

## 2025 Instructors

Additional speaker bios will be added as their class topics are confirmed.

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### **Linda Bergman-Althouse**

*(Hazards of Wildlife Rehabilitation)*

Linda began volunteering at the Outer Banks Wildlife Shelter (OWLS) in Morehead City, pursuing her passion in wildlife conservation and rehabilitation almost thirty 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," "Mentoring," and "Compassion Fatigue" 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; Frizbee, Bobby Carl, and Shadow.

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### **Cindy Bailey**

*(An Introduction to Feeding and Caring for Young Squirrels, Enrichment or Codependency for your Squirrels)*

Animals have been important to Cindy for as long as she can remember. She was raised and educated in Durham. As she continued to grow, her love and respect for animals of all kinds grew.

Cindy graduated from NC State with a degree in Animal Science. She furthered her animal science education at Oklahoma State University. She began her career in animal welfare working as the Executive Director for the Animal Protection Society of Durham. Later, she transferred and worked as the animal control director for Durham. She retired in 2010. Her volunteer career in rehabbing began over 38 years ago. She took her first rehab classes with Pat Sanford at the APS of Orange County. Her early years of rehabbing was with songbirds and fawns. Then she moved to raccoons. she really was in love. When we could no longer rehab racoons (because of rabies) and fawns (because of law changes), she worked solely with squirrels. She was in love again and has never stopped loving and respecting the beauty of the wild babies. Over the past years she has begun rehabbing opossums from naked 20-gram neonates to release. She also releases for fellow

rehabbers.

Cindy lives on a 45-acre farm in Oxford (near Kerr Lake) with her 3 rescue dogs, 2 domestic turkeys and many ducks. She is lucky to be able to raise the squirrel babies and release them on the farm. She found other sites for her opossum babies.

Cindy joined Wildlife Welfare several years ago and has enjoyed the networking and friendships of fellow rehabbers. Rehabbing has brought an inner peace for her. She finds tremendous peace watching squirrels grow and play in the woods. To her, success as a rehabber is providing for their needs, so they may mature and be successfully released into the wild.

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**Andrew Baughman**

*(The Rehabilitation of Loons)*

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**Jean Chamberlain**

*(Is that a Bird I hear? A Mammal? Maybe an Amphibian? )*

Jean has been a wildlife rehabilitator for over 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.

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**Sunny Cooper**

*(Large Bird Bandaging Workshop, Biosecurity Lab)*

Sunny is the Hospital Manager at the Carolina Raptor Center (CRC), overseeing all wild rehabilitation patients, the hospital's daily operation, the medical needs of all resident birds, and supervising volunteers, interns, and staff. A graduate of Warren Wilson College with a Bachelor of Science in Biology and a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Studies with a concentration in Conservation Biology, she has been working with raptors for over 10 years through residential ambassadors and treating wild patients through rehabilitation. She is a current Board Member for WRNC. Sunny loves to teach and mentor and is excited to teach at the WRNC Symposium.

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**Ruby Davis**

*(Raccoon Rehab, Skunk 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 works for Wildlands Engineering as a wildlife biologist and lead environmental scientist for hydrology, botany, and fauna monitoring of wetland-stream restoration projects, which includes conducting threatened and endangered species surveys. She has also assisted 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 with skunks being her spirit animal!

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**Tara Frost**

*(Introduction to Wildlife Rehabilitation, Intro to Songbird ID and Diet Needs)*

Tara Frost is a 2019 Lees McRae graduate, earning her BS degree in Wildlife Biology with a focus on wildlife rehabilitation. Upon Graduation Tara has been working at the May Wildlife Rehabilitation Center at Lees McRae College in Banner Elk NC as one of the fulltime wildlife rehabilitators, where she helps care for the 1,500+ patients a year, that includes but not limited to, opossums, squirrels, rabbits, reptiles, owls, hawks, and her favorite, songbirds. Her main duties include daily animal care, emergency triage, assisting the veterinarian with surgeries, monitoring anesthesia and patient status. Tara is also responsible for help in teaching the college students wildlife rehabilitation in and outside the center. She is currently a student at Appalachian State University studying Veterinary Technology with the goal of becoming a Registered Veterinary Technician to better help her patients and students. Tara, as of last year, is a board member of the WRNC and wants to continue improving the lives and care provided to our wildlife.

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**Dr. Antonia Gardner**

*(Opossum Medicine, Fracture Management)*

Dr. Antonia Gardner graduated with her veterinary degree from the University of Florida in 2004, after which she completed a small animal/ exotic internship at Florida Veterinary Specialists and North Bay Animal Hospital. After that she moved to southeast Florida and began working at the South Florida Wildlife Center (SFWC) in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. In 2014 she became the medical director at the SFWC and continued in that position until June 2022. As the medical director she was not only in charge of clinical operations and staff management, but also overseeing a very active undergraduate internship and a veterinary externship. Educating students on wildlife medicine is one of her passions, as is forging relationships between wildlife centers and the veterinary research community.

Dr. Gardner has presented at several conferences, including the American Association of Zoological Medicine Conference, the International Wildlife Rehabilitators' Council symposium, the Wildlife Disease Association's international symposium, and the North Carolina Wildlife Medicine symposium. She also is

a courtesy lecturer at the University of Florida, a guest lecturer for the HSVMA, and presented a 4-part webinar series for the University of Miami's Avian and Wildlife Laboratory on wildlife medicine. Dr. Gardner authored a chapter on Virginia opossum in *Medical Management of Wildlife Species: A Guide for Practitioners*, and co-authored a chapter in the recently published *Wildlife and Exotic Animal Ophthalmology* textbook series. She also published a research article on cardiac measurements in flying foxes.

In summer 2022, Dr. Gardner and her family relocated to Charlotte, North Carolina where she became one of the veterinarians at the Carolina Raptor Center in Huntersville. She also provides care for canine and feline patients at Spay Neuter Clinic of the Carolinas, and is looking forward to becoming more involved in the wildlife community in North Carolina.

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**Colleen Hartman**

*(Ambassador Candidacy and Long term welfare of Raptors)*

Colleen Roddick Hartman, CPBT-KA, is the Curator of Birds at the Raptor Center. She has been working with a variety of species including raptors and non-raptor birds of prey for over 10 years. Colleen is responsible for the care and management of the entire collection of resident birds at the Raptor Center as well as implementing the most up-to-date training practices. She has experience working with birds of prey in dynamic show settings as well as training foundation behaviors for husbandry and educational presentations. Colleen has been hosting raptor training and husbandry seminars since 2016 and has aided other facilities in their understanding and application of raptor behavior, training, husbandry care, and overall welfare through the teaching of formal classes, workshops, and consultation work.

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**Melisse Hopping**

*(Rehabilitating Opossums)*

Melisse has been a licensed wildlife rehabber for about twenty years. She has taught parts of the wildlife rehab course at Forsyth Technical Community College, and has previously given presentations at this symposium. She mentors new rehabbers, and is an active member of Owl's Roost, a nonprofit local organization of rehabbers and wildlife educators.

She lives on about 10 acres in Pfafftown, North Carolina with her husband Jerry (fellow rehabber and cage builder extraordinaire), two dogs, and 8 chickens.

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**Carla Johnson**

*(Handling Wildlife Calls, Zoonosis: Sanitation/Keeping it Clean)*

Carla has been rehabbing for over 30 years, is on the board of WRNC and is their current treasurer. She has coordinated wildlife rehabilitation classes through the local community college in Winston-Salem, NC and has presented countless environmental education programs to surrounding communities. She 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 southeast regional coordinator, treasurer and a board member for Chihuahua Rescue & Transport, Inc., a national 501(c)3 organization and she enjoys working to place unwanted hairless breed dogs. She also is treasurer and a board member of Humane Solution Spay & Neuter Program that offers low cost S/N

vouchers to people in the Winston-Salem and surrounding areas.

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**Rebekah Kriston**

*(Apprentice Permit and New Rehabber Q&A)*

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, six month old pug, two rescue cats, four parakeets, three rabbits, and a host of other animals. She enjoys writing music, singing, going to the beach, fishing, reading, traveling, and of course, all things animals!

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**Dr. Gregory Lewbart**

*(Turtle Shell Repair Lab, Interesting Amphibian and Reptile Clinical Cases; An Interactive Learning Experience)*

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.

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**Kathy Lillard**

*(Natural History of Small Mammals)*

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**Toni O'Neil**

*(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.

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**Betty O'Leary**

*(Avian Physical Exam Lab, Raptor ID 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.

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**Falyn Owen**

*(Hurricane Helene's Impact on Wildlife)*

Falyn is NCWRC's Extension Wildlife Biologist under its Human-Wildlife Interactions, Regulated Activities, & Permits Section, which oversees wildlife rehabilitation in NC. Falyn's role is to protect people, wildlife, and domestic animals by helping people interact with wildlife responsibly. Her professional experience includes ecology and management of a variety of species, including North Carolina's designated rabies vector species. Falyn holds a Master of Science in Wildlife and Renewable Natural Resources from Louisiana State University.

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**Dr. Karra Pierce**

*(Dermatology)*

Karra is originally from Canada. During her undergraduate degree she worked as a wildlife rehabilitator. Following this, she attended Western College of Veterinary Medicine with the goal of becoming a wildlife veterinarian. She is currently a full time wildlife veterinarian at the Wildlife Center of Virginia, where she loves teaching interns, veterinary students, and wildlife rehabilitators about wildlife rehabilitation and wildlife medicine.

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**Dr. Tracey Ritzman**

*(Neoplasia in Birds of Prey)*

Dr. Ritzman graduated from North Carolina State University College of Veterinary Medicine in 1995. During the first year of her veterinary career, she completed an avian and exotic animal medicine internship with the bird food company Kaytee Products. She then remained on staff at Kaytee Products for several years after her internship with a focus on avicultural medicine and avian nutritional research. Dr. Ritzman became board certified in Avian Practice with the American Board of Veterinary Practitioners in 2002. She served as a staff veterinarian in the Avian/Exotics Section of Angell Animal Medical Center in Boston, MA from 1998-2006. She then went on to become board certified in Exotic Companion Mammal Practice in 2010. Dr. Ritzman supports the veterinary community through teaching veterinary students, technicians and other veterinarians in the field of avian and exotic animal medicine and surgery.

Dr. Ritzman provides veterinary care for the raptors at the Carolina Raptor Center in Huntersville, N.C. and also works at the veterinary hospital Carolinas Veterinary Care Clinic in Huntersville, N.C.

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**Ann Rogers**

*(Medical Terminology and Math for Beginners)*

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 and two chihuahua mixes, and is the grandmother of three small boys.

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**Dr. David Scott**

*(Avian Necropsy Lab, Neurological Disease in Avians, Avian Orthopedics)*

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**Milan Starr**

*(Biosecurity Lab)*

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**Maggie Stein**

*(Volunteering)*

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**Leslie Sturges**

*(Bat Rehabilitation)*

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**Dr Miranda Torklison**  
*(Fox Rehabilitation)*

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**Miranda Turner**  
*(The Impact of CWD)*

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**Linda Veraldi**  
*(Opossum Wheel Workshop)*

Linda has lived in Raleigh for 40 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 reeducate the public about their abuse and mistreatment.

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**Tonya Weil**  
*(Apprentice Permit & New Rehabber Q&A)*

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