

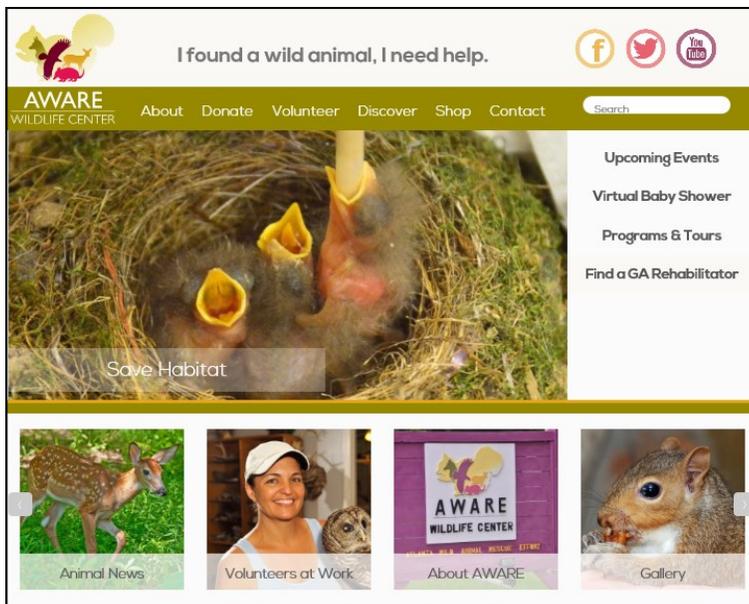
# AWARE'S TAILS FROM THE WILD

## SPRING 2014



**AWARE**  
WILDLIFE CENTER  
Atlanta Wild Animal Rescue Effort

AWARE is pleased to introduce our new website, just launched this month. The website offers a quick reference area to address basic questions related to injured or orphaned wildlife and is the best way to contact us if you have concerns or need help for an animal. We feature our current volunteers, staff, and ambassador animals, share stories on our blog, and offer updates on animals that come into our care. It's a great place for information on current events and upcoming fundraisers. In addition, the website makes it easy to donate, including opportunities to sponsor our educational ambassador animals and rehabilitation patients. If you didn't know yet, we are also now on Twitter. Please visit [www.awarewildlife.org](http://www.awarewildlife.org) to see AWARE's new facelift. We hope you enjoy the experience!



**Want to adopt Ellis D. Owl?**

**Check out our new Adopt-an-Ambassador Program on page 6!**

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[www.AWAREwildlife.org](http://www.AWAREwildlife.org)



## Director's Reflections from the Galapagos Islands



*Dr. Tarah Hadley*

Recently, I was fortunate enough to have the experience of a lifetime. As Atlanta battled the second ice storm of a century, dubbed Snowmageddon, I was on a seven day tour of the Galapagos Islands in Ecuador. Ok, I felt a little guilty about the 90-degree sunny weather near the Equator. But as a veterinarian whose primary interests involve wildlife and exotic animals,

it was a dream to visit one of the rarest ecosystems in the world where Charles Darwin began to explore the genetic history and diversity of life.

The Galapagos is a mostly pristine place. On the uninhabited islands, there is rarely a piece of trash to be found, and the lack of fear of most of the animals toward people was unbelievable. Many of these animals, including the Galapagos hawk (brown, huge, and beautiful), the flightless cormorant, the marine iguana (who knew iguanas could swim so well and live off the bounty of the sea!), and the Galapagos tortoise (my absolute favorite), do not exist naturally anywhere else on the planet. How amazing that these animals developed such unique adaptations in their evolutionary seclusion from the rest of the world.

It should be noted that you cannot visit any of the islands—officially called the Galapagos National Park—without a certified tour guide. Guides work for their respective tour companies, but they are first and foremost employees of the National Park. They must be experts about everything Galapagos and be enforcers of the park rules. The three most important rules stressed to visitors are: 1) maintain your distance from the wildlife; 2) stay on the marked trails; and 3) do not take any natural part of the landscape as souvenirs.

These guides, in my opinion, were some of the most informed conservationists that I have ever met. Most were native Ecuadorians, and they took their job of educating park visitors seriously. All I can say is, impressive! In

my opinion, the Galapagos Islands offer a lesson for us all. While I was there, I couldn't help but reflect on my own Georgia homeland.

In the many decades since Darwin's visit in 1835, the Galapagos tortoise and many other animal species were hunted or harvested almost to extinction. The Galapagos are still recovering from these devastating losses. The situation was not improved by the planned or inadvertent addition of non-native species, such as goats, feral cats, and rats, whose presence has forever changed the appearance of the natural landscape and the long-term survival of many species.

Imagine the same result here in Georgia. The gray wolf, for example, has already been exterminated. What now happens to other species like coyotes, foxes, raccoons, hawks, owls, rabbits or even the littlest songbirds that rely upon a balanced ecosystem? When we consider future land development or the impact of our domestic pets on native species, are we being careful stewards of the environment? We would be wise to heed the lessons of the Galapagos or risk taking for granted today what might disappear tomorrow.



*Left: Two marine iguanas take in the sun while soaking in the waters of the Pacific Ocean.*

*Right: A male great frigatebird with partially inflated gular pouch rests on the branches of a bush.*



### AWARE Staff

*Dr. Tarah Hadley, DVM  
Executive Director*

*Marjan Ghadrnan  
Wildlife Care Supervisor*

*Linda Potter  
Assistant Director*

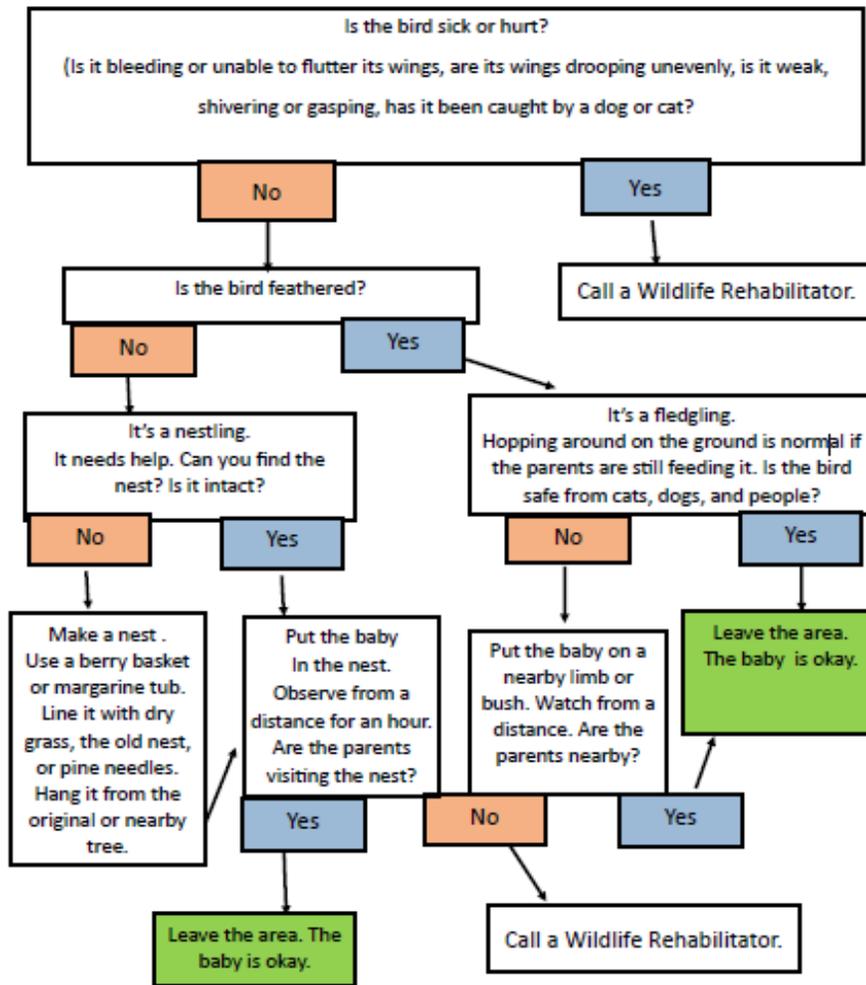
*Tammi Scarbro  
Wildlife Care Supervisor*

# Wing Beat

## Enjoying Georgia's Birds



### I Found a Baby Bird



You may find a baby bird that appears unattended or is on the ground, but it's not necessarily in danger. Use our handy chart to determine if the bird needs help.

1. kit 2. owlet 3. joey 4. kitten 5. eyes 6. kit 7. cub 8. pup 9. fawn 10. pup 11. poult 12. pup 13. hatchling 14. eaglet 15. Cub

Answers:

Who am I?



## Little Critter's Corner

Can you identify the names given to the babies of these wild animals of Georgia?

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. A baby fox is called a _____.<br>2. A baby owl is called an _____.<br>3. A baby opossum is called a _____.<br>4. A baby squirrel is called a _____.<br>5. A baby hawk is called a _____.<br>6. A baby skunk is called a _____.<br>7. A baby raccoon is called a _____ | 8. A baby armadillo is called a _____.<br>9. A baby deer is called a _____.<br>10. A baby chipmunk is called a _____.<br>11. A baby turkey is called a _____.<br>12. A baby bat is called a _____.<br>13. A baby turtle is called a _____.<br>14. A baby eagle is called a _____.<br>15. A baby bear is called a _____ |
|--|--|

# A Helping Hand for Wildlife



Baby season is here again, that time of year when AWARE volunteers and staff work tirelessly to keep up with feedings, laundry, dishes, and cage cleanings for the hundreds of animals in our care. The phone rings endlessly, and baby formula needs constant replenishing. As always, the season began with a big wave of baby squirrels admitted for care, followed by baby opossums, rabbits, and songbirds--and more animals arrive each day. More recently, several owls, goslings, coyotes, and foxes have been admitted for rehabilitation, among other species. Just last week, two baby groundhogs were admitted after their mother

was killed by a car. These wild animals come to us for many different reasons, many of which are avoidable. Here are just a few things that the public can do to help wildlife this season:

- Leave baby animals alone. Many animals are left alone for several hours during the day while their parents forage for food. In most instances, the adults are nearby, providing care as necessary and keeping predators away from the nest. Different species become independent at different ages, so knowing a little about the animal can help you determine whether it needs intervention. If you are unsure if an animal needs help, contact a rehabilitator. A list of Georgia rehabilitators can be found on our website, [www.awarewildlife.org](http://www.awarewildlife.org).
- Keep cats indoors, especially during spring and summer when animals are rearing their young. Cat saliva is deadly to small animals, and even the tiniest puncture can cause mortal harm.
- Check for nests before trimming limbs or shrubbery or before renovating or boarding up property. Most wild animals only use nests when they are raising young, and the nesting season is relatively short. By fall, animals will have left their nests and moved on.
- Inspect brush and leaf piles for wildlife before bulldozing or burning. Brush piles provide cover and nesting sites for many small animals. Consider leaving them alone until fall when nesting season is over.
- Cover your chimney with a cap and your dryer vent with a hinged cover to prevent animals from nesting there.
- Choose natural, non-poisonous lawn care products. Pesticides cause great harm to many species of wildlife.
- Feed pets inside and don't leave trash out overnight. Animals that become reliant on human sources of food often lose their instinctive wariness of our space, which can lead to conflicts.
- If you do find an animal that needs help, call AWARE or a rehabilitator in your area. Do not feed or give water to the animal unless you are instructed to do so. Keep the animal warm in a quiet and dark environment until it can be delivered to a rehabilitation facility. Wild animals have very specific needs for their diet and care. Well-meaning people who try to care for wildlife on their own often end up doing more harm than good.

## When to call a rehabilitator:

- an animal is bleeding or has broken limbs or other injuries
- an animal has been caught by a cat or dog
- a featherless bird or furless mammal is on the ground and/or there is evidence of a dead parent nearby
- an animal is gasping, shivering, or showing other signs of distress



**MYTH:** *an animal will abandon its young if humans have touched it.*

**FACT:** *Animals are strongly bonded with their young and will not abandon them. The best thing humans can do for an animal that has fallen or prematurely left the nest is to put them right back in it or, if the nest can't be reached, to create a substitute nest nearby.*



# Meet the Ambassador: Eastern Screech Owl **Ellis D. Owl**

Ellis D. Owl was named as a tribute to AWARE's founder and late director, Michael Daye Ellis. Found on the side of a road, Ellis arrived at AWARE with an eye injury and head trauma. Though he quickly regained his flight, his impaired vision kept him from being able to catch live prey, preventing his release. Although we wish things had turned out otherwise, Ellis is a star ambassador, packing a powerful punch on the cuteness scale! Many people think little Ellis is just a baby, but his size is representative of his species, which has both red and grey color phases. In spite of their small size, screech owls play an important role in their ecosystems by controlling pest species like insects, rodents, and other small prey.

Strangely enough, Ellis takes after his namesake. Those who knew him will remember that Michael hid his huge, gentle heart under a gruff and stubborn exterior. Much the same, Ellis has his own stubborn streak. Once he'd settled into AWARE, his handlers attempted for months to hand-feed him, usually only to have the food spit right back out at them. Even now, Ellis cooperates with his handlers only when it suits him. When it's time for him to get in his carrier, he flies from perch to perch evading capture, especially when it is time to put on his program equipment. In spite of his stubborn streak, Ellis behaves beautifully on the glove, educating thousands of people each year about Georgia's owls.



Photo by Alex Johnson, [www.aiiiiphotography.com](http://www.aiiiiphotography.com)

## **AWARE's Adopt-an-Ambassador Program**

If you would like to contribute to Ellis D. Owl's annual care by symbolically adopting him, please visit our website and complete the Adopt-an-Ambassador form. Our non-releasable education ambassadors are AWARE's greatest asset in our conservation efforts, inspiring thousands of people each year to protect Georgia's native wildlife. Ellis's adoption fee of \$2000 provides the following benefits: sponsor recognition at our center, in our newsletter, and on our Facebook page and website. You will also get an opportunity to meet and take a picture with your chosen Ambassador as well as a behind-the-scenes tour of the center.

Visit

<http://www.awarewildlife.org/donate-2/adopt/> to adopt Ellis today!

# A Tale of Two Kitties



Last spring, AWARE took in two baby bobcats in poor health that people had attempted to raise as pets. We don't know how these bobcats came to be in the possession of these families, but they both suffered a serious injustice. Even had they been true orphans, which seems dubious according to the information we received, the course that would have been in their best interest would have been to immediately surrender them to a wildlife rehabilitation center like AWARE that could have given them the best possible chance for survival in the wild. Keeping any native Georgia wildlife as a pet in our state is not only illegal, it is unfair to the animal and takes a toll on the environment. Both of these bobcats received the best care possible at AWARE, but their outcomes were very different.

The first bobcat that arrived was a nine-week-old kitten that had been kept as a family pet, sleeping in the bed with family members and playing with small children and the family dogs. As a result of the family's inexperience, the bobcat was fed the wrong diet and suffered from severe intestinal distress. When she broke her leg, the family finally decided they could not properly care for a wild animal and surrendered her to AWARE. Unfortunately, she had already lost her instinctive wariness of people.

Two weeks later, a seven-week-old bobcat orphan came to the center. This bobcat had been confiscated after Animal Control received reports of a child dragging him around the neighborhood on a leash. Upon examination, he was thin and dehydrated. Unlike the first bobcat, this kitten remained fierce and fearful of humans.

When both bobcats improved in health, we housed them together, hoping that the wary bobcat would influence the tame one toward wildness and a fear of humans. Unfortunately, the friendly bobcat continued to seek the attention of people, a trait that would severely limit her ability to survive in the wild and could pose a risk to humans. The bobcats were finally separated—one to live her life in captivity and the other to continue his path toward release to the wild.

Today, our beloved Savannah reigns over her large enclosure, with lots of room to run, climb, and hide. She receives attention daily from our dedicated volunteers and staff, though she has become more and more reclusive as she has grown, a natural behavior for a bobcat. Although we provide the best life possible, a life in captivity is an injustice to her. One positive outcome is that Savannah's story may now be used to educate the public to value and protect wild animals and to let them remain free.

After nearly a year in rehabilitation, the wild bobcat was released earlier this spring on private land in the mountains in North Georgia, away from human activity and busy roads. Although his mother would have been his best teacher, AWARE equipped him for life in the wild as thoroughly as possible. We hope he is thriving in his new territory.

Both stories touch deeply on our mission to rehabilitate and release injured and orphaned wild animals and to educate the public to respect and coexist peacefully with them. At AWARE we give every animal a chance to make it back to the wild. You, too, can help with our mission by spreading the word about the importance of wildlife and conserving natural habitats. We appreciate your support.

*By Tarah Hadley and Melanie Furr*



*Savannah, AWARE's ambassador bobcat, surveys her domain.*



*Bobcat rehabilitated at AWARE takes one last look back before running off into the woods to his freedom. Notice his excellent camouflage.*



**AWARE**  
WILDLIFE CENTER

## Preserving Georgia's Wildlife through Rehabilitation and Education

4158 Klondike Road, Lithonia, GA 30038

(678) 418-1111

[www.AWAREwildlife.org](http://www.AWAREwildlife.org)

**Tours given Saturdays  
and Sundays at 1 P.M.  
Donations gladly accepted**

Book an educational program and meet our ambassador animals up close!



### AWARE's Wish List

- Home Depot and Wal-Mart gift cards
- Towels and linens (no holes or loose threads)
- Sticky notes, fine-tipped permanent markers
- Applesauce, mixed fruit baby food
- Pecan halves or miscellaneous whole nuts
- Unscented HE laundry detergent and bleach
- Purina Dog Chow Complete, Friskies Grillers Blend Cat Chow, or Friskies Classic Pate

AWARE is a volunteer-based organization working to preserve and restore wildlife and its habitat through education and wildlife rehabilitation. We believe that peaceful coexistence of humans and wildlife is essential for our mutual survival.

AWARE rescues and rehabilitates about 1,300 wild animals each year and returns most of them to the wild. In addition, our licensed rehabilitators answer approximately 10,000 phone calls each year from people with wildlife concerns, providing AWARE with opportunities to help people better understand, appreciate, and coexist with wildlife. Our educational outreach programs, which feature our non-releasable ambassador animals, include school programs, festivals, fairs, nature centers, community events, scout meetings, and anywhere there is an audience interested in wildlife. Our non-releasable ambassador animals (bobcat, opossum, flying squirrel, snake, turtle, skunks, crows, owls, and hawks) provide a face to our lessons on how to peacefully coexist with wild animals.

AWARE is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that relies on private contributions of time and money. AWARE receives no government assistance.

**Your donations make our work possible.**

