



# A.R.K. NEWS

www.arkritters.org

Winter 2025

Editors: Kathy Hedrich & Randy Fierke

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## A Year in Review

By Sherrie Garver

2025 has been a great year! So many exciting things are happening at the A.R.K. In January, thanks to a very generous grant from the KFC Foundation's Kentucky Fried Wishes giving program, the A.R.K. was able to purchase a digital X-ray machine. It's hard to put into words the difference it has made in our ability to care for injured animals! It has drastically increased our surgical capabilities and has allowed us to monitor healing and broken bone remodeling. Best of all, we can offer top-of-the-line care to our smallest of intakes, including injured baby animals and songbirds. So many lives have been touched by this generous gift, and we are thankful every day for it! This spring, we hosted a massive volunteer drive held at local libraries and received an incredible response from our community! It has been wonderful to get

to know our new volunteers and watch them plunge fearlessly into the hard work of wildlife rehabilitation. We are so grateful for their enthusiasm and contribution, and boy, was it needed! To date, **A.R.K. has admitted over 1800 injured and orphaned wildlife** of all species, ensuring there was never a dull moment!

Our summer wildlife expo was a great success (you can read more about the expo on the following page), and we are already looking forward to next year. If you didn't get the chance to stop by this summer, be on the lookout for summer 2026. Come and say hello and get to meet some of our amazing wildlife ambassadors!

It was our pleasure to place several non-releasable wildlife into accredited education centers and zoos across the country, giving them a second chance at life and an opportunity to educate others about their species. And it was our great pleasure to welcome a couple of new

ambassadors of our own, including Sadie, a Gray Fox, and Castiel, an American Kestrel. Both of these animals will make excellent additions to our education team.

A.R.K. has also partnered with Baker College and their vet tech program! This 12-week rotation allows students to gain experience with various skills needed to obtain their degree and work with licensed vet techs, as well as assist our own Doc. V during surgeries.

We are so proud of our work and our volunteers and supporters. We are grateful for those who care enough to find help for animals in need, and for those who help support our mission through donations or other means. From our A.R.K. family to yours, and most importantly, on behalf of the many injured and orphaned critters who cannot speak for themselves, we thank you and wish you all the best of the Holiday season!

## MATCHING GRANT ALERT!

Dear Friends:

We are so excited to announce that the A.R.K. has received a generous offer from an anonymous donor that would **match the first \$7,000.00 in donations** raised during this Giving Season from November 18th through December 31st! This incredible opportunity to **turn \$7,000.00 into \$14,000.00** will ensure we can continue to provide the best care for our injured and orphaned wildlife!

Your gift, **at any level**, helps us continue our vital work. The A.R.K. is primarily funded through donations, and **never** charges to accept an animal. **We are able to help injured and orphaned wildlife because of donations from supporters like you!** See inside this letter for more information. [www.arkritters.org](http://www.arkritters.org)

Our Wildlife thank you for all your wonderful support to give them a second chance at life!



## ARK EXPO 2025— by Sherry Garver

On July 19th, the A.R.K. held its second annual Wildlife Expo next to the Houghton Lake Public Library. This event brought together families, outdoor enthusiasts, and wildlife supporters for a fun day filled with education and entertainment, like face painting and a wildlife scavenger hunt for the kids that featured a prize at the end!

Along with tables staffed by volunteers and filled with colorful and informative poster boards about the many species of wildlife the A.R.K. rehabilitates, **our live wildlife education ambassadors were on display**, and provided a wonderful opportunity for our community to view these animals up close and learn about the importance of their species to the wild.

Our very own wildlife veterinarian, Dr. Rebecca Vincent-Sturdivant, was on hand sewing hearts into stuffed animals for children to take home, while DNR Conservation Officer Ben McAteer was busy all day fielding questions about conservation while providing a unique opportunity for attendees to learn about and feel various animal pelts, fostering a deep appreciation for our wild neighbors.

Our silent auction tables were filled with many items generously donated by local



businesses and artisans, while long-time supporter and volunteer Bob Fierke offered free samples of his famous candied pecans made with his very own Misteguay Creek Sugarbush maple syrup!

It was truly a wonderful day! Our heartfelt gratitude goes out to our **2025 Wildlife Expo Sponsors**, who not only helped bring this event to our community, but whose sponsorship ensured our event was a success for the many injured and orphaned animals in our care.

**2025 Wildlife Expo Sponsors— We Thank You!**



**THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING OUR WORK HELPING INJURED AND ORPHANED WILDLIFE!**

## Our Sponsors Helped Make the 2025 Wildlife Expo A Huge Success!

### Team Sheri

Coldwell Banker Schmidt Realtors–  
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<https://teamsheri.cbgreatlakes.com/>

### Secluded Sunsets

Let us help plan your next journey!

[Secludedsunsets.com](http://Secludedsunsets.com)

### Mid-Michigan Chiropractic

<http://www.midmichchiro.com/>

### North Central Area Credit Union

<https://ncacu.org/>

### The St. Helen Barber Company

1611 N St Helen Rd, St. Helen, MI 48656  
(989) 387-2981

### Eye Health of Houghton Lake

2129 W Houghton Lake Dr, Houghton  
Lake, MI 48629  
(989) 366-6344

Located in the Walmart Supercenter

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Lennon, MI 48449  
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### And A.R.K. Supporters and Friends:

Deb Looney–Thanking the RCCOA staff

Al and Joyce Haxton

Mark and Peggy Kay

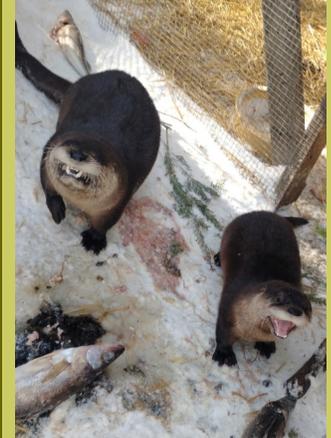
Jen Williamson–In loving memory of Suzanne Dailey

Brandy and Brooke

The David Kortez Family

The Kareiva Family

Russell Makowski



## The Summer of Sandhill Cranes

By Jennifer Williamson

This baby season we had a group of orphaned Sandhill Cranes admitted. They were all orphans at slightly different ages of development because they weren't biological siblings. It was time for us to start the release process. My husband and I released five on our property, which is a prime Sandhill Crane habitat with two ponds and several large open meadows close to wetlands.

The property is frequented by many local cranes. I checked on the five frequently, keeping my distance so they wouldn't get used to me. Each day I found that a crane had flown to the wetlands where the other local cranes were spending their summer. There they would continue to develop their flight feathers and aviation skills. Since they were in a safe habitat; I continued to monitor them and wait to see if they would take off and live the life of a crane. But one crane had not left to be

with the others. She was a late hatch and smaller than the others. She had been cared for by the finder for some time before being brought to the A.R.K. so naturally I was concerned if she were imprinted.

I watched from afar as she ate grasshoppers, mice, beetles, seeds, roots, berries, and several insect species. We made her a nest with natural nesting materials to try and help her become independent. For some time, she remained alone, but as time elapsed, she developed her flight feathers and we saw less of her. She started to visit the local cranes that frequent our fields.

Soon the local and four cranes left, migrating to their winter homes. But unfortunately, "Myrtle" as I so affectionately thought of, did not leave in spite of our efforts to reintroduce her to the wild. She cannot be released because she is imprinted. She is back at the A.R.K. and she will either become an ambassador of her species with a wild-life education facility or be placed in a zoo or sanctuary.



## MATCHING GRANT ALERT!

### We Need Your Help to Double Our Impact!

Dear Friends:

We are so excited to announce that the A.R.K. has received a generous offer from an anonymous donor that would **match the first \$7,000.00 in donations** raised during this Giving Season from November 18th through December 31st! This incredible opportunity to **turn \$7,000.00 into \$14,000.00** will ensure we can continue to provide best practice care for our injured and orphaned wildlife! Since January, over 1,800 animals have been admitted to the A.R.K., including 2 otters, 5 bobcat kittens, 26 red foxes, 27 bald eagles, 63 hawks, 164 bunnies, 240

squirrels, and a whopping 327 opossums—along with hundreds of other birds and mammals! Every one of these animals came with a story, and each one touched our hearts in their own unique way, whether it was the crying bobcat kitten with two badly broken legs who, against all odds, is on-track to make a full recovery, or the beautiful female bald eagle who was successfully treated for lead poisoning—when she was released back to her home territory her mate was waiting for her. Believe me when I tell you our hearts soared with her! **Please help us meet this challenge!** Your gift, **at any level**, helps us continue our vital work.

The A.R.K. is primarily

funded through donations, and **never** charges to accept an animal. **We are able to help injured and orphaned wildlife because of donations from supporters like you!**

#### How to Contribute

**Online: Supporters can double their impact by donating on our website at [www.arkritters.org](http://www.arkritters.org)**

**By Mail: Make checks payable to: A.R.K. or Association to Rescue Kritters**

#### **Mail to:**

A.R.K.  
3878 S Maple Valley Rd.  
St. Helen, MI 48656

#### **Thank You!**

Your contribution is tax-deductible to the fullest extent of the law.



### Wednesday morning Crew—Lanette Schupbach VanWagenen

I'm one of two "newbies" on the Wednesday morning shift, with Jen Williamson serving as our lead volunteer. When I first started volunteering this year, I spent most of my time at the sink and in the laundry room, tackling what felt like an endless mountain of dishes and loads of laundry. It felt safe there; predictable, manageable.

But Jen has a great way of gently nudging us out of our comfort zones. She shows confidence in our abilities and encourages us to take on new challenges. Lately, I've begun caring for the turtles that I have a soft spot for.

The workflow here is amazing: fast, furious, and fun. Every shift brings something new, caring for different animals, getting updates on current patients, and adapting to the ever-changing needs of the residents. Each species has its own specialized diet, housing, feeding tools, habitat cleaning routines, and enrichment activities. It can be daunting, but it's incredibly rewarding.

At the start of each shift, volunteers assess and prioritize the work for the day. The "animal kitchen," located in the nursery, is where meals are prepared for the outdoor enclosures. The work can be physically demanding, including

hauling food, supplies, and water to each animal. Because the A.R.K. doesn't have running water outdoors, garden hoses are laid throughout the grounds to provide water. In late fall, before the cold weather hits, the hoses are brought in, and we switch to delivering water using large plastic jugs. During the summer, supplies are hauled in a wagon; in the winter, they're loaded onto a sled and pulled through the grounds.

Is our crew's work different from the others? Probably not. Are we the fastest, funniest, and most clever? Of course we are! But honestly, I'm sure every crew of two shifts a day, seven days a week, is just as dedicated and hardworking. Without that level of commitment, the A.R.K. wouldn't be the successful rehabilitation facility it is today.

We are all a group of skilled, dedicated volunteers who handle critical care and organizational details. It's truly inspiring to witness.

This is just a small glimpse of morning life at the A.R.K. I hope it gives you a sense of the joy and purpose that comes with volunteering here and maybe even inspires you to join us on this incredible journey to give wildlife a second chance.

## LOON RESCUE—by Margaret Kay

In late August, I happened upon a post on our volunteer page asking if anyone in the Lupton area could check on a loon that had landed on a dirt road. I called the A.R.K. and was given the contact number for the woman who had reported the loon. She was not far away, so off we went.

When we arrived, there was indeed a juvenile loon in distress. It had probably been practicing flying, miscalculated its landing, and missed any nearby water. Loons cannot take off from land; they need approximately 150–300 feet of water to lift off. They also cannot walk on land due to the rear positioning of their legs on their bodies. We placed the loon in a carrier and brought it to the A.R.K. for a thorough check-up.



There are many factors that can cause a loon to become disoriented. One factor is lead poisoning. We drew some blood, and luckily the lead level was below what would require treatment. The next step was to perform X-rays to make sure there were no broken bones and that it hadn't swallowed fishing line or tackle. Again, this was one lucky loon!

After contacting the Michigan Loon Preservation Association president, we were told we could release this loon onto the lake I monitor, since we had no idea where it had come from and since there are numerous lakes in the area where it was found. At our lake, at least, we could keep an eye on it and monitor it further.

Along with volunteering at the A.R.K., I am the loon ranger for our two connecting lakes in Ogemaw County. I report to the Michigan Loon Preservation Association about the status of the loons on our lakes. Each year, I report when the loons return in the spring (loons overwinter in the

Gulf—yup, they're snowbirds!), whether they nest, how many eggs are laid, how many hatch, and how many fledge, or leave the lake in the fall.

We have a pair of loons that successfully hatched a chick on our lake. They tend to stay on the west half of the lake, which is separated by a shallow area or sandbar. We released this rescued loon on the east side, hoping to avoid any confrontation, as loons are very territorial. We refer to this lucky loon as *Miller*, after the road where we found it. Miller truly enjoyed life on our lake. It could be seen diving, preening, sleeping, and doing practice flights.

Adult loons leave before the juveniles, often a month or two in advance. They overwinter in the Gulf of Mexico and along the southern shores of the Atlantic Ocean. The males leave first, followed a few weeks later by the females. This leaves the chicks to navigate feeding and flying on their own. Eventually, our natural loon chick and Miller met after the adults left. They seemed to get along and could be heard calling to each other, swimming, and fishing together.

After my sister-in-law observed Miller performing four flights around the lake, we knew it wouldn't be long before our loons were gone. As of the end of October, there is only one loon left on the lake. While I am sad the others are gone, I am so happy Miller had a chance to grow and thrive on our lake and that I could be a part of it.

I am honored to volunteer at the A.R.K., where I can assist in the rescue and release of so many animals and especially my favorite: loons.



For your convenience, the A.R.K. website has been updated to accept Paypal and credit cards for donations.  
[www.arkritters.org](http://www.arkritters.org)



## A Tribute to Dame Jane Morris Goodall (1934–2025)

By Kathy Hedrich



*What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make.*  
Jane Goodall

Dr. Jane Goodall has had a profound influence on my love for wildlife and conservation. As a wildlife enthusiast and rehabilitator, I grew up reading her books, watching her documentaries, and dreaming of being just like her. Her unwavering commitment to understanding and protecting the living world continues to inspire me every day.

Best known for her groundbreaking 65-year study of wild chimpanzees in Gombe, Tanzania. Her discoveries that chimpanzees are toolmakers, that they share complex emotions and social bonds, and that they are far more like us than once believed, redefined both science and empathy.

In the latter part of her life, she became a tireless global advocate for conservation, animal welfare, and human rights. She inspired countless individuals, particularly young people, to take action through education, compassion, and respect for all life.

Her dedication was fueled by her lifelong fascination with the natural world, a curiosity first kindled in childhood as she ob-

served birds and mammals in her garden, sketching and recording their behaviors. Over time, she not only illuminated the hidden lives of chimpanzees but also challenged the ethical boundaries of science, calling for compassion in research and responsible environmental action.

Named a United Nations Messenger of Peace in 2002, Jane Goodall carried her message to every corner of the globe: that every individual has the power—and responsibility—to make a positive difference. As she often reminded us, *“Every single one of us makes a difference every day—it is up to us as to the kind of difference we make.”*

Her life’s work continues to guide and inspire, reminding humanity of its deep connection to all living beings and of the hope that still resides in action, empathy, and understanding.

<https://www.biography.com/scientists/jane-goodall>

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Jane-Goodall>

<https://janegoodall.org>

### A Huge Thank You to Dr. Dawson and the South Shore Animal Hospital

We wanted to give a big shout-out to Dr. Dawson and his amazing team at South Shore Animal Hospital for their help with Common Snapping Turtle patient #25-1886!

When it was discovered that this turtle had a cracked upper and lower mandible, we knew that in order to treat her

safely and effectively, she would need to be sedated. Thank you again, Dr. Dawson, for making the time to assist us with sedation so we could properly cast her broken mandible (jaw).



As an ectotherm, a Common Snapping Turtle’s metabolism is directly affected by environmental temperature. As temperatures drop, so does its metabolic rate slowing digestion, blood flow, respiration, and healing. If allowed to brumate, this turtle would have had very little chance of recovering.

Now that her fractures are stabilized, she’ll remain indoors in warm water under artificial lighting. Combined with antibiotics, these conditions will give her the best opportunity to heal fully.



Hello to Sadie—by Sherrie Garver



This little gray fox is one of the A.R.K.'s newest education ambassadors! She was found behind a manufacturing building as a very young kit, and although every effort was made to keep her wild, including trying to find other gray foxes from other centers to bond with, she became habituated and was deemed non-releasable. Although that is never the outcome we work toward, she will be a wonderful addition to our program, and loves to meet new people! Did you know? Gray foxes are considered a basal species within the canid (dog)

family. This makes the Gray fox the most primitive or ancestral of all living canids, representing an ancient branch of the canid family tree. They are much smaller than red foxes, usually weighing between 8-16 lbs. They are found



throughout Michigan, although they are less common than red foxes. Gray foxes are sometimes referred to as a "cat fox" due to their semi-retractable front claws and rotating wrists that allows them to climb trees. In fact, gray foxes are the only North American canid that can regularly do so! This adaptation helps them to escape predators, den and forage. They are omnivores whose diet consists of small mammals, birds, fruit, insects, and nuts. In fact, one of Sadie's favorite treats is raw almonds!

*(Urocyon Cinereoargenteus)*

AVIAN REHABILITATION CHALLENGES—by Lil Pandza



One of the most challenging birds in Michigan for rehabilitation is the Common Nighthawk. Like other birds of the nightjar family, the Common Nighthawk is designed to catch insects in midair. Its gaping mouth is surrounded by feather shafts that help funnel insects into its mouth.

As you can imagine, this feeding characteristic makes it difficult for a rehabber to feed injured Nighthawks. They refuse to open their little beaks to be fed like most of our other songbirds. The ARK makes it a point

to assign one volunteer (Bird Nerd) to force-feed an injured Nighthawk with gentle consistency of opening the tiny beak which becomes a cavernous throat. During that time a quick insertion of 4-5 wax worms using tweezers are fed to the bird. A gentle manual beak closing and throat massage is used to remind the bird to swallow. This is done repeatedly depending on how much total bird weight is required. Feedings are done twice daily, at dawn and at dusk, just as Nighthawks eat in their natural environments.

With our last injured Nighthawk, we're proud of the fact that after 30 days of rehabilitation she had gained almost 50% of her admitting weight. Fall migration to South America for Nighthawks is another challenge the ARK faces. That's a whole other topic for a future newsletter article!



**We are forever grateful for our supporters;** without you, we would not be able to accomplish our mission of giving wildlife a second chance. Every donation of food, supplies, and funds helps us help wildlife. But we try to supplement our income with fundraising activities:

**RETURNABLES:** We accept bottle and can returnables; a few of our volunteers pick them up at the A.R.K. and cash them in for us. It's a tremendous task to haul bags and boxes of returnables to the stores, sometimes waiting in long lines or returning because the machines weren't working. If you'd like to donate your returnables, there is an area just inside the gate at the A.R.K. where you can drop them off.

**PURE MICHIGAN MAPLE SYRUP:** One of our volunteers produces the syrup in his state-of-the-art licensed facility. The syrup is available in a variety of containers and at various locations throughout the community, as well as the A.R.K.





Did you know that there are acrobats in our forests? It's true! While we are sound asleep, Northern Flying Squirrels are busy "flying" from tree to tree eating their favorite food, fungi. These cute nocturnal mammals with their large eyes and long limbs do not actually fly. They have a thin membrane called a patagium that stretches between their wrists on their front legs and their ankles on their back legs which allows them to glide up to 150 feet. At only six inches long, they are able to glide up to 20 miles per hour. Flying squirrels also have cartilage on each wrist that pops up to create drag and stability, similar to the flaps on airplane wings. When approaching a tree, the squirrels bring their legs together to form a parachute for a smooth landing. When preparing for winter, they have been known to store up to 15,000 nuts. They also eat tree sap, buds, flowers, insects, bird eggs, nestling birds and carrion.

Here at ARK, we have 2 Northern Flying Squirrels in our education program. They are both not releasable due to permanent injuries sustained from encounters with cats. It's amazing how many people are not even aware that we have flying squirrels here in Michigan.



**Bird Nerd :)**

by Pat VanOosten

They call me "bird nerd" and "bird lady" too,  
I like feathers and beaks, that's true.

All summer the songbirds get my attention,  
I feed, clean and give them illness prevention.

But the bird trailer closes when summer is done,  
So I need a new job that's exciting and fun.

The ambassador birds become my next mission,  
The owls, hawk and vultures have no competition.

But then something happened, quite unexpected,  
All my attention has been redirected.

Our ambassador program has grown a bit,  
We now have some new mammals in it.

Two possums, 2 squirrels and a groundhog named Chuck,  
My job has expanded and it's just my luck.

But, wait! How could this change occur?  
There are no feathers! These critters have fur!

No feathers, no beaks, no scrawny feet,  
I guess I have some new friends to meet.

Possums, Mabel and Willow, are very sweet,  
And the flying squirrels are fun to greet.

Chuck is nice (when he doesn't bite,  
So, I guess this new job will be alright.

\*\*Shh! Don't tell the mammals that I still like the birds  
best\*\*

**Southern Flying Squirrel**  
by Randy Fierke

While the Northern Flying Squirrel inhabits the northern part of Michigan and the U.P., there's also a Southern Flying Squirrel who inhabits the southern Lower Peninsula. While closely related, there are differences. The Northern is slightly larger (in size and weight) and has grayish belly fur as opposed to the smaller Southern with white belly fur. Though "larger", the Northern only weighs about 3 or 4 ounces. Both species prefer mature forests where they can use the cavities for nesting. The diets of both include fungi and nuts but the Southern Flyer will supplement its diet with eggs, birds, and carrion.

The A.R.K. has admitted 14 flyers this year. Because these squirrels are nocturnal, the average person never gets the opportunity to see them.





## Thank you for your support!

There are several businesses in the area who support the A.R.K. by selling our maple syrup, notecards, donating animal food, and/or putting one of our donation boxes in their business. We appreciate their support; please support them.

Kronner's Pharmacy  
Shaker's Restaurant  
Family Farm & Home  
Tractor Supply  
South Shore Animal Hospital  
Bee Fit at The Club  
Lyle's Florist

Powell's Restaurant  
Posie Patch  
R & J's Best Choice  
West Branch Veterinary Services  
Packy's Pet Supplies  
Tip'n the Mitten  
Highway Brewery

## A Year of the Fox —by Brandy Prosch



What started out as “let me get my feet wet and rehab a fox or two” quickly escalated to “or three...or four.... or ten....or seventeen,” Yes, no typos here. I had the honor of helping rehabilitate seventeen fox kits this season.

To say that I learned a lot would be an understatement. Each of those seventeen foxes taught me something of value. I learned the importance of companionship when seeing the comfort singles brought to each other after being put together. I learned patience as we gave a couple foxes with head injuries time to heal. I learned about the tenacity of wildlife as I saw what I thought was a hopeless case; recover and thrive. I learned about adaptability as I witnessed a par-

tially blind fox kit learn to navigate new spaces and tasks in a way that eventually made her difficult to distinguish from the fully sighted fox kits. But perhaps, the most valuable lesson I learned wasn't from the seventeen foxes I had in care, but from the “local” foxes on my property.

It wasn't long after moving a group of seven red foxes to the outdoor, prerelease enclosure that I noticed a foul odor. A quick walk around the exterior of the enclosure revealed some unexpected gifts that had been left for the fox kits inside. The local foxes were bringing food and leaving it for the fox kits just outside the enclosure. Once I picked up on it, I began to feed the fresh finds to the fox

kits. This went on for nearly two weeks before the construction of additional enclosures nearby made the local fox wary.

From the local fox, I learned compassion. To think of the amount of effort these foxes put into catching and delivering the additional food for the kits in my enclosure is astounding. Particularly when, in all likelihood, they had offspring of their own to feed. The comfort they surely brought to the kits on the inside really warmed my heart and made me grateful since this was not something I could offer them. Humans can certainly learn a lot about kindness and empathy from wildlife.

### W.O.W. by Jamie Pagel

A couple years ago the A.R.K. was able to purchase a travel trailer, which was modified so it could be used as the rehabilitation area for the many, many songbirds, both babies and injured ones. We named the trailer W.O.W., short for Wings on Wheels.

The Bird Nerds, as we call ourselves, are dedicated to the caring for the hundreds of songbirds that make their way to the A.R.K. each year. Many of the birds are victims of cats, dogs, and other predators, while some have struck windows, fell from their nest, or hit by cars. Many of the birds have a variety of injuries, some with brain trauma requiring rest, oxygen, tube feed-

ing, and/or antibiotics.

Baby birds are fed at least every 20 minutes for 12 hours a day! As varied as the species of birds we care for, so are their diets, medical needs, habitats, behaviors, etc. Many of the birds are kept in soft sided cages to protect their feathers; once recovered from their injury or just growing up, they are put in outdoor flight cages to gain wing strength.

For over 30 years I have raised finches and macaws, so transitioning to songbirds has kept my love for all birds alive. The Bird Nerds are very passionate about the songbirds that give everyone beautiful songs and colors. I am proud to be a part of that team!





On August 16th, we transferred in a North American Bobcat Patient #25-1428 with one compound fracture and an additional broken leg. With the help of our wildlife rehab colleagues and our AMAZING Wildlife Veterinarian, Dr. V, this bobcat received his life-saving surgery and is now running on BOTH of his legs!

Now that he is healed, it's time for him to join the other FIVE juvenile bobcats we are overwintering this season. Together, they will learn to hunt, climb, cache, hide, and all of the other tools necessary for survival in the wild.

North American Bobcats are medium-sized, nocturnal, solitary, felines that can be found over a wide range of our continent. Being highly adaptive, they occupy forests, swamps, deserts, grasslands, and even urban areas. They are carnivorous hunters but also opportunistic scavengers when possible. By regulating small mammal populations, they help maintain a balanced food web within

our ecosystem and help prevent the spread of disease at the same time.

Once a year, the mother gives birth to 1-8 (typically 3) kits and raises them for 8-11 months. Once they are old enough to follow mom, the kits learn from her every move, passing on all of her skills until it's time for them to set out for their own territory.

Each bobcat eats around 2 pounds of meat each day. It will take many months and many pounds of meat, but we are looking forward to their releases in the spring.

If you have any meat you would like to donate or an old used cat tree, please reach out to us!

Thank you to everyone who makes this work possible!



**Thank you Roscommon County Community Foundation!**

After many weeks of planning, building, painting, and decorating, we are FINALLY able to say thank you to the Roscommon County Community Foundation!

We recently received a grant from the RCCCF, giving us the funding to upgrade to a custom raptor mew for our Ambassador Broad-winged Hawk, Miss Peeps!

Since losing the function of her left eye, Miss Peeps is not able to migrate. We are thrilled to be able to give her a nice warm space outside for her to spread her wings!

Broad-winged Hawks are complete migrators, only occupying our region for the spring and summer months to breed and raise their young.

They are small sturdy raptors about the size of a crow. They can be identified by their banded tail, and as juveniles,

they have heart-shaped plumage on their legs.

In the fall they gather in large groups called "Kettles", and travel to Central and South America for the winter months. This can be observed each year both in person, and digitally via the Broad-winged Hawk Project.

Thank you to RCCCF for their contribution and to our volunteers for building this enclosure!



***"The quicker we humans learn that saving open space and wildlife is critical to our welfare and quality of life, maybe we'll start thinking of doing something about it".***

***Jim Fowler***

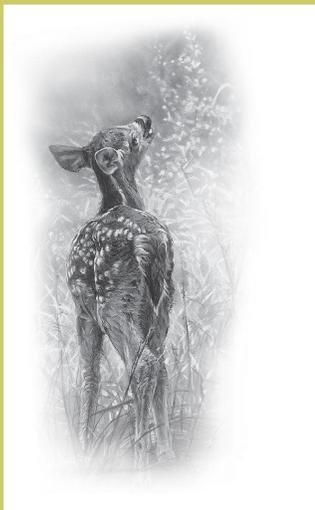


Illustration by Kim Diment

“Miracle was born when something terrible happened. Her mother jumped in front of a car, which hit her, throwing her through the windshield and into the front seat.” “The trauma caused the doe to give birth to a little fawn named Miracle.”

“...Miracle survived because of help from two very kind and caring police officers. They kept the little fawn alive until the lady could come to her rescue.”

What eventually happened to Miracle? If you’d like to know the ending to this story and read of other true stories of animals that were rehabbed at the A.R.K., please purchase a copy of “Rascal and the Berry Bandit,” written by our Director Ruth Fruehauf and Volunteer Kathy Hedrich, and illustrated by Kim Diment, a renowned wildlife artist. The book is available at the A.R.K. for \$15 and is enjoyed by children and adults. Stories are told through the eyes of a raccoon.



Eastern Cottontails—by Randy Fierke

There are two species of wild rabbits in Michigan; the Eastern Cottontail and Snowshoe Hare. In the years of the A.R.K.’s existence, we have only received 2 Snowshoes from the Upper Peninsula. The Eastern Cottontail bunny, (to which this article refers) is considered to be perhaps the most difficult of the mammals to raise in rehabilitation.

Why are bunnies so difficult to rehabilitate? They have a very complex GI system, which causes many issues in a captive setting. They are born with very few microorganisms in their GI tract. Mother’s milk provides natural bacteria, enzymes, and fatty acids. These components help the GI tract work properly. In addition of being without mom, they don’t have access to cecotropes. Rabbits have two types of stools; one is the dry, round, dark ball and the other is a small clump of moist balls. Because the plant foods bunnies ingest

are low in nutrition, they ingest the cecotropes (the night feces), and get a concentrated form of Vitamin B and other elements manufactured in the bunnies’ GI tract. In other words, they eat their food twice.

Mama Rabbit can easily have 3 to 5 litters a year with 5 being a typical litter. Multiple litters with several bunnies are nature’s way of ensuring that the prey species survives. The kits are born helpless, with eyes closed, ears flat against the head, and no fur. Most are born with the white “blaze” on the forehead; many will eventually lose the blaze, others will not. The blaze is not a sign of anything, such as sex, but does distinguish a wild bunny from a domestic one.

Bunnies have a very short lifespan, generally less than two years, though most do not survive the

first year. The major reason for this is they are prey for so many animals, such as hawks, owls, fox, coyotes, etc. Many are killed by other wildlife and cats and dogs before they even get the chance to leave the nest.

**STRESS:** Perhaps as much as a rehabber’s difficulty in duplicating what would naturally occur in the wild is the stress factor! **BUNNIES CAN, DO, AND WILL DIE JUST FROM FEAR.** Too much handling, noise, lack of companionship of another bunny, being chased by cats and dogs, etc. can cause sudden death due to fright!





During my first-year volunteering at the A.R.K., I have found I love working with all the critters here, but I've developed a special fondness for the turtles.

This year alone, A.R.K. cared for **70 turtles**. Most of them came to us after being struck by vehicles and needed a bit of patching up and rest before returning to the wild. However, **twelve turtles from four different species** arrived under very different circumstances—they were surrendered by people who had tried to keep them as pets, confiscated by the DNR, or rescued from similar situations.

Turtles are fascinating wild creatures who deserve to live freely in their natural habitats. Like most wild animals, they tend to hide injuries or illness—showing weakness in the wild can make them easy prey. While turtles *can* survive in captivity, it's nearly impossible to replicate the complex conditions they need to truly thrive.

For example, species like **Eastern Painted** and **Blanding's Turtles** need both land and water. Although we think of them as aquatic, they spend several hours each day basking in the sun—a behavior that's essential for their health. Sun exposure provides the UVB rays they need to build strong bones and shells. Without adequate UVB light, turtles can develop weak or deformed shells, metabolic bone disease, digestive issues, and a weakened immune system. Sadly, shell deformities

are common in many of the “pet” turtles we rescue.

Turtles also need time on land to completely dry their shells, which helps prevent shell rot and keeps their skin healthy. These animals require an enormous amount of space to live properly: the average **Eastern Painted Turtle** has a home range of about **10 acres**, while **Blanding's Turtles** can roam anywhere from **50 to 125 acres**, with males often traveling even farther.

At A.R.K., we do everything we can to help these resilient creatures recover and return home. But we can't do it alone—**you can help too!**

Here are a few ways to make a difference for turtles:

- 1. Volunteer** at A.R.K. or your nearest licensed wildlife rehabilitation center.
- 2. Never remove a turtle** from the wild unless it's injured or in immediate danger.
- 3. If you find an injured or displaced turtle**, place it in a dry, warm box and contact a licensed rehabber as quickly as possible.
- 4. Never try to keep a turtle as a pet.**
- 5. If you see a turtle crossing the road**, help it in the direction it was heading, and move it as far off the roadway as safely and legally possible.
- 6. And remember—not all who wander are lost.**



### Wildlife Education Program—by Randy Fierke

A big part of wildlife rehabilitation is education, sharing the rehabber's knowledge of the animals...their behavior, habitat, importance to the ecology, and how we can protect them for future generations. One way the A.R.K. does this is through their Wildlife Education Program. We have several non-releasable animals in our education program who visit community and private events, schools, and organizations to help educate the public about the wonders of these amazing animals.

Wouldn't your group love to see an owl, hawk, turkey vulture, opossum, groundhog, gray fox, or raccoon up close! Presentations can be suited to your audience and the fees are reasonable. Give us a call at (989) 389 3305 if you'd like to schedule a presentation.



## Volunteer profile – Ruth Corwin

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Growing up, Ruth always wanted to live on a farm. She would milk cows, gather eggs and feed the pigs on her Uncle Fred's farm in Gladwin. Her childhood home was on the edge of a field and she has many happy memories of catching frogs & snakes and then letting them go. Once, a bat landed on her leg. She was more delighted than afraid!

Ruth graduated from U of M with a BS in Nursing. She married and had two children. She worked at the Lamaze Childbirth Preparation Association in Ann Arbor as the Ad-

ministrative Director, taught childbirth classes and retired after 30 years.

Ruth and family moved “up north” in 2007. After attending the A.R.K. Birds of Prey program at an event, Ruth began volunteering. When Ruth Fruehauf, Executive Director asked her what she enjoyed doing, Ruth C. responded, “making order out of chaos”. Ruth F. said, “this is the place for you!” Caring for God’s creatures is important to her.

She never lived on a farm but feels volunteering at the A.R.K. is even better!

## Second Chances—by Ida Turczynski

It was May of this year, my first day volunteering at the A.R.K. When I walked into the nursery, I was in awe at the animals in the enclosures but particularly noticed the tiny fawns. They were there for a variety of reasons; the doe hit by a car, predator attack, or abandoned for unknown reasons. But we were there to give them a second chance.

I quickly learned of the care and compassion, yes and hard work, that goes into rehabbing fawns. Frequent feedings, depending on weight, age, and condition of the fawns, prepar-

ing the correct formula and warming it to the proper temperature, and sometimes having to coax them to nurse from a bottle were all challenges. As they grew, they drank more from the bottle and the frequency of feedings decreased. Once they were moved from the nursery to the outdoor enclosures, they were fed from bottle holders that are mounted on the fences outside the enclosures. This reduces the chances of becoming used to people, the least exposure to humans the better their chance for survival. Gradually, fawn

grain, browse, fruits and vegetables were added to their diet.

As the deadline of October 1 for release slowly approached, I knew they would soon be leaving. I had watched them grow from tiny fawns to losing some of their spots. Release day was bittersweet. I knew we had done everything we could to give them a second chance. I participated in the release of the fawns in Gladwin County...I watched as they ambled into the forest ...and a little piece of me went with them.



## A Big Thank You to our friends at Tractor Supply Company!

A.R.K. expresses deep gratitude to **Tractor Supply Company (TSC)** for selecting our organization for TSC’s annual team-building volunteer event. Over a dozen store managers from across the state spent a day helping prepare the facility for winter cleaning, disinfecting, and securing animal enclosures, and stocking up on supplies for overwintering patients.

TSC went above and beyond by **donating and building a new enclosure** for small opossums, constructing a carport for storage, and **donating over 40 bags of dog food** used to feed many of A.R.K.’s recovering animals. Their generosity has significantly

eased A.R.K.’s expenses and supported ongoing wildlife rehabilitation efforts. A.R.K. thanked the TSC team for their continued partnership and invaluable contributions to animal rescue work.



Thank  
You

## Thank you Volunteers—by Sherry Goff

To date the A.R.K. has taken in over 1800 animals, ranging from songbirds, raptors, foxes, raccoons, squirrels, bunnies, otters, and more! One can only imagine how many man hours it takes to provide care for that number.

To recruit more volunteers, members of our Ambassador Team visited several local libraries in the area to give a little insight into wildlife reha-

ilitation and how they could help. The turnouts were great! Many new volunteers have stepped forward and we are pleased to have them aboard.

Thank you volunteers, new and old, for making this such a great year. The seasoned volunteers have been so willing to teach the new ones, whose enthusiasm for learning is evident.



### LEAVE A LEGACY, DECREASE YOUR TAXES AND HELP THE A.R.K. AT THE SAME TIME!

Many want to leave this world a better place. One way to accomplish this is to use the wealth you've accumulated in your lifetime to do good in the world. Here are some ways to do just that:

IRA Charitable Rollover – if you are at least 70.5 years old, you can rollover up to \$108,000 from your IRA to the ARK tax-free!

Make a bequest in your will – this is a relatively easy way to leave a legacy.

Set up a donor-advised fund (DAF) – this allows you to make contributions to a fund that is earmarked for the ARK and claim tax deductions in the year you contribute.

Give a gift – financial contributions can be deducted from your taxes.

Ask that memorial donations for loved ones be sent to the A.R.K.

ON BEHALF OF THE KRITTERS, THANK YOU!

We're in the process of reviewing and updating our postal and email mailing lists. We haven't heard from many of the newsletter recipients for quite some time. We don't want to clutter your inbox and mailbox with our newsletter or spend funds on printing and mailing if you're no longer interested in receiving it. For the postal recipients, if you have an email address, we'd appreciate your sending the address to us so we can switch you to the email list. You'll receive the newsletter earlier and in color. For the email recipients, we'd like to hear from you also, letting us know if you're still interested in receiving the newsletter. For those of you that have given us your email address and still haven't received our newsletter please check your junk mail.

A.R.K. Association to Rescue Kritters  
3878 South Maple Valley Road  
St. Helen, MI 48656  
(989) 389-3305

Look for other events on Facebook and

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



Help save postage and time by getting your newsletter online! Send your name and email address to: [arkwildlife@charter.net](mailto:arkwildlife@charter.net)

The A.R.K. is a non-profit organization as determined by the Internal Revenue Service code under Section 501(c)(3). Donors may deduct contributions as provided for in the Internal Revenue Service Code.