



Summer 2024

Wild Bird Wildlife Rehab Intern

Maggy Herman
Western Washington University

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COLLEGE OF THE ENVIRONMENT



Internship Title: Wild Bird Rehabilitation Intern

Organization Worked For: Barnswallow, A Wild Bird Concern

Student Name: Maggy Herman

Internship Dates: 6/10/24 9/12/24

Faculty Advisor Name James Helfield

Department ESCI

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STUDENT SIGNATURE Maggy Herman

DATE: 8/10/24

Wild Bird Rehabilitation Intern

Maggy Herman, Summer 2024

Student and Host Institution Information

My name is Maggy Herman, I am a Junior at Western Washington University, and my W# is 01576746. I am completing an Environmental Science major with a concentration in Freshwater and Terrestrial Ecology. During the summer of 2024, from June 10 to September 12, I was a Wild Bird Rehabilitation Intern at an institution called Barnswallow, A Wild Bird Concern . In total, I worked as an intern for 200 hours. Barnswallow is located at 27120 Ivanhoe Ct, Wauconda, IL 60084 and is a state and federally licensed wild bird rehabilitation and education center specializing in the care and release of songbirds and raptors. Barnswallow is a private facility and a 501 (c)(3) not for profit organization supported through donations and private funding. The founder and director of Barnswallow is Linda Breuer. My supervisor during the duration of my internship was Kali Cotteleer who can be contacted at barnswallow.awbc@gmail.com.

Description of Internship

During my internship at Barnswallow, I worked three days a week and was responsible for a variety of tasks each day. Every week followed a similar schedule such as one day a week being reserved for cleaning and another for preparing food, among other tasks. My main objective was to support the rehabilitation center by completing assigned tasks ensuring that the center ran smoothly. Overall, my role as an intern was to help maintain a good quality of life for all residents at Barnswallow.

Duties and Responsibilities

As an intern, I was expected to work in small groups with other interns and volunteers as well as individually. While the majority of the work that I did was done individually, I did have a chance to work with another intern on a project. Over the course of a few weeks, we worked to design and build the interior of an outdoor bird aviary using materials such as plywood, branches, and logs to create perches and platforms that were accessible. We designed this enclosure for a Red Tailed Hawk named Sunshine who is a permanent resident at Barnswallow. The enclosure would create the opportunity for her to spend time outside during the day, exercising her physical and mental health.

One of the tasks that I was responsible for multiple times a week was to fill outdoor bird feeders with seed and hummingbird feeders with nectar. Because Barnswallow is located on a property with an abundance of native plants and wild areas, there was always wildlife taking advantage of the feeders. We regularly saw chipmunks, raccoons, and many species of wild birds that thrived on Linda's property. A second task that I and another intern were responsible for was unpacking and organizing deliveries as needed. Barnswallow occasionally received deliveries of frozen rats and mice or pallets of seed bags that needed to be unpacked.

A large part of my work as an intern at Barnswallow was maintaining a sanitary work environment for people and also the resident birds that lived there. Because Barnswallow is home to many birds with a variety of diets, we used countless dishes each day ranging from bowls to containers and utensils. I was responsible for washing the dishes and putting them away daily. I was also responsible for sweeping, vacuuming and mopping as needed. It was important to stay on top of cleaning the floors as wild birds can make a mess when eating, bathing, and molting their feathers.

Wednesday was the day that was dedicated to cleaning the indoor bird cages each week. While we cleaned their cages, some birds were able to spend time in the main clinic area while others preferred to stay in their cages. Cleaning cages involved removing the birds belongings such as their perches, water bowl, and wooden boxes used for hiding. The lining in the bottom of the cages was made of pieces of turf cut to fit each cage. The lining had to be removed and deep cleaned as it collected the majority of the leftover food and bird droppings. Once the cage was emptied, it was thoroughly cleaned and all belongings were placed back the way they were before. This process was done with every cage each week. The indoor residents were not the only birds that needed their enclosures cleaned, Barnswallow also housed a number of birds in outdoor aviaries. The process of cleaning the outdoor enclosures was much simpler and it involved changing the bird's water and raking up leftover food and dropped feathers. Cleaning bird cages and maintaining a healthy living area for all birds was a significant part of my work at Barnswallow.

An additional task that I completed daily was feeding the songbirds that lived indoors and the raptors that lived outdoors in the aviaries. The species of songbirds that permanently resided at Barnswallow included Blue Jays, Cardinals, Cedar Waxwings, and Mourning Doves. Each species of bird received a different diet with the range of food consisting of mixed seed, fruit, vegetables, cooked egg, and mealworms. Each songbird, no matter the species, had its own unique personality and traits that made it special. The outdoor birds were also fed daily however their diets consisted of only rats and mice because they were raptors. All outdoor birds were given a specific amount of food depending on their species, size, and health concerns.

Learning Objectives

During my internship at Barnswallow, I learned a lot of information on how a successful wild bird rehabilitation center is run and the skills that are needed to work at one. In this section, I will describe specific skills that I learned and improved on in relation to handling, caring for, and identifying illness in wild birds.

Frequently at Barnswallow, birds will need to be moved in order to clean their cages or restrained in order to apply medicine to them, among other reasons. Handling wild birds requires proper care and technique to ensure their safety and my own. During my internship, I had the privilege of practicing the handling of a variety of birds including American Kestrels, Screech Owls, a Broad Winged Hawk, Red Tailed Hawks, and Great Horned Owls. Some of these birds are more comfortable with being handled than others such as the American Kestrels. Kestrels are North America's smallest falcon and are commonly used in falconry. Although the Kestrels at Barnswallow are not used for falconry, they do wear leather equipment on their legs which makes it easier to handle them and perch them on a hand. An example of a bird at Barnswallow that does not wear equipment and requires a different method of handling is a Great Horned Owl named Clark. Clark is the bird that I handled the most while learning how to restrain wild birds. The technique that I was taught by Kali, my supervisor, was to count down from three and quickly grab the legs of the bird, bring the bird down to the floor, and turn the bird around so that its back is to your chest. This ensures that you have the most control over the talons which can be very dangerous and which is why we always wore gloves while doing this. Catching-up a bird in this way does not hurt them and is a safe method when done correctly. I learned that taking the time to put equipment on birds and handling them correctly puts less stress on the bird providing them with a better quality of life at rehabilitation centers.

During the beginning of my internship, there were a handful of baby birds that would be dropped off at the clinic each week due to them being abandoned or falling out of their nest. These birds were too young to survive without their mother and needed to be tube fed each hour for around 14 hours per day. Barnswallow makes its own formula for these baby birds which has a consistency similar to applesauce. The mixture is sucked into syringes without a needle and then gently put down the bird's throat and dispensed into the crop which is a pouch in the neck where food is stored. After being taught this process by Linda and Kali, I was able to do it myself and become confident in the skill.

Lastly, I learned about the reasons why many birds are brought to rehabilitation centers and how to recognize symptoms of certain illnesses. During my internship, I learned that an astounding number of wild birds are killed by contact with or ingestion of harmful chemicals. The chemicals tend to be used on residential lawns and golf course grass for aesthetic reasons and include but are not limited to pesticide and herbicide. It is difficult for birds to avoid these chemicals as residential areas replace forests and essential territory that birds such as raptors need to survive are built upon. Linda and Kali were able to tell when birds that came to the clinic were poisoned by lawn chemicals because of symptoms such as paralysis, seizures, and darkening of the skin. If a bird with these symptoms is found and treated within 48 hours, it has a better chance of recovery. If it is treated too late, the bird will most likely have no chance at recovery and need to be euthanized.

My internship experience at Barnswallow contributed to my educational goals and surpassed my learning objectives by allowing me to learn about wild birds and their significance in the environment. In addition to learning about why they are important, I also learned about human impacts on their populations and how I can help prevent further harm to wild birds. These

topics are critical to understand in the career path I intend to follow which is to become a conservation officer or work in the Department of Natural Resources. The hands-on experience that I gained while at Barnswallow is priceless. My coursework on the one hand, and my experiential application work on the other, have contributed to my understanding of the creation and application of knowledge in Environmental Science by allowing me to connect what I have already learned in school with what I learned through my internship experience. For example, I have previously learned about the negative effects of using pesticides in school but now I am able to apply that knowledge to identifying symptoms of exposure that appear in wild birds.

Appendix I. Supervisor Letter



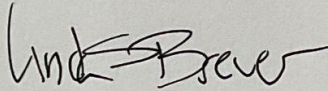
To: Whom It May Concern
Western Washington University

From: Barnswallow a Wild Bird Concern

This letter is to confirm that Maggy A. Herman has served as a summer intern at Barnswallow during the months of June and completing her internship mid-September. By that time, she will have completed well over 200 hours.

Barnswallow is a wild bird rehabilitation and education center. Maggy excelled at all aspects of our internship program, exceeding our expectations. We are sorry to see her leave.

Should you require additional information, we can be reached as noted below.



Linda S. Breuer
Director

Phone: 847-487-3606
Email: barnswallow.awbc@gmail.com

Appendix II. Supporting Images



Outside aviary designed by myself and another intern. Includes perches made of branches, platforms, and wooden steps for accessibility.



Four young Great Horned owls with their foster mother Dandelion on the right hand side.



An American Kestrel named Clover.



Clark, a young Great Horned owl.

Sunshine the Red Tailed Hawk. This photo was taken after putting new equipment on her.





Hubert the Screech owl.



Oliver the Great Horned owl.



Maleta the Broad Winged hawk.