
TALES FROM THE TREE

The Quarterly Newsletter of Ziggy's Tree Wildlife Rehabilitation Center



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IT'S BUNNAROO TIME!

"We just found a nest of baby bunnies".....a sentence that strikes fear in the heart of many a wildlife rehabilitator. Eastern Cottontails (*Sylvilagus floridanus*) are generally considered to be one of the more difficult wildlife patients we take in. Since they are a prey species, they are afraid of everything, including the people that are trying to help them. This spring we've seen a higher than usual number of orphaned and injured cottontails at our mammal facility.

The Eastern Cottontail breeds from February through September, producing 3 to 4 litters during that time, usually with 4 to 5 young. Cottontails are born naked and with their eyes closed, but develop rapidly and usually leave the nest when they are about 3 weeks old.



Just a few days old

About a week before giving birth, the adult female cottontail creates a small saucer-like depression in the ground, only about 3 to 4 inches deep and 8 inches across. She will typically look for a spot with high grass or tangled brush to provide some cover for the nest. She bites downy fur from her breast and belly to line the nest along with soft dead grass and leaves. She makes a second layer to cover the babies while she is out foraging. She only returns to feed the babies once or twice during the night, usually near dawn or dusk. Since the babies have no scent, this keeps them safer from predators.

Cottontails have very delicate digestive systems and can easily develop bloat or other intestinal problems if they are fed many of the diets that are found on the Internet. We use a formula developed specifically for this species and introduce natural foods as soon as they open their eyes.



Eyes just opening, 7-10 days old

Our success rate with cottontails is improving each year. Last year we released 159 cottontails, and we are already nearing 100 releases this spring, with half of the baby season to go. Much of the credit for our success goes to volunteer Sami Green who has been researching some of the best practices of other mammal rehabilitators across the country and making recommendations on improvement to our cottontail rehabilitation program. As with several of our other species, we find that getting "back to nature" is a key to success. Our biggest changes have been in housing and the calming scents we have in our bunny room. If our success rate continues as we improve on our methods, we will present our findings at a future wildlife rehabilitation conference.



Ready for release!

Since cottontails are most active at night, we time our releases for late afternoon/early evening in areas where they will have plenty of food as well as brushy areas to hide from predators.

What should you do if you find a nest of baby bunnies? If they are uninjured, leave the nest alone. Although our success rate is good, all wildlife babies are better off being raised by their biological parents.

If the nest is exposed because you've mowed over it, you can cover it back up with loose grass. Worried that mama won't come back? You can lay long pieces of grass or straw in a criss-cross pattern over the nest. If the straw is disturbed overnight, then mama has come back.

What can you do if you find a bunny nest inside your fenced in yard and you are worried that your dog might find it? Since mama bunny only comes during the night to feed the babies, you can cover the nest during the day with a laundry basket weighted down with a heavy rock. The babies can still get air but the dog can't reach the bunnies. Remove the laundry basket just before dark so mama can get to her youngsters to feed them. And take the dog out on a leash after dark to make sure the babies stay safe.

If the babies have been in a cat or dog's mouth, contact us immediately. Even if you don't see any obvious injuries, the bunny may have internal injuries, and their fur is thick enough that it may not be easy to see puncture wounds. We always put any cat or dog caught wildlife on antibiotics as infection can set in quickly and be fatal.

We saw this on Facebook and absolutely LOVED it!

10 WAYS TO MAKE YOUR LOCAL REHABBER HAPPY

1. Call immediately when you find orphaned or injured wildlife. Not in 12 hours, not in two days, immediately.
2. Ignore all the websites that tell you how to make homemade formula but pay attention to all the ones that say "DO NOT FEED ANYTHING TO THE BABY!".
3. Believe us when we say "Put the bunny back."
4. Slip a monetary donation into the blankets next to the orphan you just brought in. \$2, \$10, \$100....no amount is too small and it not only helps provide for the baby you just brought but it also serves as a reminder that she/he IS appreciated.
5. Understand that gas money and driving detracts from formula money and caregiving so most rehabbers do not drive to capture or pick up patients and are reliant on finders and volunteers to get them where they need to be.
6. Patiently answer each question you're asked no matter how silly or irrelevant it seems.
7. Put the bunny back.
8. Give ample time for call backs. Most rehabbers have full time jobs and families in addition to sick or injured wild animals to deal with and won't always be able to answer immediately.
9. Cooperate when asked to follow steps to attempt reuniting an infant with its parents.
10. Seriously, put the bunny back.

Written by and shared with the permission of Erin Cooksey, aka "The Milk Lady"



We love to eat our greens!

THE LATEST HAPPENINGS

It's been a busy but unusual spring baby season for us. We usually take in more squirrels than any other mammal, but our spring squirrel season was very slow....we only took in 5 orphans. On the other hand, opossum and cottontail intakes have been unusually high with our cottontail intakes continuing on an almost daily basis. We've released most of the spring mammal babies and expect we will start admitting the late summer/fall squirrel and opossum babies any day now.

Likewise, we've been busy with baby birds – we've already admitted 240 babies with another 6 to 8 weeks of baby season to go! We completed a third flight cage for songbirds this spring which is helping us move the youngsters along on a more timely basis. We've released 97 birds so far this year with more releases planned every week. Check our Facebook page for release videos and pictures.



Our three songbird flight aviaries

We've also had a little extra news coverage this past month. We were interviewed on the Nashville Today program on WSM radio. We were able to introduce our organization to a wider audience as well as provide tips to determine if the baby bird or mammal actually needs to be rescued.

We were also featured in a story on the WGNS Radio website. A deputy at the Judicial Center (who also happens to be a long-time Ziggy's Tree supporter) rescued a downed fledgling American Kestrel and contacted us for assistance. You can check out the story at <http://wgnsradio.com/helping-an-injured-falcon-cms-33339>.

We participated in The Big Payback, the Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee's one day on-line giving event. Despite a nationwide systems problems, we were able to raise \$1150 on event day and during the extended hours. Thanks to those who supported us: **Allyne Hart, Jeff & Madeline Cashdollar, Mary Ann Partington, Adam Borchart, Sherry Teas, LouAnn Partington, Carolyn Heinrich, Angela Hensley, Pam Blevins, The Delek Fund for Hope and the Jane & Richard Eskind & Family Foundation.**

We would also like Angela Wilson, Store Manager, and her staff at Peeble's Department Store in Tullahoma. We were selected as their charity for the 30 Days of Giving conducted in April. Thanks to their efforts, we received a check for \$424!

FAVORITE QUOTES

"Adopt the pace of nature: her secret is patience."
~Ralph Waldo Emerson

"I love to think of nature as an unlimited broadcasting station, through which God speaks to us every hour, if we will only tune in."
~George Washington Carver

"Those who dwell among the beauties and mysteries of the earth are never alone or weary of life."
~Rachel Carson

For assistance with orphaned or injured mammals or general questions about mammals, call or text Angela at 615-631-2205.

For assistance with orphaned or injured birds or general questions about birds, call LouAnn at 931-393-4835 or 931-841-9781.

Looking for a project for your scout troop, church, school or civic group? We'd love to have more squirrel nest boxes, and could also use small bluebird or woodpecker boxes to use with our young cavity nesting birds. Contact us for more information.

KROGER COMMUNITY REWARDS

Thanks to everyone who has signed up to support us through the Kroger Community Rewards program.

For privacy reasons, Kroger does not provide names of those who have signed up to support us. So even though we can't thank you personally, please know that we are extremely grateful for your support.

There's still time to sign up and support us. Just go to www.kroger.com/community_rewards, and enroll your rewards card, selecting Ziggy's Tree as your charity. You still get gas points and discounts – and Kroger donates money to us!

And please ask your friends and family to enroll and support us!



Thanks!!!!!!

WISH LIST

- Gift cards (grocery store, Lowe's, Home Depot, Tractor Supply)
- LCD Projector
- Heating Pads (without automatic shut-off)
- Nuts (pecans, walnuts, acorns)
- Vegetables (broccoli, carrots, kale, sweet potatoes, zucchini)
- Paper Towels
- Facial Tissues
- Toilet Paper
- Reptariums (any size)

SUPPORT ZIGGY'S TREE

- Become a member – just complete the application on the back of this newsletter, or visit our website to download and print an application.
- Give a gift membership to a friend!
- Purchase items from our wish list.
- Donate newspapers (we use those to line cages and cover the tables under the cages)
- Contact us about volunteer opportunities, such as transport, animal releases, administrative/office work, fundraising or contributing to our newsletter
- Like us on Facebook and stay updated on releases, admissions and other news.
- Invite us to speak to your church or civic group – we love to tell people about the work we do!

Check our website at www.ziggystree.org for other ways you can support us!

THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS SUPPORTERS!

ADVOCATE

Anne Kenney
Peeble's 30 Days of Giving

SUSTAINING

Winchester Family Dentistry
Bingham & Gina Bragg
Jeff & Madeline Cashdollar

SUPPORTING

Hazel & Mack Fannin
Ashley Judkins
Mark & Julie Pine
Miree Woods
Renee Kearney

FAMILY

Larry & Mary Ann Partington * Sharon Dunkin
Philip & Marilyn Falk * Renee & Tony Halterlein
Michelle & Corey Kruse * Billy & Charlotte Panter
George Gifford * Barbara & Jeff Stratton
Vicky Feinstein * Cheryl Lanning * Andrea Hershman
Bruce Smith * Gina & Alan Cleek * Ashley Judkins
Catherine Cavagnaro * Tasneem Ahmed * Susan Parker

INDIVIDUAL

Debbie Bomar * Shelly Garrett * Carol Shelton
Karen Brown * Sandy Phillips * Clay Faulkner
Sheila Martin * Don Williams * Linda Foster
Jackie Taylor * John Moore

VETERINARIANS

Pet Medical Center – Tullahoma

IN-KIND & CASH DONATIONS

Banjo Baby Squirrel Fund * Kristy Baker * Melissa Broz
George Bowers * Steve Sanders * Sherri Bryan
Bluff House Concerts/Templeton Thompson
Mark Cannon * Debbie Daniel * Brian Gittens
Wildlife Resources & Education Network
Debbie Creech * Clara Gulyas * Peg Rindfleisch

VOLUNTEERS

Animal Care: Brenan Bailey, Sami Green, Joanne Groat,
Valerie Bjorn, Tahira Mohyuddin, Sherry Teas, Angela
Hensley, LouAnn Partington

Webmaster Valerie Bjorn

Social Media Tiffany Woody

2015 RELEASES

January

2 Eastern Screech Owls
1 Sharp-shinned Hawk
1 Barred Owl

February

1 American Robin
1 Mourning Dove
2 Barred Owls
1 Eastern Screech Owl

March

1 Mourning Dove

April

1 Red-tailed Hawk
1 Southern Short-tailed Shrew
1 Mallard
41 Eastern Cottontails
1 Field Mouse
24 Virginia Opossums

May

1 Blue Jay
1 Eastern Screech Owl
1 Barred Owl
1 Cedar Waxwing
6 American Robins
10 Carolina Wrens
3 Carolina Chickadees
2 Killdeer
1 Song Sparrow
1 Northern Mockingbird
1 Brown-headed Nuthatch
4 House Finches
1 Brown-headed Cowbird
1 Eastern Bluebird
55 Eastern Cottontails
56 Virginia Opossums
17 Wood Ducks
1 Mallard
1 Groundhog

Ziggy's Tree Wildlife Rehabilitation Center
92 Maple Ave.
Tullahoma, TN 37388



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
92 Maple Ave.
Tullahoma, TN 37388**

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY.

___ Individual \$25.00
___ Family \$40.00
___ Supporting \$100.00
___ Sustaining \$250.00
___ Advocate \$500.00
___ Wildlife Champion \$1000.00

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____
Home Phone (____) _____ Zip _____ -- _____
Work Phone (____) _____
e-mail _____

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 newsletter.

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 e-mail ziggystreewildlife@gmail.com to be placed on our mailing list.