

Animal Care Project 2021 Report

PROJECT LEADER: Kimberly Curren kimberly.curren@calvertcountymd.gov

PROJECT GOALS: To assist staff with care of nature center animals while providing unique volunteer opportunities.

SKILLS NEEDED

- Capable of reading and following detailed instructions.
- Proficient at keeping detailed records.
- Can use and tare food scales.
- Comfortable working in close proximity to animals like snakes, mice, spiders, and birds of prey
- Adept at observing animal behaviors and adjusting what they do in close proximity to those animals. For example, if a snake is hiding in its box, the volunteer may determine that it's not a good idea to extract the snake from the box in order to handle it.
- Able to bend and stoop and carry buckets of water up to about 10 pounds.

Optional but Preferred Skills

- Experience working with reptiles is a plus.

REQUIREMENTS & EXPECTATIONS

- Must be able to tolerate strong animal odors and cleaning waste materials from cages
- Will feed live crickets and thawed mice/chicks to some of the animals.
- Will work independently or in family teams.
 - **Animal Care Minimum Age:** Children as young as 13 may help with general animal care only under the supervision of a trained adult.
- Must be comfortable handling turtles (up to about a foot long) and non-venomous snakes (up to 5ft long).
- Although staff and volunteers take precautions, they should understand that there is still risk involved when working with animals, such bites, scratches, and exposure to bacteria.

VOLUNTEER DUTIES

- **General Animal Care**
 - Weigh & thaw food for raptors
 - Feed, scrub and bask turtles
 - Feed the mice, frogs, skink, crickets & tarantula.
 - Clean cages and change water.
 - In warm weather, bask the smaller turtles outdoors.

VOLUNTEER TRAININGS

- **ANIMAL CARE TRAINING & QUALIFICATIONS:**
 - **In order to qualify to sign up for animal care**, volunteers first need to do a 2-hour training. Then they will need to make arrangements to come in to do animal care on a day when staff are here to answer questions. After that the volunteer will be qualified

to respond to animal care opportunities on the Galaxy Digital Volunteer Portal <https://calvertstewards.galaxydigital.com/>.

- **In order to maintain qualifications**, volunteers need to sign up for animal care opportunities at least once/month, and no more than 2 weekdays or one weekend day per week. If it has been longer than a month, volunteers need to arrange a time to meet with staff for a requalification training.

PROJECT DATES

- As-needed, there will be a couple of seasonal big-cleaning days per year.
- From January- July of 2021, volunteer trainings were suspended due to COVID-19 restrictions
- New volunteer trainings began in July of 2021
 - Animal Care volunteer trainings are scheduled by appointment only, preferably during the shift that the volunteer is most likely to work.

SUMMARY OF 2021 ACTIVITIES

During 2021, we successfully trained several new volunteers, and established a weekly animal care newsletter to keep all staff and volunteers up-to-date on animal care changes.

2021 VOLUNTEER HOURS: 135.5 hours from July 12, 2021 – Dec 31, 2021

2021 VOLUNTEERS:

- Kestrel Watson
- Will Bury
- Peter Weeks
- Lyric Ferguson
- Amanda and Julian Shores (parent-child team)
- Lorelei and Melanie Osterhouse (parent-child team)
- Rose and Sydney Weller (parent-child team)

2021 UPDATES:

- The Eastern Screech Owl (brown phase) escaped its enclosure when the door was left unlocked. Staff tried to recover the bird using food lures but were unsuccessful.
- Gene created an access door for the Barn Owl's water pan so that staff can change it without entering her enclosure. This should help reduce her stress levels as staff entering her space is very aversive.
- The pumpkinseed sunfish was released into the pond at Battle Creek after showing signs of lethargy and reduced appetite.
- We acquired a Gray Treefrog from Shannon's daughter, it has adjusted well to living at the nature center and is fed mealworms and crickets
- Buddy the Barn Owl was taken off his training regimen after having several aggressive episodes toward staff. He was fed up to try to reduce aggression during this time. He has since resumed his normal food ration and training schedule.
- Hawk was given sandpaper to help with beak coping/shaping that he can do on his own
- Barred and Screech Owls have been getting natural browse added to their enclosures on a weekly basis for enrichment and to allow for more natural hide spaces
- Kim and Grace attended the virtual IAATE conference in March of 2021

RECOMMENDED STAFF TRAININGS

- Kim is scheduled to attend the NEI Bird of Prey workshop in January 2022 and will update staff with any new information learned

FUTURE PLANS

- Continue to train the hawk for enrichment and the barn owl so that he will be program-ready.
- Continue to update changes to mews, including adding a shift area for the Barred and Screech owls.
- Discuss plans for screech owl exhibit when back deck is renovated. Due to lack of sunlight and potential mold growth on the back deck, staff recommends moving it out to the empty cage behind the nature center.
- Yearly assessments on quality of life for all raptors, especially the hawk who at a certain point may need to be humanely euthanized when his disability causes him discomfort, inability to eat effectively, etc.

History and Current Ages of the Nature Center's Raptors

BUDDY the BARN OWL (male) 4 years old in May 2021

Arrived August 15, 2017 from Deron Meador of Adventures with Raptors. Was 3 months old at the time, so that means that he hatched in May 2017

No injuries; however, because he hatched in captivity and was hand-fed, he is non-releasable.

RED-TAILED HAWK (male) age 19 in spring 2021

Arrived in Jan 2010 from Nanjemoy Env. Ed Center. They had gotten another red-tail from a falconer and were looking for a new home for this one.

Injured as a fledgling in 2002. He was found after he was injured, so it's unknown if he had a crash landing or was hit by a car, etc.

Vet amputated wing after a few months because the hawk was tripping over the wing and would sometimes bite it when eating.

Shannon worked with a 30-year old red tail at NEI, so we could have him another 10+ years.

EASTERN SCREECH OWL- Red Phase (sex unknown) at least age 9 in spring 2021

Arrived Summer 2014 from Orphaned Wildlife in Lusby

Cannot fly well. We don't know how he was injured or how long he was at Orphaned Wildlife.

Another nature center has a screech owl that's 18, so we may have them a few more years.

BARRED OWL (female) (age unknown) at least age 5 in spring 2021

Arrived in April 2018

Hit by a car near intersection of Rte 301 & 50

Head injury, one eye removed and sight compromised in the remaining eye, can fly

Still has extreme escape/avoidance behaviors when people are in her cage. Continue to provide browse and think of ways to minimize stress and reduce the amount of time we spend in her mew.

Cope her beak and talons in her cage.

Create water pan access from outside cage.

OTHER EXHIBIT ANIMALS IN OUR COLLECTION AS OF DECEMBER 2021

- Snakes
 - 2 corn snakes
 - eastern king snake
 - eastern rat snake
- Turtles
 - 2 diamondback terrapins (at least 18 years old)
 - albino snapping turtle (will be 30 in 2021)
 - red-eared slider
 - red-bellied cooter
 - eastern painted turtle
- Other
 - 2 mice (for raptor trapping)
 - Chilean rose tarantula
 - Pumpkinseed Fish (released)
 - Feeder Crickets and Mealworms
 - Gray Treefrog

Supporting Calvert County's nature parks and natural spaces



CALVERT STEWARDS

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

A partnership between Calvert Nature Society and Calvert County Natural Resources Division

2021 Annual Report

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CALVERT STEWARDS VOLUNTEER PROGRAM
c/o Natural Resources Division
2880 Grays Road
Prince Frederick, MD 20678
(410) 535-5327

Volunteer Portal: <https://calvertstewards.galaxydigital.com/>

Calvert Nature Society: www.calvertparks.org

Calvert County Natural Resources Division:
www.calvertcountymd.gov/NaturalResources

