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WRNC



Sharing information and knowledge for the benefit of native wildlife

A Quarterly Newsletter

Issue 42, Winter 2011

Call of the Wild

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Tools for Training

Use positive reinforcement and operant conditioning to shape the behaviors of your wildlife ambassadors... [\[more\]](#)

WRNC Symposium 2011

Registration is now open for the Wildlife Rehabilitators of North Carolina's 9th Annual Symposium being held in Raleigh at North Carolina State University's College of Veterinary Medicine January 28-30. A minimal fee of \$75.00 covers registration, annual

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Register

membership in the organization, attendance at the Friday night icebreaker and Saturday night banquet as well as lunch on both Saturday and Sunday. This is an amazing educational opportunity with beginner through advanced tracks including sessions on the Introduction to Rehabilitation of Baby Mammals, Fluid Therapy and Emaciation Protocols, Pain Management and Analgesia for Injured Wildlife and wet labs which will provide you with hands on learning experiences. Continuing Education credit is available! For more information check out the website at:

<http://www.ncwildliferehab.org/conference/conf2011/conf2011.html>. Hope to see you all there.

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When Rocky's Down For The Count – Squirrel Ailments

This presentation is an overview of Eastern Gray Squirrel ailments. Linda shares information and procedures to assist you with recognizing, identifying, diagnosing and forming treatment plans if or when needed for this mammal.

Considerations for the Rehabilitation of Hummingbirds

This presentation examines the natural history, diets, special considerations in rehabilitation, and migration habits of humminbirds. It touches briefly upon the most common injuries, their prognosis, and splinting techniques.

Imprinting

This presentation covers imprinting and its significance to wildlife rehabilitators. The speaker will cover recent research on imprinting.

Symposium 2011

Cage Building

Build your own small mammal cage on site with Bob's guidance. The workshop will be open from 8:30 am until 5:30 pm on Saturday. Plan 4-5 hours to complete a cage.

Raising Your Own Mealworms

Mealworms are expensive to buy, but easy to raise. It takes just a little work and lots of patience!

**You are invited to attend
our 9th symposium in
Raleigh on January 28-30,
2011**

Songbird Emergency Care

This lab includes splinting options and supportive care of songbirds.

Handling Wildlife Calls

'My dog has brought me a baby bird. 'There's a bat in my chimney.' Carla covers many of the calls frequently received by rehabilitators and vet offices.

**Visit the symposium page on
our website for more
information.**

The Use of Social Media

This session provides tips to help you strengthen your social network presence and explores methods for posting insightful information while keeping it professional.

Rehabilitation of Cottontails

Learn from someone who has raised and released cottontails, from newborns to injured adults. Randy does an in-depth look at the digestive system and how to get a "ready gut." He covers infection control (primarily from cat bites) and pain management.

Preparing Avian Biofacts Lab

Learn how and actually try your hand at preparing biofacts for use in education. Biofacts give education program attendees the opportunity to touch talons and feathers or flap the wing of a bird, increasing the senses used in learning.

The Making of a Beak and Coping Beaks

Learn the basic anatomy of a beak and how injuries to the beak can affect its growth. Betty will discuss how to assess injuries for treatment and releasability and how to tell when beaks need to be coped.

Professionalism in Wildlife Education

This presentation will focus on our role as professionals and how to ensure that we are always presenting ourselves, and our wildlife ambassadors, professionally during our varied interactions with the public.

Oiled Bird Workshop

An Oiled Bird Workshop is being held at the College on Friday, January 28, making it convenient to attend both our symposium and the workshop. Registration for the workshop is separate from the symposium registration. Information and registration for the workshop is found at <http://www.cvm.ncsu.edu/conted/OiledBirdWorkshop.html>.

The Brownstone will extend the discount rate to Thursday night for anyone attending the workshop.

Sensational Cedar! – Newest WRNC T-Shirt!



Last year's snow during the 2010 Symposium kept many members from picking up their new WRNC T-shirt, but this year snow came early, twice! Here's hoping roads to Raleigh are clear at the end of the month for WRNC members and special guests to attend the 9th Annual WRNC Symposium, January 28 – 30, 2011. The newest cedar / brick T-shirt will be available for purchase, sizes Small to XXLlarge, for \$12.00, as in the past, and the remainder of our stylin' steel-green T-Shirt inventory will be available at a discounted \$10.00. Both T-shirts are adorned with Wanda Burton's popular and stunning wildlife design, make great additions to any rehabbers "wildlife" T-shirt wardrobe and most importantly, purchase supports the members and good works of Wildlife Rehabilitators of North Carolina, Inc. See you at the Symposium!

Learning Song:

When do Young Birds Learn to Sing?

By Jean Chamberlain

Some birds learn their songs during the summer that they are hatched. The male learns his songs from adult males around him. He imitates entire songs from several adults, memorizing them. He tends to learn songs shared by 2 or more of the males who serve as his tutor. In the fall the young bird practices. He improves his songs by singing with other males.

The following spring when he settles in his own territory, he sings the songs in his repertoire that best match the songs the other males in the area are singing. This is called matched countersinging. Some of the songs that he learned before he settles in this final territory are no longer sung. He abandons the songs he learned the previous year if they aren't sung by his neighbors.

This is a common strategy used by many species of birds to learn their songs. Which species use this strategy of learning from their father or other males where they are raised? Which use other strategies? Do some not learn their song at all?

Every songbird rehabilitator should become familiar with the research that has been done on how songbirds learn their song. This information will likely change your approach to rehabilitation.

If you want to read more about how birds learn to sing, I suggest 'The Singing Life of Birds' by Donald Kroodsma.

You can also learn more about how songbirds learn to sing by attending 'Learning to Sing' at the WRNC 2011 Symposium in Raleigh, NC. This presentation will also cover other learning scenarios, including what is known on how particular species found in North Carolina learn to sing and how this information can effect how we raise these birds.

Spotlight – Wanda Angel



How did you get started rehabilitating?

I have always had an interest in caring for orphaned baby animals. When friends found orphaned baby cottontails, they would give them to me to care for. My daughter once found two tiny infant squirrels. She asked for my advice on caring for them, but I couldn't give her the advice she needed. I searched on the internet on caring for orphaned wildlife. Then decided: this is what I want to do. I took the course in Wildlife Rehabilitation at Forsyth Tech and have been rehabilitating wildlife ever since.

How long have you been rehabilitating?

This past summer was my sixth season.

Who was your mentor or who is someone you admire?

I admire Randy Atkinson and trust his advice for any cottontail questions.

What animals do you work with?

I work with all small mammals.

What type of setup do you have?

Although I would love to have a room dedicated to rehabbing, I use a large dining room with a long table set up on one wall. I have heating pads with nursery boxes lined up all across the table.

What animal do you enjoy working with most?

Next to the flying squirrel, I enjoy working with cottontails. To me, it is a challenge to rehab a cottontail and to release one is much more rewarding than any other animal because they are so difficult to rehab.

Do you have a favorite rehab experience?

My favorite experience was a cottontail who came in bloated, dehydrated and had been bitten by a cat. He was tiny, with closed eyes, and weighed only 46 grams. I treated him for dehydration and gave a course of antibiotics for the cat bite. He began gaining weight, but a few days later he developed a large abscess at the site of the cat wound. Off to the vet we went. Dr. E. examined him and treated the abscess. He also gave him antibiotics. I took him home and continued treating the wound and taking him to the vet twice a week. Unlike most bunnies, this one was so calm and relaxed, despite all the treatment. His wound seemed to be healing, and I thought I would be able to release him soon. But a few days later, another abscess developed near the first one. Back to the vet. We were amazed he was still alive. The staff at the vet's office called him "Tough Bunny." Shortly after the second abscess cleared up, a third one appeared. This one was on his back and about the size of golf ball. Again, we went through the same treatment. By this time, he had scar tissue, knots all over and was partially bald. Finally the abscess cleared up, and fur began to grow back. He had survived dehydration, bloat, a cat bite and three abscesses. After two months of extensive treatment at the vet twice a week, plus the treatment he got at home, he was finally released.

All this year I have watched a bunny in our yard. I know it is one I released but I like to think it is "Tough Bunny."

Besides working with animals, do you have any domestic pets?

I have a Quaker parrot and a miniature donkey, and my husband has turkeys, chickens and peacocks. We did have twelve pygmy goats but sold them.

Any non-animal family members?

My husband, Herman, is very supportive of my rehabbing. He likes all the animals that come in. He even tolerates the opossums.

What are your hobbies?

In addition to rehabbing, I enjoy gardening, sewing, crafts and PC games.

Tell us about an accomplishment of which you are proud.

A couple of years ago, a few of us rehabbers were discouraged with the success rate of our bunnies. I did a lot of research on the internet and communicated with well known rehabbers. I put their different ideas and ways of rehabbing bunnies together and came up with a plan to rehab cottontails with better success.

What do you like about being a part of WRNC?

I love to go to the Symposium to meet and interact with other rehabbers and most of all to gain further knowledge and ideas for rehabbing.

BEGINNER BASICS

Safety Comes First!

By Jean Chamberlain

The first priority of every rehabilitator should be that "Safety Comes First." You should be conscious of safety at all times especially when handling an animal: when you pick up an animal, at intake, while performing an exam, and when feeding. Your goal is to prevent accidents and to avoid catching diseases from the animals.

Knowledge of the natural behavior of the animals that you are working with is one key to safely handling them. When performing an exam, knowledge of good restraint techniques for that animal is particularly important (see 'Using a Little Restraint' in the March 2008 issue). When examining a mammal, cover its head. Most animals are considerably calmer in the dark and they are less able to bite what they can't see. When examining the mouth, consider placing a tongue depressor or dowel in the mouth. If the animal clamps down, this will help protect your fingers. Whenever possible, have two people for the exam. One can restrain the animal while the other does the exam.

Planning is another key to safety. Before you start the exam, have the appropriate gloves, towels, containers, and other supplies ready. If you have all the supplies at hand, you will not only take less time, but you won't need to pick up the animal as often (or carry it around while you retrieve items).



exam, scratch resistant, medium duty and heavy duty gloves

Be aware that the restraint and precautions necessary may differ for the same animal at different ages. For example, garden gloves provide adequate protection for handling young squirrels. Older squirrels can bite hard through those gloves, once their incisors begin to grow in. Even welders gloves may not protect you from an adult squirrel.

Have an additional set of supplies in your vehicle, so that you are prepared when you pick up an animal or when you find an injured animal. It's helpful to carry leather gloves, a towel or blanket, and a small box or carrier. Carry all the items needed to handle the species that you rehabilitate. In addition you may want to keep a pair of latex gloves in the glove compartment. They take little room and they are handy when you need to touch an animal, like helping a turtle cross the road, and can't wash your hands right away.

When feeding, have the food and water ready before starting, in order to minimize the number of times you must open the cage. You may want to use two sets of bowls so that you can swap them out rather than removing a bowl, cleaning it and replacing it in the cage. Also, be sure to have the cage set up to reduce the likelihood the animal will escape from the cage when you are feeding or cleaning.

Practice good husbandry too (see 'Keep It Clean' in the June 2006 issue) including washing your hands after feeding, keeping cages clean and washing food and water bowls daily. Take these precautions to prevent the spread of disease between the animals in your care and to avoid catching disease from the animals.

Knowledge of the behavior and proper restraint for the species, a little planning, and good husbandry are all important to keep you safe and healthy when rehabilitating wild animals.

Trophic Feeding Categories – Part II

By Elizabeth Hanrahan



Granivores include chickadees, doves, finches, juncos, sparrows and titmice. Most North American seed/grain eating passerines are facultative-in addition to seeds, their diets include some insects and fruit or berries when available. Seed choices vary with the species, but generally weed seeds, high-oil seeds (sunflower) and millet seeds are preferred. Though frequently seen at backyard feeders, chickadees and titmice consume about 35% seed and plant materials with their remaining diet composed of caterpillars, spiders, insect eggs and insects gleaned from foliage and tree bark. During their rehabilitation, both species of birds must have secure perches in order to open seeds. They also benefit from having a nest box available. Chickadees store food in winter; provide them with logs with cracks & crevices to cache seeds. Doves and most finches eat 90% seeds. Juncos diets are composed of about 75% weed and grass seeds. Preferred insects are caterpillars, beetles and ants. The cardinal diet is composed of 65% plants, including weed seed, tree seeds (such as dogwood) and fruits. Favored insects include Japanese and other beetles in addition to caterpillars. Cardinal young are raised entirely on insects. A rehabilitation diet should include feeder insects, as well as insects captured from the wild, for all granivores except for Doves. Incorporate a moist, high-protein kitten kibble (read labels and choose one that has chicken as the first ingredient and chicken by-products as the second ingredient) into their prepared diet. In season, offer a wide variety of weed seed as well as commercial seed diets including millet, sunflower seed and chips, peanut pieces, Niger thistle, cracked corn, commercial fruit and nut blend, minced greens and the nodes of budding fruit trees when available. Offer grit at all times. Transition emaciated granivores to whole food diets

by mixing Pancreatin with baby cereal or cooked-strained whole grain cereal. A small amount of animal protein, such as chicken baby food, may be helpful while the bird is regaining muscle tissue and strength. Adult granivore birds choose foods that meet their nutritional needs. They balance deficiencies in one food by eating another. A food that is not agreeable can make them sick. They will refuse to eat such foods or shake them from their mouths. Do not force these birds to eat!

Rehabilitation Tip

Throughout the season gather seeds, grasses and flowers from areas free of pesticides and fertilizers.

These items can be frozen for future use.

Tools for Training

Yes! You CAN train your wildlife ambassadors!!

By Nicki Dardinger

Over the next year, we will be devoting some space in the WRNC newsletter to animal training; more specifically – how to use positive reinforcement and operant conditioning training techniques to shape the behaviors of your wildlife ambassadors and develop rewarding relationships between you and the animals in your care. So many rehabilitators are overwhelmed with their daily to-do lists that they believe they don't have time to invest in the training of their education animals. However, some would argue (including me!) that setting aside time for thoughtful training sessions is just as important to an animal's well being as food, water and a clean shelter. To help get us started, we thought we'd spend a little bit of time going over some of the basic theories of how animals learn.

Classical Conditioning

Made famous by physiologist Ivan Pavlov in the early 20th century, **classical conditioning** involves simultaneously presenting an animal with a neutral stimulus and a significant stimulus. A neutral stimulus (referred to as the conditioned stimulus) could be any event that does not result in a behavioral response from the animal. The significant stimulus (referred to as the unconditioned stimulus) is an event that does result in a behavioral response from the animal (the response is referred to as the unconditioned response). When the two stimuli are presented together, they eventually become associated, and the animal begins to respond to the neutral stimulus (this response is referred to as the conditioned response).

The most famous example of classical conditioning was Pavlov's experiment conducted on the salivary glands of dogs in the early 1900s. Pavlov had noticed during a previous experiment on the digestion of dogs that the dogs not only salivated in the presence of meat, but they also salivated upon seeing the lab technician that normally fed them. To test his theory that animals could develop a conditioned response to a neutral stimulus, he designed an initial experiment where he used a bell to call the dogs to their food. After a few repetitions, the dogs started to salivate in response to the bell, regardless of whether food was present.

What role does classical conditioning play with our educational ambassadors? Have you ever noticed a change in behavior when an animal sees its caretaker approach with a food bucket? While typically, a person walking by with a bucket would not elicit a food-related response in an animal, after several (or maybe only one or two!) occurrences of a person walking by with a food bucket leading to the arrival of food, an animal will associate the bucket with food, and will display a food-related behavior, regardless if food is present.

Operant Conditioning

Operant conditioning refers to the use of a behavior's antecedent and/or consequence to influence or shape the future occurrence of the behavior. An antecedent refers to an event preceding behavior, while a consequence refers to an event occurring after behavior. The term reinforcement describes a consequence that causes an animal's behavior to occur with greater frequency, while the term punishment describes a consequence that causes an animal's behavior to occur with less frequency. Finally, the terms positive and negative refer to adding something to the system and removing something from the system, respectively.

The following table describes the four main components of operant conditioning:

	Positive	Negative
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<p>Reinforcement</p>	<p>Occurs when a behavior is followed by a consequence that is <u>rewarding</u>, increasing the frequency of that behavior.Ex: Trainer presents cue, groundhog stands up on hind legs, receives a piece of food. In the future, the groundhog stands on hind legs in response to the trainer’s cue.</p>	<p>Occurs when a behavior is followed by the removal of an <u>aversive</u> stimulus, increasing the frequency of that behaviorEx: Gloved hand pushes into hawk’s legs, hawk steps up on gloved hand. In the future, hawk steps up on gloved hand when hand pushes into its legs.</p>
<p>Punishment</p>	<p>Occurs when a behavior is followed by an undesired consequence, resulting in a decrease in that behaviorEx: Cat jumps on countertop and is sprayed with water. In the future, the cat doesn’t jump on the countertop.</p>	<p>Occurs when a behavior is followed by the removal of a stimulus, resulting in a decrease in that behaviorEx: Cue given for crow to fly to glove. Crow doesn’t fly. Cue is taken away. In the future, when presented with cue, crow flies to glove.</p>

Often, when developing training plans for animals, trainers focus on the incorporation of positive reinforcement. The use of rewards to influence behavior serves two purposes. Not only is a trainer rewarding behaviors that they want the animal to continue to perform, but the trainer is also developing a relationship with the animal based on trust. The process of developing a positive relationship with wildlife can often be time consuming and requires a great deal of patience on the part of the trainer. But in the long run, the time and effort will lead to more comfortable wildlife ambassadors (and happier trainers!).

Both forms of learning, classical and operant conditioning, are present in all of our training sessions with our wildlife ambassadors. Trainers need to be aware of how an animal’s environment influences their behavior and need to be mindful of all cues that may be causing an animal to exhibit, or not exhibit, particular behaviors. When developing a training plan, keep in mind that both operant conditioning and classical conditioning play a role in what your animals are learning, and in what behaviors your animals are exhibiting.

In future issues, we will be discussing specific behavioral issues and also delving into some more advanced training theories and practices. Are you experiencing challenges with training your wildlife ambassadors? Do you have a question that you would like answered in future issues? Please send any questions, comments or concerns to Nicki Dardinger at Nicki.Dardinger@gmail.com.

Training Resources

Behavior Works: http://www.behaviorworks.org/htm/articles_behavior_change.html

International Association of Avian Trainers and Educators (IAATE): www.iaate.org

Pryor, Karen. Don’t Shoot the Dog. 1999.

Natural Encounters: <http://www.naturalencounters.com/pressRoom.html>

Training Workshops

Association of Zoos and Aquariums: <http://www.aza.org/professional-training/>

Behavior Works: http://www.behaviorworks.org/htm/lla_professional_overview.html

Natural Encounters: <http://www.naturalencounters.com/trainingEducationWshopsProf.html>

Call of the Wild

Answering Wildlife Calls

Welcome to the first installment of a new column: Answering Wildlife Calls. Often, rehabilitators hear the same questions over and over from the public. We will use this column to provide some professional answers to some of the most commonly asked wildlife questions.

“I’ve found a baby squirrel on the ground under a tree in my backyard. What should I do?”

Baby squirrels can be blown out of the nest in heavy winds. The mother squirrel will often retrieve the baby and, if the nest is intact, carry it back to the nest. If the caller has found a baby squirrel on the ground, have them check if the baby is alert and appears healthy. If it does, reuniting it with its mother is the best solution. Remove all pets, children and other distractions such as noisy equipment from the area and observe from a safe distance. The mother will not come for the baby if she doesn’t feel safe. Give the mother at least two hours to feel comfortable enough to pick up her baby. If it gets dark outside before the mother has time to retrieve the baby, bring the baby inside and keep it warm, dark, and quiet overnight. Place the baby back in the same location as soon as the sun is up. Wait two hours.

If the mother does not return, call a rehabilitator. Baby squirrels that are genetically defective are thrown from the nest on purpose and will not be retrieved. Sometimes, for reasons of safety, a mother squirrel will abandon her nest and move her entire litter to another nest. She will carry them, one at a time to the new nest. If she feels threatened while moving them, she may leave the one she is carrying and hide. In this case, it is important to remove any threats from the area and allow her to retrieve the youngster.

Callers often express doubt that the mother will return for her youngster. If the baby is not injured, insist that the mother be given the opportunity to retrieve her baby. Many times callers will call back surprised and excited that the mother actually did return for the young squirrel.

TALES FROM THE FIELD

Mistaken Identity?

by Jean Chamberlain

We all have our favorite tale about a member of the public misidentifying an animal brought in to rehab. Mine took place many years ago in Winston-Salem. An elderly lady called and told me that she had an orphaned baby beaver and would I please help the poor fellow. I asked her if she had any water (a river, lake or pond) on her property or nearby. She said no. She lived in the city. I then asked her how she knew it was a beaver. “It has a flat tail,” she said. “A flat tail?” “Yes, a flat tail,” she said. “How large is the baby,” I asked. “Small, I can’t describe it well.” Oh well, I decided I would have to see this baby beaver, though it was a fair drive to her place.

As I drove into her driveway, I looked around and there was no lake or pond in sight. I didn’t see any beaver either. I knocked on her front door. After introducing myself, I asked “Where is the baby?” “It’s on my side stoop,” she said. “Ok, let’s look.” She took me to the side of her house, where directly opposite the house was a small shed. The door leading out of the house faced another door leading into the shed with a covered entry between the two buildings. I looked around. “Where?” “Up here,” she pointed to above the sill on the door to the shed.

“Yep, you’re right, it does have a flat tail.” There sitting on the sill was a flying squirrel!

Creature Feature

Ring-Billed Gull (*Larus delawarensis*)

Presented by Elizabeth Hanrahan

Description: The smallest of the common white headed gulls. It has a relatively short bill and long, slender, grey wings. The primary wing tips are black. Note the yellow bill with a dark ring near the tip. Breeding adults have a red orbital ring and a red gape flange. Legs and feet are yellow. Juveniles are mostly white on the undersides and have a white rump and banded tail. The breast and abdomen is mottled brown/buff. The tips of the primaries and tail are brown. The bill is dark in the juvenile. First winter birds will begin to show the dark ring on the bill though the wing tips and tail band will remain brown. Legs are light pink to “flesh.”

Weight Range: 471 g +/- 42 grams

Range: Common throughout the year and is our most widely seen gull. It is found on all bodies of water from small lakes and rivers to the ocean. This is the species of gull most commonly admitted and seen in wildlife rehabilitation throughout the country. It can be found foraging in agricultural fields, loitering around restaurants, parking lots and city parks looking for handouts. It frequents local landfills and garbage dumps.

Nestlings: Semi-precocial; tended by both parents. Nestling Ring-billed gulls are rarely received into wildlife rehabilitation. If one is received, and positively identified, it should be replaced in the nestling colony. Nestlings are fed a regurgitant by the parents until they are able to fly at 21 days. Parents teach young to dive and surface dip for food. Nestlings can be fed mealworms, supplemented with calcium carbonate or water packed tuna supplemented with calcium.

Juveniles: First to third year juvenile Ring-bills are often received into wildlife rehabilitation. They should be treated as adults. Individuals found in towns & cities will have frequently been hit by cars in parking lots; at riparian locations they are usually entangled in fishing line or are punctured by fishing hooks.

Natural History: Nests on the ground singly or in colonies, often with other Waterbirds. Nests are in open areas protected by shrubs, grasses or rocks. Because they are solitary, chicks are frequent prey to other birds. Nestling gulls are rarely received into wildlife rehabilitation. First to third year juvenile gulls are frequently received in locations where they are found; including inland locations.

Diet: Omnivore. Their diet in the wild includes fish, rodents, insects, bird eggs, offal, the young of other birds and garbage. In wildlife rehabilitation Ring-billed gulls can be fed: small whole fish, larger fish, boiled eggs, scrambled eggs, mice, soaked dry cat food and meat with bones such as chicken. Supplement frozen fish with vitamin B complex and an avian vitamin for piscivores such as Sea Tabs® (Pacific Research Laboratories, Inc., El Cajon, CA) Give ½ Sea Tab®. Insert the Sea Tab into a fish. Inject previously frozen fish with vitamin B complex and give one time daily. Reference Willowbrook Wildlife Center Pharmaceutical Index for correct dosage of B complex per kilogram of bird weight

Rehabilitation Notes: Provide a pool for swimming if appropriate for the health status of the individual bird. A pool is considered appropriate if the bird is healthy, has no fractures or open wounds. These birds need a pool to help maintain waterproofing. Sick or injured gulls should be housed in appropriate sized caging to limit stress and restrict physical activity. Unlimited activity caging for gulls and cage furnishing should be appropriate for the species and should include flat perches of different sizes, heights and textures. Substrates should be sand or gravel. House gulls only with other gulls of similar size and disposition to reduce stress, fighting or additional injuries. Monitor the gulls for bullying and fighting. Some species, such as Great Black-backed gulls should be housed individually. Pre-release conditioning is needed prior to release; this is best done by housing the bird in an unlimited activity cage, with a pool, to encourage conditioning, flight, bathing and foraging behavior. Release the gull where found or in an appropriate habitat for the species and consider migration times or overwinter if necessary.

Restricted Activity	Limited Activity	Unlimited Activity	Other, Pre-Release
18" x 18" x 18"	2' x 2' x 2'	6' x 16' x 8' Pool 45" Diameter 12" Deep	Pre release Conditioning Needed 4 birds max

Common Problems: Frequently hit by cars, tangled in fishing line, injured by or swallowed fishing hook. May have been “bullied” by larger gulls and injured in a fight.

Pearls of Wisdom

Release Boxes for Virginia Opossums

By Toni O'Neil



When it comes time to release our spring opossums in the warm weather, we can just take them to the edge of the woods and let them go but what about the fall youngsters that are ready to go when the nights have turned much cooler?

We have created permanent opossum release “drop sites” by using large plastic tubes (about 12” – 16” in diameter and about 4’ long) packed with straw. These tubes are covered with branches, shrubbery and leaves to partially hide them. The opossums are released into the tubes, and a bowl of dry kitten chow and a bowl of water is placed near the tube. The opossums have a soft release available to them – they leave the tube on their own at their leisure, and can safely hang around the area for a week with a guaranteed food supply. The opossums fare better, and the rehabilitator won’t worry (as much) about them!

If you don’t have a large plastic tube, you can make something similar with a piece of 4’ hardward cloth zip-tied together to form a roll that is 16” wide. Pack that with straw, and cover with a piece of waterproof tarp, plastic, or old table cloth. Arrange the camouflage materials around it to help hide it.



In the spring, we make brush piles over leaves or straw and that serves as a temporary spot for those opossums. But since the weather is milder for them, they don’t need as much weather protection until they find their own new territory to roam and explore.

I have felt much more confident about our opossum releases now that we provide them with a safe “halfway house” as we let them go. We have two in use, meaning they are hidden by branches and old christmas trees – which is another pearl; we have places donate trees to us after Christmas for us to make brush piles for the birds and animals to hide under in the winter. All you have to do is let the tree sales places know you want them (just like the unsold halloween pumpkins).

We had old sewer pipe for the originals, and now we are making the hardward cloth tubes for other places. They work great!



News Briefs

Ed Permit Proposal Comments

View public responses to USFWS proposal for new ed permit regulations
[http://www.regulations.gov/#!
searchResults:rpp=10;so=DESC;sb=postedDate;po=30;s=migratory+birds](http://www.regulations.gov/#!searchResults:rpp=10;so=DESC;sb=postedDate;po=30;s=migratory+birds)
See documents with # 2010-23342

Reproduction Without mating

Boa constrictors can give birth without having mated.

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2010/11/101103111210.h>

New Liaison

WRNC would like to welcome its newest student liaison, Adrienne Breaux. Adrienne is a first year veterinary student at NC State who is an avid animal rescuer and animal lover. She began volunteering at her local animal shelter when she was eight years old. Adrienne volunteered at Piedmont Wildlife Center when they were first beginning. Adrienne is interested in shelter medicine and has observed in this setting that “there are a lot of well-intentioned people in our community, but there is a lack of information and know-how when it comes to handling wildlife.” Adrienne has a strong desire to help build a relationship between local rehabilitators and animal rescues so that injured animals are directed to the proper resources.

Board Members

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