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# TALES FROM THE TREE

The Quarterly Newsletter of Ziggy's Tree Wildlife Rehabilitation Center



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Website: [www.ziggystree.org](http://www.ziggystree.org)

E-mail: [ziggystreewildlife@gmail.com](mailto:ziggystreewildlife@gmail.com)

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## NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD (*Mimus Polyglottos*)

***“Mockingbirds don’t do one thing but make music for us to enjoy. They don’t eat up people’s gardens, don’t nest in corncribs, they don’t do one thing but sing their hearts out for us. That’s why it’s a sin to kill a mockingbird.”***

***Harper Lee, To Kill a Mockingbird***

The Northern Mockingbird is our Tennessee state bird and a fierce defender of their territory with an amazing repertoire of sounds and songs. You'll know if you have gotten a little too close to a mockingbird nest – they will dive bomb you and even though they weigh on average around 50 grams or 1/10<sup>th</sup> of a pound, they apparently think they can take you best two out of three.



The Mockingbird was selected as our state bird through the efforts of the Tennessee Ornithological Society in 1933. As part of their efforts to educate the public and stimulate interest in birds and the environment, they selected 15 species of birds. They then conducted an election with the species garnering the most votes chosen as our state bird. Information on the species selected was published in newspapers and distributed to schools.

Most of the votes were cast by schoolchildren with the mockingbird edging out the robin as the most popular bird. Legislation was then introduced to the Tennessee legislature and the mockingbird was confirmed by Senate Joint Resolution 51 and adopted by the general assembly.

The Mockingbird is also the state bird of Arkansas, Florida, Mississippi, and Texas.



Mockingbirds are in the family *Mimidae*, which includes Brown Thrashers and Gray Catbirds. As the family name suggests, they are adept at mimicking sounds. Mockingbirds have a mixture of original and imitative songs each repeated several times. They can imitate car alarms, barking dogs, sirens along with other mechanical sounds, as well as other bird songs. An individual mockingbird can have a repertoire of over 200 sounds and can continue to add to that catalogue over their lifetime.

During breeding season, they often sing at night. Both sexes sing in fall to claim food territory with the male typically louder than the female



Mockingbirds can be found throughout most of the continental United States. They breed and nest in open woodland, scattered trees and bushes, shrubbery, shade trees and plantings around buildings. Their nests are usually about 3 to 10 feet up from the ground. The nest is a bulky cup of coarse dead twigs, thorny grasses, decayed leaves and weed stems and lined with fine grasses, rootlets and plant down. The eggs are pale blue or greenish white with brown or red speckles. The babies hatch naked, blind, and helpless and have light gray down.

The mockingbird's diet consists primarily of insects (beetles, ants, grasshoppers, spiders) and fruits, including elderberries and grapes. The young are fed mostly insects until they leave the nest.

Breeding season can begin in April and usually ends by September. Mockingbirds can raise 2 to 3 clutches each year. They usually lay 3-5 eggs. The female incubates the eggs for 11 to 14 days. Both parents tend to the young while they are in the nest. The babies open their eyes at 3-5 days, and leave nest at 12-14 days after they hatch.

When foraging, mockingbirds do a conspicuous wing flash – we think it looks like a yawn and stretch. Although it is unclear exactly why they do this, it may be to scare up insects or to distract larger predators. They feed primarily on the ground.

They are not fully flighted for about a week after leaving the nest. The male continues to protect and feed them as they learn to forage on their own, while the female starts on the next clutch of eggs. They are typically independent about 3 weeks after they leave the nest and will leave the area to establish their own territories.

Mockingbirds are usually in our top 5 of intakes each year, probably because they do nest so close to human habitation. We've admitted 30 mockingbirds this year, and although a few were too debilitated on admission and did not survive, we are on target to release 86% of these amazing songsters.

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

It's been a busy summer for us – we took in a record 114 American Robins during baby season! And our baby bird intakes in May were up 66% over last year. This is most likely because we are one of only two organizations in the state that accept hatchling (newborn) and nestling songbirds – those with the most intense feeding schedules. As we move through the summer months and the typical intakes are the older fledgling birds (those that have left the nest) that have run into trouble, there are a few organizations in the area that are able to admit those from their geographic area, allowing us to concentrate resources on the counties closest to our facility



*Newly fledged American Robins*

Our second round of baby Eastern Gray Squirrels started in mid-July with our first “pinky” and the population has continued to grow. We were still in the process of releasing the spring squirrels when the newest babies arrived. In addition to the 20+ squirrels that we've admitted so far, we've also taken in 16 Virginia Opossums. We're hopeful that most of these youngsters will be ready for release this fall, but suspect we will be overwintering at least a few of them.



*Eastern Gray Squirrel*

## AND LOOKING FORWARD

As we get into our slower months, aka “Not The Baby Season,” we are turning our focus to planning for next year and beyond.

One of our long-term goals is to establish a central facility. Our permitted rehabilitators currently operate out of their homes, which limits to some extent our capacity for caging and facility expansion and volunteer recruitment.

As we plan for the future, we've identified several areas where we need to recruit additional help:

- **Board of Directors:** We are currently operating with a 3 person board. We are looking for additional board members with skills in strategic planning, fundraising, accounting/finance, and that have a passion for the work we do. If you know of anyone that would have an interest in helping us to grow our organization, they can email us at [ziggystreewildlife@gmail.com](mailto:ziggystreewildlife@gmail.com).
- **Construction:** Our current pre-release caging needs repair and/or replacement so that we can continue to operate at our current intake level. And we can also use help with smaller projects like building squirrel nest boxes.
- **Website:** Our website needs to be refreshed and there are some technical issues that none of us know how to update.



*Barn Swallow*

## **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 or Instagram 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
- Nuts (pecans, walnuts, acorns)
- Fresh Vegetables (broccoli, carrots, kale, sweet potatoes, zucchini, apples)
- Paper Towels
- Facial Tissues
- Toilet Paper
- Unscented laundry detergent

Contact us at 615-631-2205 or 931-841-9781 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, text LouAnn at 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 our 99 participating families in the Kroger Community Rewards program, we have received our second quarter check for \$379.95. The funds we receive annually through this program are covering approximately one month 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!

(May 2024 through July 2024)

## WILDLIFE CHAMPION

Deborah Trimble

## ADVOCATE

Banjo Baby Squirrel Fund & Cheryl Schur

## SUSTAINING

Sharon Butcher

Julie Wotruba

Lorena Romero Alberto

Robin Mitchell

Valerie Bjorn

Ben Simpkins

Heather Reineke

Michael Westcott

## SUPPORTING

Amy York \* Larry Partington \* Debbie Bomar \*

Wendy Govoni \* Shelly Thorburn \* Sean Holt

Christine Shem \* Ayrika Whitney \* Holly Feral

S. Dillard \* Annie Clements \* Zack Debo

Sue Torre \* Jan Davidson \* Susan Gruber

Mr. & Mrs. Anthony Halterlein

Maureen Mahoney \* Alyssa Leard \* Cindy Payne

## FAMILY

Sam Abbott \* Deborah Zukowski \* Tamrah Kincaid

Dennis Sanders \* Kacey Woods \* Mary Karpos

Joy Partin\* Marie Barker \* Emilie Comoglio

Dana Marshall \* Louise Wolff \* Terri Templeman

Shannon & Cathy Jackson \* Linda Foster

Jerry Vandiver \* April Burt

## INDIVIDUAL

Michelle Villa \* Connie Black \* Vera Micklash \* Sue Labuta

## VETERINARIANS

Pet Medical Center

Haley Veterinary Clinic

## IN-KIND & CASH DONATIONS

Musical Painter \* Bethany Coates \* Olivia Summers

Kyle Bowen \* Marianne Kennedy \* Valerie Hayashi

SJ Clayton \* Karie Hickman \* TJ & Dawn Willis

Beverly Bullard

## MATCHING DONATIONS

Verizon

## 2024 RELEASES

### MAY

7 American Robins

3 Song Sparrows

2 House Finches

1 Virginia Opossum

1 Groundhog

### JUNE

3 Eastern Bluebirds

3 Northern Mockingbirds

26 American Robins

3 Carolina Chickadees

1 Carolina Wren

3 House Finches

1 Chipping Sparrow

1 Brown-headed Cowbird

4 Common Grackles

19 Eastern Gray Squirrels

4 Virginia Opossums

1 Groundhog

### JULY

29 American Robins

5 Tree Swallows

3 Red-bellied Woodpeckers

4 Northern Mockingbirds

2 Barn Swallows

3 Northern Rough-winged Swallows

2 House Finches

3 Blue Jays

2 Northern Cardinals

1 Brown-headed Cowbird

3 Virginia Opossums

7 Striped Skunks

1 Groundhog

3 Eastern Cottontails

1 Wood Duck

