

# WILDLIFE REHABILITATORS OF NORTH CAROLINA

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## *Rabies Vector Species (RVS) Training at 2020 WRNC Symposium by Jean Chamberlain*

WRNC will be providing extensive RVS training at the symposium in January 2020. We have met with the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission and the Department of Public Health to plan the training. It will include sections on the new regulations, permit application requirements and procedures and permit restrictions taught by the NCWRC (2 hours).

The Department of Health veterinarian's office will teach about rabies, vectors, vaccinations, titers, testing and more (2 hours). We are bringing in expert instructors for the various rabies vector species to cover handling, housing and care for each species (8+ hours).

This covers the 12 hours of required training needed to qualify for the permit beginning in 2020.

Are you not sure if you want to rehab RVS? In addition to the training itself there will be an overview session to help those who haven't decided if they want to rehab RVS.

There will also be a session for those who have attended training out of state to cover the requirements and regulations that are specific to North Carolina.

Come to the symposium on January 25-26 for RVS training in addition to all the other great sessions and activities.



Photograph by John Althouse



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## *Deadline For WRNC Chimney Swift Tower Grant Applications!! by Linda Bergman-Althouse*

WRNC offers a \$500.00 grant and the Paul & Georgean Kyle book, "New Habitat for America's Mysterious Birds (A Construction Guide)" to assist you or your group in the undertaking of this valuable conservation project. The WRNC Board of Directors selects up to three award grants per year.

Please refer to WRNC's website <http://ncwildliferhab.org> for details of eligibility and application requirements. This program is open to North Carolina residents only, at this time. For further questions feel free to contact the WRNC Chimney Swift Tower Grant Program Coordinator, Linda Bergman-Althouse, at 910-358-1596 or [lbergmanx@gmail.com](mailto:lbergmanx@gmail.com). Once again, the deadline for submission is November 1st, annually, and as fast as a Chimney Swift flies, so does time!

Don't miss the opportunity to host Chimney Swifts in your area!!

**Grant Application Deadline: Nov 1st, 2019**

## *Quinto's Comedy Corner!*

*by Linda Bergman-Althouse*

QUINTO SAYS:

**You might be a Wildlife Rehabilitator IF . . . .**

"You ask your daughter to move her wedding date because it conflicts with the Annual WRNC Wildlife Symposium!"

or

"Your monthly food budget for animals exceeds your people food bill!"

or

"You are in the market for a used (or new !) minivan or station wagon and the first thing you do is measure the back to make sure large kennels will fit"

READERS! If you have a one-liner that describes the unique life and double-down passion of a Wildlife Rehabilitator (tell it like it is!) and you'd like to share with QUINTO for his column, please send it to [lbergmanx@gmail.com](mailto:lbergmanx@gmail.com).

Please WELCOME QUINTO as a new contributor to our WRNC Newsletter!



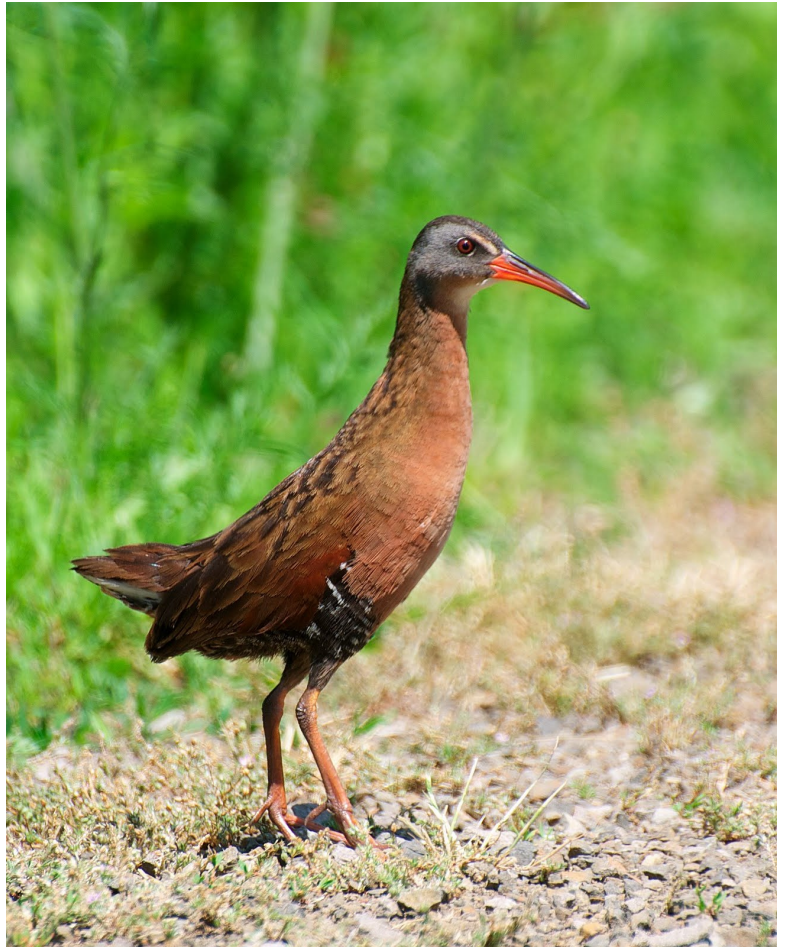


## ***“RUN, RAIL, RUN!”***

*by Linda Bergman-Althouse as written for Carolina Salt Magazine*

It's hard to even notice one is there or anywhere because they blend so well into the environment and their surroundings. A Virginia Rail becomes one with the landscape. For a good Samaritan to recognize that this thin, wisp of a marsh bird is in trouble is even more remarkable, but that is why a rescuer delivered a Virginia Rail to the Outer Banks Wildlife Shelter in Newport. He found it sitting on the roadway. That definitely means trouble and because it was thinner than the thin it should be, we have two theories; either it was weak from not eating properly, ran low on flight strength and just landed in the road or it was passing over the road and was grazed and stunned by a car. During a thorough examination, no injuries were found so it was rest and full meal deals in the treatment plan to ensure his strength returned.

There are five species of rails found in North America, but the species we see most often in Eastern North Carolina is the Virginia Rail. The other types of rails include the Yellow Rail, Clapper Rail, Black Rail (the smallest) and the King Rail, which is the largest. Rails are most often heard and hardly ever seen. Virginia Rails are skinny! Although 8 to 10 inches long with a rounded wingspan of 12 to 15 inches, they weigh only 2.3 to 3.4 ounces. The Virginia Rail is a chickenlike marsh bird with a long, heavy bill and a short, up-turned tail with white undertail feathers. Head on, the Virginia Rail looks very thin, but from the side they take on a fuller bodied look. Most biologists call that a laterally compressed body. They are mostly dull grays and reddish browns in color and barred in irregular patterns. They demonstrate a jerky gait as they walk through their common habitat, the wetlands, and that slender build makes it easy to run through reeds and marsh grasses. These extremely reclusive and secretive birds prefer dense marsh, which makes access to seeing them very difficult. The possibility of seeing young rails is more prevalent because they move about in search of food while being raised and taught to hunt by their parents. Rails become active in the evening and feed into the dark of night, and even when they migrate, they use the cover of darkness.



**Stock Photo**

A Virginia Rail is a marsh bird that uses its environment to the fullest. These skulking birds use the tall grasses and cattails as cover in their habitat. They can move about totally unnoticed most of the time. Their long toes give them the ability to walk or run, if necessary, on top of plant life on the surface of the water. Rails do not require deep waters, only enough to swim on the surface and reach into the water in search of its food. Rails belong in the same family as Coots and Gallinules, but they are not as ostentatious. While their extroverted family members swim in open water and hang out conspicuously on shore, Virginia Rails will be hiding among reeds at the water's edge and only at night will their calls be heard. Virginia Rails are particularly vocal in the spring. The birds sound off with a repeated "tick-it" in the hours of dawn and dusk, and this vocalization is thought to be made only by

## “RAIL” (*continued*)

males. Females and males also sing a “kicker” call that has a stuttering quality to it. Their diet consists mostly of insects, crayfish, snails and some seeds. Virginia Rails feed on a wide variety of aquatic insects and their larvae, especially beetles, flies and dragonflies. They also eat earthworms, snails, slugs and a few small fish. They forage by probing in the mud or shallow water, picking items up from the ground or stalking small prey and capturing them with a swift thrust of their bill. During breeding season, the male Virginia Rail will court a female by running back and forth with his wings raised. Both will make bowing motions to each other, the male will bring food and feed the female which usually clinches the deal! Males and females perform duets of pig-like grunts to defend their territories and to communicate with each other throughout the breeding season. They both build a platform nest made of cattails, reeds and grasses in a dry area of the marsh, possibly over shallow water. A top of the line nest will have living plants that form a canopy of protection over it. Momma Rail will lay 5 – 13 pale buff eggs with brown or gray spots that will be incubated by both parents for 18 – 25 days. The hatchlings will leave the nest within days, but the parents will continue to brood and feed the chicks until they are 3 weeks old. The youngsters will be flying at 25 days. The parents will generally leave the breeding territory at that point, but the young will remain.



**Stock Photo**

Virginia Rails, although reclusive, are colonial birds, so there may be quite a few residing together in one area, and a group of Virginia Rails collectively is known as a “Reel” of rails. They are often found sharing territory with the Sora Rail who really doesn’t compete much for the Virginia Rail’s food, because the shorter-billed Sora eats more seeds than the Virginia Rail’s preference of insects. Although the Virginia Rail’s presence has declined in brackish and marsh areas due to the loss of habitat, they are still widespread and common, so you won’t find them on an endangered list. As common as these “thin as a rail” water birds are, we still don’t know a lot about their behaviors because they spend their time in hiding and are very fast runners (well, at least, we know that!). They would rather try to escape danger by outrunning predators such as snakes, rodents, crows, raptors, coyotes and cats rather than be quick to fly. If flying is the only option, it will happen in bursts of short distance flights, land and then, take off again. Virginia Rails appear to be weak flyers, however, they are capably known to migrate long distances from our northern states to our southern states every year, so, this unique avoidance behavior just seems to be “their thing.” Although odd for a flighted animal to choose running over flying when in danger, it is what it is.

Run, Virginia Rail, Run!



## *Eek!! Mice!!*

*by Melisse Hopping*

I had been rehabbing for a number of years when I got my first mouse call in 2014. A shipping crate from Minnesota had been opened in a downtown warehouse, and out came four baby mice. Mom was nowhere to be found and the burly ex army ranger who discovered them was determined to give them a chance. By the time he contacted me, he had already captured them and given them kitten formula by dipping a tiny paint brush in it and letting them lick it off the end. They were perfectly healthy, eyes closed but fully furred.

One of the first things I did when I got home was try to identify their species. Since they were from so far away, I wanted to be sure they were also found locally. They were white-footed mice, which are native to our area. (along with 21 other species!)

Many rehabbers don't want to deal with mice. They're tiny, wiggly, and can escape in the blink of an eye. They're also adorable, and develop so fast they're out the door in 1-2 weeks. They don't require a lot of room, and don't need an outside release cage. They will wean themselves quickly once their eyes open, and as soon as they're eating solid foods they are ready for release.



**All photographs by Melisse Hopping**



Mice are mammals and rodents. Their care is the same as for other rodents, but miniaturized and in fast forward mode. Inspect, heat, hydrate, feed. It is easier for me to handle them wrapped in a soft cloth as I can get a better grip without injuring them. The short miracle nipple works best for me. They are too tiny to easily stimulate to pee or poop, but they seem to get along fine without it.

Since they weigh only 3-4 grams each, daily weighing is not of much use, and it is difficult to keep them on the scale unless they are in a container.

Once their eyes are open, they will take readily to crushed monkey biscuits, sesame, poppy, and sunflower seeds, wheat, cracked corn and other seeds. They can also be fed commercial parrot foods as these contain a wide variety of seeds and some fruit and vegetables.

Their natural habitat is in a wooded area at the edge of a field. We have a grassy field on our property and keep a brush pile at

## *Mice (continued)*

the edge of it for mice and bunnies. As usual, check the weather and release when it is clear. Time of day is not critical, but I usually put them out in the morning so they can get situated before nightfall.

As with all wildlife, rehabbing may be your only chance to observe mice closely and watch them grow. If you give them a chance, you may just find that you enjoy these tiny creatures.

(Did I mention they're adorable?)



**Going, going, gone.**





## *Nominating Committee Seeking Recommendations For New WRNC Board Members!*

Before long we will all be making plans to attend the annual WRNC Symposium during January, 2020 for fellowship, networking, education and fun! During the banquet all attending WRNC members will vote for new members to the Board of Directors.

The Nominating Committee is always looking for individuals who enjoy bringing new ideas and viewpoints to our discussions. If you have a person in mind who you would like to recommend as a WRNC board member and/or if that person just happens to BE YOU, please contact Toni O'Neil at [Oneil9734@yahoo.com](mailto:Oneil9734@yahoo.com), Ann Rogers at [Mom2wildlife@gmail.com](mailto:Mom2wildlife@gmail.com) or Linda Bergman-Althouse at [lbergmanx@gmail.com](mailto:lbergmanx@gmail.com). Every organization needs differing views and fresh, new effective ways to develop and grow!!

A few things you should know about a WRNC Board position:

- ◆ Terms are three years
- ◆ This is a working board – all board members are expected to attend and work the annual symposium each year.
- ◆ Board members attend several phone-in board meetings throughout the year.
- ◆ Board members serve on several working committees.
- ◆ Board members need to be team players who can communicate effectively, are willing and able to collaborate and discuss issues (including controversial ones) relating to wildlife rehabilitation and conservation education.
- ◆ You do not need to be an active rehabilitator to serve on the board.

## *Got Algae?*

Do you have any first-hand experience with blue-green algae and wildlife? Do you know anyone who does?

Please send me a note ([mengelmann@carolinaraptorcenter.org](mailto:mengelmann@carolinaraptorcenter.org)) or submit an article for the next edition of this newsletter.

Thank you

## *Wildlife Commission Seeks Public's Help in Barn Owl Sightings and Nest Box Placement* by Jodie B. Owen, NCWRC

*Reprinted with Permission from NCWRC*

The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission is asking the public to report any sightings of barn owls to the agency. Commission biologists are seeking barn owl observations to help them learn more about habitat needs and population distribution of barn owls in the Tar Heel state. Property owners who have barn owls can help further biologists' knowledge by allowing them to place nest boxes on their properties, free of charge. Currently, Commission staff has placed four boxes on private property in Anson and Randolph counties and Medford would like to expand the number of sites with nest boxes to at least 15 next summer.

Because barn owls are nocturnal and secretive, nest boxes will help biologists learn more about where and when barn owls nest in North Carolina, as well as where they prefer to hunt.



Photograph by Peter K. Burian

“Our guess is that suitable hunting and nesting habitat is shifting based on changing farming practices and urbanization,” said Allison Medford, a wildlife diversity biologist with the Commission, who is spearheading the effort. “We’ll want to first visit the property to see what evidence of owls we can find and then put up a nest box either in a building or on an outdoor pole, depending on where we think the owls are already living. It can take a while for barn owls to use the box, so we’ll monitor it annually.”

Barn owls are listed as a Species of Greatest Conservation Need in the agency’s Wildlife Action Plan, a comprehensive planning tool developed by the Commission to help conserve and enhance the state’s fish and wildlife species and their habitats. They are difficult to survey using traditional methods, such as point counts and daytime monitoring.

“Special surveys, such as nocturnal surveys and nest box monitoring, are the most effective way we can learn about barn owl distribution and abundance in the state,” Medford said.

New Hope Audubon, a chapter of the National Audubon Society



## *Barn Owls (continued)*

serving Chatham, Durham and Orange counties, began the Piedmont Barn Owl Initiative in 2012, installing barn owl nest boxes in areas with appropriate habitat. The Commission took oversight of the project in 2017 to broaden the monitoring effort across the Piedmont and focus on putting boxes where the birds are.

“The agency has been doing this type of work in the mountains for years, but there is not as much open, foraging habitat there as in the Piedmont,” Medford said. “This is the first time a large-scale monitoring effort for barn owls has been done in the Piedmont, which is why we are looking for the public’s assistance.”

Medium-sized raptors, barn owls are gray and cinnamon-colored with white bellies. Their most distinctive features are their white, heart-shaped face and dark eyes. Like most owls, they are nocturnal, but they rely on large areas of open lands, such as hay fields, crop lands and pastures, where they hunt rodents and other small mammals.

“Barn owls are excellent natural rodent control for farmers and cattlemen,” Medford said. “A barn owl eats an average of 79 pounds of mice per year, which is roughly 3 ½ mice per day. That’s some considerable free pest management!”

Barn owls nest in hollow trees, rock crevices, or large man-made structures like barns, silos and sometimes hunting box blinds. Unlike most birds, barn owls do not make nests but rather lay their eggs on piles of their own shredded up pellets. They use their nests as roosting sites throughout the year.

To participate, anyone who spots a barn owl and property owners willing to have a nest box placed on their property are asked to contact Medford, [allison.medford@ncwildlife.org](mailto:allison.medford@ncwildlife.org) or 910-975-9393.

For more information about nongame wildlife in North Carolina and the Wildlife Diversity Program, visit the Conserving page — <https://www.ncwildlife.org/Conserving/Conserving-North-Carolinas-Wildlife-Resources>

## *Deadline For WRNC Cage Grant Applications*

*by Mathias Engelmann*

Do you have need for a new rehab cage? Do you need to repair or improve an older enclosure?

Here’s a way to get \$ 500 towards that project. Go to WRNC’s website (<http://ncwildliferehab.org>) and download the application and instructions. Please make sure you include all the information we ask for.

If you have any questions, please get in touch with me at [mengelmann@carolinaraptorcenter.org](mailto:mengelmann@carolinaraptorcenter.org).

**Grant Application Deadline: Nov 1st, 2019**

## *Report Armadillo Sightings in North Carolina to the Wildlife Commission by Jodie B. Owen, NCWRC*

*Reprinted with Permission from NCWRC*

The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission is asking the public to report any sightings of nine-banded armadillos to the agency.

Commission biologists are seeking observations to help them determine the range expansion of armadillos in the Tar Heel state. To participate, volunteers who spot an armadillo in the wild should upload and share their photos on the NC Armadilloproject, which launched today on the free online platform iNaturalist. Volunteers can upload their photos via a computer at iNaturalist.org or they can download the free iNaturalist app, which is available for iPhone and Android.

People who want to report observations but do not want to use iNaturalist can send their armadillo observations to [armadillo@ncwildlife.org](mailto:armadillo@ncwildlife.org). The email should include:

- ◆ A photo of the armadillo
- ◆ When it was observed (date and time)
- ◆ The location where it was observed (GPS coordinates are best, but a detailed location description is acceptable)

Armadillos are native to Central and South America but have gradually expanded their range into the southeastern United States. In 2007, the agency received the first confirmed sighting of a nine-banded armadillo in Macon County and in the last 12 years has received more than 170 reports in 46 counties.



**Photograph by Jay Butfiloski**

The number of counties with confirmed observations is 27, stretching from Cherokee to Dare counties, and makes it likely the armadillo is expanding its range naturally throughout North Carolina, rather than being helped by human intervention, according to Colleen Olfenbittel, the Commission's black bear and furbearer biologist.

"Whether armadillos continue spreading beyond their current range will be largely determined by climate," said Olfenbittel. "Mild winter temperature conditions are good for armadillos. Since they lack thick insulation and must dig for most foods, freezing conditions can cause them to starve or freeze to death.

"However, North Carolina is experiencing fewer long stretches of below freezing weather, which is allowing armadillos to expand northward."

Learn more about armadillos by reading the Commission's armadillo species profile ( <https://www.ncwildlife.org/Portals/0/Learning/documents/Profiles/Mammals/Armadillo-Profile.pdf> ) and visiting the armadillo webpage, <https://www.ncwildlife.org/Learning/Species/Mammals/Armadillo>



## *Our Mississippi Kite Re-nesting Experience*

*by Deborah Roy*

**Background.** *My husband, Patrick Roy, and I are volunteers for Carolina Raptor Center and have re-nested many owls and hawks over the past couple of years in North and South Carolina. We typically will set-up a trail cam if we cannot get the nestling back in the original nest and need to use a temporary nest/basket or platform to ensure that the parents are caring for the nestling in its new home.*

On July 7, 2019, I heard that a Mississippi Kite (MIKI) nestling had been found on the ground and transported to Carolina Raptor Center (CRC). My immediate response was, “We want to try to re-nest him.” CRC agreed to let us try to re-nest. It was estimated he was about 3 weeks old when he was admitted. He had been found on the ground next to a road in a suburban neighborhood in Weddington, NC (Union County). Weddington is about 30 miles SE of the center of Charlotte, NC. MIKIs are not very common in this area. According to e-Bird, in 2019 there have only been 4 other sightings recorded in Union County. We thought this was a unique opportunity and wanted to be a part of it.

**Re-nesting!** The re-nesting process began with a thorough search to try to find the nest that the nestling came from. MIKIs

typically will nest on the top of the tree canopy, so we knew that we would



**All photographs by Deborah Roy**



probably have to use a platform on the original nest tree if we could find it. We searched the area surrounding the site where the nestling was originally found on the ground, but to no avail. We could not positively ID the actual nest site. So, we chose the best location that we felt the parents would be able to potentially see and access. This is not ideal since we usually try to put the platform as close to the original nest as possible, so the parents have the greatest chance of spotting the nestling. The area where the nestling was found was very dense with tall mature pine and deciduous trees. The platform was secured to the tree with ratchet straps instead of having to screw anything into the tree. We always ask permission of the

## *Mississippi Kite Re-nesting (continued)*

homeowner prior to installing a platform. The platform was placed about 20 feet up in an oak tree. We then placed a WIFI-enabled trail cam on another tree about 8 feet away that would capture activity at the platform and nearby branches of the tree. This camera sends you a notification and a low-resolution image of what was captured. Please note that placing a camera on an active nest versus using it traditionally as a trail cam are very different. Because the nest is active and there is bird movement in the nest nearly all day, you can be bombarded with images and videos. We typically only leave the camera up for 1-2 days to ensure there is a parent coming on a regular basis. You will see shortly that we needed to manage this re-nesting differently than most.



We had 2 adult MIKIs circling high above the area where the nestling had been spotted so we decided to play recordings of the nestling's calls in hopes this would bring the parents down to the area. We placed the nestling in the platform box and played the recordings using a small speaker attached to our cell phone. After a few hours and no parents to the nest box, we decided to try again early the next morning. It was dusk at this time and we thought that it may be too late in the day. We took the nestling home and fed him and then set out the next day to try again.

The next morning, we repeated the same process. We put the nestling back in the platform and would periodically play the recordings of the nestling's calls. This seemed to bring the adult MIKIs to the area, but they were circling very high and not coming down. At this point, we decided to put the nestling MIKI on the ground below the platform. Almost instantly, one of the adult MIKIs came down and landed on a tree to the left of the nestling. We were hiding nearby for the safety of the nestling, but the parent didn't come down to the nestling. So, we thought since the parent knew where the nestling was now, we would put the nestling back into the platform along with some cut-up mice and superworms. The plan was to leave for a couple of hours in case the adults were not coming down because we were in the area. A couple of hours after we left, we received the next image on the trail cam! It was so exciting to see a parent come to the platform and it brought a cicada! At this point we thought we were in the clear and we would not have to intervene again. This has been our experience with other types of raptors.

### **Homeowners**

One of the best things about this experience were the homeowners, Nancy and Bob. Nancy was also the finder. A lot of our re-nestings take place in the woods and not on a private





## *Mississippi Kite Re-nesting (continued)*

residence. However, when the re-nesting takes place on a private residence, the right homeowner can play a vital role in monitoring activity. However, please be sure to explain the importance of keeping their distance and not sharing the location with others. This is a very stressful time for the parents and nestlings, and they need their privacy and space. If the parents do not feel safe, they may abandon the nest. The homeowners involved in this re-nesting were the best! They were eager to help in any way they could and understood the importance of keeping their distance. Nancy would report when she would hear calls or see the adults in the area and on the platform. Also, as stated earlier, always ask for permission to place anything on private property, including temporary nests, platforms, and cameras. I also let the homeowner know in advance whenever I plan to be on their property. Plus, it is also important to keep them updated on activity and progress. Nancy had this to say about the experience, “It’s been a blessing to me and a wonderful experience.”

### **Where are the parents?**

On July 9, we had the last recorded parental activity at the platform. Things seem to have been going well and then suddenly, they seem to stop coming. We hoped that maybe there might be a technical issue with the camera and that maybe the parents were still coming. To ensure that the nestling was getting enough food, I added food twice a day to the platform for him and he would quickly eat it. After discussing the missing parents with Carly at CRC, we decided to leave things alone at the time and re-assess on a day-to-day basis. The nestling was thriving. The photo to the right shows his transformation after one week. - incredible! Since he was doing well and MIKIs tend to fledge earlier than other raptors, we decided to do a soft release and leave him in the platform. We would continue to add food twice a day until after fledging and then would reduce to once per day to encourage hunting.

### **Nestling Behaviors**

One of my favorite parts of reviewing video of the nestling was watching all his platform activities. He kept himself very busy during the day and was also very alert. Even though his parents were not active at the platform, they were spotted in the area and I believe he would watch them and observe what they did. The constant stimulation of being in the wild and not at the raptor center, I believe taught him a lot. When putting up the plat-



## *Mississippi Kite Re-nesting (continued)*

form we try to add nesting materials that would normally be found in the nest. In this case, since they have stick nests, we make sure that there are several sticks and space for the nestlings to lie down. We also add some small pinecones to the nest. Video captured him pouncing on the pinecones and tearing them apart. The nestling was also observed catching and eating bugs that came into the nest, most likely attracted by the food placed on the platform. He also regularly did wing-flapping, stretching, and lots of preening.

### **Food**

Because the parents did not visit the platform on a regular basis and then stopped coming, food was added to the platform. The size and type of bird will determine what you add. I started by adding a combination of cut-up mice and superworms twice a day. We were fortunate enough to have been given at least 1,000 super worms by a rehabber who had an abundance of them and wanted to share. This quantity worked out great and we had enough to continue adding worms for 2 weeks after fledgling. I used a piece of bark with a couple of leaves on top to place the food on and would remove the leaves and add new ones when new food was added. I did this to keep the smell of food at a minimum in hopes it would decrease the chance of predators coming to the platform.

Because I was going out twice a day to add food, the homeowners allowed me to leave the ladder on their property so that we would not have to load it onto the car each time. We did secure it to a tree to ensure it was always going to be there when we showed up.

### **Predators**

There wasn't any predatory activity observed with this re-nesting. There was a Red-shouldered Hawk family with two fledglings that would occasionally fly near the platform. The nestling would call out, get down low, and puff-up when they came close.

### **Nighttime**

The nestling was very much a schedule follower. Almost like clockwork every night, the trail cam would pick-up him getting down low and laying down in the platform. Other than the occasional wing and leg stretch, he was down for the night. When he got into this position he would pretty much be completely out of sight. The photo to the right shows a trail cam picture taken at night. If you are planning to use a trail cam, it is important to find one that is "no glow infrared." This is important as the light emitted from some cameras can scare wildlife.

### **Branching**

It is important to place the platform in a location on a tree that has nearby branches





## *Mississippi Kite Re-nesting (continued)*

for the nestling to branch out on and for the parent to perch on. Also keep in mind that there must be enough space for the parent to fly into the platform area. The platform should not be in direct sunlight and there should be some shading and protection from the weather. Since these birds nest in the peak of summer heat, it is important that they can get into some shade in the platform. The nestling started officially branching on July 19, but I also think I would consider it branching when he started to perch on the walls of the platform. This started on July 12.

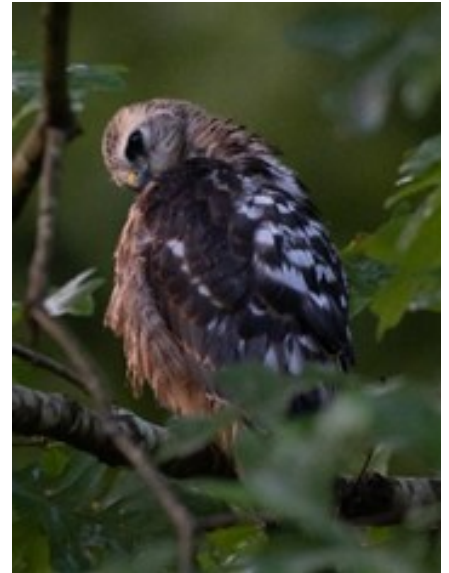
### **Fledgling**

Fledging of Mississippi Kites usually takes place around 5 weeks. The nestling fledged on July 20. At this point, MIKI would have been about 5 weeks old. After fledging, he didn't return to the platform for almost 3 days. When he returned, he was eager to eat as much as he could and was doing a lot of food begging. This included some vocalizations that he had not previously done while on the platform in the past. The fledgling seemed to recognize the sound of the ladder and that this sound meant food was being added to the platform. He would usually start calling as I put the ladder up and occasionally would fly to the platform when I got to the top of the ladder with the food. Sometimes he would wait to come over after I had left. The last time the fledgling came to the platform was on August 6. This was 16 days after fledging. On average, MIKIs will stay with their parents for 2 weeks after fledging. Then they are 100% on their own. The homeowners reported sightings of him in the area on both August 8th and 10th.

### **What Would We Do Differently?**

Perhaps we should have worn camo early on or tried to figure out a way to add food to the platform without having to climb the ladder so the nestling wouldn't associate us with food.

This experience was like no other re-nesting. It was exhausting (mentally and physically) due to the added time-commitment and also came with fear of something bad happening to the baby. But these factors were small in comparison to how rewarding it was and how much I learned about this species of bird that I hadn't previously had much experience with. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to Deborah at [alwaysbefearless@gmail.com](mailto:alwaysbefearless@gmail.com).



## *WRNC Symposium is coming January 25 & 26, 2020*

### *WRNC Newsletter Schedule*

Do you have a wildlife-related idea you would like to share with the WRNC membership? You should think about submitting it to the editors for consideration. How about a relevant article you found somewhere? Send us a link so we can ask for permission to reprint it. Email all articles, ideas, comments and questions to:

Mengelmann@carolinaraptorcenter.org

The WRNC newsletter is published four times a year. The deadlines for submissions are:

**March 1st      June 1st      September 1st      December 1st.**

### *Training Opportunities*

**Wildlife Rehab Inc.** in Winston-Salem, NC offers an 11-week course (1 night/week) at **Forsyth Technical Community College** in the spring and fall. <http://www.wildliferelhabinc.org>

**Coastal Carolina Community College** in conjunction with **Possumwood Acres** offers a 6-month course in wildlife rehabilitation. See details at <https://www.coastalcarolina.edu/>

Look for listings in the Continuing Education Schedule under the “Veterinary Office Assistant” section

**Wildlife Welfare** in Raleigh, NC offers training courses. Check them out at <http://www.wildlifewelfare.org>

**IWRC** is offering its **Basic Wildlife Rehabilitation** course in Eaton Rapids, MI on Oct 12-13, 2019. Check the IWRC website at <https://theiwrc.org/product/basic-wildlife-rehabilitation-course> for this and other courses, including on-line options.

**The Wildlife Center of Virginia** will be hosting the 24th annual **Call of the Wild** conference on Nov 15-17, 2019. See details at <https://www.wildlifecenter.org/call-wild-conference>

The **NWRA annual symposium** is not that far off: February 25-29, 2020, in South Padre Island, TX .



## *Bird/Migration Fallout and its Effect on Aquatic Birds*

*by Bayleigh MacHaffie, Carolina Waterfowl Rescue*

Signaled by the tremendous decrease in intakes (at least regarding our avian species) we all have the pleasure of entering hurricane season. As we are bunkering down in our own facilities, making sure our current patients are safe and secure, we will also be thinking about the influx of new patients we will see in the days following a big storm. Most of these patients will be those we see every day: squirrels blown from their dreys by the wind, emaciated songbirds unable to find food on the now bare trees, box turtles with fractured shells that were urged out on the roads by the rain. But, some of these new patients will be of species we have no experience with. Due to bird fallout, or migration fallout, we will encounter a variety of sea and shore birds that we will rarely see or handle at our facilities. As the first hurricane of the season is already upon us, we should all have the basic knowledge of how to identify, handle, and triage many different types of aquatic birds that will be stranded in our own backyards.

Bird fallout occurs when migrating birds traveling across large bodies of water get caught in a large storm system. They either become entrapped in the eye of the storm (flying with the system) or in front of the storm (attempting to outrun the system). The birds in the eye of the storm must travel with the system and are unable to find food in the devastation below. The birds ahead of the system are flying for their lives, exerting a much larger amount of energy than they normally would. By the time these



**Royal Tern**

**Photograph by Debbie Mauney**

birds are far enough away from the storm to rest, they are too far inland to find food and are too weak to make it back to the coast. It should be assumed that a grounded seabird found any significant distance away from a beach is thin, if not emaciated. If a seabird is found grounded after a storm, even if found on a beach, he/she should immediately be brought to a rehabilitator for a full exam.

Aquatic birds are extremely high maintenance patients. Between their abnormally high stress levels, unlikeliness to eat on their own, and poor body conditions upon intake, seabirds can be quite a challenge. One of the most important things to keep in mind is the preservation of waterproofing. When handling any aquatic bird, gloves should be used. When we touch an aquatic bird without gloves, the oils from our hands are easily transferred to the bird's feathers, which compromise their waterproofing. In order to be released, an aquatic bird's waterproofing needs to be perfect. If necessary and when stable, the bird should be washed in a series of Dawn baths to restore his/her waterproofing. The act of washing is extremely stressful and complex, so research should be conducted prior to any washing attempts if unfamiliar with the process.

Some basic information regarding Dawn washing can be found on International Bird Rescue's webpage: <https://>

## *Bird Fallout (continued)*

[www.bird-rescue.org/our-work/aquatic-bird-rehabilitation/our-process-for-helping-oiled-birds.aspx](http://www.bird-rescue.org/our-work/aquatic-bird-rehabilitation/our-process-for-helping-oiled-birds.aspx)

Aquatic birds that are found in the aftermath of large storms are almost always emaciated. Because of this, it is critical that they be triaged in as timely a manner as possible. Moving these patients to a dark, quiet place will help to reduce their stress. Patients should also be put on some form of heat – this will decrease the amount of energy unnecessarily exerted. Lactated Ringer’s Solution can be given subcutaneously with Vitamin B Complex. If emaciated, solid food should never be given on intake. Some of these birds may seem very eager to eat solids but doing so will most likely push them over the edge. Instead, the patient should be gavage fed Piscivore Care multiple times per day. Solid food should be slowly introduced in the following weeks at specific times depending on the individual and their progress. This supportive care is essential in the survival of the patient.

If you have a question about the triage of emaciated aquatic birds, feel free to send an email to [rehab@cwrescue.org](mailto:rehab@cwrescue.org).



**Sooty Tern**

**Photograph by Liz Crosby**



**Wood Stork**    **Photograph by Keenan Freitas**

Hurricanes can leave an area in absolute devastation. Unfortunately for our wildlife, there aren’t many paths of avoidance. Bird fallout is the horrific result of a storm system engulfing, trapping, and expelling migratory birds to an unfamiliar place, all the while starving and debilitating them beyond unassisted recovery. Without our combined effort, these birds will have no chance of returning to the coast. This hurricane season, please reach out if you find a grounded aquatic bird. Together, we can do our best to save these wonderful animals.

For more information regarding the effects of hurricanes on migratory birds, visit the following:

<https://www.allaboutbirds.org/how-do-hurricanes-affect-migrating-birds/>

<https://www.audubon.org/news/how-do-hurricanes-affect-birds>



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