TALES FROM THE TREE

The Quarterly Newsletter of Ziggy's Tree Wildlife Rehabilitation Center

Website: *www.ziggystree.org* E-mail: *ziggystreewildlife@gmail.com*

YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO

(Coccyzus americanus)

Yellow-billed Cuckoos are one of our more unusual intakes. We've only admitted a dozen of these interesting birds in the last 10 years. Compare that to our most common intake – we have admitted 682 American Robins in that same time frame! We enjoy researching information on these amazing birds.

The Yellow-billed Cuckoo might be known as the "rain crow" for their habit of calling loudly at the sound of thunder or before summer rainstorms, but did you know that they are not related to the Corvid family? They are more closely related to Roadrunners. Unlike the cartoon Roadrunner, the Cuckoo does not say "*beep beep"* but has vocalizations described as a hollow knocking or rattling sounds variously described as *"ka-ka-ka-kowlp", "kuk-kuk-kuk*" or *"tok tok tok*".

Cuckoos share a characteristic with woodpeckers. They have zygodactyl feet – 2 toes forward, 2 toes back. This helps them grip branches and move easily through dense foliage and tree canopies



The first time we admitted a nestling Cuckoo, we thought these bumps in their mouths were some terrible disease. Turns out these are papillae – the same as the bumps on our tongues. They feed heavily on large insects, including tent caterpillars and cicadas and it is thought these papillae help them crush their food. Adults can eat more than 100 tent caterpillars at one sitting from one web.

Cuckoo populations are declining due to habitat fragmentation, but are still considered fairly common in the eastern United States. They are not always easy to spot since they sit motionless in dense foliage as they wait to ambush their prey. They are typically found in deciduous woodlands, orchards, thickets and overgrown riparian area with willows and cottonwoods.



Cuckoos usually lay 3-4 eggs which are incubated for 11-12 days. Both parents will incubate the eggs although the majority of that duty goes to the female. Both parents tend to the youngsters after they hatch.

Yellow-Billed Cuckoos don't lay their eggs all at once. The period between one egg to the next can stretch to as long as five days. This "asynchronous" egg laying means the oldest chick can be close to leaving the nest when the youngest is just hatching. Young cuckoos are fully feathered when they are just 7 days old and will hop out of the nest onto neighboring branches at that point. They can fly at 3 weeks of age and will be self-sufficient usually within another 3 weeks.

One of the more disturbing facts we learned about cuckoos is that the male may remove the youngest baby from the nest when food is in short supply, and that the parents may stop incubating any unhatched eggs. We realized this explains the injuries on one of our late admissions. The puncture wounds on the head were consistent with the zygodactyl cuckoo feet and too close together to have been caused by a larger predator. Sadly, the little one did not survive.



Yellow-billed Cuckoos typically leave our area in September spend the winter months in South America, primarily east of the Andes in Argentina, Paraguay and Bolivia before returning for breeding season in late April to early May.

KROGER COMMUNITY REWARDS

Thanks to our 128 participating families in the Kroger Community Rewards program, we have received $305.65 for our second quarter disbursement for 2026. 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 *https://www.kroger.com/i/community/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!

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO

We've had a slow second mammal season. Between the weather and the economy, we have not made any meaningful progress on repairs for the pre-release cages we use for gray squirrels so have not been able to admit any of our favorite furry wildlife this fall. We're hoping to be fully operational by next spring. We have admitted Southern Flying Squirrels and hope to have most of them released this fall.

Baby bird season is officially over but we continue to receive calls on a daily basis on injured adult birds. Most of those have been outside of our normal service area so have been referred to other federally permitted facilities.

SAVE THE DATE DECEMBER 1, 2026

Giving Tuesday will be our last major fundraiser for the year. We will be raising money in preparation for the 2027 baby seasons as well as to complete repairs and upgrades to our pre-release caging.

We will have fundraisers posted on our social media pages or you can donate via check, PayPal or Venmo at the addresses listed on the back page of this newsletter.

THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS SUPPORTERS!

(May 2026 through September 2026)

WILDLIFE CHAMPION

Deborah Trimble
Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee

ADVOCATE

Banjo Baby Squirrel Fund & Cheryl Schur

SUSTAINING

Sharon Butcher * Julie Wotruba
Robin Mitchell * Valerie Bjorn
Ben Simpkins * Terri Bueche
Bucket Foundation * Lisa Maurer

SUPPORTING

Amy York * Larry Partington * Debbie Bomar
Lorena Romero Alberto * Beverly Clanton
Joy Robinson * Conie Kefabber * Kirstin Choi
Samantha Minkley * Mindy Threet
Anne Kenney * Terri Templeman
Mary & Steve Pearson * Ruth Ann Henry
Tammy Stevens * Daniel Bresnahal
Chelsea Skye Netter * Paul Alexander

FAMILY

Andrew Layne * Christi Mooring * Mickey Crump
Christin Jacobs * Kyle Kampen * Kim Walker
Joline Wiseman * Ariel Colon * Colleen Creamer
Angela Denharder * Natalie Wygart * Linda Foster

INDIVIDUAL

Abigail Trott * Vera Micklash * Kristy Sutton
Christy LaBrec * David LaBrec * Connie Black
Barbara Lebo * Becca Wallace * Stormie Voight
Ray Enterprises

VETERINARIANS

Pet Medical Center

IN-KIND & CASH DONATIONS

Ronni Altman * Stephanie Orton * Jason Allen
Linda Phillipy * Deborah Zukowski * Lisa Jones
Julene Redferin * Jalexi Hayashi * Tammy Simmons
Ashley Messier * June Baker * Scott Bernstein
Marquita Masuda * Brad Mallinax * Ehlana Podgorski
Julie Ann Hensley * Maria Luna

MATCHING DONATIONS

Verizon

2026 RELEASES

MAY

1 Carolina Chickadee * 3 Carolina Wrens
1 Song Sparrow * 7 American Robins
26 Eastern Gray Squirrels

JUNE

4 House Finches * 9 Eastern Bluebirds
16 American Robins * 9 Carolina Wrens
3 Tree Swallows * 3 Northern Mockingbirds
1 Brown Thrasher * 2 Northern Cardinals
1 Brown-headed Cowbird * 1 Mourning Dove
3 Blue Jays
4 Eastern Gray Squirrels

JULY

1 Barn Swallow * 3 Common Grackles
1 Tufted Titmouse * 5 American Robins
1 Brown Thrasher * 2 Northern Cardinals
4 Northern Mockingbirds * 1 Chipping Sparrow
1 Tree Swallow * 1 Northern Rough-winged Swallow
1 Red-bellied Woodpecker * 7 Carolina Wrens
5 Chimney Swifts

AUGUST

15 American Robins * 7 Northern Mockingbirds
7 Chimney Swifts * 7 Eastern Bluebirds
2 Carolina Wrens * 2 Brown-headed Cowbirds
2 Barn Swallows

SEPTEMBER

3 American Robins * 2 Northern Mockingbirds
2 Northern Cardinals * 4 Eastern Bluebirds
3 Chimney Swifts * 3 Ruby-throated Hummingbirds
4 Carolina Wrens * 1 American Goldfinch
1 Chipping Sparrow * 1 Song Sparrow

For assistance with orphaned or injured birds or general questions about wildlife, text us at 931-841-9781.

Ziggy's Tree Wildlife Rehabilitation Center
PO Box 713
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
PO Box 713
Tullahoma, TN 37388

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY.

____	Individual	$30.00
____	Family	$50.00
____	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:
___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* or Venmo at *@Ziggystree.*

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.