
TALES FROM THE TREE

The Quarterly Newsletter of Ziggy's Tree Wildlife Rehabilitation Center



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ALL ABOUT BIRDS

Baby bird season is just around the corner. With unseasonably warm weather, we've already seen some birds out prospecting for their nest sites. And believe it or not, some birds have already had their babies – Great-horned Owls nest in the winter, with the owlets hatching as early as late January.

Ziggy's Tree admits an average of 460 birds of over 55 different species each year. While we specialize in native species songbirds, we also provide care for orphaned and injured birds of prey, shorebirds and water birds. Each species provides us with unique challenges in terms of diets, housing and length of time they spend in our care. In this issue, we'll share some information and stories on some of the amazing winged creatures for which we've had the honor of providing a temporary home.

SONGBIRDS

American Robins, Carolina Wrens, Eastern Bluebirds, House Finches, Blue Jays and Northern Mockingbirds are some of the most common species we receive, most likely because many of these species nest close to houses. In the case of the robins and mockingbirds, they also fledge at an early age, days before they can fly and are often mistaken by well-meaning rescuers as being orphaned or abandoned, when in fact the parents are nearby and continuing to feed the youngsters until they learn to forage on their own.



Eastern Bluebirds

Songbirds are "altricial" birds, meaning that they are naked, blind and helpless when they hatch. They depend completely on the parents for food and warmth. Many species of songbirds grow to adult size within 2 to 3 weeks of hatching.



Nestling American Robins

We get many calls each spring about nests of hatching birds that the caller thinks has been abandoned. Birds do not willingly abandon their babies, so unless you are certain that one or both parents has been killed, the best thing to do is monitor the nest closely and constantly for several hours. The parents come and go quickly in their never-ending quest to keep all those hungry babies fed. Even if you don't see the parents at the nest, as long as the babies are looking bright and alert, they are being fed and should be left alone.

When songbirds first leave the nest, they are referred to as fledglings. At this point, they are learning some very important life lessons from their parents – where to forage for food and how to protect themselves from predators. And it is at this age that they are in the most danger from humans and domestic animals. If you see a fledgling bird, you should keep your dogs and cats indoors and monitor for an hour or two to make sure that the parents are still in the area and caring for the youngster.



Purple Martins and Barn Swallow

This past summer, we received a nest of Purple Martins from Shelby Bottoms Nature Center. Their house/nest was located adjacent to the nature center building, and was blown over during storms in May. Martins are members of the swallow family. You can see the resemblance in the photo above. In fact, they reminded us of swallows on steroids!

We were able to release 3 of the Martins back to their natal (birth) territory. The runt of the group developed more slowly, but was finally ready to release in late August. Martins congregate in large flocks as they prepare to migrate South America for the winter. We learned of a large roost (about 100,000 birds) in Nashville and took the youngster there to join the flock. He took off like a shot, and in less than a minute, was greeted by a few members of the flock. What a joyous sight!

Most of the songbirds we care for learn to feed and forage on their own before we release them. In fact, that's how we know when they are ready to face life on their own. However we do admit some species that NEVER eat on their own in captivity. Chimney Swifts and Common Nighthawks are "aerial foragers", meaning that they catch their food, eat (and do pretty much everything else) while they are flying.



Pre-fledge Chimney Swifts

These species provide a unique challenge to us. They must be fed insects at least hourly for up to 14 hours a day during the entire time they are with us. Our Chimney Swifts are generally released in August or September when the swifts are returning to the communal roost at Tullahoma High School (which contains 3000-6000 swifts) in preparation for their migration to South America. We release them in the late afternoon so they have time to join the flock and spend some time foraging for food before entering the chimney with their new family to rest for the night.

Precocial Birds

Precocial birds are those that are born downy, mobile and are following their parents immediately after hatching to find their own food. The precocial birds we most commonly receive are Wood Ducks and Killdeer.



Hatchling Wood Ducks

Both species are very sensitive and require quiet surroundings. And because they would typically be part of a larger family group, they are difficult to raise as lone youngsters. If we receive either of these species, we contact other rehabilitators to try and find a sibling for them.



Hatchling Killdeer

As with all other avian species, the best course of action is to attempt to reunite with the parents.

Birds of Prey

We occasionally admit larger birds such as hawks and owls, also referred to as raptors. We are able to provide initial medical treatment, but due to our limited facilities, any of these birds requiring long-term care are transferred to rehabilitators who specialize in these species. We are very fortunate to have this network of friends in middle and eastern Tennessee.

As with all of our wild young, we encourage reuniting grounded babies with their parents whenever possible. We have successfully returned Great Horned Owls and Barn Owls to their nests so that they could be raised by their parents. Unfortunately, there are times that the nest is in an unsuitable or unreachable location and the babies cannot be returned. That was the case this past summer when we received three nestling American Kestrels who were found on the ground at the Tullahoma Airport.

BIRD FUN FACTS



American Kestrel

We suspect the babies may have jumped out of the nest because of the extreme heat....the nest was built under a metal roof in one of the airport hangars. We provided care for the youngsters and had the pleasure of watching them grow and fledge. They were transferred to our friends at the Clinch River Raptor Center in Oak Ridge to learn how to successfully hunt live prey (crickets) before they were released.

We also hosted a pair of Black Vultures for a few days until they could be transferred to a raptor rehabilitator in the Chattanooga area who was already caring for two other Black Vultures. The birds were confiscated by TWRA from an individual who had stolen them from the nest. Vultures are part of nature's clean-up crew – the world would be a very smelly place if they were not around to feast on the dead things most other animals won't eat.



Nestling Black Vulture

Young vultures can easily habituate to or imprint on humans, meaning that they associate us with food and as a potential mate. Our rehabber friend in Chattanooga was able to provide the vultures with a safe, natural environment and minimal human contact. With the vultures being raised as a group, they were able to establish their own social structure and depend on each other as they learned how to forage for food. All four vultures were successfully released late this summer near Raccoon Mountain in Hamilton County.

Did you know –

- Chimney Swifts can't perch like other birds. Instead, their feet act like little grappling hooks and they hang on the side of trees or the inside of a chimney.
- Most birds are protected by a federal law called the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Other than during specified hunting seasons for certain species, it is illegal to harm native species birds or their nests. The main exceptions to the law are non-native species such as European Starlings, House Sparrows and Rock (domestic) Pigeons. We hold permits from the state and federal governments that allow us to provide temporary care to injured, orphaned or displaced birds.
- Free-ranging domestic cats kill millions of birds worldwide each year. We receive more birds that are injured or orphaned due to free-ranging cats than any other single cause of admission. If you have cats, PLEASE keep them indoors, or only let them outside when you can monitor them. If you have outdoor cats, we recommend you do not put up bird feeders so as not to attract birds to your yard.
- There are 24 species of gulls. And none are named "seagulls". Our most common gull in Tennessee is the Ring-billed Gull, many times seen in a Wal-Mart parking lot.



Ring-billed Gull

- Adult Killdeer will feign a broken wing in order to lead predators away from their nest. Killdeer nest on the ground in some of the most unlikely places. One of our friends reported a Killdeer nest in the middle of their gravel driveway – so they put up an orange cone in front of the nest. The eggs hatched without incident and the mother quickly moved the babies to a safer spot.

THANK YOU!

Our Generous Supporters

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Pet Medical Center – Tullahoma
Black Fox Veterinary Clinic – Murfreesboro

IN-KIND & CASH DONATIONS

Walden's Puddle Wildlife Rehabilitation Center
Chattanooga Zoo
Tullahoma Animal Control

VOLUNTEERS

Mary Ann Partington
Peg Rindfleisch
Jeff Cashdollar
Brenan Bailey
Dennis Monsewicz

We accept donations in memory of and in honor of a loved one or cherished pet and will feature that donation (as well as print a photo of your loved one, if provided) in our next newsletter.

We are available to conduct programs for schools, civic and church groups. For more information or to schedule a program, contact LouAnn Partington at 931-393-4835 or e-mail louannpartington@yahoo.com.

For assistance with orphaned or injured birds or small mammals, contact LouAnn Partington, Certified Wildlife Rehabilitator, at 931-393-4835.

For assistance with large mammals, such as deer, raccoons, bobcats and coyotes, contact Walden's Puddle Wildlife Rehabilitation Center at 615-299-9938.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Newsletter – If you would like to contribute an article or have suggestions for articles, please contact LouAnn Partington at 931-393-4835 or louannpartington@yahoo.com.

Animal Transport – Can you help pick up animals from outlying areas and transport to one of our rehabilitation facilities OR return the animal to its habitat once it's recovered? Call Angela at 615-631-2205 or e-mail ziggystree@aol.com with your availability.

Education Programs – If you'd like to help with upcoming programs, contact LouAnn Partington at 931-393-4835 or louannpartington@yahoo.com.

Website/Facebook Maintenance: We are looking for a volunteer with one or two hours a month to spare to help keep our website and Facebook page updated. Contact us at ziggystree@aol.com.

Board of Directors - If you would be interested in serving on our Board of Directors or would like to nominate someone to our Board, please submit resumes via e-mail to ziggystree@aol.com or mail to Ziggy's Tree Wildlife Rehabilitation Center, PO Box 330756, Murfreesboro, TN 37133. Board members are responsible for setting policy for the organization and assisting with fundraising activities. Time commitment is less than 10 hours per month.

Board Members

President – Angela Hensley
Vice-President – LouAnn Partington, Certified Wildlife Rehabilitator
Secretary/Treasurer – Chuck Hensley
At-Large Directors – Jan Brandon

Newsletter Staff

Editor LouAnn Partington
Contributors Angela Hensley, LouAnn Partington
Photographs courtesy of LouAnn Partington

WISH LIST

- Fruit (apples, blueberries, strawberries, grapes, blackberries)
 - Gift cards (grocery store, Lowe's, Home Depot, Tractor Supply)
 - Bird seed (millet, finch seed, black oil sunflower seeds)
 - Chick Starter (unmedicated)
 - LCD Projector
 - Copy Paper
 - Heating Pads (without automatic shut-off)
 - Laundry Detergent
 - Nuts (pecans, walnuts, acorns)
 - Vegetables (broccoli, carrots, kale, potatoes)
 - Facial Tissue
 - Bleach
 - Paper Towels
-

QUOTES FOR THE QUARTER

"There is new life in the soil for every man. There is healing in the trees for tired minds and for our overburdened spirits, there is strength in the hills, if only we will lift up our eyes. Remember that nature is your great restorer." - Calvin Coolidge



Red-tailed Hawk Release

"One touch of nature makes the whole world kin." - William Shakespeare

"There is nothing in which the birds differ more from man than the way in which they can build and yet leave a landscape as it was before." Robert Lynd, *The Blue Lion and Other Essays*

SIX NON-CASH WAYS TO SUPPORT ZIGGY'S TREE

At your birthday and the holidays. Ask your family and friends to send a gift in your name to Ziggy's Tree, or to purchase an item on our wish list.

Shop at Kroger's using one of our rechargeable gift cards. Four percent of the amount you recharge on the card goes to Ziggy's Tree, and you can recharge as many times as you want to. Information on the program is available on our website. Contact us at 931-393-4835 to get your card now!

Buy using Goodshop.com A shopping website with hundreds of merchants. Ziggy's Tree gets a percentage (up to 30%) of each transaction. Type "Ziggy's Tree Wildlife Rehabilitation Center" into the "who do you Goodshop for?" box.

Search using Goodsearch.com A powerful Yahoo search engine. Ziggy's Tree gets a penny per search. Type "Ziggy's Tree Wildlife Rehabilitation Center" into the "who do you Goodsearch for?" box.

Write a review on our GuideStar profile. GuideStar is used by many funding agencies to research non-profit agencies. You can help us by going to our GuideStar profile at www.guidestar.org and writing a review of our organization – how we've helped you or what the availability of our services means to you and the community at large. Positive reviews will encourage more funding agencies to support us.

Like us on Facebook. And ask your friends to like us to. You'll be able to hear about our new admissions and releases as they happen, and stay current on any special events or fundraising activities we are doing.

NEWS

The spring squirrel season has already started – just as we are preparing to release the last of the babies from 2011. Thankfully this season is much slower than last season, at least so far.

The winter months are our downtime. We clean and prepare for the spring babies, while taking in just a few injured adult birds. It's also the time that we write most of our grants and pursue corporate sponsorships. We've applied for several grants and should hear back on most of them just in time for the spring baby bird season.

A big **THANK YOU** to all who donated during the end of the year GuideStar/Kimbia Giveaway. Although we were not successful in obtaining enough "votes" to win the grand prize, we made a good showing and the donations are already being put to good use helping us prepare for the year ahead.

Ziggy's Tree Wildlife Rehabilitation Center
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Murfreesboro, TN 37133



NOTICE: YOUR MAILING LABEL CONTAINS YOUR MEMBERSHIP EXPIRATION DATE.

To avoid any interruption with delivering your newsletter, we ask that you renew at least one month before the date shown. Use the Membership Form provided below.

PLEASE RENEW, STAY INFORMED, WE NEED YOU!!!

YES, I WANT TO SUPPORT ZIGGY'S TREE, I AM ...

- A NEW MEMBER**
 RENEWING MY MEMBERSHIP

Memberships are for one year
Gift Memberships are also available.

Please Mail This Form To:
Ziggy's Tree WRC
PO Box 330756
Murfreesboro, TN 37133

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY.

___ Individual	\$25.00
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___ Supporting	\$100.00
___ Sustaining	\$250.00
___ Advocate	\$500.00
___ Wildlife Champion	\$1000.00

Name _____
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I would like to receive my newsletter by email.

I am interested in volunteering in the following areas:

- ___ Environmental Education
___ Wildlife Rehabilitation
 ___ Fundraising

Checks should be made payable to Ziggy's Tree WRC.

Not sure what to get that special someone for birthdays, anniversaries or just because? Consider giving them a one year membership to Ziggy's Tree!

Members receive our quarterly newsletter and invitations to special events and programs held throughout the year.

Ziggy's Tree strives to be environmentally conscious. If you would prefer to receive an electronic copy of our newsletter, please check the box above or contact us at ziggystree@aol.com to be placed on our mailing list.