



Wildlife Veterinary Care News

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Veterinary Care**

**to help us
build a large
flight cage for
eagles, herons
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birds.**

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Increase in Raptor Rescues in the Fall

The wildlife population in our area changes with the seasons, and because of this, so do the admissions to our wildlife hospital. We see fewer animals during the winter when most of the migratory birds have left for warmer climates, and the reptiles and many of the mammals are hibernating. In the spring we become much busier when the migrants return for their breeding season, and the other animals awaken and begin their breeding season. Summer is a very busy time for wildlife as they raise their young, and we receive a large number of calls about baby wildlife during that time. Then fall brings the autumn migration and with this, we see a sharp increase in injured raptors at our wildlife hospital.

Most of these injured raptors are juveniles who have recently gone out on their own. They are migrating through new habitats, and many of those needing to be rescued are trauma victims with fractures to their wings or legs. Some are rescued because they have not been successful at finding enough food and have become too thin and weak to fly.

The statistics on the survival of young wildlife are not good. On average, only 30% will survive their first year. Some become food for other animals, and others have unfortunate accidents. This, of course, means only the "fittest" will survive,

Or visit our webpage

www.wildlifevetcare.org

Wildlife Veterinary Care is a 501c3 non-profit charity dedicated to providing veterinary and rehabilitative care to sick and injured wildlife, and to improving the health of wildlife and our environment.

**For
assistance
call
540-664-9494**



Peregrine Falcon suffering from pneumonia.



Wood Turtle with an injured eye.

and it's important that our wildlife populations remain fit. But when these unfortunate accidents involve unnatural man-made objects like vehicles and buildings (and sometimes even trains), we feel obligated to help out. This fall we have cared for 19 injured hawks, falcons, eagles, and owls.



Barred owl who survived a collision with a train.

Unusual Case of the Oiled Barn Owl

Oil spills are uncommon events in the Shenandoah Valley, and only rarely have I needed to treat waterbirds that were exposed to small amounts of oil spilled into local ponds. A few songbirds and raccoons that accidentally landed in vats of cooking oil or motor oil drain pans have needed treatment. But I'd never seen anything like this oiled barn owl.

A road worker found her under a tree along route 522, soaked with a strong smelling oil and unable to fly. He carried the owl to the closest vet clinic, Cedarville Veterinary Clinic in Front Royal, where they immediately gave the owl a bath with Dawn detergent, but found this oil was very difficult to remove. The owl's feathers were so black with grease, they could not tell what species it was.

Oil causes feathers to collapse and lose their shape. Once this happens, the feathers no longer provide the insulation needed to keep the bird warm, or protect her from the sun and rain. And of course, oiled birds cannot fly, and so cannot avoid predators or find food.



Orphan barn owl



Oiled barn owl foster parenting the orphans while her feather condition improves.



Liam McGranagham banding an orphan barn owl before release back into the barn where he was found.

Birds spend a lot of time preening (grooming) and caring for their feathers because they are so important to their health and survival. When their feathers are dirty like this, they try to clean them off; in doing so, they can swallow a lot of the toxic oil.

We had to get the oil off this bird, so with the help of Tristate Bird Rescue where they specialize in caring for oiled birds (they coordinated the response to the Gulf Oil spill in 2010), we came up with a plan to dip this bird in four 100 degree baths with Dawn detergent. After using almost a gallon of Dawn, and a couple of toothbrushes for scrubbing the oil off the feathers, we finally had most of the oil off of this owl's delicate feathers. She was also treated for the oil she had consumed. After this, we had to wait to see if after preening, she would be able to fly again, or whether she would need to wait a year in captivity while she grew new feathers. After a month of preening, her feathers were in good enough condition for her to be released back to the wild.



The Oiled Barn Owl after her second Dawn bath, and then one month after multiple baths had been used to remove all the oil.



Dr. Burwell placing one of the orphan barn owls into a newly mounted owl box.



Young Bald Eagle recovering from a fractured wing.



Release of the injured bald eagle back near where he was found.

Because Wildlife Veterinary Care is 100% Volunteer, there are no salaries to pay. Your donations are spent on supplies to care for the animals. Wildlife Veterinary Care is a 501(c)3 charity, and all donations are 100% tax-deductible.

Donations can be mailed to: Wildlife Veterinary Care, P.O.Box 288, Millwood, VA 22646, and can also be made online on our [webpage](#) and [Facebook page](#).

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www.wildlifevetcare.com

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