

President's Message . . . “Baby, It’s Cold Outside,” and if it isn’t cold yet, it will be. As winter descends upon us, it’s crucial to adapt our efforts to provide the best care for our feathered and furry friends, whether they are “close-by” releases, “always wild” visitors or your resident wildlife ambassadors. Here are seven key considerations for this winter:

1. As temperatures drop, many animals become susceptible to the risk of hypothermia. Ensure that enclosures have proper insulation and heating options like heat lamps or heating pads for animals who need warmth. Your “always wild” visitors will benefit from bird boxes (for those that don’t migrate), and mammal boxes filled with straw (only natural materials – no towels) are perfect for squirrels, opossums, and cottontails. Also, mounds of straw in your yard will afford the opportunity for wildlife such as opossums and raccoons to burrow as a means to keep warm when freezing temperatures hit.
2. Natural food sources may be scarce during winter, so stock up on suitable food items, such as fruits, vegetables, and nuts, and monitor the dietary needs for each of your visitor or resident species to maintain an adequate food supply.
3. Hydration is imperative for animals despite any temperature. Ensure fresh water is always available, even in sub-zero temperatures. You may want to consider heated water sources to prevent freezing.
4. Watch for frostbite, especially in animals with exposed extremities like tails, ears, pouches and webbed feet like our sweet opossums and coastal pelicans. To offer frostbite protection, insulate all outside enclosures and provide additional bedding for the vulnerable.
5. Enclosed spaces may promote the spread of diseases so stay on top of disease control by implementing stringent biosecurity measures and quarantine protocols to prevent any outbreaks.
6. Winter days are shorter, so you’ll need to adjust feeding schedules to match natural daylight hours. Some species hibernate or become less active, so it’s vital to observe their behavior closely.
7. To reduce stress, limit human interaction as much as possible. Ensure animals have a safe and quiet environment to hunker down during cold spells, especially if being treated during rehab and recovery but housed outside.



Winter may be a welcomed down time for those rehabbers who bust their butt during “baby season” and feel absolutely spent after the last babies are released, but remember, winter can be a challenging time for our animal patients, especially our hard-earned, newbie releases. However, with the right precautions, we can help wildlife make it through a harsh winter by providing the care they need to survive and thrive until spring arrives. Thank you, North Carolina Wildlife Rehabilitators, for your commitment to our indigenous wildlife NO MATTER THE WEATHER!

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year! Linda Bergman-Althouse

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Looking Forward to our 2024 Exhibitors!

by Toni O'Neil, WRNC Board Member & Vendor Coordinator

Calling all Wildlife groups, centers, shelters, facilities and WRNC members: You are **personally invited** to set up an exhibit table displaying information about your organization or you as an independent rehabber and the work you do with wildlife. What an opportunity for **FREE** publicity and to recruit new volunteers! You also can sell your wildlife-related merchandise, gift shop items, handmade crafts, whatever you wish by taking this opportunity to **raise money** for your animals and your group! Members and attendees are always looking for rehab items, supplies, t-shirts, books, pictures, etc. to take back home from their trip. Jewelry, craft items, etc. also were big sellers, as were baked goods. People spend because it is for a good cause - **YOURS!** Simply complete the Exhibitors' Contract and send it in to reserve a table. (Because of the overwhelming responses, we must limit each group to one table.) The Exhibitors' Contract can be found on the homepage of the WRNC website: www.ncwildliferehab.org. Remember that everyone who participates at your table must wear a name tag, they must register online, indicate they are attending as an "Exhibitor," and indicate for which group. We look forward to those who participated in previous years to return, and we also hope to see new faces and more groups at the January 2024 WRNC Symposium. Please call me, Toni O'Neil (910-326-6432) or e-mail me at (Oneil9734@yahoo.com) to let me know if you or your group is interested in reserving a table for either one day or both days. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have. Remember that there is **NO FEE** to be an exhibitor if you are associated with a non-profit organization or an animal group. Time is running out - the "2024 WRNC Symposium" will be here before you know it, January 20th - 21st! Information about the location of the NC State Vet School and directions to their facility can be found on the WRNC website [Wildlife Rehabilitators of NC – WRNC \(ncwildliferehab.org\)](http://www.ncwildliferehab.org). Additional details and information will be emailed out during January to everyone as well.

Photos by Linda Bergman-Althouse



*"All Wildlife Are in Need & We Will Help Them,
Yes Indeed!" (unknown)*

Symposium RAFFLE & SALES TABLE Growing!

by Linda Bergman-Althouse, WRNC Bd Member

Our ever-popular SYMPOSIUM RAFFLE is coming together behind the scenes as usual, and Kathy Pedrick, Chair of the Fund-Raising Committee has been on the requesting and receiving end of so many great items from supportive donors that I'm sure you'll love to take home. Of course, she will continue to gather raffle awards from now through Saturday, January 20, 2024, at the symposium in Raleigh. Rumor control has it that this year we have an incubator in the raffle line-up! Now, who doesn't want that! AND a squirrel nesting box! Be still my heart. AND "Goodie Baskets" are being assembled now. Please contact Kathy at deertrackwildliferescue@gmail.com if you have any questions regarding donations for the raffle or you can bring your raffle items to the symposium and drop them off Friday night or Saturday morning in the raffle area by the sales table at the VET school in Raleigh.



Speaking of the sales table, if you haven't heard, we are offering a personalized WRNC Tumbler that you can order ahead of time at www.wendypavel.com/wrnc and pick it up at the symposium. It keeps cold things cold and hot things hot! The tumbler is so attractive, and it will have your name on it!! I love mine! We will also have "no-name" WRNC tumblers available at the sales table if that is your choice, but we will only have 20,



so be quick about it! Also, we're again asking for your "holey, broken down, nasty" sneakers this year. Don't throw those in the trash. DON'T DO IT! Save them, bring them to the symposium and drop them in the "SNEAKER BIN!" (No cowboy boots or sandals, please.) I don't know who runs or plays sports in those, but that's quite the feat (or is it feet?). Since



sneakers are manufactured with materials that are not biodegradable, they remain in landfills almost forever or are incinerated, which leads to toxic chemicals in our air and soil which harms everyone, especially wildlife. Recycling and reusing sneakers in new and positive ways keeps sneakers out of landfills and saves wildlife!

Photos by Kathy Pedrick and Linda Bergman-Althouse

“WRNC Screen Print Contest WINNER!”

by Tonya Weil, WRNC Board Member & T-Shirt Design Contest Coordinator



DRUM ROLL PLEASE . . . And the WINNER is . . . LIZ BRADFORD from RALEIGH!!



Our 2023 Screen Print contest reaped eight (8) designs to choose from, and with the help of ALL WRNC members, the votes put LIZ BRADFORD from Raleigh at the front of the pack! Her attractive design was ultimately chosen as the 2023 WRNC T-Shirt Screen Print Design WINNER! Liz is an Apprentice Wildlife Rehabilitator, working under the mentorship of WRNC member and seasoned wildlife rehabilitator, Paige Person of Wildlife Welfare. Liz has raised and released two groups of squirrels so far and is loving wildlife rehab! Aware of Liz’s artistic background as an OXHIP Studio illustrator with a focus on the natural world, Paige encouraged Liz to use her skills and enter the WRNC Screen Print Contest. Liz chose to submit a pen and ink drawing of some of her favorite North Carolina animals. Liz is a talented artist who showcases natural and whimsical drawings on [OXHIP - Etsy](#). Liz will be receiving her official WRNC congratulatory letter and her award check of \$200.00 right in time for Christmas! YAY LIZ!

CONGRATULATIONS, LIZ BRADFORD!

WRNC Board Candidate & Incumbents!

compiled by Linda Bergman-Althouse

CINDY BAILEY – “Animals have been important to me as long as I can remember. I was raised and educated in Durham. I was lucky enough to grow up with a fenced in yard, thus making it easy to talk my parents into a dog. My first dog was a pit bull named Trouble. As I continued to grow, my love and respect for animals of all kinds grew. I graduated from NC State with a degree in Animal Husbandry. I began my career in animal welfare working as the Executive Director for the Animal Protection Society of Durham. Later, I transferred and worked as the animal control director for Durham. I retired in 2010. My volunteer career in rehabbing began over 38 years ago. I took my first rehab classes with Pat Sanford at the APS of Orange County. My early years of rehabbing were with songbirds and fawns. Then, I moved to raccoons. I really was in love. When we could no longer rehab raccoons (because of rabies) and fawns (because of law changes), I worked solely with squirrels. I was in love again and have never stopped loving and respecting their beauty. Over the past years I have begun rehabbing opossums from naked 20-gram neonates to release. I also release for fellow rehabbers. I live on a 45-acre farm in Oxford (near Kerr Lake) with my 3 rescue dogs, 2 domestic turkeys and many ducks. I am lucky to be able to raise squirrel babies and release them on the farm, but I find other sites for my opossum babies. I joined Wildlife Welfare several years ago and have enjoyed the networking and friendships of fellow rehabbers. Rehabbing has brought an inner peace for me. I find tremendous peace watching squirrels grow and play in the woods. To me, success as a rehabber is providing for their needs, so they may mature and be successfully released into the wild. I am a current WRNC member in good standing, and I have served on the WRNC Board of Directors previously.”



WRNC BOARD MEMBER INCUMBENTS; (L to R) Linda Bergman-Althouse, Carla Johnson and Ann Rogers



Although their current terms of three years are expiring, Linda, Carla and Ann have chosen to rerun for the board. The three have been WRNC members for many years and have served on the WRNC Board of Directors in a number of capacities, to include officer positions and as members on a myriad of working committees that help grow the organization and provide valuable benefits for all licensed North Carolina Wildlife Rehabilitators, as well as for residents of the state of North Carolina.

Submitted photos

“It’s a Bird . . . It’s a Plane . . . It’s a Red Squirrel!”

by Courtney Cole, Rehabilitation Coordinator, Possumwood Acres Wildlife Sanctuary

In North Carolina, Red Squirrels are found strictly in the western part of the state, in mid to high elevation hardwood forests, but on October 14, 2023, Possumwood Acres Wildlife Sanctuary in Hubert, NC received two Red Squirrel patients from Sneads Ferry, a small, coastal town. The squirrels, estimated to be about three weeks old, had been found in the rescuer’s driveway. Seemingly uninjured, but mildly dehydrated, the orphans were transported to the sanctuary. Upon intake, many differences were noted that set these 2 squirrels aside from the typical gray squirrel orphans we admit for care. It was quickly determined that we had unusually admitted two Red Squirrels! The red squirrels were kept separate from the gray squirrels already in our care. Treatment and care were generally the same. The biggest difference we found was temperament. The red squirrels seemed significantly sassier and more territorial over the holding enclosure than the gray squirrels. It was also noted that they were a noisier bunch, chattering consistently and loudly. It’s also interesting to note that Red Squirrels are known as “Boomers,” especially in Western North Carolina, because they are so pugnacious and feisty. Despite their



Photo by Courtney Cole

smaller size, these little tree warriors will battle with gray squirrels in their territory and usually they will win! Red Squirrels are found primarily in hemlock and spruce-fir forests, but sometimes they will frequent mixed conifer-hardwood forests, which we find out west rather than on the coast. In addition to seeds, boomers will chow down on acorns, beechnuts, and walnuts. Researchers who have investigated Boomer nests often find parts of mushrooms that have been carefully cut and carried into a tree cavity. There they are wedged into a crevice to dry before being consumed. Based on this evidence, it appears that boomers eat "Amanita" and other poisonous mushrooms that would kill a human. Soon after receiving these squirrels, we got in contact with our state district biologist who was just as surprised about their current location as we were. He asked a multitude of questions, but ultimately wanted to make sure we had a plan for transfer and ultimate release. We decided it would be best for these two squirrels to be transferred to May Wildlife Rehabilitation Center. That wildlife rehab facility is located on the campus of Lees-McRae College in Banner Elk, NC, which is much closer to the squirrels’ native region. There, the squirrels will be over-wintered and will receive continued care until next spring. There are many reasons wildlife can end up in places they "don't belong." In this specific situation, we believe the babies “hitched a ride” in the rescuer’s camper. They had been on an extended vacation in the western part of the state, long enough for the mother squirrel to make her nest and have her babies inside the camper. The vacationers then made their way home to the coast with the red squirrels unknowingly in tow. Stranger things have happened, but it is always best to contact the proper authorities when a situation like this occurs to ensure the proper routes are taken with the animals’ best interest kept in mind!

ATTN: WRNC MEMBERSHIP COMMUNITY! DON’T FORGET to pay your **“ANNUAL WRNC MEMBERSHIP DUES”** of \$15.00. Remember, a change was made in 2019 so our membership runs concurrently with the fiscal year, which is May 1st through April 30th of the next year. We used to pay our dues at symposium time, so now we forget and don’t realize WE’VE EXPIRED until we need some information from the membership archives on our website and the YELLOW BAR POPS UP and says, “Your account has expired. Please renew your account to gain access to this content.” That was an “EEEECK” moment for a few of us recently. GO HERE: <https://ncwildliferehab.org> and click on MEMBERS to renew your account!

“More Fierce Than Merry!”

as written for ‘Carolina Salt Magazine’ by Linda Bergman-Althouse



Although the Northern Mockingbird, the only mockingbird found in North America, has a repertoire of 200 songs and is capable of singing over 1,000 songs an hour we, wildlife rehabilitators, don't perceive that ability as a demonstration of happy or merry as one generally would, especially during the caroling season. Mockingbirds are made to mimic all birds they hear, as well as other interesting sounds. So, when infant or juvenile mockingbirds are admitted to the Outer Banks Wildlife Shelter in Newport, NC during baby season, we're not always sure who we're hearing when we walk into the nursery. Mockingbirds are renowned for their mimicking ability, as reflected by the meaning of its Latin scientific name *Mimus polyglottos*, 'many-tongued mimic.' Behind every song is intent and purpose. As an infant, songs are meant to proclaim, "feed me, feed me!" Their favorite mimic in our wildlife nursery is of a Northern Cardinal; a high pitched, shrill sound (almost headache producing) that definitely gets our attention. They must be thinking that piercing sensation will put them in the feeding line first. Mockingbirds can even imitate sounds such as squeaky gates, sirens, pianos, and barking dogs so well that professionals engaged in acoustical analysis cannot tell the difference between them and the real thing. Males and females, who reach sexual maturity after their first birthday, sing both day and night as an essential part of mating, making their presence known, denouncing trespassers in their territory, attacking potential predators, and menacing or mobbing anything or anyone, to include humans, they perceive to be a threat. The bird you see perched



conspicuously on high vegetation, fences, eaves, telephone wires, a rooftop or on your mailbox is probably a Northern Mockingbird on sentry duty, ready to fiercely swoop and flagrantly harass other birds, animals, or people in defense of their self-assigned boundaries. Even on the ground, they will stretch their legs tall, extend their wings while hopping and prancing around an intruder in attempts to scare it away. If a predator persists, mockingbirds will summon other mockingbirds from neighboring territories by vocalizing distinct alarms, calling them to join forces in attack mode. These birds are absolutely unafraid and will assault large, dangerous targets such as hawks and capable cats. They should feel no need to apologize for their aggressive behaviors, though. They need to be fierce given the long list of predators they must routinely deal with such as Sharp-Shinned Hawks, Screech Owls, Great Horned Owls, squirrels, and snakes, just to name a few. You might think a bird predisposed with unabashed ferocity might be pretty big, but nope, they are medium-sized songbirds and a bit more slender than thrashers who are their closest living relatives. Males are slightly larger than females and their average wingspan is 12 to 14 inches. Most Northern

Mockingbirds have a gray or white underbelly and exhibit white wing bars. They have small heads, a long, thin dark bill with a hint of a downward curve and long legs. Their wings are short, rounded, and broad, making the tail seem particularly

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long in flight. The Northern Mockingbird is an omnivore, meaning it eats insects and fruits. The birds' diet consists of a variety of insects, spiders, earthworms, berries, fruits, seeds and sometimes lizards. Their favorite insects include butterflies, beetles, ants, bees, wasps and grasshoppers. Mockingbirds drink from puddles, river and lake edges, or dew and rain droplets found on plants. Adult mockingbirds also drink sap from cuts on recently pruned trees. Their diet heavily consists of more animal prey during the breeding season but takes an extreme shift to fruits during fall and winter. The habitat they prefer is usually open areas, forest edges, grass lands for foraging, but they have adapted well to residential living. Northern Mockingbirds visit feeding stations, especially in winter where they



dine on fruit, mealworms, and suet. They often bully other birds away from feeding areas, even if it contains foods they do not like. They don't share well. Mockingbird nests, constructed in bushes or trees usually 3 to 10 feet off the ground, consist of dead twigs shaped like an open cup, lined with grasses, small roots, leaves and sometimes bits of trash, plastic, aluminum foil and shredded cigarette butts which are not the best materials to choose, but they are resourceful recyclers.



The male constructs the twig foundation while the female stands watch, then they switch duties and the female fashions the lining. In a breeding season, the Northern Mockingbird lays an average of 3-5 eggs. They are light blue or greenish in color, speckled with brown dots and hatch after 11 to 14 days of incubation. Both the parents will feed their little brood, and after about 10 to 15 days of life, the offspring become independent. You may see youngsters still begging in the trees for food because it's hard for a child to give up that free ride, and the parents will accommodate for a while, but soon tough love will encourage self-sufficiency. As they raise young and feed on insects, they're paying attention and remembering everything that comes near their territory. The mockingbird has the remarkable ability to tell the

difference between individual humans, even after only 60 seconds of contact, despite changes of clothing. The Northern Mockingbird is known for its intelligence and is much smarter than bird experts previously thought. They rank right up there with the natural capacity and genius of the American Crow. These songbirds also recognize their specific breeding spots and return to areas in which they had greatest success in previous years. Although the Northern Mockingbird's lifespan in the wild is 8 years, the 1800's took them to near extinction because people, who valued their exceptional vocal talent, captured them for pets. When kidnapping them became illegal their numbers recovered significantly. The Northern Mockingbird, also called an American Nightingale, is the third popular state bird behind the Northern Cardinal and Western Meadowlark. Considering what we now know about this impressive and boldly assertive songbird, it might be easier to understand when all that fussing starts next Spring. Although it might sound merry at first, that bird is strictly talking business. Northern Mockingbirds need to do what needs to be done to keep us and any other threat moving along and away from their family. Isn't that what we all do?



Photos by John Althouse & Public Domain

Looking for OIL-RESPONSE TEAM MEMBERS!

by Linda Bergman-Althouse, WRNC Board Member

WRNC is looking for North Carolina licensed wildlife rehabilitators who are current WRNC members in good standing and interested in becoming Oil-Response Team trained and certified. These selected rehabbers will make up a team of 5 to 6 WRNC representatives who will deploy as needed and directed by the Tri-State Oil-Response Team out of Newark, Delaware. To become qualified and eligible to deploy to assist wildlife after an oil spill on behalf of WRNC you must be HAZWOPER certified and attend a hands-on workshop presented by the Operations Coordinator with the Tri-State Oiled Wildlife Response Team in Newark, DE. WRNC is still in the planning stages of this endeavor, but if you are interested in pursuing the training and becoming a member of this proposed team, please contact Carla Johnson, Chair of the WRNC Training Committee, at wildlife2@aol.com or wildlife2542@gmail.com.



Tri-State Bird Rescue & Research is a non-profit organization that provides medical care, housing, and diets to injured, orphaned, and oiled wild birds. They have been responding to wildlife affected by oil spills since 1976 and have a trained, dedicated staff on call 24 hours a day to respond to wildlife contaminated by oil spills anywhere in the world. Tri-State is one of only a handful of organizations in the country that can professionally manage a response to a major spill. Rehabilitation of oiled wildlife is a complex, crisis-oriented endeavor, and Tri-State takes a teamwork approach to oil spill training and response, emphasizing the need for regulatory agencies, responsible parties, state and federal wildlife professionals, colleagues in wildlife care, and concerned citizens to work together both in preparations for and response to oil spills, but the bottom line is the Tri-State Oil-Response Team helps industry partners, government organizations, and wildlife responders prepare for and plan their unique roles in incidents that may affect wildlife.

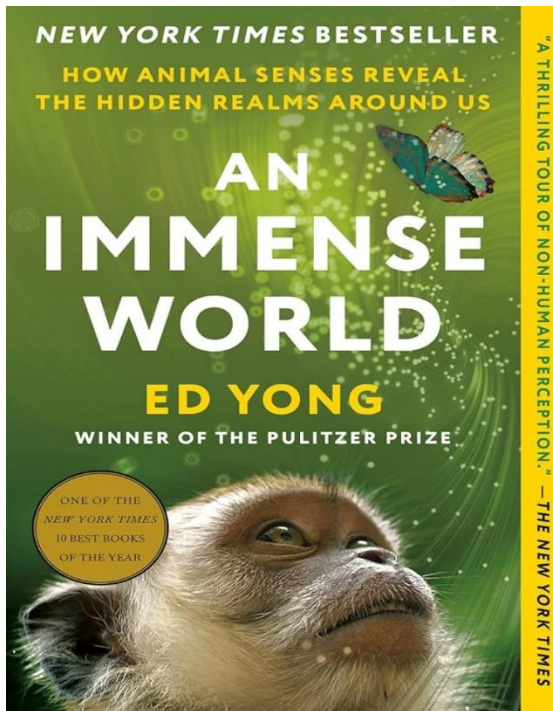


Photos Public Domain

The BOOKSHELF..... compiled by Linda Bergman-Althouse

An Immense World

by Ed Yong



In “*An Immense World*,” Ed Yong coaxes us beyond the confines of our own senses, allowing us to perceive the skeins of scent, waves of electromagnetism, and pulses of pressure that surround us. We encounter beetles that are drawn to fires, turtles that can track the Earth’s magnetic fields, fish that fill rivers with electrical messages, and even humans who wield sonar like bats. We discover that a crocodile’s scaly face is as sensitive as a lover’s fingertips, that the eyes of a giant squid evolved to see sparkling whales, that plants thrum with the inaudible songs of courting bugs, and that even simple scallops have complex vision. We learn what bees see in flowers, what songbirds hear in their tunes, and what dogs smell on the street. We listen to stories of pivotal discoveries in the field, while looking ahead at the many mysteries that remain unsolved. Funny, rigorous, and suffused with the joy of discovery, “*An Immense World*” takes us on what has been called “the only true voyage . . . not to visit strange lands, but to possess other eyes.”

Check it out here: <https://amzn.to/3QtAZh3>

4.7 stars

Of Time and Turtles, Mending the World, Shell by Shattered Shell

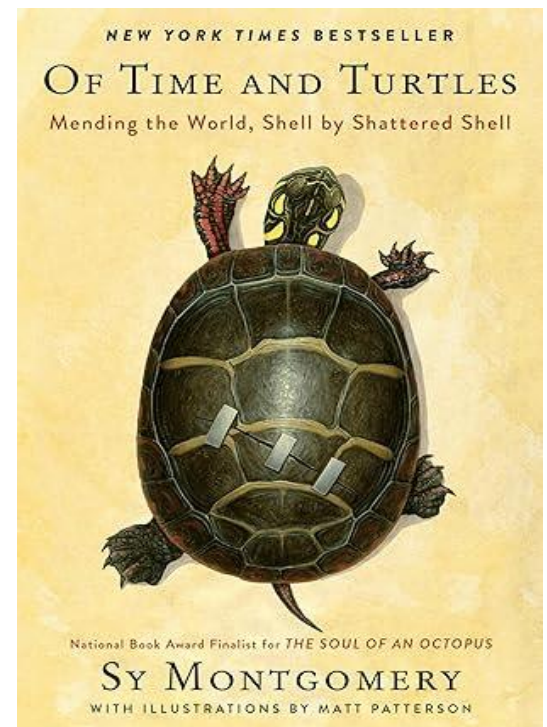
by Sy Montgomery

Hopeful and optimistic, “*Of Time and Turtles*” is an antidote to the instability of our frenzied world. Elegantly blending science, memoir, and philosophy, and drawing on cultures from across the globe, this compassionate portrait of injured turtles and their determined rescuers invites us all to slow down and slip into turtle time. The Turtle Rescue League rescues turtles presenting with wounds so severe, veterinarians have dismissed them as fatal, but the founders of the Rescue League live by one motto: “*Never give up on a turtle.*” They are given a second chance at life! This book is immersed in the delicate work of protecting turtle nests, incubating eggs, rescuing sea turtles, and releasing hatchlings to their homes in the wild. Meet Fire Chief, a snapping turtle, and follow his astonishing journey as he battles against injuries incurred by a truck. Great book for nature lovers and wildlife rehabbers!

Check it out here: <https://amzn.to/46Fif47>

4.6 stars

HEY THERE! Reading is a **STAYCATION** where you can visit someone else’s world or find those like-minded people to whom you can relate! “**The BOOKSHELF**” is a feature to highlight **recommended books** that you may enjoy. If you have a book recommendation, please email lbergmanx@gmail.com with your personal addition to “**The BOOKSHELF.**”



“Whistling Ducks!”

as written for ‘Carolina Salt Magazine’ by Linda Bergman-Althouse

“What have we here?” That was the first question asked by our intake personnel when the most unfamiliar ducklings were admitted to the Outer Banks Wildlife Shelter in Newport a while back. We’re knowledgeable of all the colorations and patterns for ducklings known to “these parts” of coastal Carolina, but these little quackers presented an identity crisis. The tiny, orphaned ducks of splotchy yellow and black with short, black bills were a mystery and didn’t seem to be from around here. It took a while to research the ID book, but we found them! Black-Bellied (BB) Whistling Ducks are “normally” found in the southernmost United States, such as Florida, Texas, and Louisiana, as well as, on the continent of South America. We know that animals are on the move, but this is a first for us with Black-Bellied Whistlers.

The gentleman who brought them in initially thought they were Wood Ducks and said he found them while walking his tobacco field in Beaufort before harvest. A large colorful duck flew up from the ground as he passed the nesting area and noticed the little fluff balls under the leaves. He decided to wait and check later to see if their mom would return, but after a few hours and no sight of Momma Duck, he changed course and figured the best thing to do was transport them to the wildlife shelter, especially since they would be in extreme danger when harvesting commenced. Nesting in a field is unusual for Black-Bellied Whistling Ducks, who are also called Black-Bellied Tree Ducks, because they like to perch or rest on low limbs above water. They may also



perch high in dead trees if they are nesting in tree cavities or hollows. So, this nesting in a tobacco field is quite rare. The Black-Bellied Whistler babies look totally different than the adult plumage of their parents. With one look at Whistling Duck parents and their brood, you see a totally mix and match family where you’d swear adoption took place, but that’s not the case. The adult, Black-Bellied Whistling Duck is a colorful mid-sized waterfowl species. It ranges in length from 19 to 22 inches with a brown wingspan of 30 to 37 inches and weighs 1.5 to 2.2 pounds. It is adorned with a brilliant pink-orange bill, long pale gray neck and legs and accented with a solid black belly and tail. The extensive white under their wings is exposed in flight and matches its distinct eye-ring. Adult male and female BB Whistlers,



who remain monogamous like the behavior of geese and swans rather than ducks, look similar, but the hatchlings look nothing like Mom and Dad, at least for quite a while! They are called “whistlers” because these social ducks are boisterous and noisy waterfowl with a very clear whistling *waa-chooo* call. They have also been referred to as “Squealers” due to their high-pitched vocalizations. The Black-Bellied Whistling Duck eats mainly during the night and enjoys huge amounts of plant material and seeds, which sheds some light on the decision of our Black-Bellied ducklings’ parents to nest in the tobacco field. And because they are seed eaters, noisy flocks of these gaudy ducks are known to drop into fields to forage on seeds and waste grain left behind after harvest. They will

“Whistling Ducks!” (cont.)

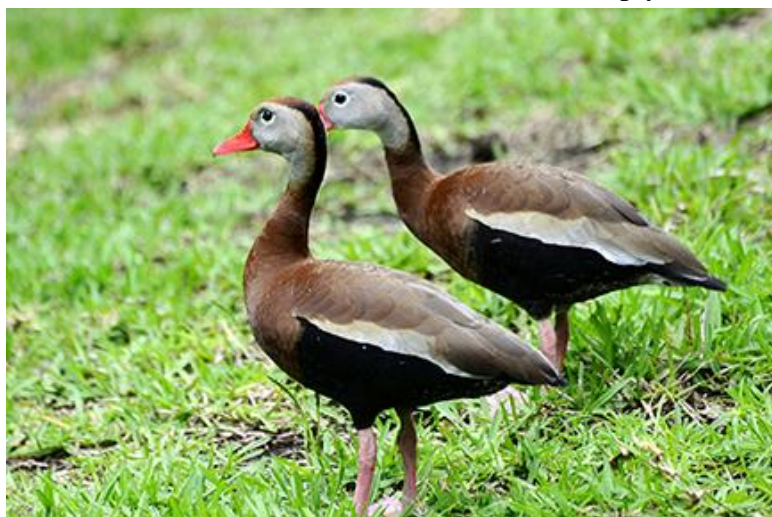
as written for ‘Carolina Salt Magazine’ by Linda Bergman-Althouse

also consume arthropods and invertebrates such as insects and snails when available, but those choices only make up 10% of their diet. During breeding season, the bonded parents search for tree cavities or the confines of a hollow tree, but as a last resort will nest on the ground. They occasionally find chimneys, abandoned buildings or nest boxes appealing as nest sites too, but always choose a site close to a water source. Cavity nests usually remain bare, but ground nests are woven of grasses and weeds. Females may lay 12 to 16 whitish eggs in their nest or lay their eggs in a large community nest with eggs from other females. The community nests are called “dump nests” and may contain 50 to 60 eggs. Incubation is provided by both sexes in a single nest for 25-30 days, but numerous



contributions for incubation by the flock occurs in a “dump nest.” The young are tended to by both parents or all the parents. The splotchy, black, and yellow ducklings in cavity nests can climb the walls of a hollow and leap from those high nest cavities to the ground within two days after hatching, be able to feed themselves immediately and will stay with the parents for up to eight weeks until they fledge. The longevity of a BB

Whistling Duck is around eight years, but the oldest on record is a male, Louisiana BB Whistler who clocked out at 10 years and 7 months. The word is that these ducks are expanding northward, and we have first-hand evidence of that! So, if you live in a wetlands area and want to welcome their arrival, and since Black-Bellied Whistling-Ducks take readily to nest boxes, you might want to construct a nest box out of half-inch marine plywood. It should be about 24 inches high at the front and 20 inches at the back, with a hole about 5 to 6 inches in diameter. Situate the nest box on a pole or in the trees adjacent to marshlands, and they will feel right at home. Also, when you’re out for a walk on trails in Coastal Carolina’s marsh or wetlands in a month or two, and you hear someone whistling at you, please don’t get offended. It may very well be one of our recently released Black-Bellied Whistling Ducks just making their presence known or communicating with BB Whistler friends and family. No offense . . . really!



Photos by OWLS Staff & Public Domain

Passing the Torch! by Toni O'Neil and Linda Bergman-Althouse

Home from school on Thanksgiving holiday and while playing in their yard in Hubert, twin eight-year-old sisters, Kadence and Alysia, and their six-year-old brother, Auldan, saw a bright red Cardinal fall from the sky. Concerned and compassionate, they ran to help the little bird. As one of the sisters cradled the injured bird, the other ran to the house to tell their mom who then pulled a shoebox from the closet. Although new to the area, Mom knew Possumwood Acres Wildlife Sanctuary was right down the road and there the Cardinal would receive proper care, so she called for assistance. Director, Toni O'Neil, took the call and heard quite a commotion in the background, so she asked the mother to 'shush' the kids a bit and to place the Cardinal somewhere quiet and out of her kids' reach until she could get there to pick up the injured bird. Mom put Toni on speaker phone so she could tell the siblings how she appreciated them helping the Cardinal and how important it is now to be very still so he will not be stressed, which will help him recover. Toni also told them she was deputizing each of them as 'Junior Wildlife Rehabilitators' and that she'd like them to research Cardinals and write up a small report that she could read when she arrived for pick-up and transport. When Toni arrived, they had all written reports with drawings to present to her. The male Cardinal had come around a little and was found out of the box and sitting aloft a shelf in the utility room. He still went to Possumwood to get checked out, spent a few "spa" days, and within a couple days, was definitely ready and able to head to open sky again. No one knows why the Cardinal fell. It's anybody's guess, but fortunately it wasn't a serious injury. It sure could have been a different outcome if the children hadn't intervened. Passing the torch can happen at any time, anywhere and at any age! Kadence, Alysia, and Auldan will remember this positive rescue experience and feel the joy of making a difference in a fragile creature's life forever, and who knows how it will impact their own lives. Did Toni just meet a future Possumwood Acres volunteer, a WRNC member, a Veterinarian, a Wildlife Biologist, or an active conservationist? Who knows?



Meet the New VSLs by Emma Eldridge, NCSU, College of VetMed



Caroline Diehl, Class of 2027, has previously worked at the May Wildlife Rehabilitation Center in Banner Elk, as well as with rehabbers in the Raleigh area. She is interested in pursuing a career in zoological and wildlife medicine and is excited for the opportunity to be involved in the symposium this year and next year! (Caroline in green scrubs)

Emily Haupt, Class of 2027, is an active Turtle Rescue Team member on NC State's campus and is excited for the opportunity to learn more about mammalian rehabilitation at this year's WRNC symposium. She is pursuing a career in small animal and exotic medicine and hopes to include wildlife triage and treatment in her future! (Emily in red)



WRNC Membership Renewal by Ann Rogers, Membership Com/Chair



REMINDER: DON'T FORGET to pay the annual \$15 dues to renew your WRNC membership! The fiscal year runs from May 1 through April 30 of the next year. Regardless of when we receive your dues during a year, the fee will cover that period. Remember, this change was made in 2019 to avoid confusion when the dues payment was formerly included in our symposium registration. Benefits for WRNC members include:



Photos by John Althouse

- Reduced symposium registration fee.
- Access to newsletter archives.
- Access to Membership Directory.
- Option to appear in Wildlife Rehabilitator Directory.
- Directory Information made available to the public.
- Eligibility to apply for cage grants.

Visit our website, at <https://ncwildliferehab.org/membership-renewal/> to join or renew. Belonging to Wildlife Rehabilitators of North Carolina, Inc. (WRNC) helps expand your network with other rehabilitators across the state so we all can share skill sets and knowledge with each other through face-to-face contact and formal training. Also, our annual symposium provides the necessary training for new permits, as well as our annual renewal requirements. WRNC worked for years to encourage the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC) to allow RVS licenses among our ranks, and we were instrumental in its ultimate adoption and implementation. With our sustained developmental growth, WRNC has become a centralized training hub for North Carolina Wildlife Rehabilitators, as well as rehabbers from surrounding and more remote states. Please visit WRNC's website today to renew your membership!

“Embrace The Challenges, For They Are The Stepping Stones to Success.” (unknown)

Quinto's Comedy Corner by Linda Bergman-Althouse

QUINTO SAYS: YOU might be a WILDLIFE REHABILITATOR -

IF . . . you measure success by the number of squirrels that recognize you at the local park.

IF . . . you know how deer feel about brussels sprouts!
They are not fawn of them!

IF . . . you know why the Pelican got kicked out of a restaurant.
He had a big bill and no money!

WHAT DID THE SNAIL SAY while riding on a turtle's back?
Whoooooooooooooooooooo!



Photo by John Althouse

Quinto wishes everyone a **MOST MERRY CHRISTMAS & A VERY HAPPY NEW YEAR!!**

WRNC MEMBERSHIP! 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 would like to share with **QUINTO** for his column, please send it to lbergmanx@gmail.com

WRNC Newsletter Schedule

Do you have a wildlife-related idea you would like to share with the WRNC membership? Please submit it to our 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 **Linda Bergman-Althouse** at lbergmanx@gmail.com **Thank you!**

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

March 1st

June 1st

September 1st

December 1st

WRNC Newsletter Editor & Copy Editors

Linda Bergman-Althouse	Editor	Carla Johnson	C-Editor
Jean Chamberlain	C-Editor	Ann Rogers	C-Editor

