



WCV Logo

Summer 2022 Wildlife Rehabilitation Externship

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A patient juvenile Virginia opossum in a weigh bucket

About the Wildlife Center of Virginia

Formed in 1982 to provide quality health care, often on an emergency basis, to native wildlife.

Since it's founding, the Wildlife Center has:

- treated 85,000 + wild animals
- shared the lessons learned from these cases with over 1.5 million school-children and adults across Virginia
- trained a corps of wildlife medicine practitioners, including veterinarians, veterinary technicians, and volunteer wildlife rehabilitators

The Wildlife Center operates out of a 5700 square-foot building including:

- a veterinary clinic
- diagnostics laboratory
- operating suite
- radiology room



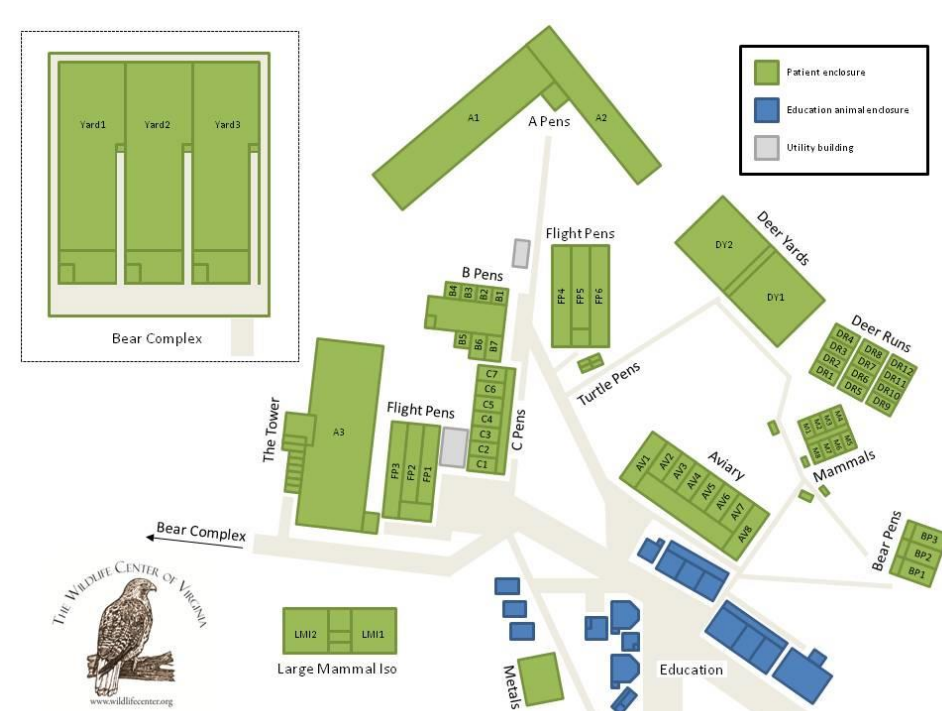
WCV's ambassador Bald Eagle, Buddy

The Center also has an array of outdoor facilities for education animals and recovering patients including:

- large flight pens
- a bear enclosure
- an aviary
- deer fawn pens
- juvenile deer yards



Indoor facility map



Outdoor facility map



A patient Barred Owl admitted to the WCV with a fishing hook through its beak

The Externship

The Wildlife Center of Virginia offers externships year-round ranging from **4-12 weeks** at a time. These externships focus on:

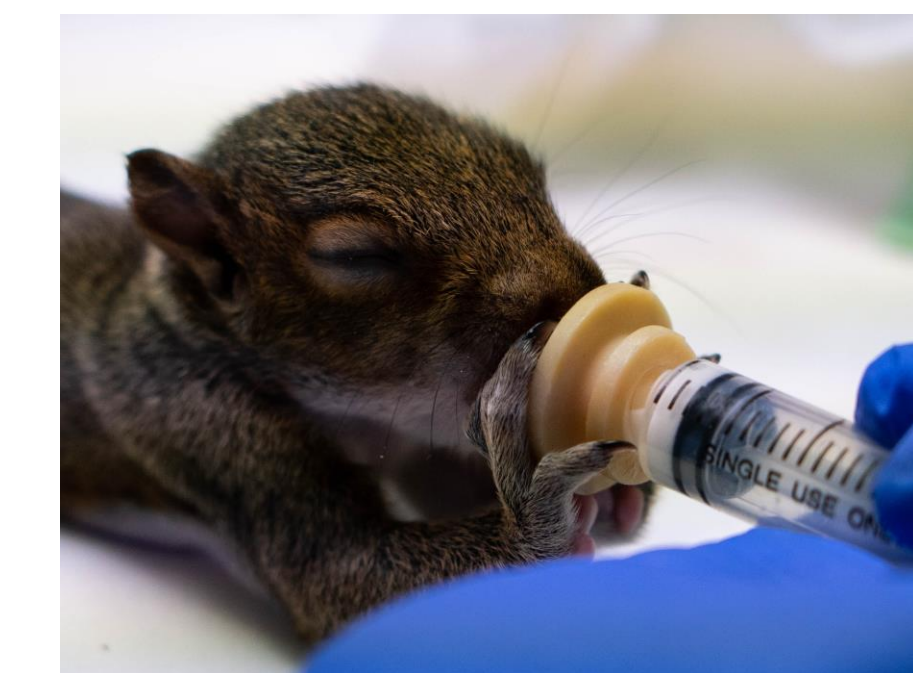
- animal husbandry
- nutrition
- capture and restraint methods
- hand-feeding techniques for orphaned species
- wildlife laws
- release criteria

- fully hands-on experience

- opportunities to shadow and assist in the veterinary hospital on-site
- work with an assortment of injured, sick, and orphaned **reptiles, mammals, and birds in various stages of recovery from injury**
- learn how to care for the Center's education ambassador animals.

My Project

- I wanted to observe how American Crows interacted with different enrichment items
- I was allowed to utilize a group of four American Crows
- created a variety of enrichment items
- provided with motion-activated trail cameras
- One crow was a subject of interest because they had been habituated to humans



A patient juvenile Grey Squirrel being syringe-fed formula

My Enrichment Items

Day 1: Puzzle Boxes

- filled empty glove boxes with fish
- covered the openings with string of different colors.



Day 1 enrichment item

Day 2: Party Poppers

- filled paper towel tubes with a variety of foods
- wrapped them in newspaper.



Day 2 enrichment items

Day 3: Scents and Flavors

- newspaper fans with strips hanging down
- covered them in different scents.



Day 3 enrichment items

Day 4: Paper Towel Tube Feeder

- placed paper towel tubes in empty boxes
- placed food inside some tubes.



Day 4 enrichment item

Day 5: Bells and Mirrors

- utilized items the center already had



Day 5 enrichment item

Observations

Day 1:

- the habituated crow interacted the most
- crow untied the string holding the boxes to the
- this crow displayed a habituated behavior of spreading its wings and shaking its tail feathers

Day 2:

- crows were far more interested in shaking the poppers to make a sound than the food
- no food taken

Day 3:

- none of the crows showed particular interest in any of the scents
- habituated crow and one other crow showed interest in apple.

Day 4:

- habituated crow was separated from the other three
- three non-habituated crows showed no interest at all in the enrichment item
- habituated crow showed great interest in both the item and the camera
- repeatedly opening the battery case of the camera
- removing the tubes from the box

Day 5:

- the group showed no interest in the items
- habituated crow showed great interest in shaking the bell to make noise
- habituated crow interacted with the mirror once.



A fledgling patient Chimney Swift



A patient juvenile American Black Bear

Conclusions

- I was expecting to discover if the birds had a food or enrichment item preference
- wanted to observe any differences in behavior between a habituated crow and three non-habituated crows
- learned that the crows **did not** have a food preference
- all the crows **more likely to interact when housed with the habituated crow**
- likely due to the non-habituated crows mimicking the habituated one's learned behavior of playing with toys
- learned that the crows prefer toys that **make noise**

Contact Me!

If you have further questions or just want to chat about the externship or my project, feel free to email me!
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