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WRNC



Sharing information and knowledge for the benefit of native wildlife

A Quarterly Newsletter

Issue 43, March 2011

Great Blue Heron Parasitism

The Great Blue Heron that was sitting in front of someone's townhouse right down the street from where I live...

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Symposium 2011 In Review

Every year after our symposium, the symposium committee reviews the evaluations....

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Spider Bite in Squirrel

"Peanut" was a fully furred, eyes open, 103 g male squirrel who came in as an orphan. [\[more\]](#)

Tools for Training

IAATE Conference 2011: Innovation and Inspiration

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Symposium 2011 Review

By Nicki Dardinger

Once a year, avian trainers and educators from all over the world gather for the International Association of Avian Trainers and Educators (IAATE) conference. This year's conference was hosted by the National Aviary in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania from February 16-19. And what a fabulous conference it was! This meeting of professional bird trainers is always full of creative ideas and information on best practices in animal training and education – and this year was no exception.

First up this year was Dr. Todd Katzner from West Virginia University. Dr. Katzner is a well respected scientist studying the ecology and conservation of eagles. He gave a fabulous presentation on the use of feathers to estimate population size of eagles in Kazakhstan, and also talked about the current research being conducted on the effect of wind farms on raptor migration (final verdict still unknown!) His web page is definitely worth checking out: <http://katznerlab.com/todd-katzner>.

There was also a talk regarding the Animal Welfare Act and the current work on the regulations regarding the change in this law to include birds (previously birds were excluded). Additionally, Eliza Savage hosted a Q & A session regarding the proposed permit regulation changes for raptors.

Several members of the bird training community gave presentations – and there were a few highlights that really stood out and had an impact on me.

First, Leanne Chadwick from Leslie Science and Nature Center in Ann Arbor, Michigan gave a presentation on her work using raptors in Animal Assisted Therapy programs. Leanne has reached out to hospitals, veterans centers, and mental health facilities in her area, and has developed programs that allow her to bring raptors into these facilities. While I had heard about the great work done with dogs and cats as therapy animals – it was really exciting to hear about the benefits that non-releasable raptors could provide to people. Check out the Leslie Science and Nature Center's web page: <http://www.lesliesnc.org/>.

I also really appreciated a talk given by Shelley Raynor from Zoo Atlanta. Jasper is a black vulture that had flown in their free flight program for years. But after some staff changes, their black vulture stopped performing his behaviors and started displaying aggression towards his trainers and keepers. They thought they may have to retire him from the free flight show, but instead, after a conversation with another trainer – they realized – he was BORED. After ten years of performing the exact same behavior on a daily basis – this extremely smart black vulture was bored. He needed something new to do. So that is exactly what the trainers decided to do. They trained him to do new behaviors – and they anticipate that he will be able to return to their flight show this summer. This talk served as a good reminder that we need to be mindful of our birds' behaviors – and remember that they can get bored too!

Finally – I was very excited to hear a talk by Cathy Schlott from the National Aviary. So often, we train our animals to perform in education programs, but we forget that we can also provide training to help with routine husbandry. Cathy worked with one of their bald eagles who needed daily bandage changes on one of his feet. Rather than grabbing him daily, she trained him to allow her to change his bandage while he sat on her glove. Wow – WAY less stress than grabbing and restraining him daily!

During the open board meeting, incoming president Steve Martin of Natural Encounters, announced a new plan – to create a certification program for avian trainers and educators. The planning is still in its infancy – but look for more details to come out over the coming year.

And perhaps the most fantastic part of the trip – a behind the scenes look at the National Aviary. With over 200 species of birds represented – including my personal favorite – a pair of Steller's sea eagles! – this was a site to see. They have recently renovated their facility to include an indoor amphitheater designed for free flight shows. And they didn't just fly raptors and parrots – they also flew a group of gulls!

Next year, the IAATE conference will be celebrating the 20th anniversary of IAATE in Minneapolis, MN. Between the Minnesota Zoo and the Raptor Center – that conference should definitely be a fantastic time. Check the IAATE website: www.iaate.org for more details.

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Trophic Feeding Categories
Pearl of Wisdom
Creature Feature



Steller's Sea Eagle, National Aviary



Andean condor, National Aviary

Spotlight

Spotlight on Christina Hildreth, WRNC Board Member



How did you get started in the wildlife rehabilitation field?

I have always had a desire to work with wildlife since I was young but I didn't actually start my work until I was obtaining my degree in veterinary technology. I spent as much time as possible volunteering at the Wildlife Center of Virginia.

Who is someone you admire, in the wildlife rehabilitation field?

I don't know if she is still involved in wildlife, but a great mentor of mine was Sarah Snead. She was the Licensed Veterinary Technician at the Wildlife Center of Virginia while I volunteered there. She was a wonderful teacher and encourager. She had an amazing understanding of medicine, wound management, lab work, handling, husbandry, and treatment of native wildlife. The impact her own career and life had on the wildlife that came through the Center really showed me how I could make a difference as a veterinary technician in the wildlife rehabilitation field.

What animals do you work with?

I work with a wide variety of exotic species of mammals, birds, and reptiles with Carolina Veterinary Specialists. We also triage various wild birds and wild mammals brought to Carolina Veterinary Specialists by the general public. As far as wildlife, I primarily work with raptors by volunteering at the Carolina Raptor Center.

What animal do you enjoy working with most?

I really enjoy the variety, which is why I love my job! But if I must pick a favorite it would most definitely be raptors. Turtles would be a second favorite.

Do you have a favorite rehab experience?

My favorite rehab experience is anytime a raptor is successfully rehabbed and released. My favorite release was an amazing, beautiful, large red tail hawk that had been an orphan that the rehab team at CRC raised. I had the privilege to be a part of that care and to release her in the summer of 2009. It was so rewarding to see her fly free for the first time in her life.

Do you have any pets?

My pets in order of acquiring: Stormi (aquatic turtle-Cumberland Slider); Cady (cat); Bubbles (hound/lab mix); and Nehemiah (cat)

Any non-animal family members?

I have a wonderful husband, John.

What are your hobbies?

I have maybe too many hobbies. Though not a hobby so much, my relationship with Jesus Christ is central to who I am and how I spend my time. I am active in our church and help lead a young singles group. I have a heart for global missions and this April will go on my 5th mission trip. I also enjoy hiking, running, swimming, and biking, and I am currently training for my first triathlon in September. I am also an artist and really enjoy realistic and illustrative type of work. Animals are my favorite subject and I enjoy using various mediums. I do commissioned pet portraits and usually work in graphite, colored pencil, pen and ink, and acrylic.



Red-shouldered hawk, Pen and ink, by Christina Hildreth

Tell us about an accomplishment of which you are proud.

I am proud of having been selected and having had the opportunity to work at Disney's Animal Kingdom's Veterinary Hospital in a Wildlife Professional Internship. I got to work with native wildlife and the zoo collection, and learned a great deal about both.

If you couldn't work with animals – what would your second choice be for a profession?

It's not really possible for me to not work with animals because I have been passionate about them my whole life. I would make a career of artwork- more Pet portraits, illustrations, and wildlife pieces. So even then I guess I would still be working with animals.

What do you like about being a part of WRNC?

I really like that there is a network for rehabbers and that efforts are made to help everyone to continue to learn and provide the best care possible to the creatures that come our way. It is encouraging to have a group that will work together for a common goal.



Cardinal pair, by Christina Hildreth

BEGINNER BASICS**Partnering with a Veterinarian**

By Jean Chamberlain

All rehabilitators need to establish a working relationship with a veterinarian. The rehabilitator is knowledgeable about the care and housing needs of the species and its natural history. The veterinarian brings medical knowledge and diagnostic skills. The veterinarian can prescribe medication and perform surgery if needed.

As a beginning rehabilitator you should look for a vet before you take in your first animal. You want a vet who is interested in helping wildlife, particularly the species you rehabilitate. If you are joining a local rehab group, the group may already have a vet who assists their members. If you are independent but have other rehabilitators in your area, ask them which vets they work with. If you are the only rehabilitator in your area, you will need to ask the vets near you if they are interested in providing treatment for injured wildlife. Start with your own vet. Some vets are interested and have training working with exotics. Many vets have little or no training with wildlife, but are willing to learn to broaden their experience.

Visit the vet's office before you bring in your first animal. Discuss appointments. Will he/she fit you in or will you need to schedule well in advance. What will the vet charge? Some vets charge for medications but donate their services. Others charge a visitation fee, the same as for pets. Will the vet be willing to work with the different species you rehabilitate? It's also important to know who will restrain the animals during the physical exam and during treatment. Some vets like their staff to restrain the animal. For others, the staff may not be experienced handling the species and they will want you to do that. Be sure you know how to properly handle the species of animals you will be bringing in.

Once you have found a vet, use his/her services wisely. Be on time for appointments. Don't keep him/her or his/her staff tied up needlessly. Respect his/her time and office rules. Bring the animal in an appropriate container. Bring gloves. Know your part. Work together for the best results for the wildlife that you rehabilitate.

Beginner Basics has been a feature of WRNC's newsletter since the Summer of 2004. Past articles are archived and are found in the member area of the newsletter. To see a list of all past articles, logon, click on 'Newsletters' and then the click on the Article button.

Call of the Wild

Answering Wildlife Calls

Can we keep it?

By Halley D Buckanoff

It's that time of year again and the phone is ringing off the hook. Many of the calls are about young animals on the ground seemingly orphaned, but we all know that the parents are nearby keeping a close watch on their kids, and you educate the public as to such. But what do you do when the caller has truly injured or orphaned wildlife within their care and doesn't want to bring you the animal; they may be fearful that you will "kill" it or that they will never get to see their "loved one" again?

We all have been there before and will be there again. Historically I have informed people that it's illegal, and I imagine them laughing at me knowing that the cops won't be beating down their door for a squirrel. I then tried telling them that it may suffer and die without being in the hands of a permitted wildlife rehabilitator, but they took that "it won't happen to me attitude". I attempted the diarrhea tactic – use the words diarrhea and vomiting as many times in the conversation as possible (they will get diarrhea if fed too much or the wrong diet) because no one likes dealing with diarrhea. But not until I put a positive spin on things did it really make the difference!

Next time they call and say, "Can we keep it and care for it ourselves?" You can tell them, "Putting this animal in our care means it will be looked after by a State (and/or Federally) Permitted Wildlife Rehabilitator that is skilled in the care of our native species. It will have an opportunity to be raised with it's own kind, provided with a nutritionally complete diet, given veterinary attention as needed, with the prospect of reintroduction into the wild in a condition that will optimize its long-term chance of survival." Could you say no to that???

Trophic Feeding Categories of Birds

Exudativores

By Elizabeth L. Hanrahan; photos courtesy Halley D Buckanoff

Exudativores include sapsuckers, kinglets and woodpeckers. Their diet is adapted to natural tree sap and resin. It also includes a wide variety of insects including ants, wasps, flies, caterpillar moths, beetles and bark and tree insects and their eggs.

Kinglets eat a wide variety of insects in addition to tree sap. The kinglet diet is almost equal amounts of insects and sap.

The woodpecker diet varies from 80% insects to 35% insects. The balance of the diet is plant material including berries or nuts. Woodpeckers enjoy a wide variety of berries including: blackberry, blueberry, dogwood, Virginia creeper.

Sapsuckers eat sap and insects, as well as a variety of berries including red cedar, grape, pokeweed, hawthorn, and tree buds. They also consume cambium, the inner layer of tree bark.



Red-Bellied Woodpecker

The rehabilitation diet should include feeder insects such as mealworms, wax worms, flies and fly larva, ants and ant egg, and a variety of insects that can be captured from the wild.

Include 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). Provide crumbled hard boiled egg yolk, peanut butter mix (1:2 ratio commmeal & peanut butter), raisins, chopped grapes, berries and apple. Provide suet and ground egg shell, cuttlebone or oyster shell for supplemental calcium & enrichment.

Provide the Exudativores with diluted, 100% natural maple syrup with no flavorings, colors or artificial ingredients or unsweetened, natural applesauce you may provide "sap" by filling a syringe with the maple syrup mix and attaching it to the side of the cage or to a log. You can also drill a hole in a log and insert the syringe.



Downy Woodpecker

Spread peanut butter mix, suit mix and insects and smashed berries on a log so that the bird can "excavate" the log.

Provide a hiding, hole in log or roosting pouch, place for comfort. Some birds will need to be hand fed for the first few days.

When transitioning emaciated exudativores to whole food diets mix Pancreatin with a sugar syrup base and a source of animal protein such as pureed insects or chicken baby food.

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Pearls of Wisdom

Raptor Enrichment

By Nicki Dardinger

You've heard it....Reduce, Reuse Recycle. Well, here are some tips for re-using some common items as raptor enrichment!



Phone books – hide food inside, or just attach to a sturdy perch to give your hawks and owls something to rip and shred.

Empty paper towel rolls – poke some holes in the sides, and hide some mice inside (it helps to have part of the mouse showing so that the birds can find their food!).

Stuffed animals (remove any squeakers!) – give to larger raptors to rip and shred (and be prepared for some clean-up duty!).

Corn husks – provide to hawks and owls for tearing and shredding.

Pumpkins and squash – you can still find these at farmers markets....remove the seeds, cut some holes in the sides, and put food inside! Good for vultures and eagles (any maybe larger hawks too....),

Tennis balls – great for hawks and owls!

Shed snake skin – good for just about everyone!

Feathers – stick feathers in a bucket of sand....good for vultures, hawks and owls.

Sticks and browse – great for all raptors! They will use them to build nests. Many smaller raptors, like American kestrels, will shred small flowers and leaves from branches.

Remember, it's important to try different enrichment items. Every bird is different! Some birds may carry a tennis ball around all day, while others may ignore it. Good luck!

Creature Feature

Southern Flying Squirrel

(Glaucomys volans)

By Carol Kaczmarek

The Southern Flying Squirrel is one of the two species of the genus *Glaucomys* which are found in North America. Flying Squirrels are the only nocturnal squirrels in North America. They are expert climbers and gliders. They are threatened in the wild.

DESCRIPTION: The Southern Flying Squirrel has grey brown fur on top with darker flanks and a cream color underneath. The shades of color vary. They have large dark eyes. Males and females look alike. It measures about 9-14 inches in length and is the smallest member of the squirrel (Sciuridae) family.

Flying squirrels do not actually fly, but glide from tree to tree. They have a furry membrane called a patagium which extends from the front legs to the rear legs and have a flattened tail which acts as a rudder or stabilizer. They can glide from 80-150 feet; graceful in the air, but awkward and vulnerable on the ground. Their predators include snakes, owls, hawks, raccoons, and domestic house cats.

DISTRIBUTION: Southern Flying Squirrels can be found in the eastern half of North America from the southern end of Canada to southern Florida. There are reports of small groups found in Mexico and Honduras. They prefer an old growth deciduous or mixed forest.

DIET: Southern Flying Squirrels eat many different foods but feed mainly on fruits, nuts, seeds, and acorns. They store food, especially acorns, for use in the winter. In fact, they may store as many as 15,000 nuts in one season! They also eat insects, buds, fungi, carrion, bird's eggs, nestlings, and flowers. In urban areas, they will also eat seeds from bird feeders, corn put out for squirrels, and peanut butter. They are crepuscular—hunting in the early morning and at dusk.

NESTING: Southern Flying Squirrels are secondary cavity nesters. They usually do not build their own nest, but take over the nests of other animals such as woodpecker cavities, bluebird boxes and specially built nest boxes. They use local materials to line their nests. They do not migrate. To stay warm through the winter sometimes, several families will live together; they do not hibernate but enter a state of torpor during the worst winter weather.

REPRODUCTION: Both in the wild and in captivity, Southern Flying Squirrels can produce 2 litters each year with 2-7 young per litter. They are usually born in early spring or mid summer. The gestation period is about 40 days.



Photo Courtesy Halley D
Buckanoff

The babies are born without fur, with fused toes and a cylindrical tail; they are born defenseless. Their ears open at 2-6 days old and their fur grows in at about 7 days with their eyes opening at 24-30 days old. The parents leave their young 65 days after they are born. The young are considered fully independent at 120 days old.

LONGEVITY: About six years in the wild, 10-15 years in captivity. They usually mate at about 12 months.

WILDLIFE REHABILITATION: Most Southern Flying Squirrels are received as orphaned infants. Newly born babies, called pinkies, are extremely difficult to hand-raise. They are about the size of a butterbean. At 5-6 weeks of age, when they are in a later developmental stage, they have a much better chance of success. Most of the flying squirrel kits come to rehabilitators because they were in a tree that was cut down or fell down in a storm. Other causes include mother did not return to the nest and/or predation. Perhaps the most dangerous predator is the domestic house cat.

Southern Flying Squirrels have very sharp teeth; they will bite if they feel they or their offspring are threatened. They will fly into your face if disturbed in their nest box. They are not considered a rabies vector species at this time, but they may carry typhus which in rare cases can be transferred to humans.

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Tales from the Field

From Toni O'Neil... A man called us recently to check up on the bird he found that was picked up by our transporter and brought to Possumwood Acres. His wife could be heard in the background laughing hysterically as he inquired if we thought the bird had "Ovarian Flu!!" Quickly realizing his mistake, he said he meant ... Avian Flu!!

True story!

From Peggy Hager... Funny story, I had gone on a bird-watching tour in Alligator River near the coast of NC in 1997 or so with a friend. There are a lot of back trails for hunting and the forest rangers were leading the tours. (Really made me think of the movie with dueling banjos and the rednecks out in the woods...but that is another story). I kept thinking of bears. At the start of the tour – and it was in the middle of nowhere – about 20 people gathered around in their trucks, jeeps, and the ranger was giving guidelines, what we would expect to see...birds, gators, everything. I asked the ranger if there was any chance of seeing a bear and right on cue a black bear ran across the road about 15 feet away. Everyone was stunned – everyone's jaw dropped. The ranger said, "Thanks bear," as if it was all planned. It was really great timing and funny. And that answered my question!

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