

Williamsburg Bird Club

February 15, 2023

Hybrid meeting: conducted in-person at the Williamsburg Regional Library auditorium and via Zoom
hosted by Ann Carpenter

Attendance: 61 in person and 41 via Zoom

President's Remarks: President Nancy Barnhart welcomed the Zoom audience and attendees in the auditorium. This is the annual joint meeting with the Historic Rivers Chapter of the Virginia Master Naturalists. We had also invited the public to this meeting in the local Virginia Gazette.

Program: AWARE: Three rehabilitators from The Alliance of Wild Animal Rehabilitators and Educators (AWARE) kept us enthralled with stories and photos/videos of daring rescues and dedicated care in our February presentation titled *Behind the Scenes of Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation and What You Need to Know About Rescuing Wildlife*. The presenters were Julie Wobig (Tidewater Wildlife Rescue and AWARE), Deb Woodward (AWARE) and Colleen Harlow (AWARE).

These highly trained volunteers are licensed by VA DWR. Their service is important because without a license, it is illegal to keep or care for orphaned, sick or injured wildlife. Among her tales of amazing rescues, Julie described running through backyards and leaping fences after an injured fleet-footed Black Vulture and sliding down a bank of prickly vines after a feisty Bald Eagle with lead poisoning. Hence, her van is equipped with bolt cutters, tree trimmer, a variety of nets and cages so she is ready for anything at a moment's notice. Julie stressed that it is important to stay with the animal that you've reported so you can show the rescuer where it is. She also reported that she often rescues rabbits, snakes and many species of birds that have gotten entangled in plastic garden netting and begged that instead we use metal wire barriers to protect vegetation. She also described rescuing a Great-horned Owl who was starving because of being unable to hunt due to four hooks of a fishing lure embedded in his skin and immobilizing a wing. Another Great-horned Owl required surgery to remove a fishing hook embedded deep in its foot. She noted that many birds die slow agonizing deaths wrapped in abandoned fishing line and asked that anglers not cut and leave fishing line or tackle behind and enlighten anyone we observe doing that.

Deb averages 250 animals per year and described what happens when a patient arrives at her home for rehab. She starts by careful observation to identify the problem and then initiates treatment for conditions like broken bones, parasites, head trauma, dehydration and emaciation. Orphans are kept warm and fed and not released until they can fend for themselves. When the animal is ready for release, the person who found it is invited to attend the release. If the animal is not migratory, in most cases, every attempt is made to return the recovered animal to the familiar territory where it was rescued, which can sometimes be many miles away. They are always in need of volunteer drivers. Deb asked that folks not use mouse/insect sticky traps, as she showed us the difficulty of removing a Carolina Wren from one.

We were treated to a cuteness overload, with many photos/videos including a wet wide-eyed bedraggled Great-horned Owl wrapped in a towel after a deskunking shampoo, as well as many orphaned bunnies, squirrels, opossums, and a wide variety of birds being fed custom formulas in 'nests' knitted by volunteers. Hungry baby Chimney Swifts, sounding a lot like little dinosaurs, have to be fed from below as they would in a chimney and when fledged, taught how to catch food on the wing by

holding mealworms in tweezer clamps held overhead. She once had 43 baby birds at the same time that required feeding every 20 minutes! She noted that injured raptors (hawks, eagles, falcons, owls and osprey) have to be initially force-fed because they don't recognize the pieces of meat/fish as food. We learned that infant opossums need to be initially tube fed because they never learn to suckle since their mother constantly drips milk into their mouths when they latch onto her nipples. An adorable video showed them finally learning how to lap formula from a dish that they were standing in. Deb stressed that her patients are wild animals and she doesn't snuggle or talk to them, and requested that when we find and bring in wildlife in need of care that we do the same, as talking and unnecessary touching them really stresses them.

Colleen, who has been a rehabilitator for 30 years, shared two of AWARE's ambassador animals: Kenny Kite and Anita Kestrel. The Mississippi Kite, a migratory bird native to SE America but not commonly seen in Virginia, had had a broken wing surgically repaired but was still unable to fly. As the one-year-old kite comfortably preened himself on Colleen's arm, we learned that kites may build their nest next to a wasp nest, which probably protects the chicks from climbing predators. The eight-year-old American Kestrel had been rescued as a baby with an issue with her beak that requires constant care. A mammal or bird that is going to be kept as a program animal is first evaluated by a veterinarian and then a comprehensive plan of care is sent to appropriate government agencies before a permit is granted. A rehab facility is also subject to unscheduled inspections by these agencies. The dedicated commitment and hard work at all times of the day involved in being a wildlife rehabilitator is really impressive!

Announcements: Since this was a joint meeting, the business portion was limited to brief announcements by our president, Nancy Barnhart, and the HRC president, Connie Rietz. The following are Nancy's announcements.

Field Trips:

- **Saturday, February 18:** Rexanne Bruno will lead a field trip along the Colonial Parkway to see water birds on the York River and shoreline. Bring National Park Pass for the possibility of birding on Yorktown National Park property. Folks will car pool at the parking lot at Target off Marquis Parkway. Lunch to follow at the Yorktown Pub for those who wish.

Great Backyard Bird Count: Nancy reminded us that it runs from Friday, Feb 17, to Monday, Feb 20, and encouraged us to participate in this global citizen scientist project even if for only 15 minutes. She clarified that one can count anywhere; not just your backyard and can send in as many lists to eBird as desired from observations of 15 minutes or more.

Bird Walks:

- **Saturday, February 25:** Our monthly New Quarter Park bird walk will include members of the Cape Henry Audubon Club. Folks should meet in the parking lot at 8 am.

The Flyer: The deadline for submissions to our newsletter is February 24th. Nancy suggested submitting articles about and photos taken during the GBBC.

HRC: President, Connie Rietz, made announcements regarding her clubs upcoming activities.

Nancy Barnhart adjourned the meeting at 7:50 pm

Respectfully Submitted

Cathy Millar, Secretary Williamsburg Bird Club

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