

# MISSISSIPPI WILD & FREE



Mississippi Wildlife Rehabilitation, Inc.

Spring 2014



Tulane University's TAB Group

Heather Haneman, Nicole Dukarm, Anastasia Tencza, Elizabeth Wittenberg, and Jesse Shamon all from the Tulane University's TAB Group joined MWR during their spring break to volunteer for a few days.

*"We are so honored they chose us to spend their Spring Break with!" said Val Smith, MWR Executive Director.*

The group had many volunteer opportunities thanks to Petronella de Beer-May who facilitated the group from Tulane University and had something scheduled for them each day.

The girls helped with two barn owl releases out at The ARK, walked the trails for an interpretive hike, removed large limbs and debris from the trails, glued our interpretive sign plaques back on their stands and identified wildlife tracks along the trails. We were visited by the local Commercial Appeal news paper where they did a great job covering the days activities and MS Wildlife Rehabilitation.

Some of the girls other projects were to help with a filing system for Petra's office (which they did an excellent job at!) Cleaning, raking, picking up limbs from the fawn compound at Val Smiths location and sowing oats for the fawns this Spring. The girls had a good time and were a joy to be around while they worked hard to help MWR.

They ended their stay with a meeting with Shea Staton who is with the MS Bat Conservation Group, to talk about consideration of raising funds to build a bat tower for the ARK and other bat housing options. The bat tower would provide a home for a threatened species, the Rafinesque's Big-Eared Bat. They were also able to meet with our Eagle scout, Dennis McDonald and dad Mike about quality cage building. Dennis, with the help of his dad and Friends from Local Iron Workers Union, built a 24' conditioning cage for raptors. The Eagle Scout project is up for a major award this year from the Boy Scouts of America!

**"MWR** are very grateful  
and proud of all of  
our volunteers! " says Val Smith.



# WILDLIFE REHAB GROUP REAPS MONSANTO GRANT WITH HELP OF DESOTO FARMER

By Henry Bailey/Commercial Appeal

Lake Cormorant area farmer Jason McGowen remembers the beat-up bird. "We had an injured owl that got scooped up by a plow," recalled McGowen, 42, also a machinist for Canadian National Railway, formerly Illinois Central. "It bit the snot out of somebody, but we were able to take it to her." That "her" is Valery Smith, a federally licensed raptor handler and founder and executive director of the nonprofit, all-volunteer Mississippi Wildlife Rehabilitation group. Smith tends and mends for eventual release birds on her 100-acre spread near Eudora in western DeSoto County, not far from the McGowen Farms acreage of soybeans and hay.

McGowen knows the value of birds of prey to agricultural producers; he's also put another injured owl and a hawk into Smith's care. And he's done something else: He planted a seed that led to a much-appreciated financial boost for the critter caregivers.

"Jason submitted MWR's name to the Monsanto Fund, which supports charitable organizations," said Smith, "and I was notified a couple of weeks ago we'd be the recipient of \$2,500 through the fund's America's Farmers Grow Communities program — and are we excited.

"Jason's a fine young man with a kind and tender heart who's been involved with Boy Scouts and other organizations most of his life." McGowen soared to Eagle rank as a youth, and as an adult he's served as an aquatics instructor at Camp Carrier in Eudora and as a volunteer firefighter for Walls.

Monsanto sent a huge cardboard ceremonial check, and a formal presentation — attended by Monsanto district sales manager Mark Brewer, MWR board members Wayne Spell and Missy Flanagan and mammal rehabber Petronella "Petra" May — was made Friday at the ARK Trail gateway on Miss. 304 west of Hernando.

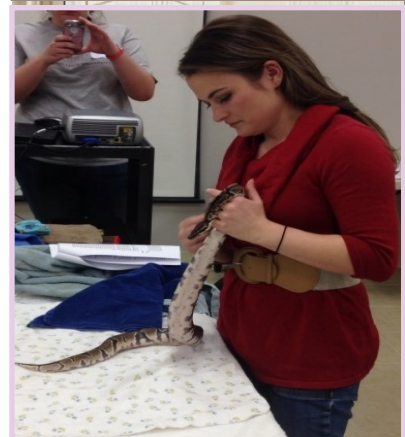


January 30, 2014 - Spirit, a non-releasable Swainson's hawk, in the care of Valery Smith and Mississippi Wildlife Rehabilitation, will soon have a new roof to its cage as a result of receiving \$2,500 from the Monsanto Fund through the fund's America's Farmers Grow Communities program. (Stan Carroll/The Commercial Appeal)

MWR hosted a rehabilitation workshop on Jan. 25th & 26th. We had a fantastic turnout! MWR got to see all our wonderful volunteers and colleagues from MSU vet college and successfully recruited new local volunteers!

MWR board members and veterinarians, Johan and [Danielle Snyder Steenkamp](#), presented an in depth study on physical examination, fluid therapy, zoonotic diseases and common ailments in wildlife rehab.

Dr.'s Johan and Danielle travelled all the way from Ft. Worth Texas to help us this year! We are so grateful to them for helping make this year's workshops professional and informative.





January 31, 2014 - Monsanto district sales manager Mark Brewer (left) with local farmer Jason McGowen, who submitted Mississippi Wildlife Rehabilitation to the Monsanto Fund for their efforts in rehabilitating injured wildlife.

McGowen and Brewer, Oxford-based district sales representative for Monsanto, agree that Mississippi Wildlife Rehabilitation deserves help. "A very neat project," said Brewer. The Monsanto Fund farmer-community program that issued the grant is in its fourth year "and we'll do it again in 2015," said Brewer. "It's been a big success." (Stan Carroll/The Commercial Appeal)



McGowen has expressed interest in helping upgrade MWR's bird of prey cages, said Smith: "They're very old and he saw that right away. So that's what we'll use most of the money for — a bird of prey face-lift." Inspecting one cage with McGowen, Smith noted the home of "Spirit" — a Swainson's hawk no releasable due to injury but valuable as an education bird — "needs a new roof and an extension, and maybe more shelter on the sides to keep out the wind." "I'm glad to help out," said McGowen.

"Farmers love birds of prey," says Smith. "I often tell school classes about the hawks following behind a farmer on his tractor are waiting for a rodent to run out so they can have a quick snack."

A barn owl on average weighs between 400 and 500 grams, just about one pound, said Smith.

"To meet his total daily energy/calorie needs, this one owl needs to eat 4.7 mice a day," Smith said. "That means this owl eats 1,715 mice each year."

Each of those mice eats, on average, 5 grams of grain per day, "or around four pounds of grain consumed per mouse per year. So one barn owl eating those 1,715 mice can save a farmer 3.4 tons of grain per year."

If this barn owl takes a mate "and they raise three babies in a year, enough mice will be consumed to save the farmer 9.3 tons of grain each year," said Smith. "With annual rye grass seed at \$280 a ton, that is \$2,600 saved per year by an environmentally safe family of barn owls — at no cost to the farmer."

"Those birds impact farmers a lot," said McGowen. "If you get an overpopulation of rodents, you can lose your living."

Smith's nonprofit group, with a modest annual budget of about \$20,000 — of which some \$8,600 help rehab birds of prey — manages to stay aloft with fundraisers, donations of time and talent and grants such as McGowen arranged.

Last fall, as the service project that helped earn his Eagle Scout rank, youth Dennis McDonald of Olive Branch organized construction of a 24-foot-long, all-steel cage for conditioning large birds of prey before release. The cage is valued at \$20,000 and was aided by the skilled labor of Iron Workers Local 167 members of Memphis and material assists from country music stars Vince Gill, who sent \$1,000, and Ronnie Dunn, formerly of Brooks & Dunn, who gave \$3,500.

MWR's major benefit event is Eagle Fest, launched last September at Arkabutla Lake's Dub Patton Recreation Area. The goal — and Smith's dream — is the establishment of a nature education and rehab center, envisioned at the ARK site.

McGowen says he and other farmers would like to see it all happen.

"She's helped us a lot," he says of Smith, "so why shouldn't we return the favor?"



Girl Scout Troop #10528

## EXPLORING the ARK

DeSoto County Greenways & Parks welcomed Girl Scout Troop #10528 for a special morning event created just for them. The activities took place at the Arkabutla Lake Rehabilitation & Education Center or ARK, outside Hernando, MS on a sunny November morning. The girls first took part in a guided "Hike & Seek", which created an educational opportunity as the group hiked the 2 mile trail. The girls took pictures of each item on their list and were able to check off all 20! The items listed were challenges like find a spider web, something fuzzy or a live animal and some items took a little more thought. At



the end of the hike the girls reviewed their pictures that they had taken and discussed among the group what they learned about each item at the stage area.

Greenways Event Coordinator , Natalie Bright then spoke to the girls about the future site of the Mississippi Wildlife Rehabilitation Education Center and how in the future kids just like them will be able to come there and learn about the animal world and why this is such an important goal for MWR and the surrounding area.

**“**having the MWR group is something to be truly thankful for and the DeSoto Greenways is a proud supporter of them“ says Bright.

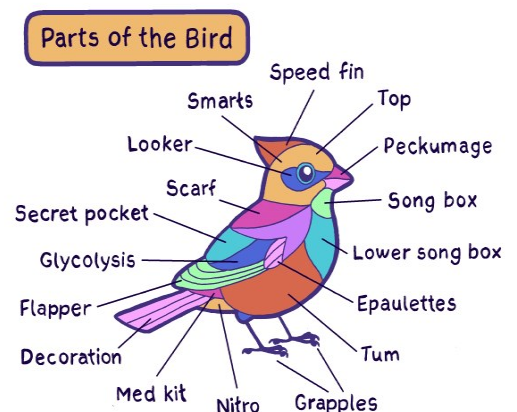
She then went on to tell the group of how they can support this effort by being good stewards to wildlife and also by promoting MWR and visiting the ARK. It was a morning filled with exploring the great outdoors at the ARK!



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What's that bird? Merlin Bird ID helps you solve the mystery.

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By Rosemary Mosco Comic



### Now You Know!

Every year White Tailed Fawns are hidden in the bushes by their mothers while they forage for food. Unfortunately fawns often mistake the legs of a passing dog, horse, person etc. for those of their mother so follow the stranger wherever they lead.

Every year the volunteers of MWF provide temporary care for about 30 fawns that have been orphaned, injured, attacked by dogs or taken from the wild illegally until they are old enough to be released back into their natural habitat.

Providing the proper food and a safe temporary habitat for injured fawns is very expensive: a 6 foot high wooden fenced pen is required to prevent predators such as domestic dogs, coyotes and bobcats from attacking these vulnerable babies. In addition, the pen is required to be in a quiet area, and it requires the same maintenance as a horse stall so cleaning becomes a challenge after every 4 hour feeding! MWR pays for the special formula fawns need, deworming and any medical treatment required. Fawns are prone to eye infections and broken legs.



February 25, 2014

Injured Red Tail Hawk

### All in a Days Work!

Because of the caring persistence of Entergy's Billy Bennett, Operations Coordinator North MS Sub Stations, this beautiful red tail hawk has another chance at life. It started this morning. An email from our USFWS Federal Agent Coop Chavis and MDWFP Officer Blake Palmer sending out a request for help from Charles (Chuck) Upchurch, Senior Environmental Analyst with Entergy Services. Mr. Billy was working in a remote area and spotted the red tail hopping along and it seemed to him the hawk was having difficulty so he called it in to Chuck Upchurch who called Blake Palmer who called Coop

When I got there and searched the ditches and sagebrush, the hawk was nowhere to be seen. I finally had to give it up and notified everyone after I got back home that I had been unsuccessful. About an hour later I received another notice the hawk was spotted again and Mr. Billy was there watching him. So my grandson Holden and I sped to the area as quickly as we could. Mr. Billy was watching the hawk who by now had wedged herself down in the sagebrush right on water's edge. You could have walked right over her if you didn't know she was there. I handed Mr. Billy a pair of talon gloves as we slowly inched our way to the frazzled hawk and was able to rescue her. The hawk presented with good muscle mass around the keel and was well hydrated. The injury was to the left wing wrist at the joint, a very bad contusion, possibly from a gunshot. I didn't see any other wounds but will run her up for x-ray in the morning and hope there are no shots inside her. Started her on ab's and she's in a quiet secure area. Mr. Billy saw her mate flying near her this morning. Red tail hawks mate for life. Hopefully, we can get her up and going again and back to her mate soon. Keep your fingers crossed. A huge thank you to Mr. Billy for his dedication and persistence in finding this bird and getting her help. Chuck Upchurch sent this email this afternoon:

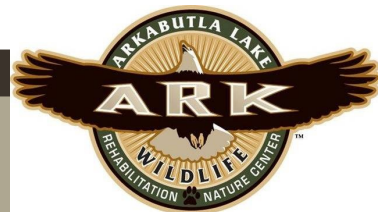
*" Glad to be able to help. Just hope she recovers!! Thank you for your work, Valery, as I am sure it is both rewarding and heart-breaking at times!!!! And I am proud of Mr. Billy for setting a great example for the rest of us at Entergy to follow!! I can say for all the linemen and Entergy personnel I share the word with about Avian protection; we are mostly hunters and fishermen and believe in conservation, and we do really care and strive to do the right thing!!"*

*Thank you, Chuck Upchurch"*

**Update: Feb. 27th**

**Entergy's red tail hawk is standing now and ate 6 mice this morning! The next step will be to transfer her to a limited flight cage then to a pre-release flight . So maybe we can see about releasing her in a couple of weeks. Its all up to her now! We will keep you undated in the next news-letter.**

# Eagle Fest 2014



## Save the Date!

Saturday, September 27, 2014

### Dub Patton Area at Arkabutla Lake

Arkabutla Lake Wildlife Rehabilitation and Nature Center Benefit

Featuring:

Live Animals

Wildlife Exhibits

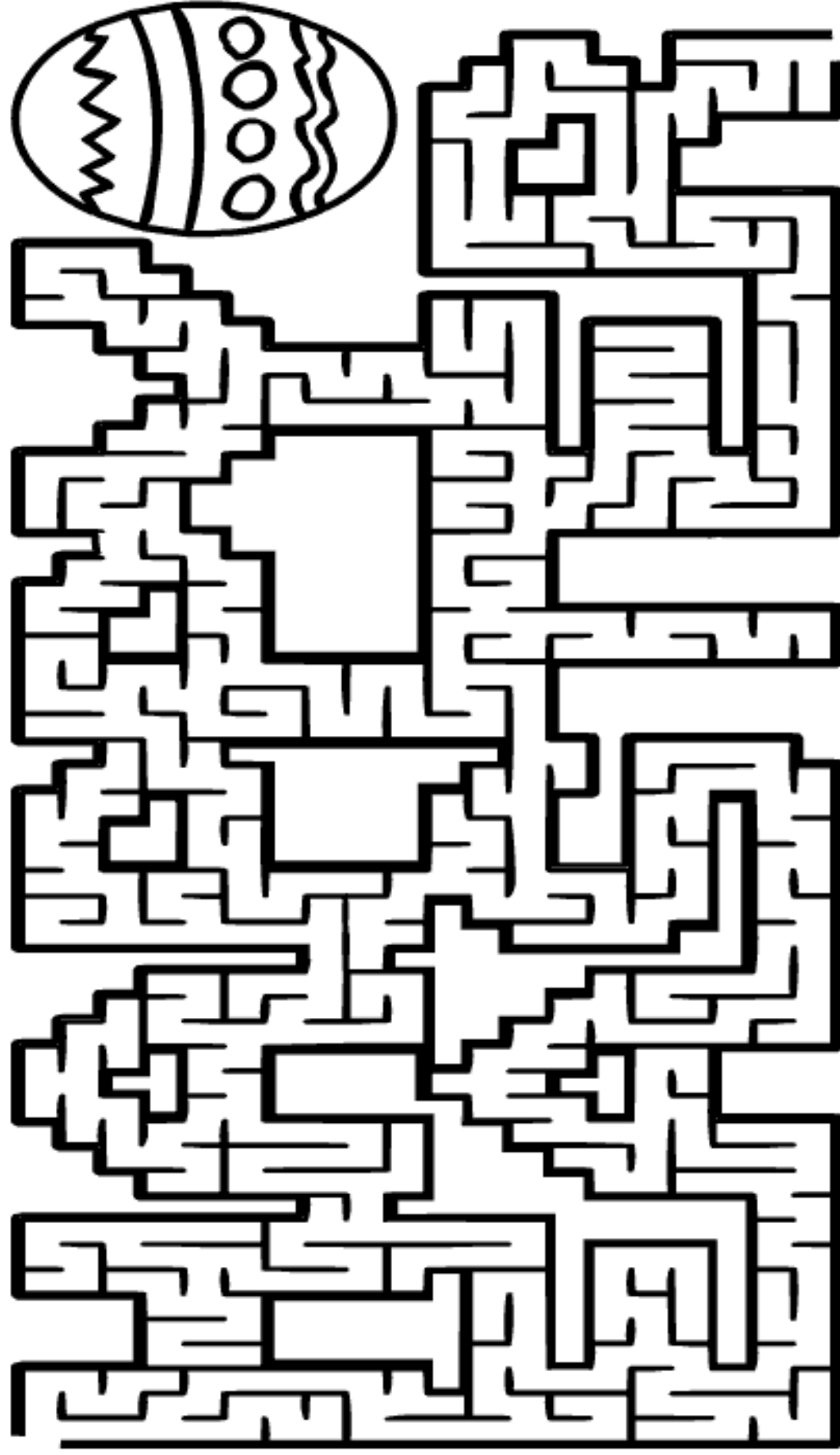
Family Oriented Activities



For additional information -- <http://desotoeaglefest.com/>



START



END





Martin Wall

## Help Scientists Find Out What's Happening to Rusty Blackbirds

It's probably North America's least-known blackbird, and the one most in need of attention. Rusty Blackbirds breed in wet woodlands across the boreal forests of northern North America and winter largely in the southeastern U.S. Breeding males are glossy black; breeding females are a silvery, charcoal gray. During winter, both sexes are extensively rusty, but they lose this coloration during late winter and spring migration. Both sexes have bright yellow eyes.

Sadly, Rusty Blackbirds have the distinction of being one of the most sharply declining songbirds in North America. An estimated 85 percent to 95 percent of the population has been lost in the last half-century. Scientists are unsure why, and they've formed an International Rusty Blackbird Working Group to work on the mystery.



To solve it, they need information on where these birds are—and that's where you can help. The Rusty Blackbird Spring Migration Blitz is an organized effort to get birders to go out during March through mid-June to search for the species. Each state, province, and territory in the species' range has been assigned a specific timeframe to search—Alabamans start on March 1; Alaskans get going in late April—so that the results can be compiled to produce an overall picture of Rusty Blackbird migration. The goal is to understand migration routes and to identify key migration hotspots that may be important to conserve.



It's easy to participate. Just check the target dates for your state or province. Then go out birding! Report your observations to eBird (whether you see Rusty Blackbirds or not). As you enter your trip report, you'll see a "Rusty Blackbird Spring Migration Blitz" survey type—please use that one. If you need it, you can find more instructions and guidelines for data collection on the Blitz website. You can also get in touch with your local Blitz coordinator, and follow the project on Facebook for updates.





All those birds you've been watching at your feeder all winter are gearing up for another nesting season—and so can you. Our Project, The Cornell Lab of Ornithology, FeederWatch staff are encouraging all participants to give our summertime citizen-science project, NestWatch, a try. The project is fun to do, gives you a special insight into the hidden lives of birds, and helps scientists, too.

We're especially encouraging FeederWatchers to join NestWatch—the combined feeder data and nest data will be especially useful—but anyone interested in watching nesting birds should consider joining NestWatch.

NestWatch is a free project open to anyone. Participants must complete a short online training that certifies them as a safe, responsible nest observer. Visit [www.NestWatch.org](http://www.NestWatch.org) for full details.



Spirit is our education Swainson's Hawk, She is 8 years old and non-releasable due to a wing fracture. I (Val Smith) flew her in from CA when I saw her advertised on a Raptor list as non-releasable. She was to be euthanized very soon.

Swainson's are in the same family as Red tail hawks, Broad-wings and Red-shouldered hawks. (*Buteo jamaicensis*)

Swainson's hawks have the longest migration of any raptor in the U.S. They migrate from CA to Argentina every year.





Postage

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E-Mail: [wltrehab@earthlink.net](mailto:wltrehab@earthlink.net)

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Tear Here

## Mississippi's Wildlife Needs Your Support!

Become a member and help save an animal at Mississippi Wildlife Rehabilitation, Inc!

- |   |  |   |   |
|---|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual \$15/yr | <input type="checkbox"/> Friend \$50/yr  | <input type="checkbox"/> School \$250/yr    | <input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor \$1000/yr |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family \$25/yr     | <input type="checkbox"/> Patron \$100/yr | <input type="checkbox"/> Corporate \$500/yr | <input type="checkbox"/> Gold \$5000/yr       |

Donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_ In Memory / Honor of \_\_\_\_\_

Please make check payable to Mississippi Wildlife Rehabilitation, Inc. MWR is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and is the only state-licensed rehabilitation facility in North MS. Your 100% tax-deductible donation goes directly to the rehabilitation of Mississippi wildlife and / or development of the Arkabutla Lake Wildlife Rehabilitation and Nature Center.

I would like to volunteer! You can use my talents in the following area(s):

- | <u>Building Trades</u>                | <u>Public Awareness</u>                  | <u>Animal Care/Rehab</u>                    | <u>Support</u>                         |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Electrical   | <input type="checkbox"/> Advertising     | <input type="checkbox"/> Small Mammals      | <input type="checkbox"/> Bookkeeping   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Carpentry    | <input type="checkbox"/> Fund Raising    | <input type="checkbox"/> Songbirds          | <input type="checkbox"/> Database Mgt. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Masonry      | <input type="checkbox"/> Public Speaking | <input type="checkbox"/> Large Mammals      | <input type="checkbox"/> Mailing       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Painting     | <input type="checkbox"/> Education       | <input type="checkbox"/> Reptiles           | <input type="checkbox"/> Web Design    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Plumbing     | <input type="checkbox"/> Writing         | <input type="checkbox"/> Veterinary Service |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |  |   |  |

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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An American kestrel fledgling that was rehabilitated and released in 2006