



Waynesboro, VA - The Wildlife Center of Virginia announced this week that Ed Clark, President and Co-Founder of the Center, will step down from his leadership role after more than 41 years at the helm of the world's leading teaching and research hospital for wildlife medicine.

"While I still intend to remain active with the Center, and will certainly still be engaged in conservation advocacy, it is time for me to retire and pass the baton to new leadership," Clark stated. "The Center has experienced steady growth for the last 41 years, and I'm confident this growth will continue for decades to come."

Under Clark's leadership, the Wildlife Center of Virginia has grown from a small, local wildlife rehabilitation facility located in a century-old horse barn and staffed entirely by volunteers, to an internationally recognized training and research center with a staff of 36 professionals, in addition to students and volunteers, who work in a state-of-the-art veterinary facility. Since its founding in 1982, the Center has treated nearly 100,000 wild patients, representing hundreds of species, ranging from hummingbirds to Black Bears.

Clark will retire March 31 but will remain active in his new role as *President Emeritus*. Clark also has said he hopes to have more time to devote to his family and long-neglected hobbies of fishing, nature photography, scuba diving, horseback riding, and spending time in his rustic cabin in the mountains of southern Pennsylvania. "It is ironic that having spent my whole career advocating for wild places and wild things, I have had far too little time to enjoy them firsthand. I plan to rebalance that in the years ahead," Clark added.

Julie Morrill, Chair of the Wildlife Center's Board of Director, said, "While we are sorry to lose Ed's leadership on a daily basis, we are confident he will remain involved with our work. It won't be easy filling Ed's shoes, but the Wildlife Center is a very strong and financially secure organization, with a very bright future." The Board is working with a professional recruitment consultant as part of a nationwide search for the Center's new President.

The Wildlife Center not only treats injured and orphaned wildlife but also focuses on the underlying causes of their patients' injuries and diseases. "The Center is most well-known for the high standard of care we provide to the thousands of wild patients we receive each year," Clark stated, "but that's just the tip of the iceberg. We are not content to simply determine, for example, that a particular patient has been poisoned; we want to know how it was exposed to that poison, whether the toxin is affecting other wildlife, and what can be done to eliminate the risk of further contamination. A complete response may include adjustments in public policy or changes in the human behavior – the everyday changes **any** of us can make in our daily lives that will have very positive impacts."

The Center's public information campaigns cover a wide range of activities – encouraging citizens not to litter roadways, to keep cats indoors, and for hunters to switch to non-lead ammunition.

During the past four decades the Center has also:



WILDLIFE CENTER OF VIRGINIA

- Provided professional training for more than 1,000 veterinary students and professionals, including undergraduate students, fourth-year veterinary students, postdoctoral interns, fellows and residents from every veterinary school in the United States and Canada and nearly 40 other countries.
- Reached millions through in-person programming, on-line training, and a vibrant online and social media presence.
- Engaged in groundbreaking clinical research and issue advocacy. In the 1980s, for example, the Wildlife Center played a major role in banning the agricultural chemical Furidan, which, according to EPA estimates, was killing more than two million birds in the U.S annually, even when used according to label directions.
- Developed the first comprehensive national wildlife health database for the real-time monitoring of emerging disease in wildlife. In the wake of 9/11, the Center received Department of Defense funding to develop this database as a potential tool for monitoring and detecting bioterrorism and biosecurity threats to the United States [wildlife are often the indicators of pathogenic or environmental contamination]. The system, known as WILD-ONe (Wildlife Incident Log/Database and Online Network), is made available at no charge to wildlife care facilities worldwide. More than 200 wildlife facilities currently use WILD-ONe, which has now accumulated more than 700,000 patient records. In addition to providing the potential for real-time detection of emerging threats, the data is now being used for research into environmental and pathological problems affecting wildlife over time.
- Published scores of articles in peer-reviewed scientific journals and publications, based on its clinical studies and research. For example, the Center is currently researching lead poisoning of Bald Eagles and other scavengers that consume shards of lead from the carcasses of animals left by hunters. The Center's research has found that more than 70 percent of the Bald Eagles admitted to its hospital have measurable levels of lead in their bloodstream.
- Gained worldwide visibility through three television series hosted by Clark on PBS and Animal Planet. In the 1990s, Clark hosted five seasons of the award-winning series *Virginia Outdoors*. In the late 1990s the Center's work was the focus of Animal Planet's weekly series *Wildlife Emergency*, which was translated into several languages and aired worldwide. Currently, the Center's work is featured in the PBS series *UNTAMED*, which is being shown on PBS affiliates across the nation. *UNTAMED* has won four Telly Awards and was nominated for a regional Emmy Award. Clark has also appeared on national programs including the TODAY show, Larry King Live, Fox News, and C-SPAN's Capitol Journal, and in a number of documentary films and television specials.

For additional information about Clark's tenure at the Wildlife Center, including a video interview with Clark and a full statement from the Center Board, visit www.wildlifecenter.org/clark. To schedule an interview with Clark, please contact Alex Wehrung at 540/942-9453 or <edu@wildlifecenter.org>.