

Wildlife Tales

2024 VOL. XXV No 1

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Center News

The year 2023 kept all of us who volunteer for the Wildlife Center as busy as ever!

The task of assisting those who call about an animal needing care, admitting orphaned or injured animals and determining the immediate needs, providing proper nutrition and meeting the dynamic developmental requirements are a tall order. Yet those of us who are volunteers of the Wildlife Center must accomplish all of these tasks with compassion and knowledge. I am so proud of the work that has been accomplished over the past thirty-five years and am confident that it will continue for many more. Here is a photo of orphaned gray squirrels, two of more than 600 native wild animals admitted for care in 2023.



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

IN MEMORY

Ron Hardee

In our previous newsletter, I shared the somber news that my husband and co-founder of the Wildlife Rehabilitation Center was in a nursing facility under Hospice care. Ron had suffered from Alzheimer's disease for many years and passed away peacefully on February 12, 2023, just four days before his seventy-ninth birthday.

Over decades, he helped to save hundreds of wildlife patients, performed rescues, bottle feed babies, and built cages. He dearly loved all of the wild animals in his care as well as the family dogs that we had over the years. In many of his photos taken with wild animal babies, you can see the look of joy on his face.



In Memory

I know that many of our devoted members who brought wildlife to me over the past decade had met my rescued dogs, Toki and Niblet. I was very sad to say goodbye to Niblet in February and Toki in October, 2023.



Arrivals and Releases

Raccoons



Here is a photo of Dr. David Jourdenais examining a baby raccoon at Geneva Oaks Animal Hospital. He has been so generous to help our wildlife center for many years and has treated a multitude of species.



It was dinner time for a baby raccoon pictured in this photo.

During 2023, our center accepted nearly 100 baby and juvenile orphaned raccoons; some came when there was no other facility or rehabilitator who would take them. I am so grateful to have a handfull of experienced volunteers listed on my FWC permit who have been willing to help me. At times, all of us have felt that we were at our limit but say, "What's one more?"

Our outdoor raccoon cages have been in need of repair/replacement for several years, and in the fall of 2022, a large maple tree demolished two of them during a hurricane. I said that at least they were damaged prior to being rebuilt! So the work to remove the three old cages and build new ones was accomplished during 2023. It is a relief to have completed this job which was a constant source of concern of mine for a long time.

Arrivals and Releases

White tail deer

During the spring of 2023, our center rescued 13 orphaned or injured white tail deer fawns. In most of these cases, the mother doe had died, usually from an auto collision, leaving the helpless baby alone in a scary world. April and May were busy months for us, and I was fortunate to have the help of volunteers Esther Plummer and Jennifer Odom, both trained in fawn care. The numbers of animals that our center receives is considerably more than I alone can handle. We did a great job rescuing, rehydrating, and feeding the unfortunate babies. We observe them in sometimes critical condition upon arrival, and then are able to help them to recover in our care which is heartwarming and truly satisfying.

We provide four feedings per day per fawn, and as can be seen by the photo, the babies are eager to drink once they are used to us. Sometimes, upon arrival, they are scared and difficult to feed; but they soon calm down once they realize that we are the dinner bell.



The soft-sided doggie playpens prove to be ideal to keep the fawns contained when they first come in after a rescue. We pad the bottom with a thick beach towel so that the babies do not slip or fall. We also have two large barn which provide plenty of out door time for fresh air and exercise. At a young age, they already begin to feed on grasses,vegetation, and soil which is necessary for proper digestion.

Arrivals and Releases

White Tail Deer

On August 20, 2023, I admitted an older juvenile fawn that had been hit by a vehicle in Oviedo, FL. A kind man, Reggie Critelli, who had brought another animal to me earlier in the year found the injured deer in the middle of a road and was able to load her into his truck. When he called me, I was a bit reluctant to accept her because I am unable to handle larger animals. There were no other options, however, and I agreed to try to help. Reggie was able to carry the doe into the barn where I have housed deer before. I told him that I would do everything that I could to save her.

For two days, she did not stand up, eat, or drink, and I gave her water with a large syringe. On the third day, she stood, walked a little, ate and drank. The miracle was in progress. I gave her lots of browse that I cut on the property, knowing from past years of deer rehab that they like to eat wild grape vines and maple leaves. I also cut up apples, watermelon, grapes, and peaches. Her appetite exploded, and I was hard pressed to keep a sufficient supply of cut browse in her barn. she ate it all.

Within a few days, she seemed back to normal; so I called on a long-time friend, Frankie Thompson. Over the years, I occasionally requested to release rehabilitated deer on Frankie's property. He has a perfect habitat for them with fields, woods, a pond, and a small herd of deer that reside there, coming and going as they please. We were able to load the deer into a large airline kennel which I had prepared in advance by padding the floor and door to prevent any injuries. Then we lifted it onto a four wheel lawn cart to roll it to my van. After successfully placing the kennel with the precious cargo into the back of the van, we were off to Frankie's. The release was perfection, and Frankie called to give me reports as the weeks progressed. It was easy to distinguish the released doe from the resident deer because she had sustained an injury above her right eye. She was granted a second chance at life.



Photo Left: older juvenile fawn with a serious concussion admitted after a car hit

Photo Right: Carol Hardee releasing the deer after a full recovery.



Arrivals and Releases

Eastern Gray Squirrels

More than 100 gray squirrels were admitted for care in 2023, most of them orphans requiring hand feeding. By September, the squirrel feedings were taking 8 hours a day; and I had other animals in care as well. There is little time to accomplish much else in the course of a day, but I always have survived the harsh schedule. Any errands must be completed between the animal feedings, and just a trip to the grocery store can be very difficult. After the main seasonal push of incoming babies slows down, it is always a relief and a lessening of stress. The little ones are worth every sacrifice made and are so grateful to receive their formula feedings. We have maintained a very high “save rate” with the rescued animals due in part to years of experience and training.

A gray squirrel baby enjoyed his formula of Fox Valley, which comes in powdered form to be mixed with water. It has the proper nutritional content and is very palatable as you can see by this photo.



Coyotes

In August, 2023, wrc volunteer, Esther Plummer, responded to an emergency call from a person whom she had assisted previously. It seemed that a coyote would not leave the carport at the home of some elderly residents. Esther was able to push the reluctant canine into a large kennel, load it into her van, and transport it to me. Upon arrival at 9:30 on a Sunday night, we were able to place the kennel containing the coyote into the coyote enclosure. We propped open the kennel door, provided a large portion of canned dog food, a water bowl, and resumed our other nightly chores. The next morning, I was dismayed to observe that the coyote had not budged nor eaten anything. I hoped that he wasn't rabid because his behavior was very peculiar. Esther helped me to vaccinate the patient and also administer a shot to treat his severe case of mange. The poor thing was very bald on much of his body. He finally exited the kennel, began hiding among the hay bales provided as a shelter, and began to readily devour food. Things were looking up. Over a few weeks, the coyote received several more treatments for mange and was provided with all of the food that he desired as he gained weight and regrew his fur. We were able to release the recovered creature to the wild life that he had known, free of mange, and weighing a lot more than when he had been captured.

Arrivals and Releases

Virginia Opossums

Here is a photo of just one of the 100+ opossums that we received in 2023. As with many others which came in so tiny, she was fed with a syringe and flexible catheter tube. Once the infants reach 50-60 grams in weight, they can lap their opossum formula from a small jar lid. They also begin to snack on diced grapes, pate chicken cat food, and other delights. How rewarding it is to observe them maturing and developing into young adults. Right: Baby opossum admitted for care. Below: The opossum grew considerably while at the center.



Cottontail and Marsh Rabbits

Each year, we admit more than 60 orphaned or injured native rabbits due to dogs, cats, and cars. In Central Florida, we have two species of wild rabbits, cottontail (lower) and marsh rabbit (top).



Wood duck



Arrival



Release day



Arrivals and Releases

Many species need our help



Great horned owl



Gopher tortoises



Infant nine banded armadillo whose tail was amputated by an auto collision.

A mourning dove was admitted to our center with a fractured leg, which I set and wrapped. The bird fully recovered and was able to walk without a limp. Once mature, the bird was released to fly and live a free life.



S. Flying Squirrel



Arrivals and Releases



Before and after photos of a raccoon which came from Walt Disney World. Upon arrival (left), she weighed only 81 grams. When ready for release (right), she was 8 pounds.



A beautiful sandhill crane recovered from a car hit.



A cute baby mouse was saved along with many others in 2023.



This angry bat did not want his examination.

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.

Also treating wildlife patients in 2023 were the veterinarians and staff of the Animal Hospital of Baldwin Park and The Integrative Animal Hospital of Central Florida.

Elizabeth Morse Genius Foundation, Matzick Family Trust, Knopf Family Foundation, Leslie and Bill Johnson, Torben and Sara Madson, Susan Stavros, Jim Yde, Dr. Terry and Judy Bangs are all thanked for their generous support.

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.

Wildlife Center Volunteers

Thank you, Marshal Wolfe, for building climbing cages, feeders, and bed boxes.

Our volunteers who 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, 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.

WISH LIST

Foods: Dry Pedigree, Purina, or Science Diet Puppy food, unsalted roasted peanuts, shelled and unshelled nuts, wild bird seed and striped sunflower seeds

General Supplies: copy paper, Epson Ultra Premium, Glossy Photo Paper

Cleaning supplies: laundry Tide pods, paper towels, especially Bounty and Viva brands, black, heavy duty trash bags with ties, Charmin bathroom tissue, gallon size zip-lock freezer bags with zipper closures, Pine-Sol cleaner

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

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

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