

2025 Instructors

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

Jessica Anderson

(Social Media for Wildlife Rehabilitators, Basic Rehabilitation of Eastern Cottontails)

Jessica Andersen is the Rehabilitation Director at the Blue Ridge Wildlife Center, where she's worked rehabbing native Virginia wildlife for the last 11 years. Previous to working at BRWC, she worked at Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation in Kendalia, TX, and the Marine Mammal Care Center in San Pedro, CA. When not working with wildlife, Jessica is an avid birder, hiker, and wildlife photographer, and enjoys spending time with her two indoor-only cats, Nugget and Freya!

Andrew Baughman

(Looney Loons: The Rescue and Rehabilitation of Common Loons)

Andrew has been practicing wildlife rehabilitation for four years throughout North Carolina and Wisconsin. He is currently obtaining a degree in Wildlife Biology at Lees-McRae College in Banner Elk, NC. While Andrew has a passion for all things wild, avian species hold a special place in his heart. Seabirds and shorebirds sparked his love for wildlife rehabilitation, and he aims to one day open up his own wildlife hospital.

(The Rehabilitation of Loons)

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 over 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 33 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 two (indoor only) cats; Bobby Carl and Shadow.

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 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 as the Executive Director of 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 were with songbirds and fawns. Then she moved to raccoons, where she fell in love. When we could no longer rehab raccoons (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 three rescue dogs, two 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 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.

Halley Buckanoff

(Triage and Stabilization of Herps)

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

(Is that a Bird, A Mammal or Amphibian I Hear?)

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 Owl's 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 treasurer and 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 Forsyth Audubon, participates in several area bird counts, the Climate Watch nuthatch survey, the NC Bird Atlas survey and coordinates 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.

Sunny Cooper

(Large Avian 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.

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! Ruby serves as a WRNC board member.

Kim Diaz

(Capture & Restraint of Small Mammals & Birds)

A dedicated wildlife rehabilitator with 18 years of experience, Kim began her journey at Flamingo Gardens in Florida, where she worked with a diverse range of species including panthers, raptors, waterfowl, songbirds, and reptiles. Her passion for wildlife care has led her to volunteer at numerous wildlife hospitals and facilities, while continuously expanding her knowledge through professional symposiums and hands-on experience.

Kim's expertise extends to veterinary medicine, where she has served as a veterinary technician treating domestic, exotic, and farm animals. Now based in North Carolina, she continues her wildlife rehabilitation work while providing educational programs to the community. Kim firmly believes in the power of collaboration among wildlife rehabilitators to achieve meaningful conservation outcomes.

Nina Fischesser

(Introduction to RVS)

Nina Fischesser has been a licensed rehabilitator since 1991, was the founding WRNC president, and works with Avian, small mammalian, and reptilian native NC species. She holds a MA in Environmental Education and Communication from Royal Roads University in Victoria, BC Canada, and a BA in Therapeutic Recreation from Southern Illinois University. Nina has been employed for 21 years at Lees-McRae College in Banner Elk, NC, as Director of the May Wildlife Rehabilitation Center, teaching wildlife rehabilitation and wildlife education through experientially based program as a BS in Wildlife Biology: Concentration Wildlife Rehabilitation.

Nina was employed by the North Carolina Outward Bound School as a field instructor for 11 years, and is a strong believer in experiential education through wildlife rehabilitation and wilderness adventure.

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.

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.

Colleen Hartman

(Raptor Ambassador Candidacy)

Colleen Hartman, CPBT-KA, is the Curator of Birds at the Carolina Raptor Center and has experience working with raptors since 2014. She is currently responsible for the care and management of over 60 ambassador birds. Colleen has extensive experience in evaluating non-releasable raptors for placement, training new ambassador candidates, and overseeing bird shows and dynamic free-flight programming. Since 2016, she has been hosting raptor training and husbandry courses, helping other facilities enhance their understanding and application of raptor behavior, training, care, and welfare through formal classes, workshops, and consulting.

Dr. Emily Herring

(Rabies, the Disease and Vaccinations)

Emily Herring is a Public Health Veterinarian at the North Carolina Division of Public Health, where she supports the vector-borne and zoonotic disease programs. Prior to joining DPH in August 2024, she completed her bachelor's degree in Animal and Veterinary Sciences at Clemson University, followed by her veterinary degree and PhD training in epidemiology at the University of Georgia.

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.

Carla Johnson

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

Carla has been rehabbing for over 30 years, is on the board of WRNC. 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.

Rebekah Kriston

(Apprentice Permit and New Rehabber Q&A, Is Mentoring for You?)

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!

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.

Dr. Laura Lathan

(Interpreting Rads of Mammals)

Dr. Laura Lathan grew up in North Carolina and graduated from NCSU’s vet school in 1995. (Go Wolfpack!) She's been in private practice for 30 years and currently practices at Whole Pet Veterinary Hospital, where she sees a variety of patients, including dogs, cats, exotics, and wildlife. From 2020 - 2024, she was the lead veterinarian at Carolina Wildlife Conservation Center. She has a passion for wildlife medicine and surgery, and also loves backpacking with the Scouts, cooking, playing Munchkin with her family, and twisting balloon animals.

Kathy Lillard

(Natural History of Small Mammals)

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 helped behind the scenes for quite a few 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 28 years. Mainly, she rehabs small mammals (but not bunnies – I scare them to death!) She prefers to work with neo-nates, as she has the time to take them on! Kathy served on the WRNC Board for 8 years and also chaired the symposium raffle committee.

(Natural History of Small Mammals)

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.

Falyn Owens

(Impact of Hurricane Helene on Wildlife)

Falyn Owens is the Commission’s wildlife extension biologist, under the Human-Wildlife Interactions, Regulated Activities, & Permits Section. Her work focuses on human-wildlife interactions across NC – from addressing conflicts to supporting wildlife in need. As part of her duties, she develops resources that help people interact with wildlife safely and responsibly. She has worked professionally as a songbird ecologist, deer biologist, program administrator, and digital media director, among other “hats.” Falyn earned a Master of Science in Wildlife and Renewable Natural Resources from Louisiana State University.

Dr. Karra Pierce

(Derm Detectives: Conditions of the skin)

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.

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 care for the raptors at the Carolina Raptor Center in Huntersville , N.C. and also works at Whole Pet Veterinary Hospital Mountain Island in Charlotte, N.C

Ann Rogers

(Basic Medical Terminology & Math)

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.

Dr. David Scott

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

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.

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

Joni Shimp

(Avian Influenza)

Milan Starr

(Biosecurity Lab)

Milan Starr is the Medical Coordinator at Carolina Raptor Center in Huntersville, NC. Before joining CRC in 2022, she spent time at Center for Wildlife in Maine, World Bird Sanctuary in St. Louis, HARP Wildlife Center and the National Aviary in Pittsburgh, PA, and the Avian Conservation Center of Appalachian in West Virginia, working with wildlife of all species through rehabilitation and education. As Medical Coordinator at CRC, she helps to maintain the care of 800-1,000 wild raptor patients per year, oversees the Raptor Hospital Interns, and manages the food and medical supply needs of the Hospital.

Maggie Stein

(Volunteering)

Leslie Sturges

(Bat Rehabilitation)

Christina Stylianou

(Rabies Species and Regulations (NC Wildlife Rehabilitation - Permits & Laws))

Christina graduated from Florida Atlantic University with a Bachelor of Science degree. She started off her career 25+ years ago as a field biologist focusing on aquatic and uplands work in Florida ecosystems. Christina has land management experience working with various agencies and stakeholders to preserve and manage 70+K acres of South Florida state lands. Being involved from the ground up, doing water testing, prescribed burns, herbicide and biological treatments helped her better understand managing habitats and wildlife in a complex human setting.

Christina became an employee of the NC Wildlife Commission in 2023 as the Section Supervisor for Regulated Activity Permits (RAPS) and Human Wildlife Interactions (HWI) call center. She is responsible for overseeing various permits (i.e. endangered species permits, wildlife and fish collection licenses, captivity licenses for rehabilitation and holding, falconry licenses, controlled hunting preserves, wildlife control agents' program, and several other licenses/permits). She also manages the human wildlife interaction call center that provides technical guidance to callers regarding wildlife observations, wounded wildlife, and wildlife damage concerns. With over 15 years of experience as a government employee her interest is to serve the wellbeing of the public and its precious environmental resources.

Dr Miranda Torkelson

(Fox Medicine and Rehabilitation, Emaciation: more than "just a little thin")

Dr. Miranda Torkelson is a veterinarian at the May Wildlife Rehabilitation Center and Assistant Professor of Wildlife Biology at Lees-McRae College. She obtained her DVM from the University of Wisconsin, completed a small animal internship at Tufts, and pursued specialty training through the Partners for Wildlife veterinary internship at The Raptor Center and the Wildlife Rehabilitation Center of Minnesota (WRCMN). She was a staff veterinarian and veterinary intern supervisor at WRCMN before following her love of teaching into academia. She is passionate about advancing quality of care and welfare for wildlife in rehabilitation through student and professional education, creating efficient organizational systems.

Miranda Turner

(The Impact of CWD)

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.

Tonya Weil

(Apprentice Permit & New Rehabber Q&A, Is Mentoring for You?)

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).

Keynote Speaker

Susan Andrews

(Making Bones Talk)

Born and raised in Williamsburg, Virginia, Susan was surrounded by history at a young age and started to work as a field archaeologist for Colonial Williamsburg during her college summers. She received her undergraduate degree in Historical Preservation from the University of Mary Washington and then attended the College of William and Mary for a master’s degree in anthropology. Following graduate

school, she worked for several years as a Staff Archaeologist for Colonial Williamsburg and then worked as the Archaeology Lab Supervisor for Thomas Jefferson's Poplar Forest in Lynchburg, Virginia. Her marriage brought her to Charlotte, NC in 1993 and later to Fort Mill, SC in 2007 where they have raised their daughter.

She started her own business as a faunal consultant in 1993 and has worked with museums, colleges, universities, the National Park Service, state offices of archaeology, cultural resource firms, and private individuals. She has completed over 100 projects from a variety of archaeological sites including Native American forts, early English settlements, military encampments related to the American Revolutionary and Civil Wars, large plantations to small farms, cabins of the enslaved, frontier and urban sites, the first Black Baptist Church in the country, the first school for enslaved children, and temple sites located in the French Polynesia Islands. Archaeology, faunal analysis, and historical research have been a part of her life for many years and she feels privileged to have a job which she loves.

When she is not working or researching, she can usually be found traveling and camping in her Airstream and hiking with her husband and their dog.