



The Paul A. & Veronica H. Gross
WILDLIFE CENTER
OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA
Educate Rescue Rehabilitate Release



2023 Annual Report



Table of Contents

- Letter from the Executive Director 3
- Celebrating our Twentieth Anniversary 4
- A Look Into Our Numbers 5
- 2023 Patient Counts by Species 6-7
- Our Top Patient Species 8
- Community Outreach & Education 9
- Re-nesting Highlights
 - Pileated Woodpeckers 10
 - Skye Ranch Bald Eaglet 11
- Patient Highlights
 - Striped Skunk & American Bald Eagle 12
 - Screech Owl, Red-tailed Hawk & White-tailed Deer 13
- Volunteering Numbers 14
- Capital Campaign 15
- Sponsor Acknowledgement 16
- A Letter from our Board President 17
- Financials 18
- Looking Forward 19

Dedication to Wildlife Education, Rehabilitation, and Stewardship.

The Wildlife Center of Southwest Florida is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that operates a wildlife hospital and rehabilitation facility for all native wild birds, mammals, and reptiles, with the exception of marine mammals. Additionally, through various programs, we strive to educate the community on how to successfully co-exist with our wildlife and the importance of it to our environment and ecosystems.

We are state and federally licensed, and because of our permits, the public is not allowed past the entry point for delivering a sick or injured animal.

Our Mission:

To protect and preserve Southwest Florida's native wildlife through educational outreach and to rescue and rehabilitate sick, injured, and orphaned wildlife and return them to their natural habitat when healed.

Why We Do What We Do

Every living creature on this planet has a place and plays an important role in the ecosystem. We understand how important it is to maintain that balance. Our team of staff and volunteers work tirelessly every day to further our mission and to save our native wildlife in need of medical care and rehabilitative services. Each patient released is another opportunity to repopulate the dwindling population numbers.

Staff

Administrative:

Pamela DeFouw
Executive Director

Christina Judd
Outreach Coordinator

Kevin Burns
Rescue Coordinator

Ivy Smart
Finance Coordinator

Spencer Greenwood
Construction &
Maintenance

Medical:

Adrianna DeFouw
Rehabilitator

Brittany Burns
Rehabilitator



Board of Directors

Karen Durette
President

Joseph Polzak
Vice President

Jan Steber
Secretary

Sandi Raasch
Treasurer

Brian Angelillis
Director

Sue Crawford
Director



The Paul A. & Veronica H. Gross
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OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA
Educate Rescue Rehabilitate Release

A Letter From Our Director

As the Wildlife Center of Southwest Florida (WCSWFL) enters its 20th year, we cannot help but reflect how far we have come. But just as important is the direction the WCSWFL is going.

Our journey started on January 1, 2004 as a backyard, grass roots center taking in about 315 patients. As the years go by, more studies have been done with wildlife with regard to medical best practices and just as importantly, housing, husbandry, and enrichment to help aid and improve our success rate with our wild patients.

Now as we enter 2024 our mission has not changed. The capabilities that we have now as a wildlife hospital have grown. We are currently upgrading our enclosures to provide a natural environment for the species we receive as well as increasing the size to account for our continued growth.

Diagnostically, we are now able to operate as a wildlife hospital including labs, radiographs and brand new this year, anesthesia. This improvement will benefit the injured patient greatly by being able to stabilize, medicate and make our patient more comfortable more quickly while keeping our expenses down.

As we continue into 2024, the WCSWFL will continue to work on our capital campaign to “build the future.” This will include web cams in specific enclosures to allow rehabilitators to monitor progress with a “hands off perspective” as well as being able to involve the community in the rehabilitation process with links to our webcams on our website.

Our outreach group will continue their mission to reach out to the communities that we serve and increase the presentations in those communities on what the WCSWFL does as well as expanding our education out in the community, educating on the wildlife in our backyard and helping these communities get to know their wild neighbors as well as aiding in resolving wildlife conflicts.

We also plan to increase our number of interns while maintaining a diversified training program to train future vets, biologists, ecologist and the wildlife rehabilitators of tomorrow.

This is a very exciting year for us as we continue to grow. Our facility has changed but we stand strong as the only wildlife facility that focuses 100% on rehabilitation. Our success rates demonstrate the benefit to our patients.

We invite you to follow and join us on our continued mission to help preserve Florida’s amazing wildlife. So many rewarding opportunities await. We hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,

Pamela DeFouw

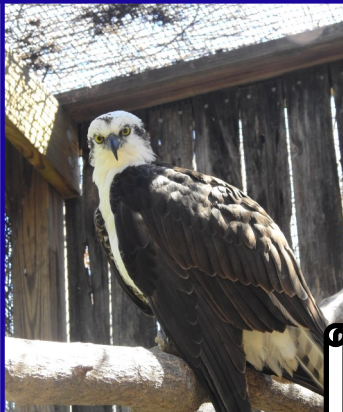
Executive Director



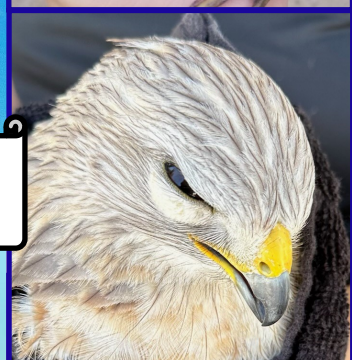


**Working Hard to
Keep Our Ecosystems
in Balance for
ALL Life.**


**One Wild Patient
at a Time.**



Over 80,000 animals treated since we began.



CELEBRATING 20 YEARS



The Paul A. & Veronica H. Gross
WILDLIFE CENTER
OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA
Educate • Rescue • Rehabilitate • Release

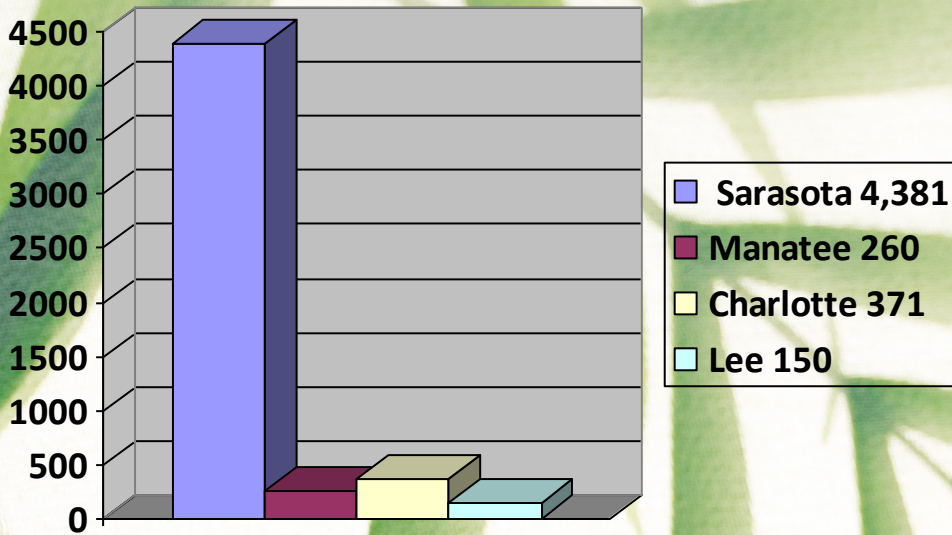


**20 YEARS OF PRESERVATION, CONSERVATION,
AND RETURNING REHABILITATED WILDLIFE HOME**



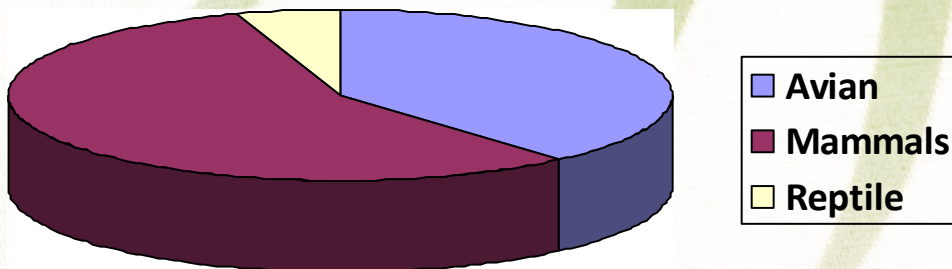
A LOOK INTO OUR NUMBERS

The Areas We Serve



We also received patients from DeSoto, Hillsborough and Polk counties in 2023.

Patient Breakdown



Top Reasons for Admission

CONFIRMED PET ATTACK

578 PATIENTS

CONFIRMED AUTO COLLISION

920 PATIENTS

CONFIRMED ORPHANS

1,320 PATIENTS

FISHING LINE/TACKLE

198 PATIENTS

SUS. POISONING/TOXINS

186 PATIENTS

UNKNOWN TRAUMA

2,073 PATIENTS

Species Count

AVIAN

112 DIFFERENT SPECIES

MAMMALS

25 DIFFERENT SPECIES

REPTILES

16 DIFFERENT SPECIES

2023 Patient Count by Species

Avian: Birds of Prey

American Kestrel	4
Bald Eagle	9
Barn Owl	1
Barred Owl	14
Black Vulture	8
Common Nighthawk	2
Cooper's Hawk	43
Crested Caracara	1
Eastern Screech Owl	90
Great Horned Owl	6
Osprey	29
Red-shouldered Hawk	56
Red-tailed Hawk	3
Short-tailed Hawk	2
Turkey Vulture	9
Total Birds of Prey :	277

Avian: Passerines

American Crow	8
Barn Swallow	1
Black-and-white Warbler	2
Blue Jay	96
Blue-grey Gnatcatcher	1
Boat-tailed Grackle	4
Brown Thrasher	11
Brown-headed Cowbird	1
Carolina Wren	18
Cedar Waxwing	6
Common Grackle	90
Fish Crow	32
Flycatcher	2
Grasshopper Sparrow	1
Gray Catbird	13
Great Crested Flycatcher	1
House Sparrow	28
Northern Cardinal	26
Northern Mockingbird	138
Ovenbird	3
Yellow-rumped Warbler	6
Yellow-throated Warbler	6
Zebra Finch	1
Total Passerines:	496

Avian: Other Birds

American Purple Gallinule	8
American Robin	3
American White Ibis	15
Anhinga	58
Baird's Sandpiper	1
Belted Kingfisher	3
Black Bellied Whistling Duck	100
Black Crowned Night Heron	4
Black Skimmer	6
Black Tern	1
Brown Pelican	94
Canada Goose	2
Cattle Egret	2
Common Gallinule	1
Common Ground Dove	12
Common Loon	20
Common Moorhen	7
Double-crested Cormorant	63
Downy Woodpecker	7
Eurasian Collared-dove	27
Glossy Ibis	6
Great Blue Heron	39
Great White Egret	23
Green Heron	4
Herring Gull	2
Killdeer	3
King Rail	3
Laughing Gull	59
Least Bittern	1
Least Tern	2
Lesser Scaup	6
Limpkin	12
Little Blue Heron	9
Loggerhead Shrike	4
Mottled Duck	72
Mourning Dove	230
Northern Bobwhite	2
Northern Gannet	1
Northern Parula	1
Pied-billed Grebe	2
Pileated Woodpecker	5
Piping Plover	1
Purple Martin	5

Avian: Other Birds

Red-bellied Woodpecker	45
Red-breasted Merganser	3
Ring-billed Gull	1
Rock Pigeon	5
Roseate Spoonbill	1
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	1
Royal Tern	18
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	2
Ruddy Turnstone	3
Sanderling	13
Sandhill Crane	45
Sandwich Tern	7
Semipalmated Sandpiper	5
Snowy Egret	6
Snowy Plover	2
Song Sparrow	2
Sooty Tern	11
Starling	13
Swainson's Thrush	4
Tri-colored Heron	1
Tufted Titmouse	8
Turkey	1
White-winged Dove	2
Willet	2
Wilson's Storm Petrel	1
Wood Duck	46
Wood Stork	11
Woodcock	1
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	5
Yellow-crowned Night Heron	11
Total Other Birds:	1202



These Blue Jays were raised at the center after falling from their nests.

2023 Patient Count by Species

Mammals:

Bobcat	6
Cotton Mouse	1
Coyote	3
Eastern Cottontail	1278
Eastern Grey Squirrel	238
Eastern Wood Rat	187
Evening Bat	47
Field Mouse	3
Marsh Rabbit	78
Mexican Free-tailed Bat	3
Mole Shrew	3
Nine-banded Armadillo	17
North American River Otter	1
Palm Rat	1
Raccoon	591
Red Fox	1
Seminole Bat	1
Southern Flying Squirrel	28
Southern River Otter	2
Southern Yellow Bat	1
Striped Skunk	2
Virginia Opossum	379
White-footed Mouse	2
White-tailed Deer	15
Wood Mouse	2
Total Mammals:	2890

Reptiles:

Alligator Snapping Turtle	1
American Alligator	2
Banded Water Snake	1
Black Racer	4
Brown Anole	2
Chicken Turtle	1
Common Musk Turtle	1
Common Snapping Turtle	1
Corn Snake	3
Eastern Mud Turtle	1
Florida Box Turtle	3
Florida Softshell Turtle	35
Gopher Tortoise	136
Peninsula Cooter	14
Yellow Rat snake	1
Yellow-bellied Slider	49
Total Reptiles:	255



This bobcat was brought in after being hit by a car.



This Gopher Tortoise was the victim of a dog attack.

Our Top Patient Species

**1,278
Received**



**Eastern Cottontail Rabbit
Most Received
Patient**

**230
Received**



**Mourning Dove
Top Avian
Patient**

**591
Received**



**Raccoon
Second Most
Received Patient**

**Over
300
Threatened,
Endangered,
or Species of
Concern**

**5,120
Total
Patients
in 2023**

**379
Received**



**Virginia Opossum
Top Marsupial
Patient**

**136
Received**



**Gopher Tortoise
Top Reptilian
Patient**

Community Outreach & Education

Getting out in the community for educational outreach is a key facet of our mission. Educating the public on the various ways to help our wildlife populations and helping residents better understand animal behaviors. Here are some of the events and communities that have opened their doors to our center to learn more about our amazing native wildlife in 2023.

- Englewood Waterfest Conservation Tent***
- Friends of the Legacy Trail, Tour de' Parks***
- IslandWalk***
- Venice Chamber of Commerce's Non-Profit Rally***
- Student Leadership Academy***
- Homestead Union Group***
- San Pedro Catholic Church***
- Quiet Strength Martial Arts***
- Venice Golf & Country Club***
- Sertoma's Sun Fiesta***
- SWFL Animal Fair***
- City of Venice, Holiday Parade***
- University Town Center Festival of Trees***



Re-Nesting Highlights

Eaglet - Skye Ranch

This eaglet came into our center after a fall from the nest.

Once an exam revealed no injuries, we headed back to re-nest this beautiful fledgling American Bald Eagle.

Scan for Video



Volunteer, Bill Marcin scaled this towering tree to place the eaglet.

All while the parents were circling above watching every move we made.

(Top left photo for scale, top middle preparing to hoist, top right, Sheri Nadelman captured a parental flyby. Photo on right, Bill carefully extracting the eaglet.)



Re-Nesting Highlights

Scan for Video



Pileated Woodpeckers - Lakewood Ranch

A storm broke a dead tree trunk that was home to a family of Pileated Woodpeckers. Rescuers Roger Riehm, and Sandy Ulrikson brought the nestlings into the center. After a well check we hatched a plan.



Mark Martell, rebuilding the trunk and removing the extra trunk weight. Bracing the reconstructed trunk with a splint, the babies were safely returned.

(Top left photo removing unnecessary weight, top middle, extra secure measures, top right, nestlings prior to renest, photo on right, condition when found after the storm.)



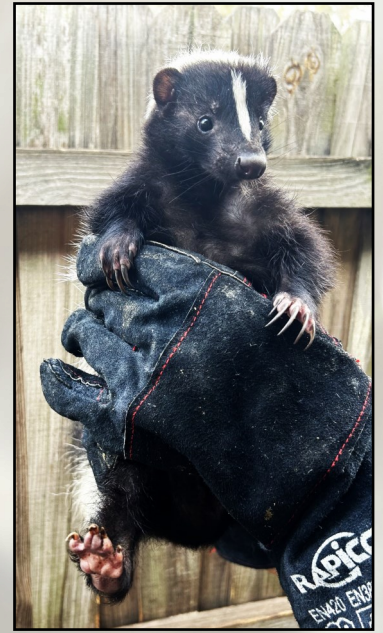
Patient Highlights

An Orphaned Striped Skunk



Patient #23-5260: This adorable baby Striped Skunk came into our center after a good Samaritan found her alone and under attack by several crows. She was treated for her wounds and placed into specialized orphan care. Caring for a skunk requires species specific housing and specialized formula. It is no easy task but our rehabilitators, with tremendous patience and dedication, raised this beautiful girl that will hopefully raise several litters in her future.

Skunk numbers are severely dwindling. They are a huge benefit to farmers, gardeners, and landowners because they feed on large numbers of agricultural and garden pests. Florida is home to two kinds of skunks. The other is the Spotted Skunk, both are a



rare sight lately. It's been at least five years since we've received a Spotted and this Striped was the only one we received this year.

An Injured American Bald Eagle



Patient #23-4982: This eagle came into our hospital after being struck by a car. We found that his Radius and Ulna bones had been fractured. This wing required two surgeries involving surgical pins to stabilize the bones in place. Once the pins were removed, physical therapy began. After several weeks he was ready for conditioning and strength training in the flight aviary. Once he proved ready, he was released back home just in time for mating season.



Patient Highlights



An Injured Eastern Screech Owl

Patient #23-1035: This poor little Eastern Screech Owl was brought to our center after being found on a construction site covered in spray foam insulation. The tricky task of removing the insulation was difficult and took several days. Our rehabilitators carefully balanced the painstaking removal in short and strategic procedures in order to minimize the stress to this already stressed owl.

Even with twice the neck vertebrae and a head that can rotate 270°, this owl got caught in this sticky situation. It is up to us as stewards of our environment to inspect your jobsite or next home improvement project just in case a wild animal has found itself in harms way.

An Injured Red-tailed Hawk

Patient #23-1890: Brought into our center after a window strike. This Red-tailed hawk was found to have a clavicle fracture which required stabilization. We kept a close eye on him daily as restricted movement was key. After treatment including anti-inflammatory pain medications and physical therapy, we were more than happy when he graduated to our aviary for conditioning. Once we saw improvement, he was flight tested and scheduled for release back home.



An Injured White-tailed Deer Fawn

Patient #23-5192: This little deer fawn was brought to our wildlife hospital last Spring after being struck by an automobile. It was traveling with a small group of deer in Sarasota's Laurel Oaks Country Club and was the last of the herd crossing a road and was struck by a distracted driver. We assume the mother was scared and ran off with the rest of the group, orphaning the injured fawn.



VOLUNTEERING NUMBERS



Without the help of our amazing volunteers, our center would not be able to rescue, rehabilitate, and release the sheer number of animals that we do. They have invested their time and talents to help our center continue forward in our mission to save every animal we can.



Our center is proud to have over **100 volunteers** on our team. Some help rescue, some help on site with animal care, and some contribute to outreach and our office work.

Together, they have contributed
over 12,000 Hours



Top: Becky Fass preparing meals for our Va. Opossums.

Middle: Rich Giangregorio mounting perches in our bird hospital aviary.

Bottom left: Cathy Cycak and Sue Seidenfeld during an outreach event.

Bottom right: Laurie Reihm answering a child's questions during a rescue of a Laughing Gull.



THE CAMPAIGN TO SAVE

SOUTHWEST FLORIDA'S NATIVE WILDLIFE



The Paul A. & Veronica H. Gross Wildlife Center of Southwest Florida has embarked on a capital campaign to make some comprehensive upgrades to our wildlife hospital and rehabilitation center. Due to rapid development in our community and other environmental factors, animals are being injured and displaced at an alarming rate. This has stretched our capacity to its limits, and the facility upgrades will better equip us to keep up with the influx of injured and orphaned wildlife in our community.

This campaign will not only help us build our capacity to rescue and rehabilitate more wildlife but will also help us provide optimal conditions to greatly increase the chance of survival for animals that come into our care.

Our new facility will contain our triage and surgical centers where animals will be stabilized and treated. Our rehabilitative enclosures have been designed specifically for each specie so that each animal will recover in an environment as similar as possible to its natural habitat. This will allow them to recover and return to the wild as quickly as possible.

If you are interested in becoming a sponsor with naming rights to one of our new structures:

visit, www.Wildlifeswfl.org/capital-campaign for more information or scan the QR code. ➡



**Thank You
to These
Amazing
Community
Sponsors
for Helping
Us Build
the Future
of Wildlife
Rehabilitation
in Southwest
Florida**

Platinum (\$100,000 or more)

Andy & Karen Durette
Paul A. & Veronica H. Gross
The Estate of Joseph Hannon
Impact 100 SRQ

Gold (\$50,000 to \$99,999)

Jan Steber

Silver (\$25,000 to \$49,999)

Louis & Cosette Kosiba
Sandi Raasch
The Community Foundation of
Sarasota County
The Martha Leiter & Nancey
Streetman Fund

Bronze (\$10,000 to \$24,999)

Lawrence Corl
David Fogg
Haydn Fusia and Angie Sutherland
Linda Kronholm
Barry & Pat Lawrence
David Schaefer
Richard & Maureen Senecal
Melonie Smicklas
Brinton Smith
Plantation Golf & Country Club

Sustainer (\$5,000 to \$9,999)

Mona Schonbrunn
The Tarr Charitable Family
The Atlanta Braves
Winifred "Woodie" Woodward

Supporter (\$1,000 to \$4,999)

Paul & Eva Durette
Louise Lindh
First Horizon's Bank

**Our Gratitude
to the
Community
Corporations
that Supply
In-Kind Food
Donations**



Venice Winn-Dixie

Sarasota Costco

**Publix on the Island
of Venice**

**Matthews-Currie
Ford**

**Suncoast Humane
Society**

**St. Francis Animal
Rescue**

Venice Walmart

**though not
corporations we also
receive food from
Our Amazing
Volunteers
and
Our Generous
Community
Members**

A Letter From Our Board President

So many wonderful things are happening at The Paul A and Veronica H Gross Wildlife Center of Southwest Florida because of supporters like you. 2023 saw great progress in the construction of our new wildlife hospital and rehabilitation center. We broke ground, began site development, laid concrete and installed a lift station to connect to city sewers. We put new roofs on our 2 main buildings, enclosed our front porch to establish a welcome center and intake area and purchased 22 new raptor enclosures. With funding from The Sarasota Community Foundation, we built a large therapy pool for our pelicans and other large seabirds. These are just a few examples of the progress we are making.

2024 will be even more ambitious as we complete our aviaries, add deer and rabbit habitats, a 100 foot flyway for large raptors sponsored by Impact 100 Sarasota, and continue site development. We still have openings for sponsorships that include naming right for one of our new wildlife habitats. Please check out the capital campaign section of our web site to learn more.

Some things never change though. We are still working hard to accommodate our ever-increasing patient load and finding better ways to engage and educate people about the serious challenges facing our wildlife. As our wildlife disappears at an alarming rate, our mission becomes more critical. Wildlife is essential to maintaining a healthy ecosystem for all species, including humans.

In 2024, we will celebrate our 20th anniversary! During those 20 years, we have grown from a small back yard group handling a few hundred patients a year to our new five acre modern wildlife hospital complete with the upgraded medical equipment and species-specific habitats. Last year we treated over 5,000 patients and over the 20 years we have helped more than 80,000 wild animals in need.

I hope you will agree that what we are doing to save Florida's disappearing wildlife is important and I hope that you will continue to help us as we work to protect and preserve our precious native wildlife. Remember that we do not receive any state, local, or federal financial support and we depend entirely on donations from our great supporters. We here at the Center wish all of you a very happy and healthy 2024!

Sincerely,

Karen Durette

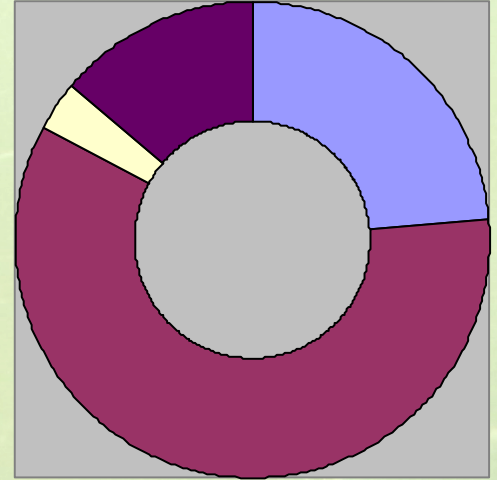
President of the Board of Directors



2023 Financials

Revenue

Individual Contributions	\$178,500
Bequests/Memorials	\$445,100*
Fundraising/Events	\$25,300
Misc. Income	\$830
Grants	\$103,800
Total:	\$753,530 ¹

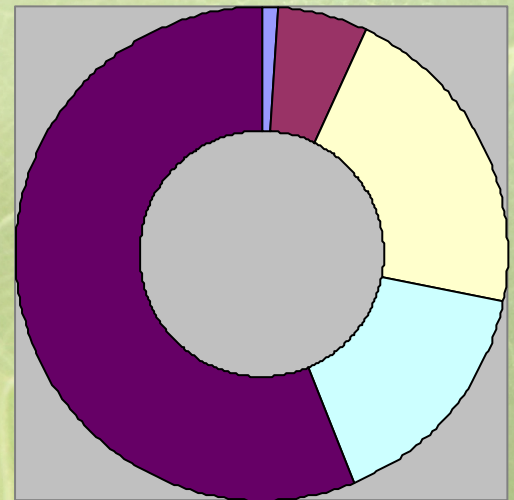


*2023 Income includes an outlier of a significant bequest.

■ Individuals ■ Beq./Mem. □ Fundraising ■ Misc. Income ■ Grants

Expenses

Marketing/ Fundraising	\$8,670
Food Cost	\$41,400
Medical Treatment	\$148,800
Management/Administrative	\$112,000
General Occupancy	\$397,235
Total:	\$708,105 ¹



■ Mkt/Fundriasing ■ Food Cost ■ Med. Trtmt
 ■ Mgmt/Admin ■ Gen Occ.

¹ These numbers are preliminary unaudited figures.

Looking Forward

Growth

As we celebrate our twentieth anniversary, exciting changes are happening here at our wildlife center. 2024 brings us to our next phases of construction. Some of those upcoming projects include our new Songbird Aviary, completion of our new Raptor Mews, and our Large Bird Aviary.



Goals

As we continue to move forward to advance our mission, we plan to expand our community outreach with informational talks in our surrounding communities and schools. Increasing the public's awareness of the dire need to save our precious wildlife and informing them on the various ways they can help. Our talks also arm the public with knowledge of the natural behaviors of our wild neighbors to help them to know when human intervention is needed.

As always, we will continue to advance our network to collaborate for conservation. The more we work together, the bigger our impact.

Another key goal for our center involves training future rehabilitators by expanding our Intern and Extern Programs with college and high school students. Sharing our knowledge with the next generation ensures the continuation of our work for many years to come.

Use your phone's camera to scan this QR code to go to our Link Tree. There you will find all of our links in one place.



Follow us on these social media platforms



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941-484-9657

www.WildlifeSWFL.org