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# TALES FROM THE TREE

*The Quarterly Newsletter of Ziggy's Tree Wildlife Rehabilitation Center*



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## How Much Wood...

...would a Woodchuck chuck, if a Woodchuck could chuck wood? About 700 lbs. Cornell University did a study on their earth-moving abilities and since they are capable of moving that much earth in their relatively short lifespan, they figured they could move that much wood.

But Woodchucks don't chuck wood! The name "Woodchuck" comes from a Native American word, wuchuk, which roughly translates to "Digger". They are also known as groundhogs, whistlepig, chuck, woodshock, groundpig, whistler, thickwood badger and "bulldozer bear". It is a rodent of the family Sciuridae, belonging to the group of large ground squirrels known as marmots. It was first scientifically described by Carl Linnaeus in 1758.

Adult Groundhogs measure between 17 1/2 to 24 inches in length and weigh around 13 lbs., which is twice the average of a newborn human baby. Like other squirrels, they have tails that are about 6 inches long which they use for balancing when standing upright. They resemble fat little bears when standing upright on their hind legs. They are solitary animals, spending their summers feasting on grasses and plants and taking naps in the sunshine. During the summer they can eat about a pound of food per sitting! In the winter, they hibernate. While hibernating, its heart rate slows from 80 beats a minute down to 5 per minute. Their body temperature drops from 99 degrees to as low as 37 degrees according to researchers at Cornell. Groundhogs loose over 30% of their body weight during hibernation. They stick close to their homes and don't wander far from their den at any time.

They are only found in North America, from Canada down to the southern United States. They love woodland areas that bump up against grassy open areas and fields. The groundhog's burrow is called a sette (pronounced set). They dig these burrows which typically are 6 feet down and 20 feet wide. They may have up to two dozen entrances/exits. Their burrows contain several chambers: a food pantry, a bathroom, a sleeping den and a nursery (if female owns den). They line their sleeping area and bathroom with dried grass which they will remove from the den and install new grasses from time to time to "freshen" up their homes. Groundhogs are active during the day, and feed mostly in the early morning and late afternoon. They spend lots of time mending and expanding their settes, and eating a variety of vegetation, supplemented by insects, snails and grubs.



One of the things that distinguishes groundhogs from other marmots is that they are generally solitary animals. While most marmots live in small family groups, the groundhog is a loner and even a bit anti-social. They defend their burrows and territories from other groundhogs in loud squabbles which include hopping about, swishing their tails and chattering their teeth.

Even though they live alone, groundhogs will use a shrill, whistle-like warning call, which gives them the common name whistlepig, and alerts all the groundhogs in the area of any danger, such as a low-flying hawk or other predator. These rodents are herbivores, which means they eat vegetation. The diet includes grasses, plants, fruit and sometimes tree bark. They are sometimes known for damaging gardens and crops, which makes them undesirable to some folks. The truth is that they serve a great purpose in aerating our soil and aiding in moisture retention under large trees, etc.



In early February, male groundhogs come out of hibernation and look for females' burrows. If he finds one, he enters. It is believed that males do this to introduce themselves to potential mates. In early spring, females give birth in their nursery chamber to 2 to 6 young (after gestation of 32 days), who are born blind and hairless. The pups grow quickly maturing in a little over 3 months. After 3 months, they leave their home to dig a new home of their own. They typically live 3 to 6 years in the wild.

The groundhog is the only rodent with its own day. Most of us are quite familiar with February 2<sup>nd</sup> - Groundhog Day! According to tradition, if the groundhog sees his shadow, we will have 6 more weeks of winter. How accurate is this forecast? Punxsutawney Phil (the records in Pennsylvania go back 100 years) reports that he has predicted 99 forecasts of more winter and 15 forecasts of an early spring. According to data from Stormfax, Phil has been correct only 39% of the time. So he gets it wrong a lot! But then again, our weather folks aren't always right either!

Our baby Groundhog intakes this year were from a construction site. Mama was accidentally killed, but when the workers realized she was a nursing mother, they looked until they found the babies. They are probably the youngest we've ever taken in, but they have been growing like weeds and are currently in an outside run learning to eat on their own.



*Photo credit: Austin King, Angela Wilson, Angela Hensley*

## Meet our partner ... The Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee

Have you heard that Ziggy's Tree has received a \$3,000 grant from The Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee? These funds will be used to support our wildlife rehabilitation program, and will directly help us rescue, rehabilitate and release Tennessee's orphaned and injured native wildlife.

The Community Foundation awarded more than \$2.39 million in grants to 365 nonprofit organizations as part of the 2019 annual grantmaking process.

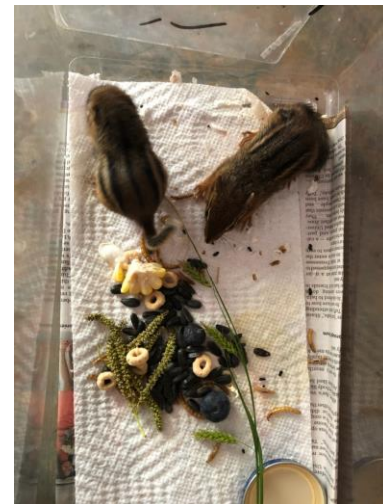
We're very grateful to the Animal Welfare Fund of the Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee for their support this year. As an all-volunteer organization, the funds we receive go directly to providing appropriate nutrition, housing and medical attention for the 800+ animals we take in each year.

The Community Foundation awards discretionary grants annually from its unrestricted and field-of-interest funds through an open application process to Middle Tennessee nonprofit organizations addressing community needs and benefiting the well-being of citizens through valuable programs and innovative services. The Foundation connects generosity with need in order to build a stronger community for the future. To learn more, please visit [www.CFMT.org](http://www.CFMT.org).



## HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO

Whew! We've been busy. The March tornado that blew through from Nashville to Cookeville brought us quite a few young Eastern Gray Squirrels – we went from 0 to 60 in a month!! Going into April, we also took in Virginia Opossums, Eastern Chipmunks, Southern Flying Squirrels and those adorable Groundhogs mentioned in our cover story. We currently have 75 mammals in care. We're hoping for some clear weather days in May as many of these babies are ready for release! And our mammal specialist is ready for a little bit of a break – we've had mammal babies in care constantly since last July.



*Eastern Chipmunks*

We've also taken in a record number of songbirds so far this year – we're up nearly 60% over last year's numbers. Part of this increase is due to other organizations limiting and/or closing to intakes due to the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the fact that many people are at home during this time and observing the wildlife in their yard. We've had a great year so far walking rescuers through reuniting bird families – if we hadn't been able to do that, we'd be over our capacity for baby birds. We're thrilled that everyone has been so cooperative in attempting to reneest. While we love raising our little feathered friends, we know that they are always much better off staying with their biological parents.

We're celebrating our 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year! We obtained our nonprofit status in May of 2010. It's hard to believe we've been around that long – but when you're taking care of babies, the days just fly by (yes, that was a bird pun).

## **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, board membership 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](http://www.ziggystree.org) for other ways you can support us!***

### **WISH LIST**

- Gift cards (grocery store, Lowe's, Home Depot, Tractor Supply)
- Dried Bloodworms
- High quality dry cat food
- Baby Food (fruit – apples, bananas, blueberries)
- Canned or frozen mixed vegetables
- LCD Projector
- Heating Pads (without automatic shut-off)
- Nuts (pecans, walnuts, acorns)
- Fresh Vegetables (broccoli, carrots, kale, sweet potatoes, zucchini, apples)
- Paper Towels
- Facial Tissues
- Toilet Paper
- Unscented laundry detergent
- 24, 36 or 48 inch Bungee cords

Contact us at 615-631-2205 or 931-393-4835 to arrange to drop off any of the above items.

For assistance with orphaned or injured mammals or general questions about mammals, 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 text 931-841-9781.

For assistance with injured turtles, contact Rachel at 615-587-2977.

***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 our 62 participating families in the Kroger Community Rewards program, we've received our first quarterly check for \$308.15. The funds we receive annually through this program are now covering approximately 6 weeks of our operating costs.

If you shop at Kroger and would like to support us through this program, just go on-line to [www.kroger.com/community\\_rewards](http://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!

Don't have an e-mail address or computer access? You can still sign up. Just call 1(800) KROGERS, OPTION 3 or 1(800)576-4377, OPTION 3.

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.

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



**THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS  
SUPPORTERS!**

**WILDLIFE CHAMPION**

The Animal Welfare Fund of The  
Community Foundation of Middle  
Tennessee

**ADVOCATE**

Charles Chamberlin

**SUSTAINING**

Ann Gildemeister

**SUPPORTING**

Banjo Baby Squirrel Fund  
Dean and Donna Jennings

Amy York  
Debbie Bomar  
Brady Palmer  
Patricia Brinkley  
Ann Carr  
Bob & Star Eaker  
Karen Curry  
Karla Watkins  
Page Powers  
Amy Wallace

**FAMILY**

Mary Ann & Larry Partington \* Misti Graffis  
George & Ashley Bowers \* Celese & Jim Sanders  
Sarah Wellman \* Steven Sekor \* Cheri Glover  
Vanessa Lazon \* Laurie-Ann Tomasek  
Susan Gruber \* Robin Mitchell \* Cathie Lloyd  
Robert Smith

**INDIVIDUAL**

Charles Parish \* Karen Dean \* Julie Bryant  
Rachel Manlove \* Kelsi Laws \* Erica Marshall  
Logan Harmon \* Amy Diller

**VETERINARIANS**

Pet Medical Center  
Airport Animal Clinic

**IN-KIND & CASH DONATIONS**

Banjo Baby Squirrel Fund \* Critter Gitter  
Grace Hanners \* Brigitte Morris \* Valerie Hayashi  
Chris Padgett \* Kim Lyles \* Jeannine Powis  
Hilary Llamas \* Dave & Tracy Meadows \* Jill Joyce  
Debbie Sykes \* Keysha Kepler

**Thanks to our December 2019 Giving  
Tuesday donors, we made our goal of \$1000!**

Debbie Sykes \* Devon Blackburn \*Misty Mingo  
Hazel Fannin \* LouAnn Partington \* Juniper Russo  
Cynthia Wennemark \* Holly Young Gilbert  
Pandy Burck Hershman \* Rachel Manlove  
Patricia Lee \* Angela Hensley \* Sherry Nickell  
Monica Etschman Ash \* Bettina Bowers  
Wendy Kinhead \* Melissa Rose Boyle \* Amy York  
Beth Terry \* Gracie Hollombe Vandiver  
April Powell (in memory of her father Sloan)

*Results of our May 2020 Giving Tuesday/Anniversary  
Fundraiser are pending.*

**2019 RELEASES**

**December**

1 Barred Owl  
3 Eastern Screech Owls  
1 Virginia Opossum

**2020 RELEASES**

**March**

66 Eastern Gray Squirrels  
6 Southern Flying Squirrels

**April**

1 Carolina Wren  
1 Tufted Titmouse  
1 Yellow Bellied Sapsucker

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/Administration

Checks should be made payable to Ziggy's Tree WRC. You can also renew/donate by credit card at [Paypal.me/ziggystree](https://www.paypal.com/merchot/cgi-bin/?cmd=_express-checkout&context=express).

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](mailto:ziggystreewildlife@gmail.com) to be placed on our mailing list.