

Wildlife Tales

2023 VOL. XXIV No 1
Written by: Carol Kerr Hardee, B.S., M.S.



BOARD OF TRUSTEES:

Carol Kerr Hardee,
Chairman
John Metcalf,
Vice Chairman
Terry Beckett,
Secretary
Jane Fishman Leon,
DVM, Treasurer
Torben Madson III, PA
David Jourdenais,
DVM
Lori Grady
Jennifer Odom
Teri White

PARTICIPATING MEMBER OF:

* International Wildlife
Rehabilitation Council
* National Wildlife
Rehabilitation
Association
* Florida Wildlife
Rehabilitation
Association

Center News

News of 2022

In 1992, my husband, Ron Hardee and I officially co-founded the Wildlife Rehabilitation Center of Central Florida. We had obtained our state and federal permits in the 1980's. Through the years, we have made many friends who also had a desire to save wildlife. Unfortunately, Ron was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease in 2009. Since that time, he has slowly declined in mental functioning. During 2022, the disease progressed much more rapidly, resulting in his hospitalization in October and afterward admittance to a nursing home under Hospice. We are currently just taking one day at a time.

Photo of Ron Hardee
and an orphaned fawn



Please visit us at our web site: www.wildlifecenterflorida.org

Arrivals and Releases

White tail deer



My five-year-old great grandson, Steven, delighted in feeding the fawn when he visited. He called her “Fawny”. Since Fawny was not going to be released to the wild, we were not concerned that she would be tame.

In the spring of 2022, our center rescued more than a dozen orphaned or injured fawns. “Fawny” was admitted with a discernable limp, and an x-ray revealed that she had been born without a hip socket on her left side. She would not be releasable, and a permanent placement would be needed. As luck would have it, I received a call from Sebastian of the Brevard Zoo asking if we had any non-releasable white tail deer. I was totally shocked because I rarely receive any calls requesting permanent animals. Over the next two months, we completed a mountain of paperwork in order to send Fawny to her new home at the zoo. Once she arrived, the staff were thrilled to have a fawn placed in their care, and after quarantine, Fawny joined their herd. She adjusted to her new surroundings and the other deer beautifully.

At the WRC, Fawny had the run of a large enclosure that was 24’X14’. She was able to walk and run, but will always have a limp. In captivity, she can expect to live a long life.



Arrivals and Releases

Raccoons



The WRC admits more than 150 injured and orphaned raccoons per year. In the photo above, one of our many babies had just finished drinking his bottle of Fox Valley formula. All raccoons at our center also receive vaccination series for rabies, canine distemper, parvo, and feline distemper. It is expensive to purchase all of these supplies for so many patients, but we have said that a job worth doing is worth doing well.

We are fortunate to have the help of the wildlife department of Orlando International Airport for release when the raccoons are grown and ready to explore the wild world on their own.



In this photo, is one of the many neonates that come in for care routinely. They not only require frequent feedings but also must be kept at a proper temperature on a heating pad or in an incubator.

Arrivals and Releases

Eastern Gray Squirrels

During August, September, and October of 2022, we experienced a tremendous influx of orphaned baby gray squirrels. We had already been admitting the babies on a daily basis when we were struck by hurricane Ian. Although electrical power was out at our location for about four days, our Generac automatically started and powered everything for the duration. On the day after the storm, my son, Wayne, began the huge clean up job at hand which took several weeks to complete.

I received a phone call every five to ten minutes that day, most were baby squirrels and a few were birds. Volunteer, Esther Plummer, not only received many babies from me but also drove to many sites to rescue infant squirrels in peril. At one destination, she climbed a 25' ladder to retrieve three baby orphans from a nest.

There was a deceased mother squirrel, and the babies were screaming for her.

Another rescue required Esther to park her van and wade through water to get the baby squirrels from a lady whose neighborhood and road were flooded.

Nothing seemed to stop her from the rescues, and many lives were saved.

Over the next weeks, we had our hands full with hours of feedings four and five times per day. During this traumatic time, Ron was hospitalized, and I am grateful to my volunteers for taking many of my baby animals so that I could spend more time at the hospital. Jen Odom, Teri White, Nathalie Barnhart, Shellie Giliam, Thressa Jones, and Stacy Russo all did their part, and I am forever thankful.

Photo: Two baby gray squirrel orphans



Arrivals and Releases

Southern Flying Squirrels



A tiny, baby flying squirrel (photo above) was found alive in a cheetah enclosure at a local theme park and promptly transported to our center in January, 2021. At that time, I had four other flying squirrels in care (photo below), but they were considerably older than the new arrival. She did join their ranks later, but initially was kept separately. I named her “Cheetah”, and she remained very special as I doted on her. Even when the entire group of flyers were transferred to their large outdoor enclosure with a flying squirrel bed box, Cheetah would come to me when I called her name. When it was time for release after six weeks in the outdoor cage, I hung the bed box containing the flyers up in a nice cypress tree. Below the bed box, I hung a flyer feeding box which I filled with pecans, peanuts, acorns, apple, corn, and striped sunflower seeds. When I stood below calling Cheetah, she would look out at me from the door of the box.



Arrivals and Releases

Baby Turkey

In my many years of conducting wildlife rehabilitation, I was privileged for the first time to raise a baby wild Florida turkey. She grew up with two baby wood ducks and several whistling ducks. I did not handle her, and she remained quite wild. The group were initially housed in a soft sided cage with a heating pad underneath at one end and a UV-B light during the day. The group devoured mealworms, but also fed on duckling feed, Mazuri waterfowl starter, and chopped Romaine lettuce. I spent a fortune on the mealworms, but I raised some really healthy youngsters.

When they outgrew the indoor cage, I moved them to a safe outdoor enclosure with a small wading pool and all of their favorite foods. The baby turkey began to fly when she was quite small, which surprised me, but, of course, I did not release her until she was much more mature.

The ducks were released at a lake, and the turkey was released at the property of a good friend, Marshal Wolfe, where a large flock of turkeys were seen daily. When I took her out of the pet carrier, I opened my hands, and she immediately flew high into the air then landing perfectly on a branch in a tall oak tree. The successful rehabilitation of a wild baby turkey was completed at last.



Arrivals and Releases

Coyote pup



Meet Mr. C, a young coyote pup who was trapped at a resort in Kissimmee, FL, in the late spring of 2022. When I received the call, I immediately asked then transporter, Bruce Rouch, to go rescue the little guy. Bruce left right away because I feared that the coyote pup would be killed if he went elsewhere. Upon his arrival, I examined the baby for disease and injuries. He seemed fit but a little on the thin side. When fed a bowl of small carnivore diet, he gulped the food down as quickly as he could. Later that day, I administered canine distemper, parvo, killed rabies vaccines, and ivermectin to prevent worms and mange. Later that week, he was also given a flea and tick preventative. While in care, he was given vaccinations three times, and wormer and flea prevention monthly. The youngster continued to have a tremendous appetite and matured well. I was proud of my success.

I did not interact with the coyote to try to tame him, but let him remain wild. Since he had no siblings, I provided as much enrichment as I could with sturdy kong dog toys, a hanging car tire, and fresh road killed prey animals. For lack of a better name, I just called the pup Mr. C. In October, he was ready for release, and our friends at OIA helped by taking him to a great area on airport property far from humans and roads. Mr. C, I wish you a good life.

Arrivals and Releases

Virginia Opossums



As in other years, many infant opossums came in for care, usually when their mother was killed in an auto collision. At our center, we tubally feed when the babies are under 60 grams in weight. Then we begin to train them to feed from shallow containers of formula and canned cat food or carnivore diet in small dishes.

Cottontail and Marsh Rabbits



Baby cottontail

Infant cottontail and Marsh rabbits can be difficult to hand raise, developing digestive problems readily. For this reason, I like to transfer bunnies to Back to Nature Wildlife Refuge where they have a staff member who has a real knack for successfully rearing them. They refer to her as “The Bunny Whisperer”, and I am so grateful for the help.

Arrivals and Releases

Bobcat

In October, we received a report from the Florida Wildlife Commission that a bobcat had been hit by a vehicle on I-4 and transported by a Florida Highway Patrol officer to I-Drive in Orlando. We were told that the bobcat had been put in a pillow case so that it would not get away but that it was able to break free. It was then placed beside a wooded area and that the officer was nearby monitoring for speeders. Volunteer, Jennifer Odom, was called upon for the rescue since she is on the west side of town and has years of rehab experience. We thought that the bobcat would be fairly small if it had fit in a pillow case; so Jennifer brought a small dog crate along with capture gloves for the ensuing rescue.

Upon arriving at the scene, Jennifer had to wade into a swamp where the bobcat had crawled. With some effort, she successfully wrestled him onto dry land. She also discovered that it was an extremely large adult male which was able to bite through her capture gloves. He barely was able to fit into the dog crate; however, Jennifer made do. The big cat would stand but then fall over due to its injuries. We knew that we needed x-rays and expert veterinarian assistance ASAP. I made a call to a renowned wild animal hospital (which wishes to remain anonymous), and they agreed to help. Jennifer was able to transport the bobcat there immediately but noted that he appeared to be declining during this time. X-rays were completed at the facility, and although no fractures were evident, the bobcat's condition continued to worsen, and he sadly died overnight from his injuries. All involved in the case had done everything humanly possible to save his life, and that provides us with some comfort.

Birds



Esther Plummer played a significant role in rescuing many sandhill cranes during 2021. She is quite skilled at safely capturing the birds that are injured. After stabilizing them for several days at the Center, Esther loaded them in her van for transfer to Wynne Burns, a wildlife rehabilitator in Fort Pierce, FL.

Photo of a mature sandhill crane

WISH LIST

Foods: Dry Pedigree, Purina, or Science Diet Puppy food, unsalted roasted peanuts, shelled pecans, any unshelled nuts, wild bird seed and sunflower seeds, any brands of dry dog or cat foods, and fresh acorns are greatly appreciated for the squirrels in care.

General Supplies: infant “receiving blankets”

Cleaning supplies: laundry Tide pods, paper towels, especially Bounty and Viva brands, dryer softener sheets, black, heavy duty trash bags with ties, Charmin bathroom tissue, gallon size zip-lock freezer bags with zipper closures, spray cleaners such as “409”, and “Pine Sol” for cleaning floors.

Monetary Donations are always necessary to keep us stocked on formulas, meds, vaccines, and foods for the wild patients in our care.



A photo from the past is of Ron Hardee feeding a herd of fawns. For years, he was the primary caregiver of fawns and river otters at our Center. At times, we would have a dozen bottle babies. He also raised all of the many other creatures that were admitted for care such as the baby raccoons. These are now fond memories to treasure always.

When you place an order with Amazon online, you can make a donation to WRC which won't cost you anything. Just go on Amazon Smile and choose WRC as your charity. We are on their list of non-profits which receive a percentage from purchases when designated by the buyer. I always do this when I order, and it adds up. Amazon sends the amount earned to our business checking account every three months.

The Wildlife Rehabilitation Center of Central Florida is an IRS registered 501(c)3 organization. All donations are tax deductible. A copy of the official registration and financial information may be obtained from the Division of Consumer Services by calling toll free within the state, 1-800-435-7352.. This does not imply endorsement or approval by the state of Florida. Tax exempt # 59-3130779

If you include the Wildlife Rehabilitation Center of Central Florida in your will, please be sure to use the legal name and address of our Center as listed in this newsletter.

Thank You To The Following:

We thank the dedicated staff of Disney's Animal Kingdom- Hospital Manager, Leanne Blinco and all of the DAK animal keepers who assist the wildlife. Our friends at DAK have done so much to support the care of many injured and orphaned native wild animals and our Center.

We wish to thank dear friends of the wildlife, Wayne and Linda Boyd, for their generous support these many years. Their kind assistance has enabled us to provide the very best for our wildlife patients.

A thanks goes to Dr. David Jourdenais, Geneva Oaks Animal Hospital, who has assisted us for more than 25 years and Dr. Jane Fishman Leon for all of her help.

Thanks, Publix on Alafaya Trail at Eastwood for the fresh produce and dry pet foods.

We appreciate the officers of Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission for their dedication and hard work. They routinely capture or confiscate injured or illegally held wildlife and transport them to us, often at night and on weekends.

Thank you, Johnny Metcalf and staff at Orlando International Airport for helping to release raccoons and coyotes on protected property far from humans and traffic hazards.

To Ryan Gopaul-thanks for having lots of wish list items sent to us through Amazon!

A special thanks goes out to the following for their generous gifts to WRC: Jim Yde, Sandy Juba, Dr. Dennis and Kristina Horanic, Susan Stavros, A. Duda & Sons, Thomas Nelson, Torben and Sarah Madson III, Leslie and Bill Johnson, the Knopf Family Foundation, Barry Clinger, the John and Joan Dietze Foundation, & Elizabeth Morse Genius Foundation.

This photo is of a neonate southern flying squirrel which I successfully raised to adulthood. An intensive schedule, proper temperature, formula, feeding techniques and implements are all imperative for successful rearing of these tiny darlings.



Wildlife Center Volunteers

Thank you, Marshal Wolfe, for building climbing cages, feeders, and bed boxes for the squirrels and raccoons, and for completing various repairs at the center.

Our volunteers who field phone calls, are vaccinated for rabies prevention, care for a wide variety of species, and transport as needed: , Jennifer Rosenfeldt, Terri White, Jennifer Fletcher Odom, Thressa Jones, Nathalie Barnhart, Mike Melone, Shellie Gilliam, and Esther Plummer. Thanks!

I wish to thank my brother-in-law, Jack Hardee, for helping me with many hours of work on the website and the newsletter. He is also our IT guy for all computer repairs and problems that arise, seemingly on a continual basis.

Wildlife Rehabilitation Center
of Central Florida
21117 Reindeer Road
Christmas, FL 32709

BECOME A MEMBER — Members receive the newsletter for one year. An issue full of stories and updates on all of your wild animal friends! Donations of \$50+ also receive a beautiful 8x10 full-color photo, suitable for framing.

Individual (\$20) Family (\$25) Business (\$100 - \$999) Corporate (\$1000+)
 Other \$ _____ 2023 Newsletter Thank you for your support!

Please fill in the following if the newsletters are to be mailed to an address different from that on your check:

NAME _____

STREET ADDRESS _____

CITY/STATE/ZIP _____

PLEASE MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO: Wildlife Rehabilitation Center of Central Florida (or WRC)

MAIL TO: 21117 Reindeer Road, Christmas, FL 32709 **PHONE:** 407-568-3200

Or donate online at our website wildlifecenterflorida.org by using a credit card payment. Donations are tax deductible.