

BEAVER TALES WINTER 2021, UNEXPECTED WILDLIFE REFUGE

The winter season at Unexpected is beginning and though we may not always see the animals at work, we know they are making their own preparations for food and shelter to sustain themselves and their families through the coldest months. In autumn, beavers will begin to store food, cutting choice sticks of woodland trees and storing them in and around their lodges. They put on body fat for insulation and energy as food becomes scarce. The family lodge provides shelter from the colder temperatures. Using a mixture of branches, vegetation, debris, and a coating of pond mud, the structure maintains a stable temperature. Combining this with the body heat of the family, and sometimes a guest muskrat, the home will keep everyone warm and safe. As we patrol the Refuge, we are able to spot many of the lodges on the pond.



As the year draws to a close, and you may be considering charitable gifts, please keep Unexpected Wildlife Refuge in your thoughts. We, and the animals, are grateful for your continued support.

Running a wildlife refuge is not only physically and emotionally demanding, there are always expenses with which to deal. Although we are frugal in how we spend Refuge funds--having only one employee and an all-volunteer Council of Trustees--we need your help in ensuring the continuation and longevity of the Refuge. We hope you will take the time to make the most generous donation you can...*now*.

Help needed with trail maintenance

With the arrival of cooler temperatures we will be getting back to regular trail maintenance throughout the Refuge, and we could use your help. Trail maintenance can be light (using loppers to clear overgrowth, painting blazes, etc.), or more entailed (assisting with the removal/relocation of larger fallen trees and debris, installing signs, etc.). Groups and individuals are welcome, and we can work around your schedule and preferred intensity level.



If you would like to assist with trail maintenance, while enjoying the fresh air and beauty of the Refuge, please call 856-697-3541 or email manager@unexpectedwildliferefuge.org to let us know how you can help.

Petition to free Bella the beluga



Bella the beluga whale has been locked behind glass walls for at least seven years, since she was captured along with two other beluga whales and forced to become the aquatic entertainment at Seoul's Lotte World Aquarium.

Two years ago, a conglomerate promised to free Bella from the aquarium in South Korea, but then did nothing. She's still in an enclosure, the aquarium attraction remains open, and experts say Bella is showing signs of significant psychological distress.

Belugas, like other whales, evolved to live in the huge expanses of the ocean, swimming hundreds of miles and interacting with all sorts of animals in the wild. Locking them in sterile glass prisons the size of a human home with only a couple other belugas for company -- if any at all -- is cruelty, plain and simple.

Visit <https://www.thepetitionsite.com/takeaction/860/428/153/> to sign the petition and demand the release of Bella the beluga to a reputable sanctuary immediately.

Save the bees. Tell your state Legislature to restrict bee-killing pesticides.



Bees are dying off at an unsustainable rate, with serious consequences for our natural world. They play a vital role as pollinators, and losing them would have a devastating ripple effect across all ecosystems. It's urgent we protect our bees by expanding bee habitats and stopping the use of bee-killing pesticides.

Help give bees a chance. Visit <https://environmentnewjersey.org/feature/nje/save-bees> to sign the petition urging state legislators to restrict bee-killing pesticides.

A visit with a male harlequin darter dragonfly

During the month of June, in our social media posts, we highlighted dragonfly and damselfly species seen on the Refuge, and we recently posted a female harlequin darter dragonfly, seen on Cedar Bridge Trail last spring. Just over a year later, we were visited by a male of the same species when he landed on the shoulder of our



manager's daughter outside of Headquarters. While we do not see them as often as some other species, harlequin darters have dark coloring with bright geometric patterns, a combination which helps them to stand out from the others. We appreciated the opportunity to snap some photos and get a close look, until he was ready to fly off.

Red velvet ant wasp catches our eye at Miller Pond

This red velvet ant wasp was photographed as she scurried among the rocks alongside Miller Pond. Also referred to as red velvet ants, these insects are in fact wasps. Although they look like large, hairy ants and, since females are wingless, they are sometimes mistaken as ants. They are not aggressive, but females do have a long needle-like stinger concealed at the tip of the abdomen and can inflict a very painful sting if handled. Males have two pairs of transparent black wings, but no stinger. Red velvet ant wasps are the largest of the velvet ant species in the eastern United States, attaining an approximate length of 1.9cm.



Beaver partakes in midday snack of lily pads

Over the course of a few days this past July, we were fortunate to observe some of our resident beavers in the main pond. While our manager Jen and Trustee Dave Sauder were patrolling and assessing the bridge work on the main pond dike, a large adult beaver swam from the pond and crossed under the bridge. A few days later we saw who we believed to be the same individual swimming through the open water, snacking on lily pads, quite close to the viewing area near Headquarters. We would like to think perhaps this was the father of the family, out for a swim, while mom remained back in the lodge nursing kits.



Wheel bug nest and emerging nymphs

While out doing trail maintenance last spring, our manager observed this unique wheel bug nest with emerging nymphs. The wheel bug is a member of the family of insects known as assassin bugs--about 7,000 species of insects in the 'true bug' order. Like most members of the family, wheel bugs are predacious on other insects--caterpillars and beetles in particular. Once per year they lay anywhere from 40 up to 200 barrel-shaped eggs, which are cemented together in a mass resembling a honeycomb. The eggs hatch in May and June, and nymphs soon begin hunting for prey. They molt several times, growing in size through the season, and by late summer they are adults, ready to mate and lay eggs.

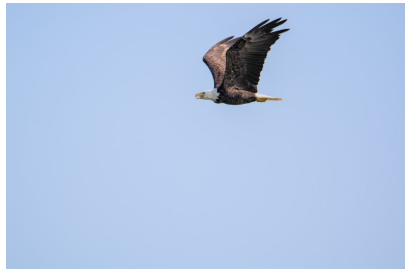
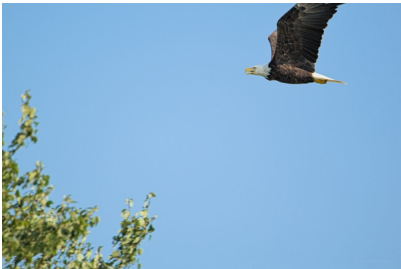


Metamorphosed northern cricket frog tadpole transition nearly complete

While canoeing on the main pond we spotted this northern cricket frog tadpole basking on a lily pad. This tadpole is in the final stage of metamorphosis, having developed all four limbs. Next the tail will be gradually absorbed into the body, after which he or she will be considered an adult frog. Northern cricket frogs have a distinctive dark triangular mark on the top of their head, and the tadpoles have a black-tipped tail, unlike other tadpoles. They can be found basking on sunny banks of shallow marshes, ponds, and slow-moving streams. They can jump more than three feet, and, they jump in a series of zigzag motions to escape predators.



Bald eagle activity on the main pond



While quietly sitting at the main pond, enjoying the peaceful beauty, we watched as this bald eagle briefly passed through. It was just enough time to snap a few pictures before he or she was out of sight. We are not sure, but this may be one member of the mated pair who we often see perched in the trees around the pond or fishing in the shallow water. Found only in North America, bald eagles are considered "fish eagles," as their main source of food is fish. As such, bald eagles tend to live in forested areas that are near rivers, lakes, reservoirs, marshes, and coasts.

Eastern box turtle safely moved from road

In late August, while returning from offsite errands, our manager encountered this eastern box turtle on the dirt road. Now that the winter season is underway, this individual is likely burrowed underground. Usually starting in October or November box turtles burrow into loose soil, mud, or abandoned mammal burrows. As the soil temperatures drop through winter, the turtles will burrow deeper. They will emerge again sometime in April or early May. Although not considered endangered on a national level, some states list box turtles as a species of special concern. Populations can be locally abundant in many areas, though their numbers have declined in others as a result of habitat loss and fragmentation, and removal from the wild for the pet trade.



Daisy fleabane grows from uprooted tree



This past spring, while canoeing along the main pond, we spotted this aster species, more specifically a species of daisy fleabane, just starting to bloom. It caught our eye especially because this opportunistic plant was growing out of the underside of an uprooted tree. Fleabane are annual, herbacious plants in the daisy family (Asteraceae). Commonly referred to as the aster, daisy, composite, or sunflower family, the primary common characteristic is the existence of tiny individual florets, held together in flower heads. What appear to be "petals" of a flower, are actually each individual and complete ray flowers, and the "sun disc" at the center is a dense pack of tiny disc flowers.

Former patrol volunteer donates items to Refuge

Recently we were contacted by longtime supporter and former patrol volunteer, Diane Harrell regarding some old Refuge items she had come across in her mother's home. Diane kindly offered to donate the items to the Refuge and paid a visit to drop them off. Among those items were books inscribed by Hope, copies of news articles featuring UWR, and a handmade gavel made by Cavit from repurposed, beaver-gnawed wood. Diane shared stories of visiting Hope many years ago, along with her mother and brother, Janis and Bruce Barry. Diane recalled when her mother would take them out of school during hunting 'season' to assist with patrols at the Refuge. We are grateful to Diane for donating the items to us and for her help over the years.



Helping wildlife and Unexpected Wildlife Refuge today



The Refuge is home and sanctuary for hundreds of animal and plant species, some highly endangered, and ensures their best chance for survival. We depend on the support of our donors to keep the Refuge safe. We – and the wildlife – could not exist without you. May we rely on your continued support? A donation today – no matter how small – will help us to continue our important work and secure the future of the Refuge. We care for these 767 acres with a small operating budget, one paid staff and a voluntary Council of Trustees.

Help us and the environment

Please send us your email address so that we can reduce the number of paper newsletters and the waste that entails. Send to info@unexpectedwildliferefuge.org, stating you would like to be placed on the electronic newsletter list.

This issue of our newsletter is brought to you by a grant from Lush Fresh Handmade Cosmetics.

Unexpected Wildlife Refuge

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