

Piedmont Wildlife Center Annual Report

2022 - 2023 Fiscal Year

www.piedmontwildlifecenter.org | 919 - 489 - 0900



CELEBRATING **2**  YEARS OF NATURE CONNECTION

Our Mission

To encourage conservation and inspire people to build lifelong connections with nature through immersive outdoor education, citizen science, and wildlife stewardship.





Letter from the Executive Director

Greetings, Piedmont community!

It seems so long ago that we celebrated Piedmont Wildlife Center's 20th anniversary on January 20th! 95 of our closest supporters joined us at the Durham Armory for an evening of celebration, reflection, and fellowship. Photos and details from the event are shared in the pages that follow. For our friends who couldn't join us in January, we raise a glass to you, too. We wouldn't be here today without all of you, near and far.

As we enter our 21st year, I am excited to share our many successes from the 2022-23 fiscal year. PWC's programs are beginning to look more like they did in the pre-COVID pandemic days. Our Conservation Team increased their programming and grew their income by 30% this year. Education Team ran fully-enrolled camps where campers were once again able to gather for big group games. We've returned to local schools in Orange and Durham Counties to run afterschool programs, and we hope to expand access to these and other PWC programs with the help of our new 15-passenger van. We've hired great staff who are dedicated to our mission. We've added new Ambassador Animals to our community, and grown our Adopt-an-Ambassador program to bring in additional funds and help people connect with the wildlife around us. Although a few board members have had to step down, more have joined, and all are excited to help guide our goals moving forward.

As the pandemic has been downgraded, we continue to monitor public health protocols to make sure we can keep our community as safe and healthy as possible. Our challenges have shifted to finding another location for our core operations and ultimately acquiring our own land. We have outgrown our current indoor space at Leigh Farm Park, and need to find a location where our staff, Ambassador Animal community, and programs can grow sustainably. Given our ever-changing climate, we also need more indoor space so campers can have a reprieve from occasional bad weather, especially when severe storms come through or (as was the case during this summer's Canadian wildfires) air quality is poor.

We've also been informed that the City of Durham plans to do major renovation work on the Leigh Farm Park cabin, which houses our administrative spaces as well as our Conservation Team and most of our Ambassador Animals. Currently, the city's timeline has construction beginning sometime in the fall 2024. In the next year, it will be necessary for us to move everything out of that building, including animals, enclosures, furniture, computers, phones, and appliances. A big challenge, yes – but also an open door to opportunity! This change presents opportunities to collaborate with other organizations, bring our programs to other parts of Durham, and begin dreaming of what PWC might look like in our next 20 years.

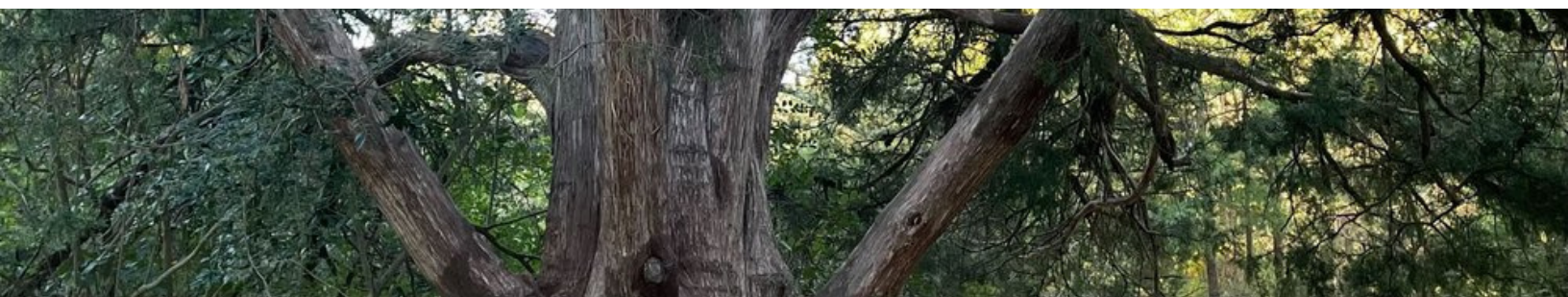
We continue to work towards hiring and reaching underserved communities, people of color, and diverse cultural and identity groups to better reflect the vibrant Triangle community. We are working to build relationships with people and organizations in these communities so we can improve access to our programs and better support everyone who visits PWC.

Our challenges are a reminder of why our mission is so important. If we all develop deep bonds with the natural world around us, and understand how much we rely on each other, we will be better equipped to do the work of improving our communities. We are grateful beyond words for all you do to support us. Thank you for sharing your love of nature with the young and young at heart. Thank you for all your help to keep our Ambassador Animals healthy and our boardwalks and camp circles in good condition, for spreading the word about us, and for your vital monetary and in-kind help to keep our programs running.

With gratitude and love,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen J. McCall". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Karen McCall
Executive Director, Piedmont Wildlife Center





Special thanks to photographer Stanley Luo for many of the photos featured in this report.

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Ambassador Animals

Piedmont Wildlife Center's educational animals serve as ambassadors for their individual species. All of our Ambassador Animals have found a permanent home at PWC after being rescued or surrendered by their previous owners. Our raptors were all rehabilitated after sustaining extensive injuries, but deemed non-releasable due to their inability to fly or hunt.

Each Ambassador Animal has an important lesson to teach about wildlife conservation. Their stories inspire all who meet them to make changes to protect our environment and the animals who share it with us.

This year, we welcomed 4 new Ambassadors!



Arlo the Eastern Screech Owl

Arlo was rescued in Virginia by Nature's Nanny Wildlife Rehabilitation after colliding with the side of a van. His accident left him with head trauma and a permanent left eye injury, making him unable to properly hunt in the wild.

Tony the Great-Horned Owl

Tony was found as a juvenile in Newport News, Virginia. Someone noticed he had been on the ground for two weeks and called Nature's Nanny Wildlife Rehabilitation. X-rays revealed a bent and previously fractured right wing, making Tony unable to fly.





Maple the Red-Shouldered Hawk

Maple was found on the ground after having fallen from the nest. He was rescued by Nature's Nanny in VA who discovered that he had eye damage. Because of his injuries, his vision is impaired and he is unable to hunt well enough to survive in the wild.

Garnet the Corn Snake

Garnet came to us in December 2022 from BeWild Reptile Rescue in Durham. He was surrendered to BeWild along with two other snakes, all of whom had stunted growth from poor care. He's estimated to be 2-3 years old but is much smaller than he should be at his age.



In Loving Memory

Ambassador Animals who crossed the rainbow bridge this year:



Pickles



Bella



Guacamole

Conservation

This year, our Ambassador Animals met **5,232 people** through camps, field trips, tours, school programs, birthday parties, and outreach events and spent a total of **35,984 hours** teaching people about wildlife.

Conservation staff, educators, and volunteers introduced people from all over the NC Triangle to native raptors, mammals, and reptiles by telling their stories and sharing important conservation lessons for each species.

Together, we did:

48 birthday parties

74 field trips

250 outreach events

324 school programs

We also hired 5 new conservation educators to support growing demand for our programs and trained 15 new husbandry volunteers to help care for our Ambassadors.

It takes approximately
728 volunteer hours per year
to provide daily care for all
of our Ambassador Animals!





One of our ongoing goals is to bring our conservation programs to underserved communities where fewer opportunities exist for children to connect with nature. For many people, meeting our Ambassador Animals is the first time they have had the opportunity to view wildlife up close. We hope that by coming face to face with wildlife, children are inspired to protect and appreciate our environment for years to come.

Thanks to a grant from Bass Pro Shops, we received funding to bring our "Wildlife in the Classroom" program to 12 Title 1 elementary schools in the Triangle at no cost to them.

Research & Citizen Science

This year, we worked with graduate student Emma Brentjens at Duke's Nicholas School of the Environment to evaluate and improve our Triangle Turtle Trekkers citizen science project. Emma created a survey that was shared throughout local conservation and education networks and received **885 responses!** Survey responses indicated great interest and enthusiasm towards protecting box turtles and participating in the project.

58.6%

have heard of Triangle Turtle Trekkers

60.7%

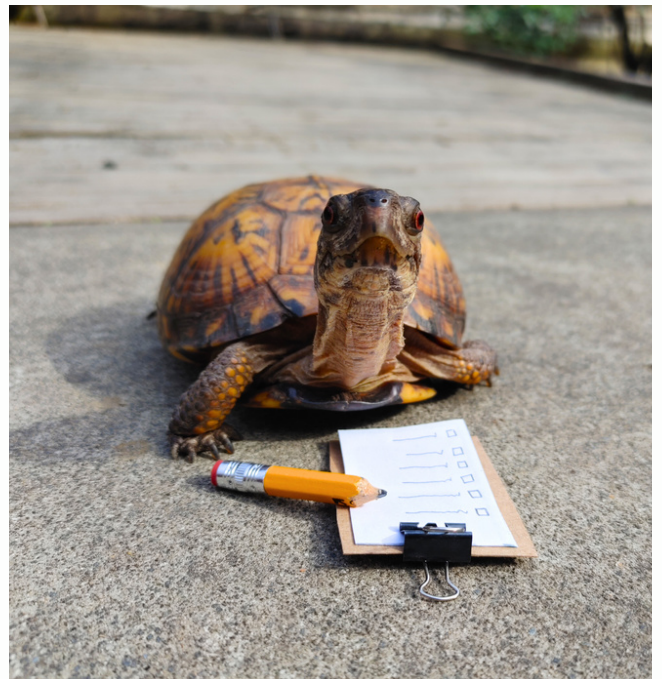
of those who have heard of Triangle Turtle Trekkers have participated in it

77.7%

strongly or somewhat agreed that they value habitat and wildlife conservation

72.1%

strongly or somewhat agreed that Triangle Turtle Trekkers is doing important work in NC



Education

This was a successful year full of growth for Piedmont Wildlife Center's outdoor education programs. We ran summer camps, Wild For a Day and intersession camps, Homeschool in the Wild, teen leadership and skills camps, backpacking trips, and afterschool programs. Each of our programs takes place entirely outdoors at unique local parks, including Leigh Farm Park in Durham, Blackwood Farm Park in Chapel Hill, and Umstead State Park in Raleigh. Each program provides campers with opportunities to use their imagination and creativity, learn about native flora and fauna, develop naturalist and survival skills, and build lasting relationships with both peers and nature.

This year, we hired

54 seasonal staff

(and 5 interns!) to help support all of our programs.

We welcomed

2,087 campers

campers across all our locations - Durham, Wake, and Orange

And we spent

13,438 contact hours

helping kids and teens connect with nature at camp and on backpacking trips.



We held **82** camp sessions,
served **253** homeschool students, &
awarded **\$3,827** in scholarship funds
to **16** campers.



Homeschool in the Wild

Composed of a diverse group of community-oriented families, Homeschool in the Wild is a wonderfully unique opportunity for homeschooled children to engage with others and grow on their own terms.

We follow a model for teaching and learning based on nature mentoring and the art of questioning. It is designed to engage the body and senses, inspire the mind, awaken curiosity, develop confidence, create community, and build nature connection.

This past fiscal year, our Homeschool in the Wild program ran at full capacity in Durham 2 days a week, and ran in Raleigh for Wake Wednesdays. Registration for our spring 2024 homeschool program is currently open. We have received many inquiries from families who have heard about us through word of mouth and are eager to join this special community.

Earthkeepers Afterschool

Since 2011, our Earthkeepers Afterschool program has connected kids to nature at public elementary and middle schools across the Triangle. Our afterschool students explore tracts of woods at their schools and gain insight into how much goes on around us in the natural world, even in small spaces. After a long day of indoor learning, Earthkeepers is a magical opportunity for kids and young teens to learn about native flora and fauna, connect with each other, hone their awareness and naturalist skills, and build confidence and focus while spending time outside.

It is important to us that all students have opportunities to connect with nature. Thanks to our donors, grants, and partnerships with local school districts, we have been able to help underserved students participate in Earthkeepers without the worry of transportation by operating at their own schools. We also award need-based scholarships.

Starting Spring 2022, we returned to schools to bring Earthkeepers to all afterschool students enrolled at public Orange County middle schools. We also provided programming to Carrboro students at school day camps during teacher workdays. In 2023-24, we hope to bring Earthkeepers to more schools in the area.



Financials

2022 - 2023 Fiscal Year Revenue

Conservation Programs	\$98,776
Education Programs	\$598,126
Special Events	\$24,849
Government Grants	\$ 7,250
Contributed Income & Grants *	\$126,645
Nature Store	\$9,174
Interest Income	\$5,827

Total Revenue **\$870,647**

** Includes monetary donations, in-kind gifts, & grants*

2022 - 2023 Fiscal Year Expenses

Staff payroll, taxes, benefits	\$584,064
Conservation expenses	\$27,131
Education expenses	\$48,465
Nature Store	\$4,534
Special events	\$11,861
Buildings & grounds	\$28,203
Overhead	\$38,538
Van	\$74,982

Total Expenses **\$817,778**



Capacity Development

2 New Staff Members



Alex Moehring

Administrative Assistant



Arisa Fourie

Homeschool & CIT Coordinator

2 New Board Members



Michelle Mann

Board Treasurer



Irene Faust

Board Member

IN THE 2022-2023
FISCAL YEAR, WE
ALSO WELCOMED

5
CONSERVATION
EDUATORS

EDUCATION
INTERNS
5

4
CONSERVATION
INTERNS

ADMIN INTERN
1

20th Anniversary Celebration

20 YEARS OF NATURE CONNECTION!

On January 20th, the historic Durham Armory transformed into a wildlife wonderland as 95 nature lovers from across North Carolina raised a glass to 20 years of nature connection. Our staff, volunteers, program alumni, and supporters had a wildly good time celebrating Piedmont Wildlife Center's 20th Anniversary – all made possible by donors like YOU!

PWC was founded as a wildlife hospital in 2003 by veterinarian Dr. Bobby Schopler. However, after treating countless animals in the center's first 6 years, Schopler and his successor Gail Abrams realized education was key to preventing the kinds of human-wildlife conflicts that brought animals to rehabilitators in the first place. In 2009, we ended our rehabilitation program and reorganized to focus on environmental education and conservation. We've since reached tens of thousands of children, teens, and adults through our award-winning outdoor camps, classes, and educational wildlife programs.

The highlight of the evening was a series of inspirational remarks by founder Bobby Schopler, former Executive Director Gail Abrams, and current Executive Director Karen McCall. These past and present PWC leaders reflected on PWC's growth, resilience, and impact over the last two decades. And of course, Gail performed her famous barred owl call! Before and after these remarks, attendees enjoyed toe-tapping music by folk duo Kiah Wells and Jesse Fox, who generously donated their time and talent to help us celebrate.

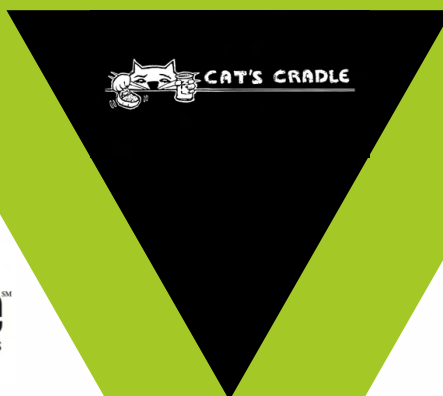




Attendees also had a chance to meet some of our most charismatic Ambassador Animals, including our new corn snake Garnet, juvenile red-shouldered hawk Maple, and eastern screech owl Arlo. Our Raptor Team was especially excited to bring red-tailed hawk Katara out to greet guests at our VIP hour. Katara has taken a long time to warm up to being handled, and the 20th Anniversary Celebration was her very first off-site appearance. Our feisty hawk did so well that our staff and volunteers are now working with her to become a regular at our educational programs!

With your help, we kicked off PWC's third decade by raising \$17,033.95 to support our conservation, education, and citizen science programs. Whether you bought tickets, volunteered at the event, spread the word, made a donation toward our fundraising goal, or simply cheered us on from afar, we could not have done this without you.

Special thanks to our generous event sponsors: Pinnacle Financial Partners, Carrboro Coffee Roasters/Open Eye Cafe/Caffe Driade, Cat's Cradle, & Mediterranean Deli.



In Memory of Pete Heinze

We would like to honor Peter “Pete” Heinze, PWC’s former Education Coordinator, who passed away on October 9, 2022. Pete’s gentle leadership, love of the outdoors, and inexhaustible sense of fun touched everyone he worked with. Our staff and campers were so lucky to have had him in our community, however briefly. Pete started at PWC in February 2021 as an afterschool and day camp counselor. In the spring of 2021, Pete became our Education Coordinator and held that role until the end of summer 2022, when he got the chance to return to his home at YMCA Camp Thunderbird.

The biggest impact Pete made with children and adults alike was laughter. He had his taco costume on hand that made the kids giggle without fail and was truly a joke machine. He was always ready to join a group and share one of his favorite camp songs with silly movements and chants. You would never catch him without a quick pun or knock-knock joke at the ready. During the spring season this past year, Pete would greet a specific homeschool camper with a new joke each day. One week, when she was unable to come to camp, he still shared his joke with her family over the phone. He was dedicated to making a difference for every camper who came through our programs and you could easily tell how much he loved what he did.

Behind the scenes, Pete supported his staff in many ways. The Education Team liked to refer to him as the glue that held them all together - whenever anyone needed something, he was there with a smile. He had an infectious good attitude that would brighten the room. He made sure the staff felt appreciated, especially during the busy summer months. He also liked playing tricks every now and then to ensure everyone was taking it easy. Pete was on PWC’s fundraising committee and came up with the idea for our “Mammal Madness” fundraiser, which he helped organize. Bringing people together over sports, friendly competition, and a good cause gave him great joy.





PIEDMONT WILDLIFE CENTER
CONNECTING PEOPLE AND NATURE

Our Vision

A world where all people are united by a love and respect for nature, and are committed to the health of the planet and one another for generations to come.

Our Core Values

Gratitude, Respect, Curiosity, Inclusivity, Awareness



If you would like a hard copy of this report please contact us at
admin@piedmontwildlifecenter.org

Piedmont Wildlife Center is an IRS designated 501(c)3 non-profit organization.
Our Federal Tax ID is 47-0890261.

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