



# THE AMERICAN WILDLIFE REFUGE

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THE AMERICAN WILDLIFE REFUGE IS A FEDERALLY RECOGNIZED NON PROFIT CORPORATION  
OPERATING UNDER CODE 501(C3), SUBSECTION 509 (A1)

## **I - Volunteer Packet Introduction**

Thank you for your interest. We are an odd organization when it comes to volunteers, we make sure they are truly committed before we spend any time training you. The idea is that people volunteering have to be truly driven to this work, or the training time and extra effort our other volunteers spend training them is time taken from an animal's care. Our organization is committed to the animals, the rest is peripheral.

So, what do we make volunteers do? We make them come to us. If you do want to volunteer for the refuge, the first thing you need to do is follow us at our public events. Go to shows and introduce yourself. Watch what we do. Be there and offer help if we need it. This way you will hear our talks and information several times in several different ways and learn about us and the animals while being there to help us when we can not step away. If you do this, and do not do anything to worry the animals, the trainers or the public, you will be invited to the refuge after a time, and you will be given some basic work to do there. Mostly cleaning cages and such, but still, bird work.

Our public presentations are listed on our facebook page, our website, our [meetup.com](http://meetup.com) group site, or available by a simple email to [awrefuge@aol.com](mailto:awrefuge@aol.com) .

## **II - Volunteer Policy**

**Initials** \_\_\_\_\_

The American Wildlife Refuge is one of the most efficient organizations of its kind in our area. We routinely rescue raptors, including Owls, Hawks, Falcons, and Bald Eagles. We also rescue other birds of prey like Vultures and Blue Herons.. Our resident animals are seen on television, at fairs and festivals, and at schools and parks. Our volunteers truly make a difference.

We are very picky about who we let near our animals. While we do not discriminate in any way or even ask about race, gender, sexual orientation, or religion, we do not allow anyone near the birds until we are sure they can handle them and will not hurt them.

We quite honestly do not have the time to teach people unless they are dedicated and self motivated. Additionally, our animals are dangerous. We make sure our volunteers understand that they WILL get hurt. Not that they might be hurt, but if they work with us, there is an injury in their future; possibly several.

Our basic policy on volunteers is this:

- 1) Volunteers must supply their name for our email list and have Facebook and/ or Meetup (Meetup is a must!). or have someone to check our facebook and meetup pages regularly (so you are informed about refuge activities). We have dozens of people that call or email us one time, and basically disappear after that. We do not have time to keep up with people who are interested, but not really motivated.
- 2) Volunteers Must be trained. All volunteers must have a minimum of 12 hours training before we will let them do anything on our grounds. Each Volunteer for the rehab area and public work has to either go thru our 5 week training class at Wake technical Community College (see the web page) or go through similar training though the refuge. Volunteers for constructing and maintenance, but not working in public or with birds must still take a basic class.
- 3) We are very demanding of our volunteers at the refuge. We have to be. The people working with us are responsible for the life and death of our birds. We take that very seriously.
- 4) Volunteers understand that the refuge has a zero tolerance abuse policy. That means any reported abuse is assumed true unless proven otherwise. Whether the abuse is bullying, sexual harassment, intimidation, or any other type, it is assumed true. The only exception is if the reported incident is something done for the safety of the birds in our care.

- 5) All volunteers are subject to dismissal at any time for any, or for no stated reason. Dismissal of a volunteer can be done by any board member, or the official license holder.
- 6) All volunteers understand that rehab and education with birds of prey is a very complex process with many layers involved. Just because you have been a volunteer for a year or so does not mean you know everything about the process. There are many levels to all forms of wildlife work. As such, volunteers agree that they will NOT discuss AWR policies or procedures, nor will they violate anything in the signed confidentiality agreement.
- 7) Volunteers understand that a criminal record search will be done before they are allowed at public locations as representatives of AWR.
- 8) It is a privilege to volunteer for AWR. As a volunteer, people will remember that they are not to beg others to volunteer, nor are they to urge other volunteers to do more. We do not harass people into joining AWR or to doing work they may not be ready to do.
- 9) AWR is about the birds, not about the people. ALL VOLUNTEERS ARE REPLACABLE. **The birds lives depend on our work; our volunteerism is not for our ego, but for the bird's lives.** As volunteers we must keep our minds on this ideal. Volunteers are the bird's last line of defense against the world at large.
- 10) Volunteers do not let anyone touch our birds except AWR authorized volunteers, or wildlife officers, or licensed veterinarians.
- 11) Volunteers understand that they will be hurt by the birds, or the cages, or other refuge equipment. They agree not to hold the refuge responsible not bring suit against the refuge for any reason.

**Signature of Volunteer** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

## **III - Volunteer Options**

### **A) Volunteering from your own home**

We need lots of help that can be done from your own home! There are several types of paperwork, schedule work, web work, and phone work items that are constantly behind.

**Paperwork-** We are a 501c-3 nonprofit corporation, and we have to maintain federal migratory bird license requirements. The federal paperwork is pretty amazing. On top of the federal paperwork, we have the normal business needs of organizing, advertising, and accounting. If you are good at paperwork and would like to help us out, please let us know. One major area of need is someone to coordinate placements of birds that are non-releaseable. This involves quite a bit of paperwork.

**Schedule work-** We often just have no time to schedule public appearances. It happens when you have a busy schedule, you stop being able to call people, and then you get a period with no appearances. Since our appearances are our main source of income and public exposure, schedule lulls can cause problems.

**Web work-** We are very particular about what goes up on our web page. If you are willing to do things our way, and you are good at web page design, we can always use help.

**Thank you notes-** Many people donate to AWR, and to be quite honest, we are not always able to give them proper thank you notes and recognition because we are so busy with caring for the animals. Help with thank you notes would likely increase our repeat donations as well.

### **B) Volunteering at our Facilities**

Our main rehab/bird care facility has 22 flight cages, 4 rehab cages, and 11 isolation areas. It gets extremely dirty. Cleaning up after these birds is more than a full time job. In our peak season, there is no way to care for the birds and keep the area clean without several people helping. We do not allow unskilled people to work with the birds. If you volunteer for this area, you will more likely be cleaning up messes and repairing damaged perches and cage parts. (The birds need something to do; and they really like to eat perches) We are very picky about who we let come and work at this site. We do not publish its location, and we screen all volunteers before they visit it. Volunteers for this area will be doing mostly clean up and minor repair work. They will occasionally assist the rehabbers in various ways.

### **C) Volunteering for public appearance work**

We do off-site (at other location) educational shows. Each year we do between 150 and 250 shows. In an average year we present for over 5000 school students, and have over 100,000 visitors to our public displays. Volunteers for public appearances are of three (3) types. There are the unskilled go-fers, the skilled handlers, and the presenters.

Since everyone that goes with us to a show is a public representative of the refuge, even the unskilled go-fers must have worked with us for a short time before they help on an education show.

**Go-fers-** Yes, people who have no real bird handling skills are needed at shows, but they must know certain things before they get to their first public appearance. They have to know enough about the refuge to answer the questions that people ask them when the presenter is not in the room. People ALWAYS ask you questions when you are helping out with a refuge public showing. Go-fers also have to know a few things that can and cannot be done near the birds. Most often, during loading and unloading, the go-fer stays in the room protecting the birds that are there while the bird handler is transferring the rest of the birds for the show. Go-fers also do all the errands that the presenter needs to have done on the show site.

**Skilled handlers-** Skilled handlers are the people who work with the birds. They are able to take care of any minor injuries, and they are the final judge of when a bird has had enough. They are in charge of and responsible for the birds and have full authority over the show. They are the ones that can refuse to do the show if the site is not sufficient or the rules are not followed. Often the skilled handler is also the presenter.

**Presenter-** The presenter is the one that will do the talking at the show. At larger shows there are multiple presenters and multiple bird handlers. A presenter may or may not be a bird handler. In some shows the presenter teaches or talks while the handler waits to be told to bring out a certain bird. the presenter must know what they are talking about, because they are always asked the most unexpected questions. The presenter is the most visible representative of the refuge at the show.

## IV - Volunteer Titles:

Below is our current list of volunteer titles. If you wish to volunteer, please send us your information packet via e-mail or snail mail so we can have a record of you. Thanks!

- \* **Transport Personnel-** This is a very important job. Transport personnel are the ones we call to help take our birds back and forth to the vet, or other facilities. They also help us pick up food for the birds, materials and supplies, and other items. There is very little to no actual animal handling in this type of work.
- \* **Animal Pickup Personnel-** Part of the rehab side of our refuge is the on site rescue. Most of the rescues are simply walking up to the injured animal and placing them in a carrier. Some are just meeting people who have already gotten the bird and put it in a box. Some rescues are more active. This type of volunteer does the most active and physically demanding part of our work, but also the most important to the rehab side. We train our volunteers in animal capture to do this work.
- \* **Cage Maintenance-** Yes, it is cleaning cages and feeding animals, but this is the way all caretakers start. It actually takes training to even be in a cage with the animals long enough to clean it. If you do not go through cage cleaning and maintenance first, you will not be a rehabber or educator. ALL rehabbers and educators do cage

maintenance work before we allow them to go further, and all continue to clean cages as long as they work with us.

- \* **Construction**- Just like it sounds. It is building new cages and helping to repair old ones. Construction also helps us build displays for our educational shows.
- \* **Office Help** - We are a 501c3 organization. Our reports and paperwork have to meet government requirements. Our licenses also have certain reporting requirements. No matter how important the other work we do is, we still have to do the paperwork.
- \* **Donations Coordinator**- We need people to help us bring in money. These birds want to eat every day...
- \* **Rehabber**- Rehabbers are the heart of our group. Rehabbers are the ones who actually care for the injured and captive animals. They are the ones who act as EMTs for the birds, or nursemaids . Whatever the bird needs, the rehabber is the one who decides what is going to happen
- \* **Educator**- Educators are the presenters and animal handlers of our educational birds in public they are the ones who do the shows that get us known. Educators are often in the news. After time in cage maintenance and training with one of our educators, volunteers can become educators themselves.

# V - AMERICAN WILDLIFE REFUGE VOLUNTEER INFORMATION FORM

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone (wk) \_\_\_\_\_ (hm) \_\_\_\_\_ (cell) \_\_\_\_\_

(circle preferred contact location)(Other) \_\_\_\_\_

Where did you hear about the American Wildlife Refuge?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Have you visited our web Page? If so, do you have any comments or suggestions?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What do you want from your experiences as a volunteer? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Have you worked with any other wildlife rehab or educational organizations before?

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## Section II Volunteer information

What experience do you have with wildlife or birds? \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

What type of work would you like to do at the wildlife refuge? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Are you willing to do other types of work at the refuge as well?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How much time each week/month do you have to volunteer? Please specify best dates and times \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## VI - AWR CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT:

As stated before, AWR animal areas are NOT public location, nor are they general knowledge. Being allowed there is strictly for purposes of assisting the American Wildlife Refuge, not for any other purpose. Revealing the location to the general public will endanger the animals.

Before entering all visitors must sign this form:

- 1) "I understand that this is a home, and as such there is no business insurance on the premises (as there would be on a public location). I am signing this form to state that I will not sue the homeowners nor the American Wildlife Refuge if I am injured on the premises, no matter what the cause. I understand that the hills and ground may be slick and uneven, and there are limited handholds, even around stairs." [Initial] \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) "I understand that a large part of the security and safety for the animals at this location depends on secrecy. I am signing this form to state my promise to keep the location and setup of the wildlife refuge a secret, discussing it only with those involved in the American Wildlife Refuge. I understand I will be liable for any damage resulting from my passing on information to any other source. I will not photograph nor record any part of my visit in any way without express specific permission." [Initial] \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) "I understand that there may be areas I will be rushed through for the safety and consideration of Rehab Animals. I will neither linger nor resist moving away from any areas that the wildlife caretaker urges me to move away from." [Initial] \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) "I will not enter or open any cages under any circumstances without direct instructions from the caretaker, and I will remember that the cages and habitats are made of materials safe for the animals within, but they may not be safe to touch from the outside." [Initial] \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) "I will not attempt to touch any animals." [Initial] \_\_\_\_\_

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(Print name)

(Date)

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(Signature)

(Date)

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Refuge Official witness:

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(Signature)

(Date)

Names of others present:

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(Signature)

(Date)

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(Signature)

(Date)



## VII - Warnings and Permission For Volunteers

This form is written by the American Wildlife Refuge (herein after referred to as wildlife refuge) to inform volunteers, parents and guardians about the hazards of volunteering for the wildlife refuge. This form is designed to make sure that the volunteer, parent or guardian fully understands the nature of volunteering at the wildlife refuge and the potential harm that can come to their dependent.

Unlike many charities, wildlife refuge volunteers will do primarily physical work, not just office and paperwork. Most often the work includes heavy lifting and construction. Volunteers are constantly repairing cages and moving heavy loads of building materials to and from the construction area. Additionally, part of the construction and repair may be done on a ladder or from the top of a cage. Falling is always a possibility. Other volunteer duties with lifting involved include moving educational materials to and from a vehicle for presentations at schools, libraries, parks and other public and private venues. It is quite common for volunteers to injure themselves doing physical work.

In addition to the potential harm done by heavy physical work, there is the reality of working in a mostly natural setting. Unlike most businesses, the main work areas of the wildlife refuge are not necessarily OSHA approved areas. Most of the work the wildlife refuge does is in natural or undeveloped outdoor locations. The land may have hidden dangers, including hidden holes, slippery areas, sharp branches, briars, old barbed wire, trash, or worse. Part of the volunteer work entails going into wilderness areas after injured animals. It is not uncommon to pick up ticks and suffer from poison ivy or briar scratches. The dangers of being in undeveloped areas are numerous. Any volunteer to the wildlife refuge will have to understand that they will be exposed to these dangers. All volunteers are injured by the work environment at some time.

Exposure to the animals at the wildlife refuge is also hazardous. Animals come to the wildlife refuge injured and ill. Some illnesses are transferable to humans and pets. While we take care to limit exposure, it must be understood that the possibility exists that a person could pick up an illness or disease from the animals. Additionally; we work with predatory animals. They are able to defend themselves, and often do. As a result, the animals may cause bodily harm to volunteers. While safety measures help, it should be understood that every volunteer who handles the animals is eventually hurt by one of them.

There are many other dangers to working with the wildlife refuge, but the most common ones are listed above. Again, it should be understood that all volunteers are eventually injured in some way while working with the wildlife refuge.

I HAVE READ THE ABOVE PARAGRAPHS AND UNDERSTAND THEM (Initial) \_\_\_\_\_ PARENT \_\_\_\_\_  
Volunteer

I UNDERSTAND THAT ALL VOLUNTEERS AT THE WILDLIFE REFUGE GET INJURED IN SOME WAY. I HAVE DISCUSSED THE DANGERS WITH MY DEPENDENT AND WE BOTH UNDERSTAND THE RISKS INVOLVED. WE HAVE AGREED THAT HE/SHE WILL BE AS CAREFUL AS POSSIBLE AND UNDERSTAND THAT THERE WILL BE SOME INJURY AT SOME TIME. WE AGREE THAT THE WILDLIFE REFUGE AND THE LANDOWNER WILL NOT BE HELD AT FAULT OR LIABLE FOR ANY INJURY INCURRED.

SIGNATURE OF GUARDIAN (IF APPLICABLE): \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE OF VOLUNTEER: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

Witnesses: \_\_\_\_\_

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