicle collisions involving wildlife declined 21- 44% (varying by location) in the weeks following the implementation of stay-at-home orders earlier this year (1). Reducing automobile travel is one, albeit impractical in the longer-term, solution for reducing wildlife-vehicle collisions. Another solution that has been proven to be successful is wildlife crossings. These over and underpasses act as naturalistic bridges for wildlife so that they may safely cross roadways. In addition to saving the lives of individual animals, wildlife crossings can bolster biodiversity by connecting isolated populations and fragmented habitats. The crossings may be planted with grasses, trees, shrubs, and decorated with rocks to mimic their surrounding environment, which entices animals to use them. They are implemented in conjunction with fencing that extends along the road in both directions, helping to herd animals toward the

crossing and away from the road. The crossings are strategically placed in areas that are hotspots for wildlife-vehicle collisions and along migration routes.

In Nevada, the construction of wildlife over and underpasses across a highway that intersects mule deer migration routes resulted in a 50% decrease in the number of mule deer mortalities with each subsequent migration. Deer readily utilized the crossings, and increased usage was documented each year as the deer became habituated to them (2). They preferred overpasses to underpasses, which highlights how species-specific preferences can be used to shape the design of these crossings depending on the target species. Tunnels, for example, are ideal for amphibians and reptiles but may feel constricting to larger animals like deer and moose.

While some crossings are designed for mass appeal, others serve specific animals. For instance, Australia's red crabs enjoy specially-designed crab bridges which facilitate the species' mass migration from the forests to the ocean for breeding. These steep, narrow bridges are made of metal grating that crabs easily climb to safely cross roadways (3). Trains also pose a danger to wildlife. In a coastal city in Japan, turtles would get stuck between the rails of train tracks and eventually be crushed. The railway company solved this problem by installing "turtle ditches" beneath the tracks, helping the crossing turtles remain out of harm's way. Ten turtles were observed using these crossings in just a few months (4).

I hope that we as a society are heading toward having an increased respect for other animal species and their right to be here. As this shift occurs, perhaps these crossings and other creative attempts to foster coexistence will become more commonplace.

We are not the only ones with places to go.

Sources:

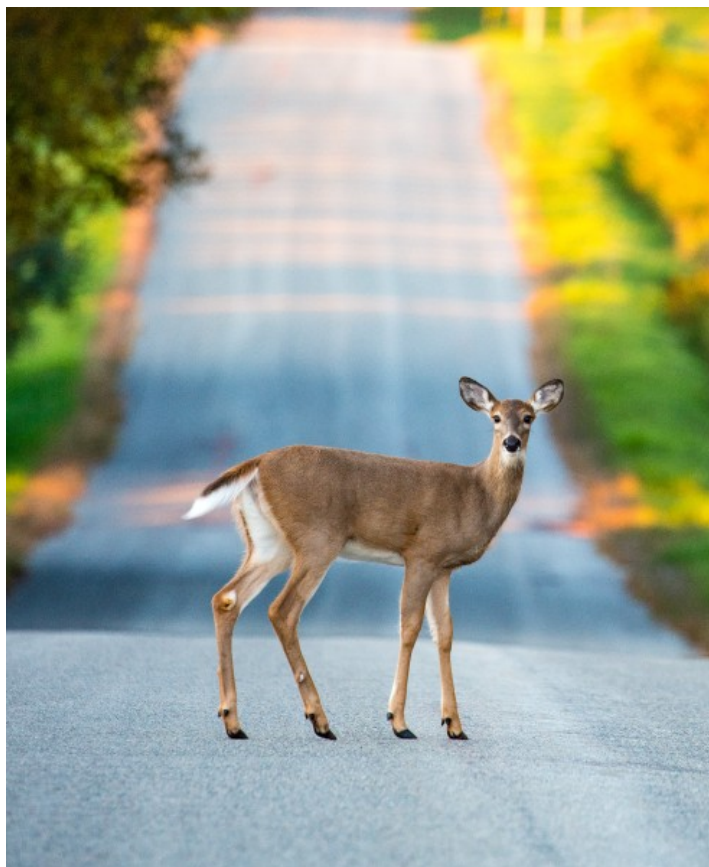
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Impact of COVID-19 Mitigation on Wildlife-Vehicle Conflict, by Road Ecology Center UC Davis, https://roadecology.ucdavis.edu/files/content/projects/COVID_CHIPs_Impacts_wildlife.pdf

2. Stewart, K. 2015. Effectiveness of Wildlife Crossing Structures to Minimize Traffic Collisions with Mule Deer and Other wildlife in Nevada., <https://www.nevadadot.com/home/showdocument?id=6485>

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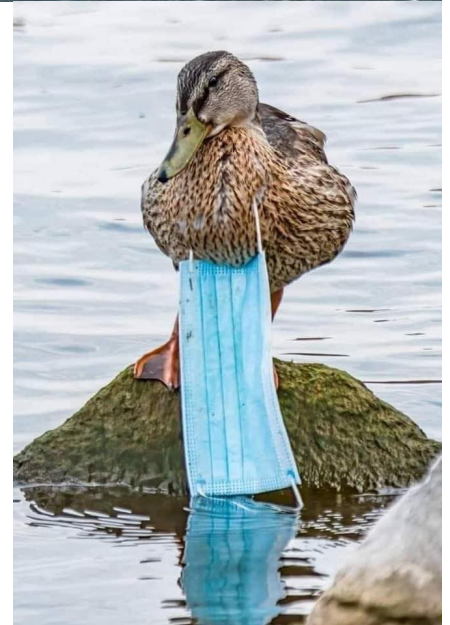
Wildlife rehabilitators have a new challenge on their hands.

GREEN PAGE



Across the country, wild animals are being injured by improperly discarded covid masks.

In water and on land, birds, reptiles and mammals can get caught in the straps and are unable to break free.





Always cut or break the straps before discarding masks.

Dispose of them properly, and

DO NOT LITTER!



GREEN PAGE



WHEN SPRING HAS SPRUNG, SO WILL DISEASE:

HOW AND WHY TO CLEAN YOUR BIRD FEEDERS

BY NIKKI HARLEY

Feeder Maintenance and Its Importance



Bird feeders are a great way to observe and provide a reliable food source for your neighborhood birds. However, the congregation of animals at your feeders can contribute to the spread of disease. Bird seed that becomes damp allows for the development of mold, bacteria and fungus. The sugar in hummingbird nectar ferments over time, making it the perfect breeding ground for infectious diseases. Aside from the actual food, harmful pathogens can also grow and persist on feeder surfaces and the environment. By properly cleaning and maintaining your feeders, you can minimize the spread of many illnesses.

The best practice is to clean your bird feeders at least once a month. Remove all uneaten food

from the feeder and scrub it thoroughly. You want to disinfect it with a 10% bleach solution (9 parts water to 1 part bleach). Soak the feeder for several minutes, rinse and allow it to air dry completely. Hummingbird feeders need to be cleaned at least once a week and more frequently in the summertime. When cleaning hummingbird feeders, use hot water or a dilute vinegar solution and use a bottle brush to scrub; you do not want to use any soaps or detergents. If you notice any sick or dead birds near your feeders, clean and leave your bird feeders down for two weeks to prevent the spread of disease.

Cleaning underneath your feeder is just as important as cleaning the feeder itself. Be sure to rake up food and fecal debris that has fallen to prevent the growth of pathogens. Spreading out, rotating and offering multiple feeding locations in your yard reduces crowding at feeders and avoids accumulation of fecal matter. Additionally, storing bird seed in air-tight containers prevents the growth of mold. It is also important to keep feeders about twenty feet away from windows to reduce window strikes. Remember, birds are not the only animals that will visit your feeders. Rodents like squirrels and mice will also be attracted to the seed and bees to the nectar.

Common Diseases Found at Your Feeder

Avian Pox- *Avipoxvirus* is a viral infection that can be caused by many different poxvirus strains. Birds afflicted by the virus develop growths near the eyes, beak, wings, legs and feet. These growths vary in color and can grow so large that they can impede vision. Avian pox is spread either by direct contact with an infected bird or indirect contact at feeding surfaces where an infected bird had previously visited.

Aspergillosis- *Aspergillus* fungus grows in



damp/wet bird seed and in food debris underneath feeders. Spores are inhaled into the lungs and air sacs, which lead to the production of pneumonia and bronchitis. Birds affected by this fungus experience weakness and diarrhea on top of respiratory disease.

Candidiasis- This fungal disease particularly affects hummingbirds and their digestive tract. *Candida albicans* causes the hummingbird's tongue to swell, preventing them from consuming food and leading to starvation. Like aspergillosis, this disease is spread through contaminated food and water sources and grows in older food sources.

Mycoplasmal conjunctivitis- Although it is commonly known as House Finch Eye Disease, bacteria *Mycoplasma gallispticum* affects species other than finches. This disease causes the eyes to become swollen, crusty, red and produce a watery discharge. The eyes can become so swollen that the bird becomes blind. Birds with conjunctivitis usually will stay at the same reliable food source, thus spreading the bacteria to other birds.

Salmonellosis- Another bacterial disease, *Salmonella typhimurium*, affects the gastrointestinal tract and is spread through the consumption of contaminated fecal matter that has fallen onto food. Birds affected by this disease display lethargy, diarrhea and ruffled plumage. Unlike the other diseases discussed, salmonella is transmissible to humans.

Trichomoniasis- Caused by protozoal parasite *Trichomonas gallinae*, trichomoniasis produces lesions in the mouth and esophagus. This causes difficulty swallowing, so the bird will drool and regurgitate its food. Consumption of the contaminated regurgitated food, as well as water, leads to the spread of this disease.

Resources

<https://www.bto.org/our-science/projects/gbw/gardens-wildlife/garden-birds/disease/salmonellosis>

<https://www.bto.org/our-science/projects/gbw/gardens-wildlife/garden-birds/disease/avian-pox>

<https://www.bto.org/our-science/projects/gbw/gardens-wildlife/garden-birds/disease/trichomonosis>

<https://feederwatch.org/learn/house-finch-eye-disease/>

<https://www.massaudubon.org/learn/nature-wildlife/birds/common-bird-parasites-diseases>

<https://www.audubon.org/news/hummingbird-feeding-faqs>

<https://www.paws.org/resources/providing-safe-food-and-water-for-birds/>

<https://hummingbirdbliss.com/hummingbird-diseases-from-pathogens-to-prevention/>

<https://www.massaudubon.org/learn/nature-wildlife/birds/common-bird-parasites-diseases>

Editor's Note: Nikki came to the MCWC as a college intern. For the past two seasons she has held a position funded by the Wildlife Center Friends for an exceptional intern. Nikki leaves us this Summer to attend veterinary school. All of our best wishes go with her.

A LETTER FROM JODIE SHUSTER

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, WILDLIFE CENTER FRIENDS

Supporting the Mercer County Wildlife Center and their mission has always been a passion for me. They work tirelessly to protect and preserve local wildlife and the one habitat we all share.

This past year, as we all know, was no ordinary year. After Covid-19 spread throughout the world, we were all feeling lost, restless and insecure. These were/are uncertain times. For the Mercer County Wildlife Center they knew that, despite Covid-19, they must go forward with their mission and keep their doors open to accept injured, orphaned and displaced wildlife.

Given the restrictions in place, they (Mercer County Wildlife Center employees) worked with a skeleton crew and for many months without the help of volunteers. Many days each crew worked 12 hour shifts in the oppressive summer heat. They are my heroes and I would like to give them all recognition.

The Board of Directors of Wildlife Center Friends and I would like to thank Diane Nickerson, Jane Rakos-Yates, Nicole Golden, Libby Bukovec, Kim Dawes, Nikki Harley, Lisa Hewitt, Arie Manchen, Megan Morici, Kristi Schollerberger, Kim Wickenden and all of the volunteers that came back in September for their commitment and their service to wildlife.

A huge thank you also goes to you, the donors and the rescuers, without whom none of this would be possible. Each year your support saves lives and we cannot thank you enough.

In 2020, 2730 animals came through the Mercer County Wildlife Center. Each one received the best care, by the very best people in the very best organization.

Thank you for all you do!

Wishing you abundant health and happiness,

Jodie Shuster

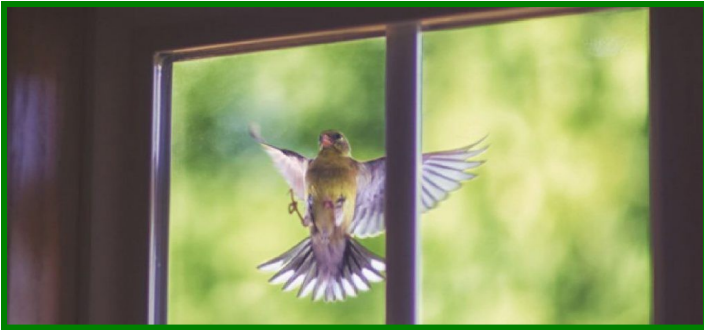
*Executive Director,
Wildlife Center Friends*



BIRDS AND WINDOWS - HOW CAN YOU HELP PREVENT A SENSELESS END

BY ADRIANA MANCHEN

WHACK! Then... *Thud.*



Many of us have heard this dreaded sound coming from right outside our windows. If you have heard it once, chances are your stomach will drop if you hear it again. My first experience with this was at my current home. Our wall of windows deceived an unsuspecting songbird that all too willingly hit the window at full speed. Just like that, that little life was gone. He stood no chance against the building whose job is to shield me from the dangers of the world.

Here at the center, we see numerous patients each year that have experienced similar accidents. In 2020, a total of fifty-seven birds were brought in either as known or suspected victims of window strikes. Of the fifty-seven patients, only sixteen made it to release. While 28% of our window strike victims were successfully sent back into the wild, a shocking 72% did not make it. They either had injuries that were too extensive to treat or died during treatment.

A study entitled "Bird-building collisions in the United States: Estimates of annual mortality and species vulnerability" published in *The Condor* (Loss et al., 2014) quantified the total loss of birds due to window collisions in the U.S. to be somewhere between 365 – 988 million annually. The study was a review of twenty-six other

studies. The datasets were combined and analyzed to extract the results. They looked at mortality associated with residential homes (buildings one to three stories high), low-rise buildings (four to eleven stories), and high-rises (any buildings over twelve stories). Residential homes were shown to have a median mortality of 253 million birds each year. Low-rises accounted for a median of 339 million bird deaths, and high rises accounted for a median of 508,000 individuals lost. Even though the median number was the smallest for high-rises, the annual mortality rate was the highest at 24.3 birds per building. The mortality rate for residences and low-rises was 2.1 and 21.7 birds per building, respectively. All this is terrible news for a class of animals that is already experiencing a steep decline in population numbers across many species, both common and rare.

This all sounds very dire, I know, but the good news is that window strike events are PREVENTABLE! In recent years, a number of cities have created "Lights Out" programs to help reduce the amount of mortality that light pollution causes during the migration season. Light pollution disorients the birds as they fly

throughout the night when migrating, resulting in hundreds and sometimes thousands of deaths per evening in large, lighted metropolitan areas. The "Lights Out" programs work with cities and businesses to encourage turning off lights to save birds, energy, and money!



(Continued on page 28)

(Continued from page 27)

The Delaware Valley Ornithological Club appears to be working on one such initiative in Philadelphia after a piece was published in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* documenting one such event where an estimated 1,500 birds hit buildings on a single evening on October 2, 2020. This left 400 bird bodies scattered throughout the streets of downtown Philly. I am sure it was a horrific site. It took this tragedy, but at least there is traction now. What a great project to get involved with, if one happens to be looking for volunteer opportunities.

As home-dwellers, we can most definitely help, too. We have all seen the large bird decals plastered all over windows, and although well-intentioned, those decals are ineffective. More suitable options incorporate a 2" X 4" grid pattern of lines on the windows that successfully keep birds from hitting windows - as they no longer perceive it as something they can fit through to get to the extension of woods/garden that your windows create. The options are numerous and can be very budget friendly. They can be temporary or permanent fixes. The American Bird Conservancy has put together several helpful documents on the topic. Links to one brief and one in-depth resource are provided below.

Our yard has many avian friends and I know first-hand that these techniques work really well. I am very relieved that we have not experienced a bird striking our windows again. If you have not seen or heard it yourself, I do not recommend waiting to experience it before making your home bird friendly. These window aides can help us all play an active role in conservation for a group of animals that is in sharp decline. Make an impact by preventing one.

https://abcbirds.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Save-birds-2017_bw.pdf

https://abcbirds.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Bird-friendly-Building-Guide_20151.pdf

INTERN STORY

BY ASHLEY EMMEL



Ashley

Putting into words my experience and what led me to interning at Mercer County Wildlife Center is a difficult, but exciting task.

All my life I knew I wanted to work with animals, but I was never sure how. When it came to high school and picking a college and a major, I decided on going to Holy Family University with a major in Pre-med. My intention then was to become a wildlife or zoo veterinarian and even decided to intern at the Philadelphia Zoo the summer after my freshman year. During my sophomore year I got hired as a veterinary technician, and everything seemed like it was beginning to fall into place for vet school. It was not until my junior year that I began to feel like something was missing. Everything I planned on and decided on so early in life just did not seem right. I realized I really enjoyed being in nature, studying wildlife, and

saving them. Which led me to change my major to biology/environmental science, and I now want to work in wildlife rehabilitation or become a wildlife biologist.

In May 2020 I began to intern at Mercer County Wildlife Center and at first I was very nervous, but also very excited. I met people here that are just like me, who always want to learn about wildlife and how to help them. This summer was one of the most remarkable and rewarding experiences. I worked with a variety of wildlife, from reptiles, to mammals, to birds - which was not an experience I had had previously. Even though I was not experienced in this field, everyone here was always so helpful and willing to teach me. I always enjoyed Jane's, Nicole's, and Nikki's education sessions every day. They would teach us something small like an animal's nutritional needs, or even how to harvest eggs from a dead female turtle. Every day here is a learning experience and is not an experience you can get by simply being in a classroom and I love it!

I would say that the most rewarding part of being a part of Mercer County Wildlife Center was when we were able to release the animals. Just being able to take part in the rehabilitation of these animals is rewarding in itself. Being able to nurse a young animal back to health, watch them grow, and be released is something that makes you feel like you made your mark

on the world. One time that sticks out to me is when I was able to go with Jane to release some of the raccoons that had been at the center since they were kits. Watching them finally return to their natural habitat, climb trees, walk in the river, and just being the curious animals that they are, was truly amazing. I left that day with a feeling of exhilaration and a new hope for what is to come in the future.

The work they do at this facility is beyond extraordinary. Their compassion for the local wildlife and extensive dedication to help not only animals, but also educate humans has led me to realize that I also want to continue my path towards working with wildlife. I will remember my time here for the rest of my life, because my experience here shaped me into a person that I am today and made me aspire to be just like everyone at Mercer County Wildlife Center.





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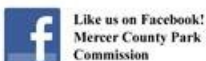


Thank you to our volunteer nest watchers, Kevin and Karin Buynie, that continue to monitor the bald eagle nest at Mercer County Park.

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.



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