

ALABAMA WILDLIFE CENTER

WILDLIFE TIMES

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Monty, our resident Mississippi Kite

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I hope your 2025 is off to a wonderful start! March 10th marks my third anniversary with the Alabama Wildlife Center, and as I reflect on this journey, I am filled with gratitude and excitement. It has been incredible to witness AWC's transformation—an organization that has been revitalized, reinvigorated, and is now reaching new heights in its mission.

Over the past three years, we have made tremendous progress. From a complete clinic renovation to expanding our outreach and increasing educational opportunities for underserved communities, our impact continues to grow. But none of this would be possible without **you**—our dedicated staff, volunteers, supporters, and community partners. Your unwavering commitment fuels this work, ensuring that Alabama's native birds receive the care, protection, and advocacy they deserve.

As we look ahead, I am eager to continue this momentum. With plans for **statewide expansion** on the horizon, we are excited to broaden our impact, reach more communities, and inspire the next generation of conservationists. Together, we are strengthening AWC's role as Alabama's leading wildlife rehabilitation and education center—Helping birds recover, habitats thrive, and communities connect with nature. Thank you for being part of this journey. Here's to another year of progress and possibility.



Chris Sykes

Upcoming Events

**24th-
28th
MARCH**

Looking for something fun and educational this spring break? Join us every day at 2:00 PM for wildlife encounters, guided hikes, crafts, and more! Perfect for nature lovers of all ages. Check out our website or Facebook for details!

**19th
APRIL**

Spring is here, and so are the baby songbirds! Join us for our annual Baby Bird Shower from 10:00-12:00, featuring bird-themed crafts, behind-the-scenes tours, adorable baby birds, and cake. See you there!

**3rd
MAY**

For the Birds Gala. AWC's annual fundraising gala promising a night of delectable Southern Cuisine, lively music, and of course – our amazing birds!!!

**11th
MAY**

Whether you're planning a family adventure or giving moms a well-deserved break, we've got the perfect outing! Experience live raptors, guided nature hikes, and hands-on activities as we celebrate the incredible women in our lives.

DEVELOPMENT DIRECTIONS

In my first six months as Director of Development, AWC has celebrated some major milestones, including a record year-end campaign that raised nearly \$200,000, \$55,000 in support from the Community Foundation of Central Alabama, and over 170 participants in the first annual Christmas Classic 5k.



Strategic planning sessions with staff, volunteers, board members, and community members have been essential in shaping our vision for 2025 and the next 50 years as we approach our 50th anniversary in 2027. These discussions are guiding key decisions on how we can expand our impact, improve accessibility, and strengthen our role as Alabama's leading wildlife rehabilitation center.

Key projects for 2025 include making our campus fully ADA-accessible - with potential support from a \$75,000 Honda Foundation grant as a semifinalist. We're also continuing our renovations of the wildlife clinic by improving education aviaries and creating new public enclosures for educational ambassadors like our black vulture and eastern screech owls.

Jordan Giddens

Director of Development

YOU'RE INVITED!



You are invited to join AWC and our amazing birds at our Annual Fundraising Gala, "For the Birds"! This unforgettable evening will celebrate the crucial work AWC does in rescuing, rehabilitating, and protecting our region's most vulnerable avian species.

What sets this gala apart is its inspiring lineup of speakers and special guests, including celebrity and Iraq War veteran Noah Galloway. This year's event will feature a festival or conference-style format with guests being able to choose from a variety of programs – such as interactive wildlife programs, guest speakers, an award ceremony, live music, and arts and crafts – to customize their own unique experience throughout the night based on what interests them the most!

Individual tickets are \$85, while VIP tickets are \$150, and include a 4-course Southern Cuisine buffet, a drink ticket, and a night of fun! Learn more about the event by scanning the QR Code or visiting the website at <https://secure.qgiv.com/event/forthebirdsgala2025/>.



Ed Bird
Spotlight...

MISSISSIPPI KITES

Ictinia mississippiensis

Monty, a Mississippi Kite, came to AWC in Spring 2022 after being found on the ground in Montevallo suffering from soft tissue damage to his right wing. While he unfortunately suffered permanent scarring in his right wing - which prevents full wing expansion - he has quickly become a crowd and staff favorite on the glove!

Mississippi Kites are migratory birds that can vary in length from 12 to 15 inches (close in size to a crow or robin), and are primarily found in the Southeastern United States – with the largest concentration of Mississippi Kites found in the Black Belt and Coastal regions of South Alabama.



Interesting Facts



Habitat: Mississippi Kites prefer to build their nests and habitats in areas near open fields where they have access to open country - a perfect area to hunt for their preferred food source!



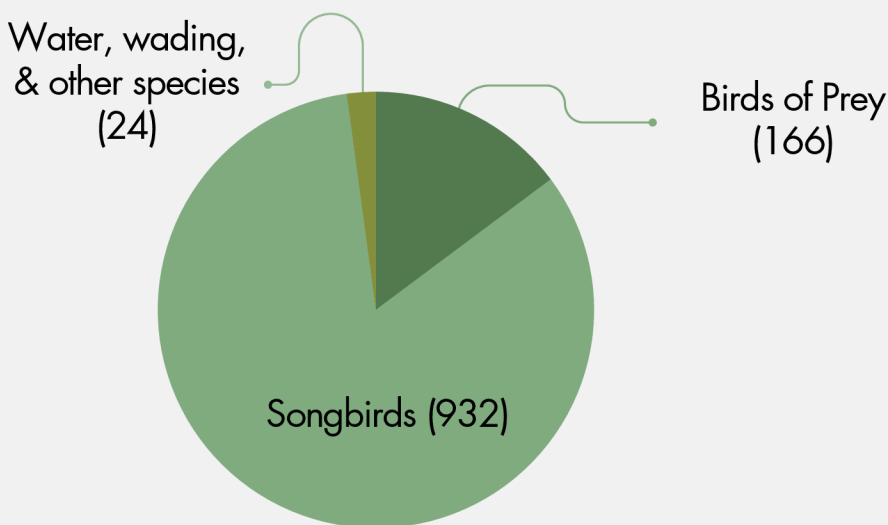
Namesake: Mississippi Kites earn their name from their remarkable ability to glide effortlessly through the air for extended periods, much like a kite soaring in the wind.



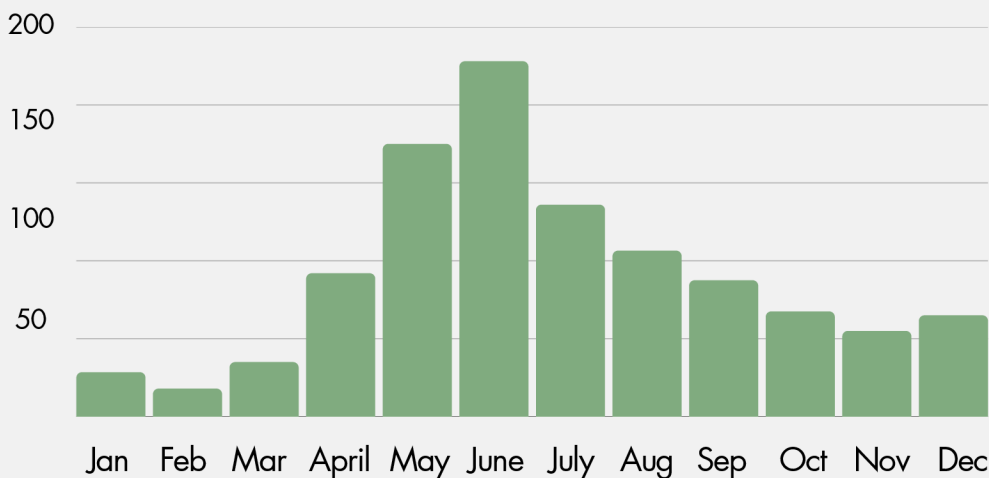
Insectivores: Mississippi Kites are primarily insectivores – subsisting off a diet based on insects like grasshoppers or dragonflies – but can also prey on small birds, bats, reptiles, and amphibians. They are often known to catch insects mid-flight, sometimes holding their prey with one foot while flying.

2024 INTAKE AND CALLS

TOTAL INTAKE FOR 2024: 1122



TOTAL HELPLINE CALLS FOR 2024:



SHELBY IS ON THE GLOVE!

Shelby, the Alabama Wildlife Center's resident American Bald Eagle, arrived in 2018 after surviving a car accident that left her blind in one eye, rendering her non-releasable into the wild. Since then, she has become a cornerstone of AWC's educational programs,



offering visitors a unique opportunity to observe and learn about this majestic species up close – one of only 2 bald eagles on display to the public in the state of Alabama.

Recently, under the guidance of volunteer and general falconer Giang Leisch and Education Director Viktoria Partain, Shelby has been successfully glove-trained. This advancement allows her to participate more actively in educational demonstrations, enhancing public engagement and fostering a deeper appreciation for wildlife conservation. Visitors can now enjoy more interactive experiences with Shelby, witnessing her impressive presence and learning about the vital role of Bald Eagles in our ecosystem.



Pictured Above: AWC Education Director, Viktoria Partain, with Shelby.
Pictured below: Volunteer and General Falconer, Giang Leisch

You can get up close to Shelby and our other amazing birds by volunteering with AWC's Education Department!



Wild bird
Spotlight...

NORTHERN FLICKER



Distinctive Appearance: The Northern Flicker is easily recognized by its brownish-gray body, black-barred back, and bold black polka-dots. A black chest crescent and a large white rump patch stand out, especially during flight. Its underwings flash either golden-yellow or fiery red, depending on the region, adding to its striking, colorful display.



Habitat and Range: The Northern Flicker is a versatile woodpecker found across most of North America. It inhabits a variety of environments, including open forests, forest edges, woodlots, groves, parks, and suburban areas. Unlike many woodpeckers, the Northern Flicker often forages on the ground, favoring habitats that offer a mix of trees and open spaces.



Conservation Needs: The Northern Flicker faces conservation challenges primarily due to habitat loss, nesting site competition, and environmental changes. Although the species remains widespread, urbanization, deforestation, and the removal of decaying trees (crucial for nesting) pose significant threats. Conservation efforts focus on preserving woodland habitats and reducing the impact of invasive species like European Starlings, which often compete for nesting cavities.



Diet: The Northern Flicker has a diverse diet, with ants and other insects making up a significant portion, especially during warmer months when it often forages on the ground. It also consumes beetles, termites, caterpillars, and spiders, along with berries, seeds, and nuts during fall and winter. Suet feeders and bird-friendly gardens can attract them, particularly when natural food sources are scarce.

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