

2023 Instructors

Linda Adams

(Baby Bird ID)

Linda Tuttle-Adams is an author and illustrator of *Baby Bird Identification (a North American Guide)* recently published by Cornell University Press. After obtaining a degree in biology, Linda worked at the California Academy of Sciences. As a field biologist she has participated in many avian studies including rare lek-breeding species in Suriname, South America. In 2008 Linda became involved in wildlife rehabilitation and has experience with many different species from waterbirds to songbirds. As a leader in her field, Linda has taught a variety of subjects to wildlife rehabilitators as well as educating the public about conservation and living with wildlife.

Kaitlan Adkins

(Everything Bird)

Kaitlan Adkins is a native North Carolinian and has always had a passion to help animals. She has been rescuing animals since she was a child. She graduated from NC State with a BS in Zoology. She also has studied herpetology and is very passionate about reptiles.

Kaitlan completed an internship at Possumwood Acres and was hired on as the intern coordinator and volunteer coordinator. Her knowledge of reptiles allowed Possumwood to expand their rehab services to help turtles and snakes.

She went to work at Rocky Point Animal Hospital in 2019 and quickly became a valuable asset to Dr. Joni Shimp's team. She took on the role of Volunteer Coordinator with the Cape Fear Raptor Center and has helped with every bird surgery since.

When CFRC became an education only facility she Co-founded Wild at Heart Wildlife Sanctuary with long-time friend Tonya Weil. They now rehabilitate all the Bald Eagles in Coastal NC.

In Kaitlan's spare time, she started Cuddle Up Cat Rescue and takes on surgical or critical care kitties in need. She is also a Virtual Assistant and Life Coach. She is married to Matthew and they have many fur, feathered, and scaled children.

Lisa Barlow

(Rehabilitation of Striped Skunks, Rehabilitation of North American Foxes)

Lisa has been a state and federally permitted rehabilitator since 1992, worked in the veterinary field since '96, and has been a Licensed Veterinary Technician for 18 years. Lisa founded Tidewater Rehabilitation and Environmental Education (TREE) in 2017.

While raptors and piscivores are her passion, Lisa has worked with nearly all species of native wildlife. Skunks and both species of fox are her favorite rabies vector species to work with.

Lisa has 2 Amazon parrots, a herd of 14 tortoises, and she is owned by her Cane Corso, Braticus Maximus.

In her spare time, oh wait - she doesn't have any spare time, who is she trying to kid!

Linda Bergman-Althouse

(Compassion Fatigue, Alternate Habitat for Chimney Swifts, Is Mentoring for You)

Linda began volunteering at the Outer Banks Wildlife Shelter (OWLS) in Morehead City, pursuing her passion in wildlife conservation and rehabilitation over twenty-eight years ago. She achieved her certification as a state wildlife rehabilitator and currently works independently in the field of wildlife rehabilitation coordinating and accomplishing field rescues, rehabbing small mammals in her home, mentoring new volunteers, and assisting wildlife centers in her area on an on-call basis. For many years, Linda has been presenting wildlife classes on issues and topics relative to the field of wildlife rehabilitation such as "Squirrel Ailments," "Anything & Everything Squirrel," "Alternate Habitat for Chimney Swifts," "Professionalism," "Hazards of Wildlife Rehabilitation" and "Treating the Human Animal" as requested by coordinators for wildlife symposiums and conferences held in our eastern region. Linda is proactively concerned with the loss of wildlife habitat due to progressive development in Onslow and its surrounding counties and regularly attends community and civic meetings to voice those concerns through education, as well as, rally support. Linda holds a Master of Science degree in Educational Psychology. Linda grew up in rural Macon County, Illinois with many chickens, cats and dogs, but after 32 years of in-state residency calls North Carolina home. She is Eastern Illinois University Alumna, an author, a retired U.S. Marine, College Psychology Instructor, Industry Training Developer & Line Build Designer, Career Transition Counselor for the DOD, Wildlife Rescuer and Rehabilitator, current board member of Wildlife Rehabilitators of North Carolina, Inc. (WRNC) and staunch advocate for animal rights and conservation of our natural resources. Linda resides in Onslow County, North Carolina with her retired Marine & Professional Photographer husband, John, and three (indoor only) cats; Seven, Shadow and Frizbee.

Dr. Jessica Buchy

(Chelonian anatomy, husbandry, and triage)

Dr. Jessica Buchy is the clinical veterinarian at North Carolina State University College of Veterinary Medicine's (NC State CVM) Turtle Rescue Team and the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences in Raleigh, North Carolina. Her clinical caseload involves both wildlife and living collection patients including a variety of reptile, amphibian, aquatic, and invertebrate species along with occasional mammal and avian species. As a Florida native, Dr. Buchy attended the University of Central Florida for her Bachelor of Science in Biology and the University of Florida College of Veterinary Medicine (UF CVM) for her Doctor of Veterinary Medicine. Dr. Buchy has a wide variety of wildlife rehabilitation and zoological medical experience through externships, internships, and volunteering with Audubon Center for Birds of Prey, Disney's Animal Kingdom, Back to Nature Wildlife Refuge, Lion Country Safari, Jacksonville Zoo, and UF CVM field services at the Lubee Bat Conservancy and St. Augustine Alligator Farm in Florida, The Wildlife Center of Virginia in Virginia, the Bronx and Central Park Zoo in New York, and NC State CVM field services at Discovery Place Science and Sea Life Aquarium in North Carolina. Dr. Buchy will be giving a presentation on Chelonian anatomy, husbandry, and triage as well as assisting with the Turtle Shell Repair Laboratory.

Halley Buckanoff

(Herptile Care, DEAI)

Halley is the Wildlife Center Supervisor at the North Carolina Zoo’s Wildlife Rehabilitation Center overseeing rehabilitation practices, center operations, and mentoring of volunteers, interns and students. A graduate from Lewis and Clark College in Portland, OR with a Bachelor of Science in Biology, Halley is also Certified Veterinary Technician and Certified Wildlife Rehabilitator with 20+ years of emergency, exotic, zoo and wildlife medicine and husbandry experience. She is Co-Founder, Co-President of Association of Wildlife Veterinary Technicians and Nurses. She has completed graduate level course work in animal population management and animal nutrition as well as training in Traditional Chinese Veterinary Medicine for Veterinary Technicians and becoming a Certified Equine Sports Massage Therapist. She’s an experienced field biologist mist-netting, trapping, banding, tracking and radio-collaring birds, currently holding a USFW banding permit and conducting post-release survival studies on commonly rehabilitated and reared backyard birds. She works with birds, herps, small mammals, bears and otters, just to name a few.

Jean Chamberlain

(Basic Medical Terminology for Beginners)

Jean has been a rehabilitator for about 30 years, specializing in raptors for over 20 years. Jean presents many wildlife education programs each year for Owls Roost in the Forsyth county area. She designed and teaches WRNC's Basic Course and chairs the committee that organizes the symposium each year. Jean is past president for WRNC, is on WRNC's Board and is its web administrator.

Jean created Raptor ID on IWRC's website and is on the Curriculum Development Committee for IWRC's courses.

Jean is active in the Forsyth Audubon Chapter, participates in several area bird counts, the Climate Watch nuthatch survey, the NC Bird Atlas survey and coordinate the Pilot Mountain Hawk Watch each September. Jean is an advocate for exposing orphaned songbirds to their song while they are in rehab. She is currently recording birdsong, studying the song of our resident songbirds and creating a website for the recordings.

Dr. Kerri Cooper-Bailey

(Herptofauna Zoonoses, Emerging Reptile and Amphibian Diseases)

Dr. Kerri Cooper-Bailey has served as an exotic species and small animal veterinarian in the state of Virginia for over 13 years. Currently, she has been accepted and started the ABVP Residency program in Reptile & Amphibian practice. She has worked in the field of wildlife medicine as a wildlife rehabilitator for over 20 years and enjoys working specifically in the fields of raptor (eagles, hawks, falcons, and owls) and reptile rehabilitation. Dr. Bailey and her husband are both Master Falconers. She has worked with venomous species for decades and gained her American Zoological Association certification in venomous species in 2009. Since then she has been a consultant for the rehabilitation and management of such species for many years including training law enforcement and animal control officers on safe handling, containment and first aid. She currently is an Adjunct professor at the Virginia – Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine on the Blacksburg campus at Virginia Tech. She lectures constantly for local public events all the way to national veterinary conferences. Dr. Bailey spends her spare time with her fellow wildlife rehabilitator husband, 6 dogs and small zoo of birds and reptiles they care for at their home.

Ruby Davis

(Raccoon Rehab, Beaver Rehab)

Ruby Davis has been a licensed wildlife rehabilitator for 15 years. She obtained her Bachelor of Science in Wildlife Biology from Lees-McRae College. She is the Wildlife Rehab Director for Carolina Wildlife Conservation Center where she oversees the center’s rehabilitation practices for patients, along with the training and mentoring of staff and volunteers. Before coming to CWCC, she worked with Wildlands Engineering as a wildlife biologist and lead environmental scientist for hydrology, botany, and fauna monitoring of wetland-stream restoration projects, which included conducting threatened and endangered species surveys. She has also helped the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission with bat surveys. Her skills specialize in trauma and emergency care, including turtle shell repairs, along with husbandry and habitat experience. She was also the first NC rehabber to obtain their RVS license from the NCWRC.

Dr. Ernesto Dominguez

(Critical and Intensive Care, Handling and Restraint)

Dr. Ernesto Dominguez is currently the Associate veterinarian at Wellesley Animal Hospital, in Richmond, VA. Dr. Ernesto Dominguez grew up in Mexico City. After studying two years of Human Medicine, Dr. Ernesto graduated from the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) School of Veterinary Medicine in 2013. After getting his degree, he completed different postgraduate training in wildlife centers and zoos around the world, including the Belize Wildlife and Referral Clinic, Arcas Wildlife Center in Guatemala, The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore, African Safari Zoo in Mexico, The Wildlife Center of Virginia, and the Johannesburg Zoo in South Africa. In 2016 he completed an internship in Raptor Medicine and Surgery at the Raptor Center at the University of Minnesota. From 2016-2020 he was the Hospital Director at The Wildlife Center of Virginia. Ernesto's research has been focused on wildlife and conservation medicine. He is Board Certified by the American College of Veterinary Preventive Medicine. Dr. Ernesto and his wife, who is an LVT, love traveling and spending time with their two dogs and three cats.

Maureen Eiger

(Renesting birds, Tips & Tricks for Raising Songbirds Roundtable)

Maureen Eiger is the founder and Director of Help Wild Birds; Roanoke’s only nonprofit wildlife rehabilitation organization that exclusively rehabs migratory birds. She is the author of one of the new chapters and co-author of another chapter in Hand-Rearing Birds, Second Edition edited by Rebecca Duerr and Laurie Gage. As a State and Federally Permitted Bird Rehabber Maureen has been rehabbing various species of birds, teaching and presenting programs for over 20 years. She has been a contributing writer to the North American Bluebird Society Journal, The Roanoke Star Newspaper, various Audubon and bird club newsletters and the blog 10,000 Birds. She receives hundreds of calls a year from bird rehabbers / people from all over the country asking for advice to solve their "bird problems" or answer bird related questions.

Maureen is an avid birder and previously a Virginia Bluebird Society Board Member and Vice President of the Roanoke Valley Bird Club. She enjoys teaching bird rehab and non-rehab bird programs to various groups and networking with other bird rehabbers across North America.

Peggy Hentz
(Cottontails 101)

Having worked in the animal industry all of her life, Peggy founded Red Creek Wildlife Center, Inc in 1991. She is a wildlife rehabilitator, educator, speaker, and author. Peggy is a member of the Pennsylvania Rehabilitation and Education Advisory Council to the Pennsylvania Game Commission. She has developed the certification programs for threatened and endangered species in Pennsylvania for wildlife rehabilitators, and the state guidelines and training program for “wildlife capture and transport” in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Peggy is the author of “Rescuing Wildlife, A Guide to Injured and Orphaned Animals,” “Raising the Neonatal Cottontail” and two children’s books “Zoey Finds a Bunny Nest,” and “Zoey Finds a Fawn.” Her children’s books incorporate two of her life-long hobbies: drawing and writing poetry. Peggy’s also developed and administrates Wildlife EDU.com, an online training program for wildlife rehabilitators. Peggy lives with her Doberman, Zoey, and cat, Shortness

Carla Johnson
(Handling Wildlife Calls, Zoonosi: Sanitation/Keeping it Clean)

Carla has been rehabbing for over 25 years and is on the board of WRNC. She has coordinated wildlife rehabilitation classes through the local community college in Winston-Salem, NC and presented countless environmental education programs to the surrounding community. Carla is WRNC's current Treasurer, is on the symposium committee and helped put together and teach the refresher course taught by WRNC. In her spare time, she rescues dogs from puppy mills and natural disaster situations, is the Southeastern Region coordinator, treasurer as well as one of the board of directors for Chihuahua Rescue & Transport, a national 501(c)3 organization and enjoys working to place unwanted hairless dogs.

Rebekah Kriston

Rebekah Kriston is the proud cofounder of A Wild Life: Center for Wildlife Rescue, Rehabilitation, and Release in Lumberton, NC. She never anticipated that she would become a wildlife rehabilitator although she has always had a love for animals and taking care of those that were injured. Rebekah is a graduate of North Carolina State University and Appalachian State University and holds a Master’s Degree in Communication Disorders. She practiced speech pathology for nine years and following the birth of her daughter, Lilly, she became a stay-at-home mom. During this time, her work with rehabilitating wildlife gradually increased and she saw the great need for a local place of rehabilitation for the wild animals in her area as well as the need for public education about those animals. After collaboration with a wildlife rehabilitator friend, A Wild Life was founded. Rebekah currently holds a federal license to rehabilitate raptors and a state license to rehabilitate small mammals. She is planning to obtain the RVS license and has completed the courses necessary to move forward in this area. Rebekah currently lives in Lumberton, NC with her husband, daughter, 14-year-old English bulldog, two rescue cats, four rescue parakeets, guinea pig, and a host of other animals. She enjoys writing music,

singing, going to the beach, fishing, reading, traveling, and of course, all things animals!

Dr. Gregory Lewbart

(Turtle Shell Repair Lab)

Greg has degrees from Gettysburg College, Northeastern University, and the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine. He worked for a large wholesaler of ornamental fishes before joining the faculty at the North Carolina State University College of Veterinary Medicine in 1993, where he is Professor of Aquatic , Wildlife, and Zoological Medicine. He is a diplomate of the American College of Zoological Medicine and the European College of Zoological Medicine, is an author on over 200 popular and scientific articles about invertebrates, fishes, amphibians and reptiles, and speaks locally, nationally and internationally on these subjects. He’s also authored or co-authored 30 book chapters and edited or co-edited five veterinary textbooks.

Kathy Lillard

(Introduction to Rehabilitations)

Kathy lives in Edenton with her husband and 2 cats. She worked at Wildbirds Unlimited for 3 years and enjoys working in her yard, volunteering in the community, and being outdoors in general. Kathy has been a member of WRNC since it was formed, and has been helping behind the scenes for several years, especially during the Symposiums and Raffles. She has also been a member of NWRA and IWRC. “I have always loved animals and living in the country I rehabbed animals before I knew what rehabbing was.” Now she is taking a break, but has been rehabbing for 21 years. Mainly, she rehabs small mammals (but not bunnies – I scare them to death!)when I am able. She prefers to work with neornates, as she has the time to take them on! Kathy has served on the WRNC Board for 8 years and has also chaired the symposium raffle committee.

Mary Ann McBride

(USDA Regulatory Updates for Wildlife Rehabilitators)

Dr. Amber McNamara

(Vertebrate Anatomy, Songbird Bandaging Lab)

Dr. Amber McNamara is an Associate Professor at Lees-McRae College and the veterinarian for the college's on-campus May Wildlife Rehabilitation Center. Courses taught at LMC include Advanced Clinical Wildlife Rehabilitation, Comparative Vertebrate Anatomy, Zoonotic Diseases, and Digital Radiography, as well as assisting the director in facilitating clinical instruction of wildlife rehabilitation students. She has taught at LMC since 2013 and previously worked for the Clinic for the Rehabilitation of Wildlife (CROW) for over eight years. She is a 2003 graduate of Purdue University and recently completed a master's degree in health sciences with a One Health focus through the University of Florida.

Toni O'Neil

(Introduction to RS Rehab, Capture & Restraint of Small Mammals & Birds)

Toni O'Neil has been rehabilitating since 1991 and specializes in songbirds, shorebirds, raptors, and waterfowl. She created the Wildlife Rehabilitation courses for Coastal Carolina Community College's Community Education program in Jacksonville, NC and taught that for 15 years before retiring from the college in 2020. Toni has been an online instructor for the Animal Behavior Institute (ABI) since 2013 and continues to teach multiple courses in their Wildlife Rehabilitation Certificate Program. Since 2003 she has been the Founder and Executive Director of Possumwood Acres Wildlife Sanctuary in Hubert, NC. Toni has been involved in WRNC since its beginning and has served in several positions on the Board of Directors and as Chair and Co-Chair for various committees. She enjoys being a presenter in the annual Symposiums and meeting the next generation of wildlife rehabilitators throughout the state.

Betty O'Leary

(Avian Physical Exam Lab, Feather Imping Lab)

Betty has 25 years of raptor experience at Carolina Raptor Center. She worked with birds in rehabilitation and permanent resident birds used for education. She operated a hawk watch and raptor banding station during fall migration at Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge for four years, and assisted with two other stations for 10 years. She enjoys teaching others on raptor rehabilitation and care, and performing necropsies. Betty currently volunteers at Nature's Nanny Wildlife Rehabilitation in Chesapeake Virginia.

Falyn Owens

(Rabies Species Regulations)

Falyn currently supervises the Commission's Human-Wildlife Interactions & Regulated Activities and Permits Section, which includes the Wildlife Rehabilitation Program and the NC Wildlife Helpline. Falyn is passionate about helping people interact responsibly with wildlife, especially in circumstances where those interactions are unplanned (e.g., orphaned/injured wildlife, nuisance/damage complaints). Beyond human-wildlife interactions, her professional experience includes research in songbird ecology, deer management, and urban wildlife conservation. Falyn holds a Master of Science in Wildlife and Renewable Natural Resources from Louisiana State University.

Jerry Reynolds

(The Awesome Opossum!)

Jerry Reynolds is Head of Outreach for the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences. His museum career includes 20 years at Discovery Place Science Museum in Charlotte, 3 years as Director of Imagination Station Science Museum in Wilson and 19 years in his present position. He received BS and MS degrees in Zoology from North Carolina State University.

Ann Rogers

(Medical Math for Small Mammal Rehabbing)

Ann has been a licensed home rehabilitator of small mammals since 1988. She has been federally permitted for songbirds since 1991. She is a board member of both Wildlife Welfare, Inc. and WRNC. She has a degree in mathematics from Duke University and retired from her job a software developer in 2000. She is the mother of two adult sons, two chihuahua mixes, and a pet mouse who all travel in a motorhome with her and her husband when they take extended trips.

Dr. David Scott

(Large Bird Bandaging Lab, Retrospective look at raptors with spinal and ocular trauma)

David Scott earned his BS in Electrical Engineering from the University of Illinois in 1988 and his DVM in 1997. He was formerly the staff veterinarian at the Carolina Raptor Center where he oversaw the medical care of close to 1000 birds each year. His specialties include orthopedic surgery and bioinformatics and he has developed the RaptorMed medical management software system in use at many major rehabilitation facilities worldwide. He regularly speaks at avian conferences both nationally and internationally and teaches veterinary students in an intense hands-on RaptorVet externship program.

In addition to the 3rd edition of his book, "Raptor Medicine, Surgery and Rehabilitation" has published "The red-tailed hawk: A surgical dissection", a detailed layer-by-layer of a common wildlife species.

Betsy Shank

(Eastern Grey Squirrels - 16 weeks in a little less than 2 hours!)

On a warm Spring Day in April 2010 Betsy found her calling in life after finding her first baby squirrel. He was successfully raised and released. Her fast-paced life in corporate America came to a screeching halt about a year later when 5 baby squirrels were given to her to raise.

In 2011 Betsy started her own business sewing bedding for small, caged animals; with a direct concentration on sturdiness for the "wild" ones. Her business, Auntie MM's Custom Boutique grew rapidly in the coming years. In between projects she studied wildlife rehabilitation with a goal of becoming permitted. She trained under several rehabilitators in many states before becoming permitted in Pennsylvania, then went on to earn her Certified Wildlife Rehabilitator (CWR) designation by the IWRC. Her non-profit, Acorn Acres Wildlife Rehabilitation specializes in the rehabilitation and public education of squirrels, cottontails, and woodchucks.

Betsy serves on the Board of Directors for Wildlife in Need Emergency Response of Pennsylvania (WIN), and is the Co-Chair of the 2023 Pennsylvania Wildlife Rehabilitation Conference Planning Committee. Betsy lives in Millersville, PA with her husband and their domestic rabbit, Latte.

Dr. Joni Shimp

(Avian Influenza)

Dr. Joni Shimp went to the University of Minnesota for her undergraduate degree and North Carolina State University for her Veterinary Degree. She works full time in her mixed animal veterinary hospital in

Rocky Point, and founded Cape Fear Raptor Center in 2012. She has a strong background in Bald Eagle rehabilitation and reconditioning. She is a co-researcher and author on multiple Bald Eagle research projects. Joni, her husband Scott, and their two children manage and live on Broken Dog Farm, home to 3-day Eventing and Dressage horses.

Leslie Sturges
(Bat Rehabilitation)

Leslie has been rehabilitating bats since attending Bat World Sanctuary's Bat Boot Camp in 2001. Over the course of her rehabilitation career, she has handled well over 2,000 bats and has hosted all but one of the mid-Atlantic's native bat species, in addition to brief encounters with several megabat species in captive and rehabilitation settings. She trained with Bat Conservation International in field methods, and is a member of the Northeast Bat Working group. She works with wildlife biologists from USFWS down to local municipal agencies and advises on species behavior and presence to assist regional management decisions. As a retired park naturalist and former zookeeper, Leslie brings in depth knowledge of ecology and natural history to inform and improve her rehab practice. She also develops and presents educational programs to further bat conservation in Virginia and beyond.

Sarah Van de Berg
(CWD: NC Surveillance and Response Plan)

Sarah's current role is to coordinate wildlife disease monitoring and surveillance efforts of the Commission both in the field and in the office. Often acting as a liaison between diagnostic labs, state and federal agencies, and zoonotic disease working groups, Sarah believes that connecting human health and agriculture with wildlife is key in building a healthy, sustainable future for all. Her professional experience extends beyond wildlife disease to include animal husbandry and enrichment, agritourism, experiential learning in STEM, and small mustelid ecology. Sarah holds a Bachelor of Science in Wildlife and Conservation Biology from the University of Rhode Island.

Linda Veraldi
(Rehabbing Opossums, Opossum Wheel Lab)

Linda has lived in Raleigh for 39 years with her husband Sam, and 2 children. Has always had a passion for anything with 4 legs. Originally from New York State where as a child she always had dogs, bunnies, and horses. She was rehabbing before she knew it was a "thing". Finding Wildlife Welfare, Inc. in Raleigh and becoming a licensed Rehabilitator has been a dream come true. As she enjoys rehabbing opossums, squirrels and bunnies, she has found her passion with opossums. She was asked to join WWI's Opossum Training Team as her love for this misunderstood creature was infectious. She helped launch the move for the 2020/2021 training season for dozens of new rehabbers to a Zoom platform. It was a great success. She is also a mentor to new rehabbers and loves nothing more than to see them grow and thrive with each group of babies they take in. She currently serves as a member of the Board of Directors of Wildlife Welfare Inc. and WRNC (Wildlife Rehabilitators of NC). She loves to educate and inform everyone she meets about rehabbing and the wonderful Virginia Opossum and would love to re-educate the public about their abuse and mistreatment.

Dr. Carl Williams

(Rabies, the Disease & Vaccinations)

Tonya Weil

(Everything Bird)

Tonya Weil holds federal permits for all bird species and state permits for small mammals, reptiles, amphibians and birds.

Tonya stumbled into wildlife rehabilitation while trying to find that one thing she needed in life, passion in work! In 2013, while attending UNCW for Environmental Science, she completed an internship with Toni O'Neil at Possumwood Acres Wildlife Sanctuary in Hubert NC. She decided wildlife rehabilitation was what had been missing in her life and dove in. She became the Education Coordinator at Possumwood Acres and set out to make the world a better place for wildlife by educating the public.

In 2019, she started at Cape Fear Raptor Center. Raptors have always been her soft spot and CFRC has allowed her to focus on them and grow as a wildlife rehabilitator. CFRC was founded by Dr. Joni Shimp and having a DVM and falconer as her mentor has allowed her to obtain valuable and advanced skills in wildlife rehab. This is where Tonya completed her Eagle mentorship.

In 2020, When the Raptor Center went to education only, Tonya and long-time friend Kaitlan Adkins, formed Wild at Heart Wildlife Sanctuary. They specialize in Eagles and Raptors but take in whatever needs help.

Before wildlife rehab, Tonya was a Marine and proudly served her country as a CH-46 aviation electrician and aerial gunner. She was meritoriously promoted twice and left the Marine Corps as a Sergeant. She obtained her AA in Liberal Arts from National University in La Jolla CA. Her husband Chris, retired from active-duty Marine Corps as a Gunnery Sergeant in 2020. They have an amazing daughter, Tiffany, that attends the Onslow Early College High School and many furry and feathered family members to keep them busy in their free time (aka not baby season).