Dear WHL Supporters,

Welcome to a brand new year for the Wildlife Hospital of Louisiana. This year finds us full of enthusiasm as we continue our efforts to obtain a new facility for the Wildlife Hospital of Louisiana. Our advisory council met recently to design goals and strategies that will make our project a reality. We would like to thank all the members of the advisory council for their continued support and dedication.

So far we have been busy with close to 500 wildlife cases as of the end of April and numerous educational presentations across the state. As always, we continue our mission of conservation, research, and education. We remind you to spread the word about the WHL and what we do for the state of Louisiana. Educate the younger generations on the importance of caring for our wildlife and the environment. Remember that every Louisiana resident has a stake in the WHL. It is up to all of us to ensure that we have a place that can help save and protect our wildlife. We thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,

Javier Nevarez, DVM, PhD
Director

WHL Receives Transport Cages from Boy Scout

Kyle Templet, a student at Woodlawn High School, is a member of Boy Scout Troop 888. For his Eagle Scout Project, Kyle manufactured a set of transport cages for our resident raptors. The cages are similar in design to those used by falconers and allow for easier transportation of the birds in a lightweight carrier. Congratulations to Kyle on his accomplishment as an Eagle Scout!!

In Memoriam

Sadly, there have been two recent losses within the wildlife rehabilitation community. Mrs. Jan Cook and Mr. Chuck Williams passed away recently. Both were devoted wildlife rehabilitators with years of experience in the state of Louisiana. They will be missed greatly by their family and friends.

We’ve also had an animal loss at the WHL. Athena, our resident Barn owl, passed away this year due to anesthetic complications during an eye surgery. She was a favorite amongst many students and WHL supporters.
In 2007 the WHL admitted 1,568 wildlife cases. Of these, we had 468 mammals, 33 reptiles, and 1,067 birds. We are now using a digital program that allows us to easily track the amount of animals that are admitted and the species distribution. We would like to thank Mariana Roundtree and our student workers for all the hard work they put into getting our admissions data into a digital format.

The WHL Helps a Burrowing Owl Find its Way Home

In 2007 we had an unexpected wildlife case admitted to the WHL. It was a burrowing owl (Athene cunicularia), a small species of owl found in Florida and the mid-western states. This bird was found in the Baton Rouge area, and it is not known how it made its way here. After performing a physical exam and diagnostic tests, it was determined that the owl had suffered soft tissue injuries to one of its wings. After a few weeks of cage rest and feeding, the owl regained strength and was ready for release.

Since we do not have any burrowing owls in Louisiana, we reached out to other rehabilitation facilities. Our friends from Wild at Heart in Arizona offered to take the bird. Wild at Heart is a wildlife organization with great expertise on burrowing owls. We would like to thank Mrs. Samantha Fox from Wild at Heart and US Airways for providing transportion for the owl from Houston, Texas, to Arizona. Once there, the owl was introduced to a group of burrowing owls in preparation for release back into the wild.

The last newsletter of 2007 had the case of a Gopher tortoise that had five eggs within her but had been unable to deposit them. We performed surgery in order to remove the eggs. During the surgery, it was discovered that her reproductive tract had ruptured, and the eggs were free floating within the cavity. In addition, two eggs were broken at the time and had created severe adhesions of the tissues and organs. Despite our best efforts to repair the reproductive tract, the tortoise did not recover from the surgery. This case provided a great degree of difficulty and was a good learning experience for everyone involved.

The WHL Case of the Month

This issue’s case of the month is one with a happy ending. In February 2008, the WHL released a bald eagle in the Morgan City area. This was an adult eagle that presented due to gunshot wounds, intestinal parasites, and dehydration. This was yet another case of a bald eagle shot in Louisiana. This eagle was lucky to survive and did not suffer any major injuries related to that incident, but others are not so fortunate. Of the 10-12 Bald Eagles that are seen by the WHL each year, approximately half of them have been shot. It is still incomprehensible why someone would shoot a bald eagle, our national emblem and a sign of freedom that is so representative of our country. Yet it is the reality that many have no respect for our wildlife. It is cases like this one that continue to motivate us at the WHL to bring the message of wildlife conservation to young and older generations alike. We would like to thank the Brownell Memorial Park and Carillon Tower in Morgan City for allowing us to release the eagle from their grounds.