



## Avian Conservation Center of Appalachia

# Newsletter

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### Veterinary Student Externship at ACCA By Ben Litwak

The ACCA was recently kind enough to host me for a three-week rotation during my final year of veterinary school. This year to date (October) the ACCA has provided compassionate care and rehabilitation to over 260 birds. The most common reason for presentation to ACCA is two-fold: a car struck a wild bird, and crucially, someone witnessed the bird in distress and chose to intervene on the bird's behalf.

As they try to navigate a natural world intersected by interstates between 89 and 340 million birds die after collisions with vehicles annually on US roads<sup>(1)</sup>. By contrast these deaths dwarf the number of all vertebrates used annually in research in this country between 7.5 and 28 fold<sup>(2)</sup>. In my time here at the ACCA I've fielded calls from as far as three hours away. I take this to mean that there is no closer organization within 6 hours, in at least one direction, offering what we offer. These concerned witnesses have compassion for the bird in distress and want to intervene but have nowhere to turn.

When a bird is brought in to the ACCA Drs. Fallon, Mulé, and Tarosky of Cheat Lake Animal Hospital make time to turn their attention to the bird. Every bird receives a physical exam using best handling practices, and then X-ray images are taken to find any unseen pathologic process. These birds receive fluid resuscitation, pain management, and antibiotics as indicated by their condition before being held in the Cheat Lake Animal Hospital for observation for 24 hours. If the bird bears a broken bone that can be fixed, it gets fixed. When stable, birds are transferred to the ACCA facility for rest, recovery, and rehabilitation where they are fed a diet appropriate to their species, sex, and age.

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### Our Mission:

To conserve wild birds through scientific research; education and public outreach; and rescue and rehabilitation

## Veterinary Student Externship at ACCA, continued

By Ben Litwak

(Continued from page one)

We should all hope that our pets would receive the same level of care if they were to stray and be injured. At the ACCA Drs. Fallon, Mulé, and Tarosky have admirably expanded their circle of concern to include the wild avians of Appalachia attracting attention from avian advocates hours away in all directions.

This remarkable aspect of the ACCA is only one of many. The organization and its volunteers present frequent educational events in the area that serve to inspire and educate children and young adults. It hosts a growing tissue bank from which researchers will soon be able to draw upon to answer questions as to the conditions wild birds face and the diseases they suffer from.

With best intentions and in a spirit of stewardship, the ACCA is a place of compassion, care, discovery, inspiration, and education. It has been wonderful to be a part of the ACCA if only to grasp a glimpse of what's achievable. My time here is over tomorrow and those compassionate souls seeking care for wild birds will still be bringing them in, but tonight we're releasing an Eastern screech-owl back into the woods of West Virginia. Thank you all for being a part of the ACCA.

- (1) Loss, Will, & Marra. "Estimation of Bird-Vehicle Collision Mortality on U.S. Roads." *The Journal of Wildlife Management*, 78(5):763-771. 2014.  
<https://www.fws.gov/migratorybirds/pdf/management/lossetal2014birdvehiclecollisions.pdf>
- (2) Speaking of Research. "US Statistics."  
<https://speakingofresearch.com/facts/statistics/>

## Congratulations, Dr. Jensen!



We are very proud of longtime volunteer Meghan Jensen, who successfully defended her dissertation this semester. In December she will graduate from WVU's Wildlife and Fisheries Resources department with a PhD. Her doctoral research focused on genetics of North America's forest hawks – Northern goshawks, Cooper's hawks, and sharp-shinned hawks.

Meghan also enjoys working with the ACCA's educational birds, especially our peregrine falcon, Tundra, pictured above with Meghan.

Congrats again, Dr. Jensen!



## Great Horned Owls with Cancer?

This fall we admitted two great horned owls that were emaciated and depressed; both died shortly after admission. Our veterinarians performed post-mortem exams on the owls and discovered tumors in the abdomens of both. The tumors involved the owls' livers, although it hasn't been determined where the tumors originated. It could be coincidence that two great horned owls with liver tumors were admitted in a two-week period, but we're wondering if there's a connection. If we discover any answers to these questions, we will let you know! (One of the owls is pictured here with Dr. Ginny Mulé, one of our veterinarians.)

## Fundraising for Outdoor Classroom Begins

This fall the ACCA began to raise funds to construct an Outdoor Classroom on the property of Ridge Way Farm in Cheat Lake. Eventually, we hope to move more of our educational operations, including our non-releasable birds, to Ridge Way. There, the public will be able to access us more easily, and we will therefore be able to grow our outreach efforts. Building an Outdoor Classroom will be a great next step towards developing our presence on the farm.



We're envisioning a covered shelter that can hold 50-70 people, with a slightly raised stage on one end for presentations. When we raise enough funds, we can add electricity and a stone fireplace. Read more about our plans in the enclosed letter!

Several of our wonderful volunteers organized recent fundraising events for the Outdoor Classroom. Nari Soundarrajan (pictured above) held an Indian cooking class and donated the proceeds for the classroom, and Zac Swank organized a charity ride with the 304 Jeep Club, followed by a bird presentation at the site of the classroom. We're fortunate to have such wonderful volunteers at the ACCA – thank you to all who participated in these recent efforts!



## We've Been Busy!

We've had a lot of fun at educational outreach programs this fall – thank you to all the teachers, schools, and organizations that invited the ACCA to give presentations recently. And thank you to our volunteers and birds, pictured here at the WV Botanic Garden, Cheat Lake Elementary Science Fair, and at WVU.



### ACCA Annual Membership Application

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

**Please mail your membership application and your \$20 or more donation check made out to ACCA to:**

286 Fairchance Road, Morgantown, WV 26508

### Help Us Help the Birds

Running an avian conservation center is expensive! Costs include medicine, bird food, and more. We will accept monetary donations in any amount, and donating \$20 or more will make you an ACCA member for one year. Members will receive our quarterly newsletter and periodic email updates. We will also accept donations of gift cards and supplies--check out our Wish List on Amazon.com.

### Volunteer and Spread the Word:

If you'd like to find out more about volunteering with the ACCA, email [admin@accawv.org](mailto:admin@accawv.org). Also, please spread the word about us! Pass on our contact information, suggest our Facebook page to your friends, and follow us on Twitter. And of course, if you find an injured bird, call (304) 906-5438.

## Hawks Released at Area Schools

This fall the ACCA released several rehabilitated hawks at area schools. Most recently, the students at Skyview Elementary School in Morgantown witnessed a red-tailed hawk return to the wild. The hawk briefly perched on a batting cage on the school grounds before flying into the woods.

Students at Morgantown Learning Academy in Morgantown watched a young red-tailed hawk return to the wild on their school property. They gave the young hawk a hearty round of applause!

And a rehabilitated broad-winged hawk (pictured here) was returned to the wild at Route 40 Elementary School in Frostburg, MD, near where it was found injured after being hit by a car.

Best of luck to these hawks!



### **Avian Conservation Center of Appalachia, Inc.**

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