

WILDLIFE JOURNAL

2021 Annual Review

An Annual Publication of the Mercer County Wildlife Center

BALD EAGLE REBOUND STUNTED BY POISONING FROM LEAD AMMUNITION

BY KRISHNA RAMANUJAN

Bald eagle populations have slowly recovered from near devastation after the government banned DDT in 1972, but another ongoing issue has weakened that rebound – lead poisoning from gunshot ammunition.

A new study, published January 13 in the Journal of Wildlife Management, finds that despite increasing numbers of bald eagles, poisoning from eating dead carcasses or parts contaminated by lead shot has reduced population growth by 4% to 6% annually in the Northeast.

Radiograph of a bald eagle from the Avian Haven Wild Bird Rehabilitation Center in Maine shows lead fragments – revealed as bright white particles – in the gastrointestinal tract.



Credit: Avian Haven/

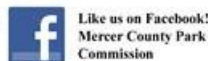
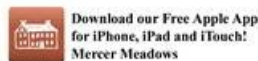
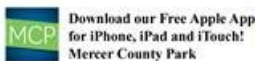
The results could help educate and inform policy on ammunition choices for hunters, as copper-based ammunition exists; though supplies of all ammunitions have been low lately.

“Hopefully, this report will add information that compels hunters, as conservationists, to think about their ammunition choices,” said Krysten Schuler, assistant research professor in the

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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 39 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'm equally thankful for the many businesses, organizations, veterinarians and others who donate a variety of goods and services. The past year has continued to be 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 volunteers. Best wishes in the year ahead.

Sincerely,

Brian M. Hughes
County Executive



HOW WE GOT IT DONE...

As vaccines were approved and administered, more volunteers were able to return. In total, about 30% of our volunteer staff returned in 2021. In 2022 we will once again be able to invite new volunteers! We have missed our volunteer staff and look forward to the safe return of our remaining volunteers and welcoming new volunteers!



2021 VOLUNTEERS

Clinic Supervisors

Shelby Coulton
Samantha Cruz
Kimberly Dawes
Jack Dreger
Lisa Hewitt
Adrianna Manchen
Megan Morici
Kristi Schollenberger

Reese Buckley
Susan Buckley
Sarah Carey
Marjorie Caddy
Ann Church
Linda Covello
Kim Eschbach
Janet Forgrieve
Stephanie Foy
Susan Gallagher
Helen Golden
Robin Haines

Beth Morpeth
Wendy Most
Geoffrey Peters
Adrienne Pitrelli
Janice Quilla-Budd
Shari Rexroad
Tim Richards
Sussi Riggleman
Marilyn Sanders
Jodi Specter
Taylor Sternotti
Frank Stillwell

Volunteers

Ross Amico
Bonnie Baker
Kathy Bascio
Cathy Beans
Bob Bowden
Daniel Buckley

Marie Hendricks
Amanda Hummel
Lois Keats
Elizabeth Kuziel
Georgia Larzelere
Kim Mancuso
Michele Mariano
Elizabeth Moran

Spring/Summer/Fall Interns

Wildlife Warriors

Cameron Bruschini: Rowan University
Kerry Cantrell: Juniata College
Francesca DiLeo: Delaware Valley University
Erin Foley: The University of Rhode Island
Jillian Gullo: Delaware Valley University
Mandy Marinucci: Delaware Valley University
Sydney Misunas: Stockton University
Meaghan Shannon: University of Connecticut
Emmalyn Tavani: University of Rhode Island

Team Tenacity

Emily Cleary: Franklin and Marshall
Taylor Floyd: West Virginia University
Michelle Marko: Delaware Valley University
Hannah Rose: University of New Haven
Jessica Meyer: Lawrence Township ACO
Lauren Schaumburg: Delaware Valley University
Samantha Vereha: Mercer County Community College

COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Brian M. Hughes

MERCER COUNTY PARK COMMISSION

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Marissa Davis, Vice President

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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

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Erica A. Miller, DVM

Paul Wagner, VMD

ART DIRECTOR/EDITOR : Jami Arbizu



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



A Note From The President



As we continue to maneuver through the challenges of a worldwide pandemic and chart new pathways and courses, it is with true gratitude that I share that some of our colleagues from the Wildlife Center Friends will be stepping down from their official titles. They, however, will not be ending their long-standing relationships with the Friends and the Mercer County Wildlife Center!

First, I would to recognize two departing members of the Board of Wildlife Center Friends. Paul Renner joined our Board in 2017, and in particular, served an instrumental role in expanding our ability to pursue grant opportunities. This assistance will help serve the Board well as it continues to further its mission and expand programming. Bruce Stout served on the Board for 7 years. His extensive service is not only marked by the amount of time that he dedicated to the Friends and its activities, but by his willingness to analyze information, to ask meaningful questions, and to offer sound advice. We will not only miss his wise counsel, but his sense of humor and kind spirit.

Both members contributed their valuable expertise and gave their valued time to help grow our outreach, educational, and fundraising efforts, as well as to expand the supportive role of the Wildlife Center Friends to the Wildlife Center.

Our Executive Director Jodie Shuster has also decided to pursue her other passions and will be relocating to South Carolina. Her energy, her enthusiasm, and her love for her work were unmistakable as she undertook projects big and small. We wish Jodie our best as she begins this new chapter, and we know that she will continue to be a great friend to the Wildlife Center Friends and the Mercer County Wildlife Center.

We have assembled a team of individuals to make sure that our message continues to be delivered on our social media, our website, and through our fundraising efforts. And, Board members Linda Proefrock and JillAnn Murphy will continue to capably steer the efforts of the Wildlife Center Friends as we look to the future. Thank you for your continued support and stay tuned for more exciting news!

Sharon Lauchaire

President, Wildlife Center Friends

OBSERVATIONS

BY DIANE NICKERSON

The year 2021 gave us a look at a new normal. Though we were all masking, vaccinating and being cautious of our new companion - Covid-19 - we were all restructuring our lives to keep moving forward. We did the same thing here at the Wildlife Center!

The year began with cautious optimism that there might be an end in sight. However, that was not to be. Instead, we needed to continue with the protocols that we had put in place during 2020. We continued our work as the two teams (Team Wildlife Warriors and Team Tenacity), working twelve to fourteen-hour days, that we had developed the year before. We again accepted a limited number of college interns and assigned them each to a team. We continued our policy of accepting patients by appointment only. And, we continued our work. In the late fall we were able to return to our normal work schedule and disband our team model. We are hopeful that there will not be a need to return to that schedule.

After many years of planning and waiting, the new pre-release flight conditioning enclosure was completed at the Center. Our old flight enclosure had become structurally unsound. With building plans from colleagues at Avian



Haven in Maine, the new enclosure was completed by spring and the first customer was a great horned owl. Many thanks to Jeremy McDermott from the Park Commission who was the project manager. He learned more than he ever wanted to know about flight enclosures! The new space has a large oval flight and three smaller enclosures on the interior. They are all connected with doors and flyways. It is a wonderful addition to our physical plant.

During the 2021, MCWC treated 2,843 new patients, encompassing 135 species, and released 61% back into the wild for a second chance. Looking back at our caseload for 2021, 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.

Once again, we had no new volunteers this year. So, there is not a new volunteer article for this publication. Instead, we asked two of our college interns to provide their unique



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perspectives on the twelve-week crash course that they navigated. It is normally an intense internship, made all the more challenging by Covid protocols. Jessica Meyer and Erin Foley (page 13 & 24) shine 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.

Staff members Adriana "Arie" Machen and Kim Dawes looked at a mysterious disease in 2021 (page 20) and why our volunteers chose to help at the center (page 23). Nicole Golden added some information on one of our native species, the diamondback terrapin, for this publication (page 15). Jane Rakos-Yates took some time to explain challenges facing white tail deer (page 17).

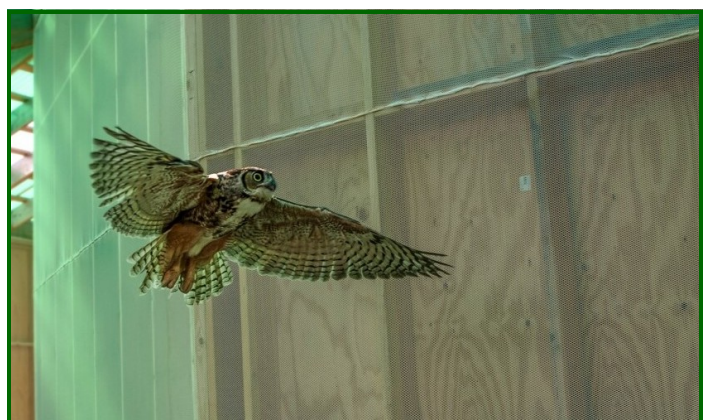
The collaboration between the Wildlife Center Friends, the Mercer County Park Commission, Conserve Wildlife Foundation, and PSE&G continued in 2021 with the *Eyes on Eagles* program. Some quick thinking and adaptations and the programs were adapted to a combination of in-person and virtual programming. Plans for 2022 season are underway for limited in-person programming.

Our last pre-pandemic education outreach program of 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/>. We certainly missed the day's activities at the gallery in 2021. It was the first time in twenty-seven years that we were not be able to attend this event. Unfortunately, it looks like 2022 will mark the second time. We will look forward to the norm changing and being able to, once again, present outreach programs in the community and be back at Ron's gallery. Many thanks, as always, to Ron for introducing us to possible, new supporters and the many gifts he sends our way.

On the topic of education programming, all of our education ambassadors were removed from programming in March of 2020. We have not had the opportunity to work with them or spend time training them. We plan to begin working with them again in early spring of 2022 and hope to be able to resume programming by the Fall of this year or early in 2023. A reminder that the Outdoor Education Environment adjacent to our building remains open. The hours are Wednesday through Sunday, 10:00 am to 4:00 pm. The education ambassadors are on display in this area. Admission is free.

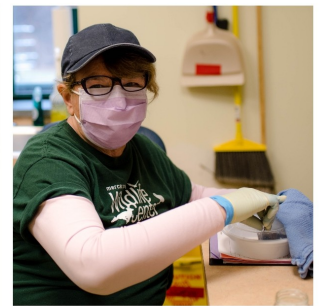
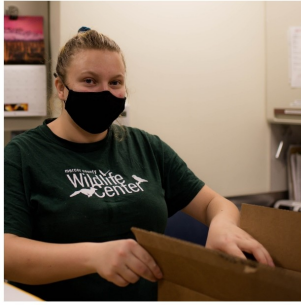
This is where I normally thank all of our volunteers for their service throughout the year. This year I would like to extend a special thanks to the stalwart group of volunteers that returned at the end of 2020 and early into 2021. Our volunteers show up week after week, month after month, and many, year after year. For the 2021 season forty-three hearty souls jumped in to work with the patients and staff to keep the center operational. We cannot thank them enough for their continued efforts.

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, again, 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.





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



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



PATIENT LOG

MCWC TREATED 2,843 ANIMALS DURING 2021

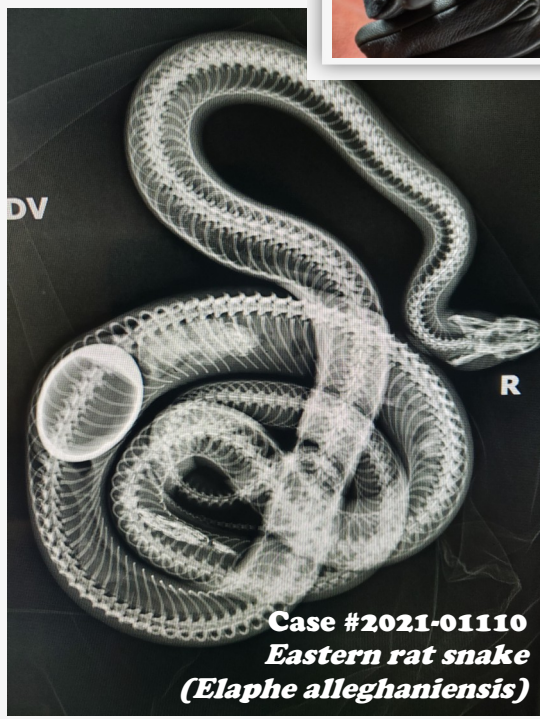
The past year brought us new species, new challenges with species we have treated before and a number of firsts. On April 29th, case number 2021-00431, a juvenile red-tail hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*) was brought to the by one the NJDFW eagle nest watchers, proving that they do more than monitor eagle nests! It had been hit by a car in Burlington County. Radiographs revealed a fracture of the left humerus, the large heavy bone between the shoulder and elbow.

Since the proper healing of this bone is crucial to flight for these birds, it was determined that a surgical repair was necessary for potential release. Normally, an intramedullary pin would be placed in the bone. Then a second surgery would be performed weeks later to remove the pin after the bone calcified. Then there would be additional recovery time from a second surgery. Instead, the veterinarian chose to try a different technique. In true McGyver fashion, the plunger from a 3cc syringe was placed in the bone to stabilize it. The plastic plunger, weighing much

less than a stainless-steel pin, would not interfere with flight if left in place when the bird was ready to release. So, it would not require a second surgery or recovery time.

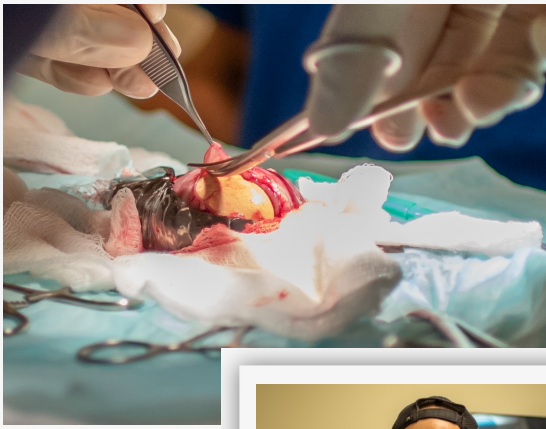
The surgery was a success and the bird was moved to a large flight enclosure for pre-release flight conditioning. On August 14th, after recovery and conditioning this bird was released.

Case number 2021-01110 arrived on the 10th of June. It was an eastern rat snake (*Elaphe alleghaniensis*) that had been found in a chicken coop unable to escape. It had swallowed what it assumed to be a chicken's egg but turned



Case #2021-01110
Eastern rat snake
(*Elaphe alleghaniensis*)





out to be an indigestible ceramic egg, which kept it from retreating through the hole by which it had entered the coop.

Thankfully, the farmer realized that the loss of a chicken's egg now and then was a small price to pay for the valuable service of limiting the rat population in the chicken coop. The snake was taken to our colleagues to the south, Woodford-Cedar Run Wildlife Refuge for care, and they transferred it to us that afternoon.

A few years ago, we made acquaintance with a veterinarian who specializes in reptiles and all things scaled and shelled. Peter DiGeronimo, DVM agreed to try to help this snake. After studying radiographs, he had a plan. Dr. DiGeronimo brought a veterinary technician with him as an assistant and surgery to remove the ceramic egg was performed. A few hours later the snake and the egg had been successfully separated and the waiting began. Would the specialized digestive tract heal well enough for the patient to be released? Instructions were for no food for five days, then small easily digestible meals and the wait for evidence of digestion (feces!). Dr. DeGeronimo would return in a week to check on progress.

Two days later case number 2021-01177 arrived with the exact same problem. Never before had we seen this problem. Now, twice in as many days, here it was, again! This rat snake had ventured into a duck pen and consumed a similar ceramic egg and then was unable to fit back through the wire fence. Dr. DiGeronimo returned a week later to check the progress on his first patient and after the first practice run, the surgery on the second snake a week later was old hat! Happily, both snakes recovered nicely and were released near where each had been found on the 14th of August.

Every year we treat a number of eastern screech owl (*Megascops asio*) nestlings and fledglings who have found their way out of their nests before they are mature enough to do so successfully. During 2021, we experienced "screech owl palooza". Between mid-April and the end of June, twenty young screech owls were presented for care. Most were hypothermic, lethargic and thin and simply needed supportive care.



Nestling screech owls (*Megascops asio*)

(Continued from page 9)

After medical stabilization, we were able to re-nest a few of them. This is always the best choice for a young animal, if at all possible. The others were separated into small groups based on age and location. They progressed from hand-feeding to self-feeding and then to pre-release conditioning enclosures. Each group was subsequently released in a location close to where they were originally found. They were also provided with backup feedings until they stopped returning for the free handouts!



Susan M. Barnard, author of *Bats in Captivity*, was fond of saying that in June it rained red bats up and down the east coast. The eastern red bat (*Lasiurus borealis*) is a solitary, migratory bat. Since they do not live in colonies, like most of the other bats in this area, they mainly roost in trees. And, instead of leaving their young while they hunt for food, they carry their young with them while flying. This would appear to be efficient at first glance.

However, it presents a few problems. First, while most bats give birth to a single pup, red bats regularly give birth to multiple young. Twins and triplets are the norm while quadruplets are not abnormal occurrences. Second, an adult red bat weighs, on average, about ten grams. The young weigh about two grams at birth. Some quick math reveals that it is not very long before the total weight of two, three or four pups is equal to or greater than the weight of the mother. And thus, adult female red bats end up on the ground, unable to regain flight, with their young still attached.

Patient numbers 2021-01654, 2021-01655, 2021-01656 and 2021-01657 arrived on July 8th. The adult and three pups had been found on the ground in Titusville. Unfortunately, the adult was already dead when the group was brought to us. The young pups were all very lethargic, hypothermic and severely dehydrated. The group could have been on the ground unnoticed for many days. Sadly, the pups succumbed one by one over the next week. The education message in this story is that if you see a group of bats clumped together on the ground, they are in trouble. They cannot get back up off the ground. Call the center for advice as soon as possible.

Following the disappointment of the red bat family was the surprise of a hummingbird nest with nestling hummingbirds in it! Case numbers 2021-01695 and 2021-01696, ruby throated hummingbirds (*Archilochus colubris*) were presented for care on July 12th. The client had had some tree branches removed and remarkably had noticed the quarter-sized nest with hatchlings in the branch debris. After a couple of days of unsuccessful attempts to feed the young birds, they arrived, dehydrated and lethargic. They each weighed less than one gram on arrival. The nest was an architectural wonder built from spider webs and mosses. It expanded and contracted with their

movements and breathing. The young were fed every fifteen minutes over the next four weeks. It was amazing to watch them grow and test out their flight skills. They were eventually moved to a large soft-sided flight enclosure. They were moved outside every day to get fresh air and become acclimated to the outdoor surroundings.

On release day, August 6th, a hummingbird feeder was placed in a tree next to their enclosure. They each flew out of the enclosure and landed in the tree and then took maiden flights around the Outdoor Education Environment. They returned daily for a few weeks, sometimes making fly-bys of staff when the feeders were getting low. As the weeks passed, their feeder visits became less frequent and they eventually left for places unknown. This was a first for the Mercer County Wildlife Center. While we regularly treat adults, these were the first nestlings to be raised at the center.

During one of the many storms that went through Mercer County in 2021, a large tree fell on a property in Hopewell. On August 14th, case numbers 2021-02147 and 201-02148 arrived. They were naked nestling woodpeckers that had fallen with the tree the night before. The client heard them calling and located them in the rubble. The next day, she still heard a bird calling and located the last sibling, case number 2021-02163. The most common woodpeckers that we treat



are red-bellied woodpeckers (*Melanerpes carolinus*). So, without any feathers for identification, it was assumed that they were red-bellied woodpeckers. We fed and treated them accordingly.

A few days later the sound coming from the incubator did not sound correct. It did not sound like the vocalizations of nestling red-bellied woodpeckers. Time to investigate a little further. The final determination was red-headed woodpeckers (*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*). The game had just been changed. This species is on the threatened and endangered list of New Jersey birds. Each individual becomes all the more important. Unlike many woodpecker species, the young birds spend a long period of time with their parents and older siblings when they leave the nest.

So, as we prepared these birds for release we had to keep all of this in mind. On, September 17th Sharon Petzinger, Senior

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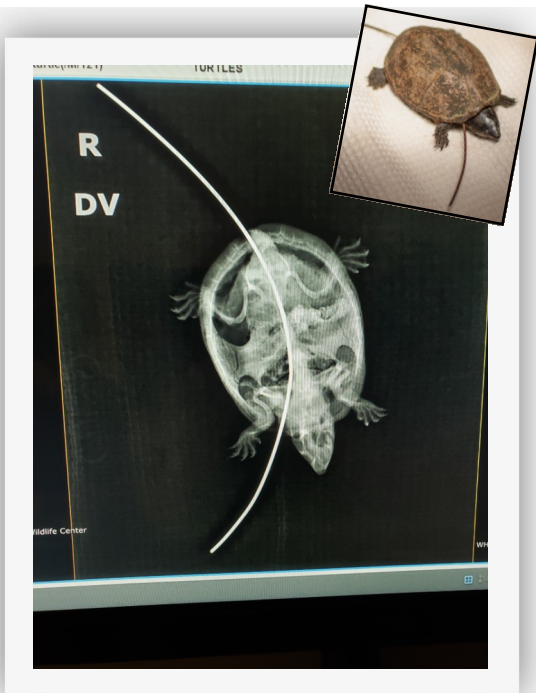
Case #2021-002147 Red-headed woodpecker (*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*)

(Continued from page 11)

Zoologist from the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife Endangered and Nongame Species Program, arrived at the center to place federal identification bands on these young birds. Sharon had not ever seen the nestlings of this species in her work with the state. On September 18th these fledgling birds were taken back to the location where they had been found. The other birds in the area could be heard vocalizing. The staff set up some elaborate feeding stations, which the client agreed to refill daily, and released the birds. Thankfully, over the next few days, they integrated back in to the family group for another successful release.



The last couple of cases to share this time both 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.



On July 8th case number 2021-01649, a common musk turtle (*Sternotherus odoratus*) was presented for care. It had been found in Cumberland County hanging from a fence by a hanger that had been inserted through its body under its shell. Immediately, this turtle was placed under anesthesia for radiographs. After consultation with Dr. DeGeronimo an attempt was made to remove the wire hanger. Unfortunately, the turtle was so debilitated from its ordeal, that it never recovered from anesthesia.

***Take home message-
Cruelty to animals is never OK.
Turtles feel pain, too!***

On September 8th Princeton Animal Control brought in case # 2021-02429, a common raccoon (*Procyon lotor*). The raccoon had been picked up at a home where the homeowner had a pesticide (indoxacarb) that had been used in treatment of an ant problem outside. The pesticide had been sprayed around the foundation and on the patio. Apparently, it tasted good to the raccoon who presented with neurological symptoms. Indoxacarb causes methemoglobinemia, a condition of elevated methemoglobin, which cannot bind oxygen, which means it cannot carry oxygen to tissues in the body. Symptoms may include headache, dizziness, shortness of

breath, nausea and poor muscle coordination. Complications may include seizures and heart arrhythmias. This patient was treated with antiseizure medications and oxygen. Unfortunately, treatment was not successful.

***Take home message-
Any use of toxins should ensure that
only the target species is being
affected.***

Until next time...



INTERNING STORY

BY JESSICA MEYERS

I am always asked how I started interning at Mercer County Wildlife Center (MCWC). Before I explain this, I need to share how my luck, fate or whatever you want to call it, played a significant role in getting me there.

In January 2021, I enrolled in an Animal Control Officer (ACO) course to become a licensed ACO in New Jersey. Part of my requirements included 20 hours of ride-along time divided between two certified, licensed animal control officers (ACOs). It was no easy task convincing anyone to let me ride-along with them during the pandemic. However, one of the ACOs that agreed was a 30+ year veteran from Mercer County.

One of our first calls involved catching a potentially injured skunk in a mall parking lot in the rain. It was awesome! Next, she took me to MCWC to show me where the sick and injured wildlife received care. I was so impressed that

there was a facility so close to home that could rehabilitate native wildlife. Even more surprising was that they took in birds from all over New Jersey. That night, I went home and applied for the internship program.

A few weeks later, the same ACO that took me to MCWC wanted to know if I was interested in a job with their township as soon as I was certified. What were the chances of that happening, I thought? I explained my dilemma about already applying to the internship program and my desire to gain more experience with wildlife. Not only did I have future employer's support, but they encouraged me to do so. On the days that I was not at the internship, I had the option of working as an ACO with a seasoned officer that would show me the ropes.

The first couple of weeks after I started the internship, I felt like I was chasing my tail. A lot of my time was spent in the shell shack caring for turtles and a few snakes. I was also given the responsibility of feeding the resident educational diamondback terrapin turtle in the tank at the entrance of the building. He had to be fed

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(Continued from page 13)

and back in his tank by 10 a.m. I quickly realized that watching the clock became a big part of my day.

It took several baby steps before I felt more confident and was willing to step foot into the triage and ICU areas. The breakthrough for me came when I was asked to help fill syringes and hold baby raccoons. They needed to be vaccinated for distemper before joining the others in the raccoon room. Looking at these helpless fluffs that were totally reliant on humans to keep them alive filled me with gratitude for the opportunity to be there. They would eventually be introduced back into the wild to live their lives as they should. Little did I know that I would also be instrumental in releasing them a few months later which was an amazing experience.

Meanwhile, as weeks turned into months, I was now working with the birds. I have always loved birds, but during my time at MCWC I was able to interact with them on an entirely different level. When I mentioned to Diane that I liked to stay busy, I never realized just how much sitting for a few minutes would become a luxury. There were **a lot** of birds, including tiny house finches and wrens with their eyes still closed; messy, noisy grackles, cardinals, blue jays, robins, mourning doves, bluebirds, wood ducks; and a red-bellied woodpecker that had no feathers and both acted and looked like a pterodactyl. I felt like I was running a marathon from room-to-room having to watch the clock and feed some of the baby birds on the hour. On numerous occasions, Diane would ask if I was tired of birds, yet. I wanted to confess that I was not tired of the birds, just tired! This was as challenging as waiting tables in college.

Later in the season, an entirely different group of birds would soon show up. These would be the insectivores. Most people think that birds migrate towards warmer climate for the weather conditions. But, I learned that they travel where the insects and other food are available. The

new group of birds were surprisingly fascinating. The chimney swifts looked like bat men with little beaks and loud screams. When their chorus commenced, no one could talk over them. They hung from a tent-like structure in the incubators. Getting my hands inside the incubator to feed them was not easy, either. I felt like I was playing the game of Operation every time I had to aim the food in their beaks. The beautiful cedar waxwing with an iridescent mouth was always a pleasure to feed. Two other favorites were the cuckoo and Eastern kingbird. They were so enjoyable to feed and listen to their chatter. The last day of my internship I actually cried saying goodbye to them. I had grown attached to these birds after they came in as nestlings. I watched them grow their pin feathers and learn to eat without my assistance over the course of my internship. It was remarkable to watch this transition.

Nothing could have prepared me for this work experience and the education I would acquire during this internship. Every day was something new, rewarding and challenging. I would be remiss if I did not mention some of the hardships, though. We dealt with the mysterious illness that was killing some of the young birds, <https://phys.org/news/2021-08-disease-songbirds-mysteriously.html> which to date still has not been resolved. On another occasion, I sat with a white tail deer fawn to make sure the IV drip would stay in place. Sadly, the fawn did not make it, but I was always reminded that there were others that would. Lastly, trying to tube feed the baby mourning doves became an anxiety filled task. These very young doves were gentle, easy-going birds of whom I quickly became fond. They were totally reliant on a liquid diet and if fed incorrectly, I could tear their crop or they could end up aspirating. I imagined it was like performing surgery every time they had to be tube fed. I literally held my breath and said a little prayer.

The last day of the internship, we gathered for a lunch outside to watch a video of memorable

moments, eat, and shared stories. At one point, I remember blurting out to the group that I finally felt like I was with "my people." Nature was a gift that I taught my daughters to always treasure and I finally met people who agreed with me. Everyone there wanted to help the wildlife as much as me. All the volunteers and staff at MCWC work so incredibly hard and I understood why. It was so rewarding to help rehabilitate the wildlife and an honor to work closely with this group of people. Thank you to the interns I worked with all summer. Although there was an age difference, I was so impressed with their maturity and dedication. Everyone sincerely wanted the same goals and helped each other out.

I continue to be employed as an ACO and bring injured or sick wildlife to MCWC. I love seeing everyone with whom I interned, including all the volunteers and staff that do such an incredible job. I wish everyone that gets certified as an ACO has an opportunity to work so closely with the animals and licensed experts, like those at MCWC. It taught me so much about how to handle wildlife, facts that I continue to use to educate the public. My internship experience has assisted me in so many calls as an ACO. It is an ongoing learning process; and I will be forever grateful for my time as an intern at MCWC.

DIAMONDBACK TERRAPINS *(Malaclemys terrapin)*

BY NICOLE GOLDEN

The diamondback terrapin is the only species of turtle in the world that live in brackish water. Brackish water is a mix of salt water and fresh water found in coastal bays, lagoons and saltwater marshes. Terrapins also have the largest

range of any North American chelonian, ranging from Cape Cod to the Florida Keys and around the gulf to Texas. Even with the broad range, diamondback terrapins are listed as a species of special concern in New Jersey and have varied conservation statuses across the United States. Once considered a delicacy, they are now a non-game species in New Jersey which means there is no hunting season. Crab traps in New Jersey are required to be retrofitted with terrapin excluding devices to further protect them from accidental entrapment. Vehicle strikes, boat strikes, land development and illegal pet trade remain the top threats to terrapins in New Jersey. They also have natural predators including raccoons, gulls, foxes and crows that prey on eggs and hatchlings that are making their way to the water after hatching.

Diamondback terrapins are easily distinguished from other species with their diamond shaped scutes (plates) of the carapace (top shell). Skin color varies from cream to gray with black spots, streaks or blotches. The plastron (bottom shell) is varied shades of yellow and green. Webbed feet and muscular legs make them exceptional swimmers.

Males are smaller than females ranging four to five inches while females are six to nine inches in length. Females can lay up to three clutches of eggs each season with each clutch having four to twenty-two eggs. Females have the ability to store sperm for years. So, it is possible to

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Females use their hind legs to dig triangular holes three to eight inches deep to lay their eggs. Once the eggs are laid the females leaves quickly to reduce the potential of predators finding the nest location. Eggs hatch between sixty to one hundred days depending on the temperature; the warmer it is the sooner they hatch. Lifespan for a terrapin that makes it to adulthood is twenty-five to forty years. However, it is believed that only 1%-2% of hatchlings make it to adulthood.

Diamondback terrapins are mostly carnivorous feasting on snails, clams, insects and carrion but will eat some plant material. Living in brackish water presents some drinking challenges for terrapins. Salt glands near their eyes flush out excess salt from the brackish water but they still need to drink fresh water. They have been seen accessing fresh drinking water in creative ways such as rainwater collected on each other's backs, puddles and leaves and even catching raindrops as they fall into their mouths.

The Mercer County Wildlife Center received twenty-one adult diamondback terrapins in 2021. Of the twenty-one received, fifteen were hit by cars, four were "stolen" from the wild to be kept as pets and two were attacked by predators. The center successfully treated and released eight of the twenty-one and is currently overwintering one with hopes to release in the spring. Ten of the terrapins that were injured beyond repair were gravid (carrying eggs) females. A total of sixty-three eggs were harvested from these deceased terrapins and thirty-seven eggs hatched with all thirty-seven hatchlings released in the fall.

The Mercer County Wildlife Center houses one educational diamondback terrapin in the lobby of our building. This terrapin is unable to be released because of shell deformities due to improper diet and negligence. Stolen from the wild and housed inappropriately for fifteen years resulted in permanent, irreparable damage. The New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife was alerted to the situation and confiscated the terrapin. The Mercer County Wildlife Center received the terrapin in 2018 and the decision was made to keep him as an educational ambassador to educate the public about the laws regarding taking wildlife from their natural habitat. The center is continuing to modify the terrapins enclosure to a more natural habitat which has proved challenging for a water turtle who did not know how to swim!

For more information about diamondback terrapins in New Jersey and conservation projects, please visit:

<http://www.conservewildlifenj.org/species/fieldguide/view/Malaclemys%20terrapin%20terrapin/>

<http://www.conservewildlifenj.org/protecting/projects/terrapin/>

OH DEER, WHAT NOW?!

BY JANE RAKOS-YATES

It is hard to believe, but less than 100 years ago the white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) population nationwide was 30,000. Today, estimates are around thirty million. Why the surge? There are a few major reasons. More suburban development and much less forest are the primary reasons. Today's landscape greatly favors white-tailed deer. Since they feed on low growing plants and shrubs, they find the most to eat on the forest edge and suburban back yards. Neighborhoods are interspersed with smaller wooded areas that offer deer a habitat much more to their liking than deep forest or open farmland. Other reasons for the surge are reduced hunting and few predators. Wolves (*Canis lupus*) were the primary predator of deer. Now only coyotes (*Canis latrans*) and black bear (*Ursus americanus*) share the suburban New Jersey landscape and prey on newborn fawns. However, deer populations are minimally reduced by predators since most white-tailed deer live in areas where there are very few coyotes or black bear.

While the main cause of white-tailed deer injury and fatality in New Jersey continues to be car collisions, the weather conditions of 2021 set up the perfect storm for an outbreak of epizootic hemorrhagic disease. Epizootic hemorrhagic disease and blue tongue are both hemorrhagic diseases spread by biting insects. Blue tongue is more prevalent in domestic livestock such as sheep, cattle, and goats. Both epizootic hemorrhagic disease and blue tongue infection damage blood vessels causing hemorrhage of the internal organs. Previous years of epizootic hemorrhagic disease outbreaks were in 2007, 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2017.

Epizootic hemorrhagic disease, or EHD as it is generally referred, is not a new disease and

was documented in the United States in 1896 and New Jersey in 1955. It is transmitted by the tiny biting insect adult midge/gnat (*Culicoides cornutus*) or often called "no-see-ums". This insect is annoying to humans, but can be deadly to white-tailed deer. It is the

female midge that picks up the EHD virus from the blood of an infected host and then transmits the virus by biting another host. The midge breeds in muddy areas and moist leaf litter during the driest part of late summer and early fall when seasonal midge activity peaks. Ideal weather conditions in 2021 produced higher than usual midge activity with wet spring and early summer months followed by dry late summer and fall months. The midge breeding areas of mud and leaf litter are almost impossible to locate and eliminate, making it difficult to control an outbreak.



Once the deer is bitten by the infected midge, symptoms begin to appear in five to ten days. Symptoms of EHD are difficulty standing, drooling (from tongue and gum ulcers), swelling of

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the face, tongue and neck, and foam-like discharge from the nose or mouth. Since the disease also causes high fevers, infected deer may seek out a water source to drink and cool off. Affected deer may show reduced activity and loss of appetite because of tongue ulcerations. They may appear dehydrated and emaciated due to a disruption in their stomach lining which prevents nutrient absorption. They die quickly, within eight to thirty-six hours. Since white-tailed deer gather in small herds, the entire herd can quickly become infected. The disease is not spread directly from deer to deer and humans cannot be infected with EHD by contact with deer or bites from midges. The disease is most often fatal, but survivors of the infection can become emaciated in the winter and may exhibit hoof cracks or deformities.

The midge will die after the first frost in the fall and EHD will rapidly disappear along with it. The first frost date in central New Jersey in 2021 was not until November 5. First frost dates fluctuate every year, but trends show first frost dates are occurring later and later each year possibly due to climate change. Delayed frost dates equal longer periods of midge activity, resulting in extended white-tailed deer infections and fatalities.

Whether you view white-tailed deer as friend or foe, no one wants to witness their suffering on the side of the road or in your neighborhood. If you see an injured white-tailed deer on the side of the road or in your neighborhood that cannot get up or stand, the most humane solution is to call the police or local animal control to end its suffering. If you see a deer that is exhibiting any of the EHD symptoms in the late summer or early fall months, report the location to New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP), Bureau of Wildlife Management.

Although Mercer County Wildlife Center cannot accept or treat juvenile or adult deer, (the size limit for patients at the center is 10lbs or less),

they can offer advice and resources for any white-tailed deer situation. Please refrain from offering any food to sick or injured white-tailed deer or any animal! Introducing new foods to an already compromised animal may exacerbate their injury or sickness by increasing gastric distress resulting in diarrhea and dehydration.

Resources:

<http://www.vet.cornell.edu/article/epizootic-hemorrhagic-disease-white-tailed-deer-updated>

http://nj.gov/dep/fgw/news/2021/ehd_info.htm

BALD EAGLE... (CONT.)



(Continued from page 1)

Department of Public and Ecosystem Health in the College of Veterinary Medicine and senior author on the study, "Environmental Lead Reduces the Resilience of Bald Eagle Populations." Brenda Hanley, a research associate in the Department of Public and Ecosystem Health, is first author.

The diminished growth rates have the potential to erase cushions that protect populations against unforeseen events.

"Even though the population seems like it is recovered, some perturbation could come along that could cause eagles to decline again," Schuler said.

Habitat loss, climate change, West Nile virus and other infectious diseases are all threats that could affect bald eagles' resilience and lead to population declines, Schuler said.

While bald eagle numbers in the lower 48 states quadrupled between 2009 and 2021 to more than 316,000, according to a 2021 United States Fish and Wildlife Service report, the current findings on impacts of lead to the eagles point to potential negative outcomes for other species.

Human health can be affected when bullets fragment inside game species and are then consumed. Many hunters 'field dress' a deer they shot with lead ammunition, leaving contaminated organs where the animal fell. Bald eagles are known to scavenge such carcasses, but they are not the only animals to do so. Trail cameras have shown that owls and crows, as well mammalian species including coyotes, foxes, fisher and bears also scavenge remains left by hunters.

"We have not collected data on these other species in the same way that we pay attention to eagles," Schuler said. "We are putting eagles out there as a poster species for this issue, but they are not the only ones being impacted."

In the study, Hanley used a mathematical representation of bald eagles' life history that links properties of individuals to population-scale processes. The researchers also used necropsy records from 1990 to 2018 from seven northeast U.S. states. Out of 1,200 records, close to 500 had been tested for lead, and of those, the researchers looked to see if the birds had ingested toxic levels or if they had just been exposed to the metal.

Through the computer model, the researchers were able to create a hypothetical situation where the lead-exposed and poisoned birds from the necropsy records were added back into the population of living birds, to get counts of how populations would have fared if these birds had not died or been exposed to lead.

Even though total eagle numbers increased

across the Northeast between 1990 and 2018, the model estimated that deaths from ingesting lead depressed the growth rate of bald eagle populations by 4.2% (for females) and 6.3% (for males).

The study's authors have made public the software from their novel methodology, so others can use it to analyze similar population-scale data for other species, Schuler said.

The study was funded by the Morris Animal Foundation, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and funds from the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act, administered by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

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<https://news.cornell.edu/stories/2022/01/bald-eagle-rebound-stunted-poisoning-lead-ammunition>



THE YEAR THE BLUE FELL FROM THE SKY

BY ADRIANA MANCHEN

I feel a bit like Chicken Little here. I am about to dive into an inexplicable tale. The world has been strange for a while now and 2021 was no exception. The busy season was well underway when our little corner of the world was hit with a suspicious and unwelcome surprise. It took us seeing a few patients before we became aware that we were witnessing a bizarre and vicious pattern. Our first patient came to us on June 7, 2021. It was a common grackle that had been found down on the ground with no parents around. That is the reason many of the nestling and fledgling birds are admitted to the center, so at first it seemed like a typical case. He even thrived for the first few days. However, whatever he was plagued with soon kept him from being able to swallow his much-needed sustenance and eventually his eyes began to crust over. The disorientation and lethargy soon followed. The songbird mortality event of 2021 had struck New Jersey and we had a front row seat to the turmoil.

As rehabilitators, we are often privy to disease outbreaks in animal populations. Snakes are plagued by snake fungal disease. Entire amphibian, reptile, and fish populations are threatened by Ranaviruses that are often fatal (Wildlife Futures Team, 2020). The currently ubiquitous white-tailed deer battles hemorrhagic disease in the late summer (Wildlife Futures Team, 2021). And, not too far away in the western part of the country, wild rabbits are falling victim to a nasty bug called rabbit hemorrhagic disease virus. These are just a few of the many disease outbreaks our animal friends endure. It seems every species is vulnerable, including humans. We humans are going through one such epidemic right now! Often, the outbreaks that befall our neighboring wildlife go unnoticed by the average person, but this year was different.



Birds have become beloved. According to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (2016), bird watching alone has grown to include over forty-five million

participants that spend nearly forty billion dollars on birding-related activities and equipment. So, perhaps it is the charismatic nature of birds or that "baby" birds were dying, but when young birds started to fall ill in droves, people all over the country took notice. Local publications in the areas first hit started picking up the story. Online forums were full of bird enthusiasts urging everyone to take down their feeders and birdbaths and wash everything with a one part bleach to nine parts water solution. I remember first learning about this mysterious illness online. The article I read was discussing how wildlife rehabilitation centers in the D.C. and Virginia





area were receiving many fledglings in a debilitated state. The birds would survive for a few days and then quickly succumb to the disease. Most of the birds were coming in with swollen, crusted eyes and/or neurological issues. Little did I know at the time, but this internet read was foreshadowing what we were about to experience at the center.

A week or so later on June 7, 2021, our first victim, common grackle 2021-01042 was admitted. This bird was not displaying any of the known symptoms. The next day, blue jay 2021-01071 was admitted; this fledgling had the symptom of crusted eyes. On June 15, 2021, another bird with crusted and oozing eyes was admitted to the center. By this point, the original grackle had taken a turn for the worse and we realized that the strange illness we had been reading about had officially arrived. Over the next few weeks, the wildlife center admitted forty-five more patients with this affliction. Of all the patients, only one was an adult. The final case count included one American robin, two common grackles, and a whopping forty-five blue jays. The sole adult was a blue jay. The last two patients we admitted came in on August 10, 2021. Sadly, all forty-eight of these patients either died or had to be humanely euthanized as

they languished more each day. By far, the species hardest hit at our center was the blue jay. In 2021, we admitted a total of seventy-two blue jays. We lost 62.5% of our blue jay patients to this unknown bird plague. Blue jays are known for their cleverness and toughness. It was heartbreaking to watch each one of these bright little birds succumb to this culprit.

We had to come up with biosecurity measures on the fly. Since we were not sure what we were dealing with, we relied on good old reliable bleach to disinfect everything with which these poor youngsters came into contact. We had two areas dedicated to treating those birds that seemed like they might have a shot at recovery. In the end, we saw each of them decline and once they did, the progression of the disease was swift. Strangely enough, the mystery illness disappeared as quickly as it arrived, and it seemed to do so in all the areas of the country where it was found.

Although there is no definitive answer as to what could have caused this event, there is a list of what did not cause it. The Wildlife Futures program team at the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine has been working with various labs throughout the country to find an answer to the cause of this perplexing event. To date, there is no evidence that the illness can be blamed on avian influenza, West Nile virus or other flaviviruses, Newcastle disease virus or other paramyxoviruses, herpesviruses, poxviruses, Trichomonas parasites, or the bacteria that causes house finch conjunctivitis. At this time, researchers have not been able to pinpoint any specific toxin either (Baillie, 2021). As we near our 2022 spring season, all wildlife professionals and bird fanatics are holding their breath. Will there be a repeat of the song bird mortality event this year? If so, how devastating will this be to the populations if this illness is put on repeat each year? Could this have been a one-time event that we may never really understand? Is this something we can prevent? Only time will tell.

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I personally am not one to put out bird feeders (by the way we can do so, again), but in the last two weeks as snow has regularly blanketed the ground, I have given in and brought out the peanut wreath, feeders, and suet blocks. I watch the “common” birds come to the feeders and take their treasures that were specifically put out for them. As I look out the window and watch our feathered friends, I think of the upcoming summer and hope that the event that took place this last year was not a harbinger of things to come. I stand there and hope that all the birds we regard as “common” continue to be just that and that all the colors continue to fly high in the sky.

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MCWC OUTDOOR EDUCATION ENVIRONMENT



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

**Wednesday-Sunday
10AM-4PM**



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

WHY WOULD ANYONE VOLUNTEER THEIR TIME?

BY KIMBERLY DAWES

We have all heard it. If you just work hard, you will be successful. It is a mantra that parents have preached to their children since the beginning of time. I am currently raising two sons, who are in their early twenties, and I am shocked to listen to them talk with their friends. It seems, at times, all that matters to this younger generation is how much they earn. Although they seem to be full of ideas and beliefs about how things should change in this world, their entire identities seem to be based on how much money they are bringing home (or not bringing home). I completely understand that money is important. We all need money to survive. It makes me wonder what this non-stop strive for just a paycheck is doing to our mental health. What if the things that really matter come with no paycheck? How do we find a balance?

I am the volunteer coordinator at the Mercer County Wildlife Center, and I see firsthand the hard work and dedication of our volunteers. I know those words have been used too often to describe volunteers, but how do you describe someone who comes in every week and immediately asks... "What needs to be done? ... Don't worry, I got this.?" Our center never closes. We have animals that need care every single day. Sometimes I just stare in amazement at the beautifully orchestrated "dance" that is going on around me. People making dishes of food, people cleaning cages, others doing laundry, another set doing the dishes. These folks do not look miserable. They look happy. They are smiling (behind their masks). They are asking others... "what can I do to help?" "How are you?" "Can I get you anything?" Can it be that volunteering, while it does not feed your wallet, feeds your soul?

I decided to ask a few volunteers why they come in. I know what a great help they are to the Center. I know what the Center gets out of

it. But... what do *they* get out of it? Why are they willing to take precious time out of their day and clean out cages and hose off heavy racks and make food dishes? With all the craziness of everyday life, with the never-ending "to-do" lists ... why make the Wildlife Center a priority? Many started because they were looking to fill their time after retiring or brought in an animal and saw what we do here and decided they wanted to be a part of it. But no matter what brought them in, the interesting part is ... why did they stay? I would like to note that all volunteers I spoke with (all volunteers in the center at this moment) have been with us for at *least* 3 years, since we did not have any new volunteers in 2020 or 2021, due to the pandemic. Why are they still here five (5), ten (10), sometimes twenty (20+) plus years later? I went into this thinking I knew the answers I was going to get, I mean, I started as a volunteer ... so I would certainly know why someone else would volunteer, right? Wrong. There are many answers that I fully expected and many more that I did not. What I did not expect was how emotional of a conversation it became.

On more than one occasion, I found myself staring into eyes that were tearing up and overcome with emotion while explaining to me that this is where they have found a group of people who care about the same things that they do. That is not a small thing. The importance of surrounding yourself with others who value the same things that you do is huge and, now that I am thinking about it, very rare. In addition, being even a small part of rescuing an animal and releasing it back into the wild brings more joy than many things in their daily lives. To be depended upon and needed and appreciated by others, who care about what you care about, is priceless. That sometimes working hard and knowing that you are doing good for wild animals - that do not

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want to be here but have found themselves injured or diseased or orphaned and are dependent on you - is all the reward you need to keep returning.

It could be that today's youth is so busy trying to figure out how to be responsible adults and how to take of everyone else they have not figured out how to also take care of themselves. It is a part of growing up. I have no doubt that my boys will find what feeds their souls and makes them happy. I am encouraged all the time by watching our young interns, here at the Center, working long hours, taking care of the wildlife with smiles on their faces, while sweating in the summer sun.

I guess, just like everything else in life, you need to find a balance. Yes, you absolutely have to make a living and support yourself financially. However, you also must find out what feeds you emotionally and mentally. What makes you feel good about yourself? That answer will be different for everyone. I just feel really lucky to know the few who find fulfillment working alongside me and saving wildlife. Maybe the question should not be "Why would anyone volunteer their time?" Maybe the question should be "Why wouldn't you volunteer your time?"

Hey boys, I have an article for you to read..



My very first assignment turned out to be my favorite. I was assigned the "Shell Shack" on the second week of my internship, after we learned the ropes during the first week. Working in the shell shack was a very exciting venture, but it was also a daunting one. Knowing I would need to pick up a 20+ lb. snapping turtle to clean its' bin was intimidating to say the least, but with the help of the fantastic staff and volunteers, I was able to conquer my fear. In fact, with this internship, I was able to conquer another fear of mine: snakes. I began the summer terrified of them and by the end I was casually caring for four foot long rat snakes, which is something I never thought I would be able to say.

Another favorite assignment of mine was the bird room. The bird room housed all of our baby birds that needed 'round-the-clock care. I have always considered myself a bird person and I soon became known to my team as such. My favorite memory of my time in the bird room was with a red-bellied woodpecker who absolutely loved mealworms. His eagerness made us all laugh whenever it was time to feed him. Some of my other favorite birds included our American robins and mourning doves, which always made me smile.

INTERN ARTICLE

BY ERIN FOLEY

Throughout the whole summer, no two days were the same as an intern at the Mercer County Wildlife Center. Some parts remained consistent, such as our bald eagle greeting everyone as they walked through the door, or the raccoons chattering because they were excited for their morning feeding. As an intern, we were all assigned different animals to care for every other week, which kept things new and exciting.

As the summer continued, I got to work with some other amazing animals including white tail deer fawns, ducks, geese, red foxes, and Virginia opossums, to name a few. Every time we came in and had a new assignment waiting for us, it was so exciting to see where everyone would be for the week. Speaking of "everyone", I want to mention my amazing intern team. We all became very close, and I always looked forward to lunch when we could all hang out and chat about our days. We all had such unique backgrounds, even though some of us came from the same schools. We clicked as a team and were always looking for ways to help one another out which not only helped us accomplish our tasks more efficiently, but meant

we got to enjoy our work that much more. I could not have asked for a better team with whom to spend my summer.

Interning at the Mercer County Wildlife Center is an experience I will never forget. I made great memories and long-lasting friendships along the way. Working with rehabilitated wildlife is not something many people can say they have done, which separates this experience from most. I feel so lucky to have been able to be a part of something so cool and unique. I have so much gratitude to the people at the wildlife center for making the summer such a special one. This was by far one of the best experiences for which I could have ever asked.

A LETTER FROM JODIE SHUSTER

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, WILDLIFE CENTER FRIENDS

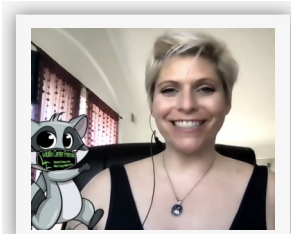
Forging a Path for the Future

With all the chaos that we have experienced in the last two years, it is humbling to see the outpouring of support for the Mercer County Wildlife Center and Wildlife Center Friends. In 2021, Wildlife Center Friends had a very successful fundraising year allowing us to continue to support lifesaving and educational efforts of the Mercer County Wildlife Center.

While the Center staff and its team of veterinarians provide ever present top-notch care to every wildlife patient, the Friends continue to work with the Center to develop new animal habitats, education programs, a robust enrichment program for our education animals and to ensure training opportunities for staff through your support.

As the Executive Director of the Wildlife Center Friends, I am so proud of the growth that we have seen over the years and I am especially grateful to all the staff, volunteers, interns of the Mercer County Wildlife Center. To our donors, animal observers and rescuers, you are the reason why we can do what we do.

It has truly been an honor, a pleasure, a joy to serve as the Executive Director for the past four and a half years. As I begin a new chapter in South Carolina, I will continue to follow the lifesaving and life changing work as you continue to forge a path for the future.



Jodie Shuster

*Executive Director,
Wildlife Center Friends*



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





PROTECT ENDANGERED SPECIES





Red-headed woodpecker (*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*). This species is on the threatened and endangered list of New Jersey birds.


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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