

ALABAMA
WILDLIFE CENTER



WILDLIFE TIMES



LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The power of a story. A collective of words describing emotion, detailing nuances, delivering complexities, and working together to embrace a receiver. While all stories share three main parts, we are introduced to several layers of conflict, action, and resolution. And during the journey, we emerge into the characters' lives and the beauty of their world. If you're reading this, we share a love for stories. We love being introduced to a world outside our own, seeing a perspective through another's eyes. Stories can break up the monotony of our daily routine. Stories can grow a passion or foster a new interest. And lastly, stories are made to be shared, passed on from friend to friend, loved one to loved one.

The Alabama Wildlife Center has the honor of telling the stories of birds, giving a voice to the voiceless. Each day at the AWC we get the privilege of working with these magnificent creatures and sharing their importance to anyone who will listen. For the injured, we give them a second chance to live out their next chapter. For the orphaned, we watch them grow and allow them to teach us their beauty. After they are released back into their world, we have the joy of sharing their individual stories, influencing the receiver in hopes that they will become an advocate for the voiceless as well. If you are reading this, we share a love for wildlife.

Your generosity and support helped write the outcome for many injured and orphaned birds. And for that, we are forever grateful. Thank you for allowing us to continue the story of the Wildlife Center and the stories of our patients and education birds. We hope you enjoy this edition of our newsletter!

Until next time, wishing you the absolute best!



Chris Sykes
Executive Director



BABY BIRD SEASON IS HERE!

Volunteers needed

We are in need of volunteers to help during our baby bird season! There are 3 different shifts (each shift is a total of 4 hours) that are available for volunteers:

Shift 1	Shift 2	Shift 3
7 AM - 12 PM	12 PM - 5 PM	4 PM - 8/8:30 PM

Please visit our website if you are interested in becoming a volunteer to help with our baby bird season!

UPCOMING EVENTS



MAY 13TH, 2023

Baby Bird Shower
10 AM - 2 PM



MAY 30TH, 2023

10% Tuesday at Rojo
5 PM - 10 PM

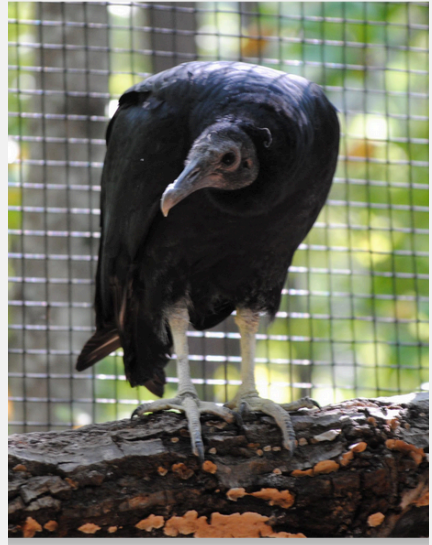


Support from individuals like you is vital to continue our mission serving as the largest wildlife rehabilitation clinic in Alabama. The cost of care for a single bird for one month is \$25-\$100. Donate today and help our patients get the care they need!

ED. BIRD SPOTLIGHT:

OLLIE THE BLACK VULTURE

Say hello to Ollie! His species, Black Vultures, are year-round residents in Alabama and are some of the most important and valuable birds that grace our skies. They spend much of their day riding thermals looking for their next meal. Unlike most raptors, Black Vultures are not chasing down live prey, but instead are using their vision and smell to find carrion that is already deceased. As "nature's garbage disposal", they help to remove carcasses and any associated bacteria or viruses, making them extremely valuable in maintaining a healthy environment. Vultures are also highly social and can develop strong bonds with other members of their flock.



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Ollie came to AWC in 1993 as a young fledgling that had been hit by a car. While the vehicle collision did not cause any permanent damage, initial inspection by our clinic found Ollie was born blind in his right eye. He was also very thin upon arrival and deemed a failure to thrive case, rendering him non-releasable. He now lives as an education ambassador along our Treetop Nature Trail boardwalk, entertaining and teaching thousands of park visitors annually.



**STOP BY AND WISH HIM A
HAPPY 30TH BIRTHDAY SOON!**

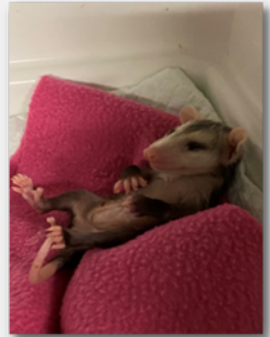


MARY'S MAMMALS



It's 10:00pm and I have just finished the evening animal care that started 5 hours earlier. Dinner has yet to be eaten, and I left the household chores for yet another day. April, May, and June are the busiest months for wildlife rehabilitators. Reuniting healthy babies is always encouraged, but for some baby mammals, this is not an option. Of all the mammal species that have young in Spring, opossums (*Didelphis virginiana*) make up the

largest number of baby mammals admitted into a rehabilitator's care. Opossums are marsupials and carry their babies in an abdominal pouch. Mother opossums can have as many as 13 babies in her pouch, so when she falls victim to a car, cat or dog (the usual sources of injury or death), the babies will often survive and become orphans. Rehabilitators can get inundated by large numbers of admissions with more requests every day. Despite the opossums' usefulness in the ecosystem and their "goofy cuteness" as babies, they are not one of my favorites to rehabilitate. Baby opossums don't naturally nurse and often require tube feeding until they are old enough to lap from a dish. They are prone to infection, metabolic bone disease, require prophylactic antibiotic therapy, will be cannibalistic to weaker/smaller individuals, and the odor generated by the excrement of dozens of little opossums is not the most enjoyable smell in the mornings. That said, they are relatively easy to raise when they can lap formula from a dish and are eating a balanced diet. Once they are at least 8 inches long excluding the tail, opossums can survive on their own and be released to go forth into the wild to eat rotting carrion, ticks, and roaches.

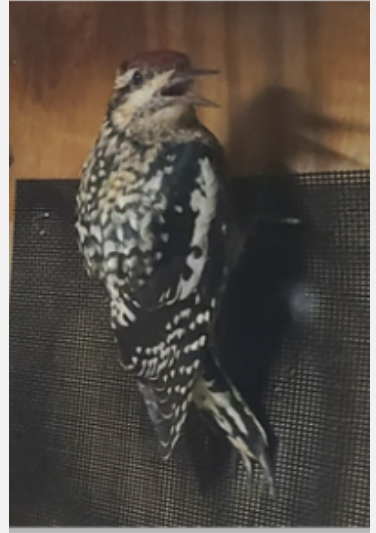


YUM!



TALES FROM REHAB

This Yellow-bellied Sapsucker female was admitted in January 2023 with an injury to its right wing due to being caught by a dog. She recovered well from the wing injury after stabilization, rest, and exercise time in our aviary and was released March 2023. Sapsuckers are a black and white woodpecker species that visit Alabama during the winter months. Males will have red throats that distinguish them from the females. They are distinct from other Alabama woodpeckers in that they will bore neat rows of holes in trees called sapswells, which they will check often and drink tree sap and trap insects. We try to simulate this foraging behavior in rehabilitation by drilling holes in logs and offering a home-made maple syrup sap formula in open-ended syringes placed in the holes. Our sapsucker patients have taken well to the tasty sap.



This nestling barred owlet fell from a tree in south Alabama in late March 2023. The finders reached out to the Oak Mountain State Park and the Alabama Wildlife Center for advice on what to do. After discussing the situation with the finders, we determined the parents were still feeding it on the ground and that the original nest was not accessible and potentially damaged. So we gave re-nesting advice and information to the finder and they built the little one a new nest and put it up into a nearby tree. The nest was impressive, and the parents found the baby that night!

NURSERY THOUGHTS

I know it is rare for all birds in a brood to survive. The fatigue we feel is nothing. Mama birds hunt for the food, then feed it. What they do is nothing short of miraculous. Do their wings hurt as bad as my feet? Do they prop them on the side of the nest and say, "It's down there. Go get it."?



My favorite babies are Bluebirds, and there is one who is weak but gaping and eating, and it looks at me with the most gentle eyes. I wonder if the mama birds can really look into the eyes of these babies, or if they just see a vessel that needs worms. My husband calls me "mama bird" which I think is cute, but erroneous. There is no way we can substitute.

The impostor syndrome is real.

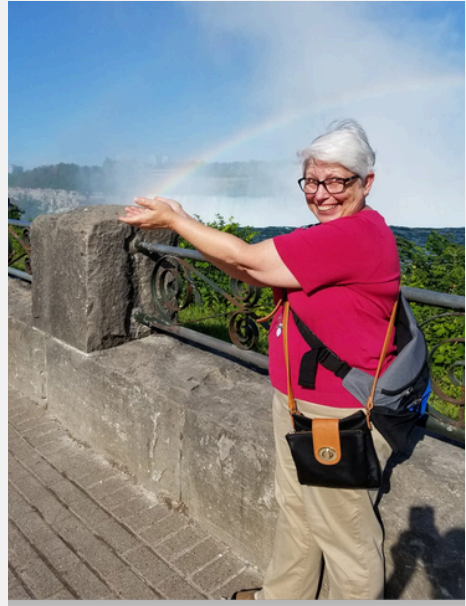
We do the best we can. Thanks to a generous donor, we could purchase 12 travel-sized incubators. These incubators will isolate individual nests to prevent spread of any contagions, and are adjustable so we can use them for each nest from nestling stage through fledgling without having to move birds around. A quick hand washing between stations insures these babies stay safe.



I hope the interns and volunteers, will be able to take the time to really look at these birds and experience them. Notice how their expressions differ, how some are so gentle and others aggressive. How some seem to peer into your soul and some act like you're not there at all. I hope they see each huge personality in the tiny bodies. We are the last hope for these little guys.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

AWC could not exist at our current level without the love and support of our dedicated volunteers. We would like to introduce you to one of our long-term volunteers, Sabrina Baker. Sabrina has been a volunteer with the wildlife center since 2001 and has worn many hats within the organization over the years.



A self-proclaimed 'nature junkie', Sabrina's love and awe for wildlife and the outdoors has always helped fuel her appreciation for AWC and the work we do. From performing medical examinations, triaging vehicle collision raptors, feeding baby songbirds, and educating the public, Sabrina knows how to do it all! Now retired from a 25+ year career as an Application Development Unit Manager, you can find Sabrina and her husband, Richard, enjoying their free time with their three grandchildren!

THANK YOU, SABRINA!



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