Speaker Bios

Wildlife Rehabilitators of North Carolina Symposium 2027

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Linda Bergman-Althouse

(*Hazards of Working with Wildlife, Squirrel Ailments*)

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 35 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 their (indoor only) cat; Bobby Carl.

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Jeremy Bivins

(*Better Care Through Technology: An Intake-to-Release Walkthrough of WildCare*)

Jeremy Bivins has been caring for wildlife in Carolina Beach since moving to the area in 2011. He began as a capture and transporter for Skywatch Bird Rescue and also supported state

reptile programs at Carolina Beach State Park. In 2021 he became a licensed small mammal and reptile rehabilitator. Currently he is executive director of Coastal Wildlife Alliance and also works with Sea Biscuit Wildlife Rescue, building his skills in bird triage and care and helping the organization expand its mammal program. Jeremy lives in Carolina Beach with his extremely patient and supportive wife, Lori.

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Shane Boylan

(Endoscopy of Reptiles)

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Katherine Brown

(Life on a Host: Working with Ectoparasites)

Katherine serves as the Research Program Manager at the Nolan Laboratory of Vector-Borne and Zoonotic Diseases, where she oversees all tick surveillance for the state of South Carolina. She earned her MPH in Epidemiology from the University of South Carolina, focusing her research on developing innovative arthropod surveillance studies and integrating animal health, human health, and vector ecology within the One Health approach.

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Jean Chamberlain

(Basic Medical Terminology)

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

Jean is also 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.

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Sunny Cooper

(Large Avian Bandaging Lab, Raptor Puppet Making Workshop)

Sunny is the Director of Raptor Rehabilitation at the Carolina Raptor Center and a board member for WRNC. She has been working with raptors for over 10 years both in an education setting and rehabilitation. She has a B.S. in Biology and a B.S. in Environmental Studies from Warren Wilson College. Sunny currently oversees the Raptor Hospital raptor rehabilitation program and the medical needs of the Carolina Raptor Center's avian ambassadors. She enjoys teaching and has presented at WRNC symposium, Raptor Research Foundation Conference and Carolina Raptor Center webinars. She has been a part of several publications including Safety and Immunogenicity of Poultry Vaccine for Protecting Critically Endangered Avian Species against Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Virus.

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Ruby Davis

(Intro to RVS, Intro to Raccoon Rehabilitation, Advance Raccoon Rehabilitation, Fox Rehab)

Ruby Davis is the Director and Owner of NC Wildlife Rehab, an environmental scientist with Wildlands Engineering, and an instructor for the NC Wildlife Symposium. She has been a licensed wildlife rehabilitator for more than fifteen years and was the first individual in North Carolina to obtain a Rabies Vector Species (RVS) license from the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC). Ms. Davis holds a Bachelor of Science in Wildlife Biology from Lees-McRae College.

In her role as an environmental scientist, Ms. Davis focuses on hydrology, botany, and fauna monitoring for wetland and stream restoration projects, with additional experience conducting threatened and endangered species surveys. Her work integrates ecological research with practical restoration efforts to promote habitat resilience and biodiversity.

As an instructor for the NC Wildlife Symposium and a board member of the Wildlife Rehabilitators of North Carolina (WRNC), Ms. Davis is committed to advancing professional standards in wildlife rehabilitation. Her areas of expertise include trauma and emergency care, wildlife husbandry, and habitat management.

Driven by a passion for science, conservation, and education, Ms. Davis brings a depth of field experience and a collaborative spirit to her professional engagements.

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Rachel Dupree

(*Digital Storytelling to Build Community Support*)

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Tara Frost

(Introduction to Wildlife Rehabilitation, Capture and Restraint of Small Mammals and Birds, 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, DVM

(What We Know About Meloxicam in Birds, Wound Care in Wildlife Patients)

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, the NC Wildlife Medicine symposium, and previously at the WRNC symposium. She is also 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 and is also a consulting veterinarian at Carolina Wildlife Conservation Center located outside of Charlotte. She also provides care for canine and feline patient 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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Dr. Sarah Hargrove, DVM, MSc

(Responsible Antibiotic use in Wildlife; it's not just Baytil)

Sarah Hargrove is a 2006 graduate of the NCSU-College of Veterinary Medicine. Afterwards, she earned her MSc in Conservation Biology at the Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology within the University of Kent at Canterbury. She has been living in Asheville, NC since 2008, working as both a small animal and exotics veterinarian and as the veterinarian for Appalachian Wildlife Refuge. Her interest in working with native wildlife grew while serving in the Peace Corps in Tanzania, and having summer breaks during vet school helping in research in Rwanda, working in Tanzania and South Africa, and 4th year rotations in Thailand. She has been working with AWR since its inception over 10 years ago. She has particularly fallen in love with box turtles.

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Elka Hutchinson

(Skunks, Mice)

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Carla Johnson

(Handling Wildlife Calls, Zoonoses: Sanitation and 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 and mid west 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 is also the founder of NC Spay-Neuter Association, Inc., a 501(c)3 organization that offers low cost spay/neuters for dogs and cats.

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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

(Illegal Reptile Trafficking, Turtle Shell Repair Lab)

Worked for a large wholesaler of ornamental fishes before joining the faculty at the NC State College of Veterinary Medicine in 1993, where he is Professor of Aquatic, Wildlife, and Zoological Medicine. He is a diplomate of the American and European Colleges of Zoological Medicine and has authored or co-authored over 300 scientific articles and book chapters. Greg has made 33 trips to the Galápagos doing wildlife conservation work. He is the faculty founder of the Turtle Rescue Team, a student-led wildlife clinic that has treated over 10,000 patients.

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Betty O'Leary

(Avian Physical Exam Lab, Raptor ID)

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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Jess Ransier

(*Wildlife Diagnostics*)

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Dr. David Scott

(Post Surgery Treatment & Care for Raptors, Raptor Care Study)

David Scott earned a BS in Electrical Engineering from the Univ. of Illinois in 1988 and his DVM in 1997. He was the staff veterinarian at the Carolina Raptor Center for 14 years where he oversaw the medical care of up to 1000 injured birds of prey 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", he has also published "The red-tailed hawk: A surgical dissection", a detailed, layer-by-layer dissection of a common wildlife species.

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Betsy Shank

(*Rehabilitation of Eastern Gray Squirrels*)

Betsy left her corporate career in 2010 to dedicate her life to her passion - wildlife rehabilitation. She founded Acorn Acres Wildlife Rehabilitation, Lancaster County's first non-residential, commercial facility specializing in small prey species and Virginia opossums. A Certified Wildlife Rehabilitator (CWR) through the IWRC, Betsy teaches at state and national conferences, serves on the Board of Directors for Wildlife In Need (WIN), and co-chaired the 2023 Pennsylvania Wildlife Rehabilitation Conference. Known for her down-to-earth teaching style, Betsy blends science, experience, and compassion to inspire rehabilitators of all levels.

Betsy resides in Millersville, Pennsylvania, with her husband, where she continues to lead Acorn Acres with a blend of compassion, innovation, and hands-on experience that inspires rehabilitators of all levels.

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Mac Stewart

(*The Art and Science of Opossum Rehabilitation, Flight Conditioning*)

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Dr. Miranda Torkelson

(*Songbird Bandaging Lab, Foil Tape - A versatile and non-invasive method for shell fracture stabilization*)

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 passion for teaching into academia. She is driven to advance the quality of care and welfare for wildlife in rehabilitation through student and professional education, creating more efficient systems, and medical innovation.

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Savannah Trantham, CWR

(Sharing Spaces, Not Germs, Tube Feeding for Nutrition and Medical Care Lab)

Savannah started her journey as a wildlife rehabilitator more than 20 years ago alongside her start in the zoo community. Starting out with small mammals and herptiles but ultimately branching out to many species. Savannah graduated from Lees McRae College with a B.S. in biology with a concentration in wildlife rehabilitation in 2008 and returned to the AZA and zoo community for a total of 18 years specializing in small and mid-sized mammals and herptiles. During her AZA career she was able to continue to focus on wildlife rehabilitation through her facility. In 2014 she co-founded Appalachian Wildlife Refuge in Candler, NC and shifted to full time rehabilitation and Appalachian Wild in 2018. When not working with wildlife, Savannah helps run her family farm where she and her family have raised wool sheep and goats for more than 30 years.

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Nancy Vergara

(*I Like Baby Buns and I Cannot Lie: Cottontail Rehab*)

Nancy is a licensed wildlife rehabilitator in Western North Carolina with nine years of experience. Her specialty is eastern cottontail rabbits, caring for approximately 300 each year. A lifelong passion for animals inspires her work, with rabbits and fawns holding a special place in her heart. In 2021, she expanded her rehabilitation work to become licensed to care for white-tailed deer fawns and RVS. Nancy is committed to continuing education, studying natural history and collaborating with fellow wildlife rehabilitators to better support the animals in their care. She recently began teaching portions of the wildlife rehabilitation course at Forsyth Technical Community College, sharing her experience and passion. During the off season, she volunteers for Animal Help Now, updating their licensed rehabber database for the entire U.S.

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Dan Wilson

(*What to Do When You Receive an Oiled Bird*)

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