ISSUE #1

WNY RAPTOR Newsletter



Letter from The Director:

Spring has arrived! Busy season for wildlife rehabilitators will soon be upon us, and I thought it was a perfect time to take a moment to introduce myself and WNY Raptor!

WNY Raptor and Wildlife Care, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) dedicated to wildlife rehabilitation, education, and research. We are a group of individuals who are passionate about what we do!

WNY Raptor was founded by myself (Dr. Bernadette Clabeaux) as a passion project in 2019. It began as a way to supplement the cost of animal care that rehabilitators (including myself) have to endure. Animals in our care must receive veterinary care, transport, housing, and other necessities that require funding. After earning my NYS and federal permits, I took the leap and founded the organization. It has been amazing to watch our organization grow over the past 6 years. The goal is to always release the animal back to the wild where it belongs!

This purpose of this newsletter is to keep our supporters in the loop on all of WNY Raptor's on goings- and there are many! Throughout the year we help rehabilitate hundreds of animals, answers over one thousand calls, texts, and emails, while attending educational events and caring for our individual families. We do all of this for the love of nature.

This newsletter will highlight some rehabilitation stories, our annual fundraising event, and our amazing volunteers!

Our charity relies on the kindness and support of our community and supporters like you, for which we are thankful!

Enjoy this month's newsletter!

gradette Jabeaux,

In this newsletter you can expect:

<u>Letter from</u> <u>Director</u>

Event Calendar

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<u>Rehabilitation</u> <u>Research Efforts</u>

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Event Calendar



Birds of Prey Days @ Braddock Bay

- Birds of Prey Days is an annual celebration of spring raptor migration, offering activities like hawkwatching, raptor banding tours, owl prowls, live raptor programs, and educational displays for all ages.
- It is hosted by **Braddock Bay Raptor Research** (BBRR).
- People of all ages are invited to come out and learn about hawks, eagles, falcons, owls, and other species in support BBRR's conservation efforts. Activities will be held inside and out, including hawkwatching, raptor banding, owl prowls, live raptor programs, educational and art displays, and kids activities.
- \$5 suggested donation for adults, kids are free.
- Contact: Braddock Bay Raptor Research, 585-267-5483, <u>information@bbrr.org</u>.
- WNY Raptor presents at 1 pm on 4/26!!!



Summer Reptile Show

- The Reptile Show has moved to the **M Hotel**.
- Hosted by WNY Reptiles.
- Runs from 9 am to 5 pm.
- WNY Raptor will be there with our owl ambassadors and reptile friends.
- Come support us by having a PHOTO taken!
- Handmade merchandise will be available to purchase. All proceeds go directly towards rehabilitation.
- For more information visit our booth on the day of the event.

Other Upcoming Events

Spring Spectacular at the Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge

10 May 2025

- Located at 1101 Casey Rd, Basom, NY
- Event is from 9 am to 4 pm
- WNY Raptor will present at 11 am
- Presented by Friends of the Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge

Fall Reptile Show

- 1 November 2025
- More details to come

Volunteer Highlights



Alysha Gullion

Alysha Gullion, M.Sc., is a recent graduate of the Biological Sciences program at Brock University. She served as a Teaching Assistant for three years at Brock University, assisting in the instruction of courses such as Principles of Ecology and Introduction to Biology.

Additionally, Alysha worked as a research assistant in Dr. Liette Vasseur's Ecosystem Ecology Lab, focusing on sustainable ecosystem management and climate change adaptation strategies.

She currently volunteers at WNY Raptor and Wildlife Care Inc. as a Wildlife Data Analyst, and with the SPCA Serving Erie County within their wildlife department. She previously worked as a Marine Mammal Trainer, primarily training Beluga whales (*Delphinapterus leucas*).



Hannah Robillard

Hannah Robillard is a dedicated wildlife and environmental conservation professional who recently graduated with a Master of Wildlife and Fisheries Resources degree from Clemson University, followed by a Bachelor of Science in Biology from Medaille College. With hands-on experience as a licensed wildlife rehabilitator with WNY Raptor and environmental educator at the Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge, Hannah has demonstrated a strong commitment to sustainability and conservation. Hannah has also contributed to various educational outreach programs and research, including studies regarding axolotl regeneration, conservation, and gila monster behavior. With expertise in wildlife rehabilitation and field techniques such as bat mistnetting, bird banding, GIS, and environmental stewardship, Hannah is passionate about advancing conservation efforts and environmental education.



Keith McKale

Keith is an expert carver and carpenter.

He runs Fernwood Art and displays his unique natural carvings regularly at our events.

He has designed many pieces for the mews that our wildlife use, including the stairs that he is pictured with here.

Volunteer Highlights



Helen Busch

Helen joined WNY Raptor sharing a passion for helping rehabilitate animals and educating others. Helen's main interest is reptiles, ranging from enrichment to rehabilitation. In her free time she is researching and creating enrichment decor for reptiles, especially for her own critters. She has her own menagerie of animals ranging from snakes, geckos, birds, cats and even a rabbit.



Emma Ridolfi

Emma is a Licensed Veterinary Technician, as well as a NYS Licensed Wildlife Rehabilitator. She has volunteered with WNY Raptor since the summer of 2021 and says she has enjoyed every minute. Currently, she works in mixed private practice and sees a variety of animals every day. She loves spending time with her animals at home , which includes a rabbit, a crested gecko, and a shih-tzu.



Jay Bortel

Jay graduated with his bachelors of biology in 2022. He currently now work as a rabies specialist and a nuisance inspector with the Erie County Department of Health. He has been apart of WNY Raptor for a few years now and help with animal husbandry side of things making sure all the animals in our care are happy and healthy!



Our Director, Dr. Bernadette Clabeaux

Bernadette Clabeaux, Ph.D. is the founder and director of WNY Raptor and Wildlife Care, Inc.. She has worked with wildlife for over 25 years, and has her NY State and Federal licenses in wildlife rehabilitation. and education. She was an Associate Professor at Medaille University from 2014-2023, at which she taught over 21 different biology-related courses. She is currently an adjunct professor at the State University of New York at Buffalo (UB) in environmental sustainability at which she teaches Field Ornithology and Field Botany. Dr. Clabeaux has both her master's and Ph.D. degrees in biology from UB and has worked as a biologist for Ecology & Environment, Inc. (now WSP) and other environmental organizations.

Summer Rehabilitation



Enclosures

WNY Raptor is a home-based facility. We have a number of mews and enclosures that house many recovering or orphaned raptors throughout the spring and summer. This unit has 7 compartments within, and a double door system to ensure there are no escapees!

Our enclosures also have many natural features, like natural trees and branches to provide for a variety of substrates. This helps prevent foot infections, like bumblefoot, which can be detrimental to raptor health .





Eastern screech owls in rehabilitation

It is the season to find baby Eastern screech owls. They look like little "balls of puff" in the lawn. These are fledglings that have left the nest to practice flying. You can gently place them back up in branches near the nest (usually an of hollowed out tree- they love old maples!). Sometimes though they do get injured and need rehabilitation.

Last year we had a number of them. These two highlighted in this newsletter came in very early in the season (March), and had burned food pads. It is unknown how this happened.





Luckily, they were rescued and given lots of TLC. They were placed in our new larger Brinsa incubator purchased through our generous grant from Robert Joseph Foundation. They were amazing patients to work with, and after learning how to hunt on their own in our outdoor mews, were soft released into a wooded forest. If you find any and have questions, please contact us! Photos can be texted to (716) 863-7603.



A Few Notes To Remember

- Many songbird fledglings that fall from nests can be simply put back in. It is best for "mom and dad" to tend to them.
- It is a MYTH that if you touch a bird, and put it back in the nest, that parents will not come back. This is NOT TRUE. If the bird is healthy, please gently back in with the clutch.

Summer Rehabilitation- "Bubbles"



Bubbles' Story

In April 2024, "Bubbles," was hit by a car in Orchard Park. Luckily, she was **rescued** by The Piptone sisters, and brought to Dr. Clabeaux's home-based wildlife facility.

Bubbles had a major open fracture of the shell that needed to be closed. We were able to get Bubbles to the veterinary clinic the very next day. Dr. Jeff Hess and the amazing staff at Specialized Care for Avian & Exotics made her as comfortable as possible with medications, put her under anesthesia and performed surgery. They even fastened clasps to the open part of her shell and tightened then to keep the shell together. Teguderm was applied externally to prevent the entry of parasites and fly eggs.

After the procedure, Bubbles was taken back to Dr. Clabeaux's wildlife facility for rehabilitation and major TLC. It was recommended we dry dock her at first. "Dry docking" is the temporary removal of a reptile from its aquatic environment for medical reasons, which allows the tissues under the shell to heal. Bubbles was checked on daily since she needed injections for pain (performed by Clabeaux) and had to be monitored for feeding. At first, the turtle was not eating, which can be a normal response of reptiles to stress.

At veterinary checkup number two, **the prognosis looked grim** for Bubbles. The wound was not healing as well as everyone would have liked and her color was pale. If she was not better by the next appointment, she may have needed to be euthanized. At this appointment, the decision was made to keep trying and place Bubbles in a pool of water inside the enclosure to see if this would stimulate her to feed and aid in recovery.

The water seemed to be a great choice! Bubbles began swimming and walking around the bottom of the basin, essentially "perking up". She began to feed daily-taking mice, earthworms and other meals from Dr. Clabeaux. She even started to escape and dry dock herself in the large 10x50' enclosure.





One day Clabeaux found her in a pit of mud in which she had been digging and nesting. To her surprise, there were eggs in the nest! This is how we know she was female. Initially, everyone thought she was a male based on the lack of eggs on her imaging.

Time passed, and Bubbles had another check-up. This one went much better! Her color was much better, her tissue wounds had fully closed, and even her shell **showed signs of healing!**

Approval was given for her release back to an area far from traffic and adjacent to more than 60 acres of federal wetlands! We wonder if she will make an appearance this spring?



Summer Rehabilitation







White-Nose Syndrome in Bats Written by Hannah Robillard

Recently, Bat Conservation International (BCI) came out with new research stating they may have found a potential solution to White-Nose Syndrome (WNS) in bats. As you may or may not know, WNS is a fungal disease that kills hibernating bats. It was first detected in 2006 when a large, unusual die-off occurred in New York. Since then, WNS has spread across most of the United States and Canada. As of 2018, over 90% of little brown bats, northern long-eared bats, and tri-colored bats have succumbed to the fatal fungus. Thanks to BCI and Oregon State University (OSU) scientists, "a promising potential solution" has arisen. The team has found a technique that involves ribonucleic acid (RNA), which converts DNA to carry out important cellular functions. This technique, called RNA interference (RNAi) technology, will be used to combat WNS's increasing pervasiveness. RNAi technology can stop cells from producing certain proteins, including ones the cell needs to survive, and by doing so, scientists can "silence" WNS's genetic code, meaning it can no longer function. RNAi is currently used to treat human disease and manage agricultural pests, and the BCI and OSU team behind the RNAi technique has proven it can destroy WNS in a lab setting. Their overall research strongly suggests RNAi can destroy WNS in the wild, which could lead to significantly fewer bats infected and killed by WNS during hibernation. This treatment would be sprayed in caves and bat nesting sites to eradicate the ability of WNS to infect the colonies. All that is left in this project is for the team to encourage others to try it. Unfortunately, there is a divide in the scientific community on whether this solution could do more harm than good; however, the researchers strongly suggest that WNS has already caused the most damage, so we need to act fast. For the full article and more information, you can visit this link to the BCI's website.



Playing Opossum: Facts About North America's Only Marsupial Written by Hannah Robillard

Opossums are well known for their characteristic of playing dead, or better known as "playing opossum" but what else do you know about these fascinating marsupials?

Opossums and possums are different: The Virginia opossum is North America's only marsupial; whereas, possums are a separate order that dwell in Australasia. Central and South America are also home to a variety of opossum species. If we want to get real technical, opossums and possums are from the same subclass, Theria, but are in different orders.

50 Teeth: Can they bite? Absolutely. Are they likely to bite you? Not really. Opossums have more teeth than any other North American mammal. Despite having a lot of teeth, opossums will most likely hiss, bare teeth, run away, or play dead.

Low Body Temperature: Oppossum's average body temperature hangs around 94 degrees Fahrenheit. This makes them more disease resistant. Opossums are also resistant to reactions from most snake venom, scorpion stings, and Lyme's disease.

Self-Care Day is Everyday: Despite their rat-like appearance, opossums are consistent groomers. They will even eat the ticks right off of themselves. It is estimated that opossums consume nearly 5,000 ticks per year. **Opossum = Opposable:** Opposable thumbs that is! Opossums have opposable thumbs on their rear feet. They also have prehensile tails that assist them in climbing. (No, they cannot hang from their tails!)

Truth or Myth? Opossums can't get rabies. This is a **MYTH**! Unfortunately, our opossum friends can get rabies; however, because of their low body temperature, the virus is less likely to survive. Sadly, in New York State, the cases of rabies in opossums have been increasing over the past few years.

Raptor Rehabilitation Highlights: A Study on Survival of White-Tailed Eagles after Rehabilitation Efforts

Article by: Alysha Gullion MSc.

Scientific Study by: Rozsypalová et al. (2024) (see citation below)

As a wildlife rehabilitator, we get to experience the journey and growth of various species that come into the clinic first-hand. We marvel as a weak robin hatchling grows its flight feathers and enters the fledgling stage. Or when that same robin is finally cleared for release after months of care. But, once they are released, rehabilitators are often left wondering how that little robin is faring in the wild. This is a pertinent question that many scholars and rehabilitators are now trying to answer: Are the species we are rehabilitate able to successfully integrate into their natural environment?



Figure 1. Survival duration of White-tailed Eagles over a seven year span. Number of days survived shown at the end of the bar.

With advancement in GPS technologies, researchers are beginning to address this question. In fact, a study conducted by Rozsypalová et al. (2024) followed 22 White-tailed Eagles (Haliaeetus albicilla) in various rehabilitation centers across Czech Republic, Austria, Germany, and Slovakia between 2005 and 2023. The study included juveniles, immatures, and adult White-tailed Eagles. All eagles were admitted to the rehabilitation centers for various aliments that included trauma, poisoning, infection, or general weakness. They were released when they considered fully recovered, in which they were then fitted with a telemetry device that would track their location.

Rozsypalová et al. (2024) also mapped the eagles' movements from the telemetry data, estimating their home ranges, and even recording when an individual perished or survived through the duration of the trial (Figure 1). In addition to this, they could record the flight trajectories each eagle took (Figure 2). While there are always some discrepancies with GPS tracking devices, this study represents another exceptional step in answering the question: How are these species faring?

This study also documented reproductive success in five rehabilitated eagles, noting the number of fledgings each individual produced over the years. Rozsypalová et al. (2024) concluded that rehabilitation efforts resulted in successful releases of Whitetailed Eagles, with some cases showing high survival rates and even successful reproduction in the wild.

It should be noted that I was unable to cover all aspects of this study due to space limitations. If you are interested in reading this amazing study (which I highly encourage!) you can find it <u>here</u>.

Citation:

Rozsypalová, Lenka & Literák, Ivan & Raab, Rainer & Peske, Lubomir & Krone, Oliver & Skrabal, Jan & Gries, Benno & Meyburg, Bernd-Ulrich. (2024). Survival of White-tailed Eagles Tracked After Rehabilitation and Release. Journal of Raptor Research. 59. 10.3356/jrr2417.



Figure 2. Flight trajectories of five different White-tailed Eagles after release.



WNY Raptor Annual Fundraiser Information!

It's never too early to think about spring! Just wanted to throw it out there to save the date June 13 from 6:30 to 9:30 PM at the Cove. We will be having our Wildlife fundraiser for WNY raptor that evening. It is always a fun time with lots of baskets, 50-50, Some vendors, music and MC beverages and food! Not much more we're missing to have a good time. Tickets are \$50 at the door or can be purchased through zeffy.





Thank you for reading!

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