

Williamsburg Bird Club
Wednesday, February 19, 2020
W&M Andrews Hall, Room 101, 7:30 pm

Attendance: 110

President's Remarks: President Cheryl Jacobson opened the meeting and greeted the joint gathering of members of the Williamsburg Bird Club and Historic Rivers Chapter of the Virginia Master Naturalists. She began by celebrating the life of Geoff Giles, past president of WBC and also member of the Historic Rivers Chapter and who had died earlier this month, with fond memories shared by many. His excellent ability to identify bird songs; eagerness to go birding; never meeting a stranger; joy in sharing info about birds; and being the best-birding-buddy ever were among those noted. A memorial service will be held in April. Geoff will be sorely missed. Cheryl explained that to limit stress on the live birds being presented tonight, the featured program would be delivered first.

Program: Linda Morse, VP and Programs Chair of the Historic Rivers Chapter, introduced the folks presenting the program, AWARE (Alliance of Wildlife Animal Rehabilitators and Educators). Deb Woodward, certified rehabilitator (also WBC member and VA Master Naturalist), and Colleen Harlow, treasurer, education director and rehabilitator, described that their mission was to rehabilitate, provide sanctuary and individualized care for Virginia's native wildlife with the intent to release in accordance with the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries guidelines. The animals that can't be released become education animals. Deb has six acres at her home in New Kent where she rehabilitated over 80 animals during her first year.

A shrill high call was heard from the first animal ambassador before she was even brought to view: a five-year-old Kestrel named Anita who'd had a deformity of her beak as a youngster that has since healed. We were told that young raptors who are going to be released have to first graduate from 'mouse school' to prove they can provide for themselves. Other animal ambassadors were Zoe, a Red-shouldered Hawk who was called Zeus until eggs were unexpectedly laid; Woody, the Pileated Woodpecker, who noisily hammered away at everything in his cage even when not being featured and insists on being hand fed and enjoys the luxury of bathing in the rehabilitator's bathtub; Chloe, a beautiful red morph Eastern Screech Owl; and Hershey, a Barred Owl. Many of these birds could not be released due to having been hit by vehicles causing neurological damage or loss of eye or compound wing fractures. We were reminded not to throw biodegradables like apple cores and banana peels out of car windows, as they lure rodents to the edge of the road, and an owl or raptor focused intently on swooping down on them can become vulnerable to being hit by a vehicle.

Josie, the daughter of our Program Director, Dean Shostak, and apprentice rehabilitator, brought out the last guest: an adorable Opossum who'd been orphaned. Her litter mates were successfully released into the wild but she had refused to leave her sanctuary and looked very contented wrapped in a blanket in Josie's arms.

Each animal was brought around the entire assembly for folks to enjoy a close look and take photos. We were all so impressed by the enthusiasm and passion that exuded from these dedicated rehabilitators. For more information about AWARE visit their website: <https://awarewildanimals.squarespace.com/> As a nonprofit organization, donations are always most welcome.

After a question and answer session, Cheryl announced there would be no business meeting. Cheryl adjourned the meeting at 8:16.

A free raffle was held and refreshments were provided by Cindy Baker, Nancy Barnhart, Deane Gordon and Judy Kinshaw-Ellis.

Respectfully submitted,
Cathy Millar, Secretary Williamsburg Bird Club,
February 22, 2020