



2025 ANNUAL REPORT

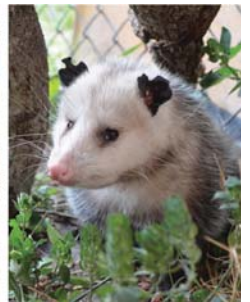


10525 Clapp Simms Duda Road, Orlando, FL 32832
407.568.5138 btnwildlife.org



About Back To Nature

Back To Nature is the largest wildlife rehabilitation facility in Central Florida, serving more than 3,000 animals per year. Founded by Carmen Shaw and incorporated in 1989, Back To Nature is a 501 (c) 3 nonprofit that relies on the generous support from the public to fulfill its mission. In 2014, Back To Nature moved from East Orlando to its current home at Eagles Roost on 20 acres of Orange County Conservation land.



Mission

The mission of Back To Nature Wildlife Refuge is to rescue, raise, rehabilitate and release injured or orphaned Florida native species and to provide education about respecting and preserving the environment through our non-releasable permanent residents known as *"Educational Ambassadors"*.

From Our Executive Director

Dear Friends,

As we reflect on the challenges and accomplishments of 2025, I cannot help but look back on our more than 35-year journey and stand in awe of how far Back To Nature has come. What a remarkable year it has been!



First and foremost, I want to express my deepest gratitude to our generous donors and dedicated volunteers, the individuals who give their time, talents, and compassion to clean our grounds, care for our facilities, support our mission, and provide loving attention to our native wildlife. The impact we achieved in 2025 would not have been possible without the generosity and belief of people like you.

In July, we celebrated our official reopening and ribbon-cutting ceremony alongside elected officials, board members, donors, volunteers, and community supporters. Our campus expansion now includes five new buildings: a Clinic, Administration Building, Food Preparation Building, Education Building, and Visitors Center. These enhancements have significantly strengthened our ability to care for injured and orphaned wildlife while creating new opportunities to educate and inspire our community.

During 2025, we cared for 3,436 animals, one of our highest intake years since 2021. We believe this increase reflects the rapid development occurring across Central Florida, which continues to disrupt natural ecosystems and displace wildlife. Because of your support, our specially trained staff provided around-the-clock care, ensuring every animal received the best possible chance to heal and return to the wild. In addition, our dedicated volunteers contributed more than 45,000 hours of service, and our offsite education programs reached more than 35,000 community members.

Because of your generosity and belief in our mission, we are making a difference, one animal, one lesson, and one act of compassion at a time.

I invite you to visit our campus and see firsthand the incredible impact your support has made and continues to make for our wildlife friends.

With my sincerest heartfelt thanks,

Debbie

Back To Nature Staff

Debbie Helsel

Executive Director

Kelly Verduin

Assistant Director

& Volunteer/Intern Coordinator

Christian Sellas

Animal Care Supervisor

Hannah Shamlaty

Animal Care Technician

Frida Sanchez

Animal Care Technician

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Wildlife Walk & Educational Ambassadors

Visitors can view Back to Nature's permanent resident "educational ambassador" animals on the Wildlife Walk. They include Florida native species and non-native wildlife such as bobcats, foxes, birds of prey, a lemur, and threatened species such as the gopher tortoise and Sherman's fox squirrel. There is also an active bald eagle nest in the area that visitors can observe from winter through spring.



Education & Outreach Programs

Back to Nature offers guided educational tours onsite as well as offsite visits to schools, community groups, and events. BTN also partners with local Scout troops to provide opportunities for Eagle Scout and Girl Scout Gold Award projects.

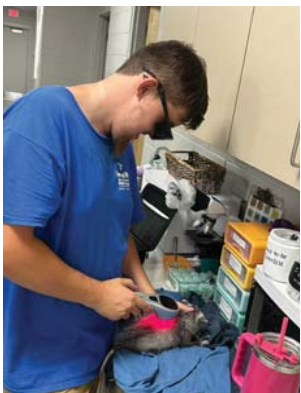


Volunteer & Internship Programs

Back to Nature relies on volunteers and interns to run its animal care programs but also provides enriching experiences for adults and educational opportunities for college students to earn school credit in wildlife biology, wildlife rehabilitation, and animal husbandry. Partner schools include the University of Central Florida and Valencia College.

Brick Program

We are excited to offer a special opportunity to support our organization through our Memorial Garden Brick Program. This will give you the chance to contribute to the beautification and maintenance of our serene garden space while honoring loved ones, commemorating significant life events or recognizing those who have made a difference in your life or community.



Wildlife Rehabilitation

Back to Nature's wildlife rehabilitation services are more critical than ever as rapid development in Central Florida disrupts natural ecosystems and displaces wildlife. The majority of animals arriving at Back to Nature are impacted by human activity. With a dedicated, specially trained staff providing around-the-clock care, BTN works to give every animal the best possible chance of returning to the wild where they belong. Intakes saw a slight increase over 2024, since BTN reopened to the public in July 2025.



2025 News and Highlights

Back to Nature reopened in July 2025! 36 Years of Saving Wildlife!

In 2025, Back to Nature Wildlife Refuge celebrated 36 years of serving Central Florida's wildlife and community. Since its founding by Carmen Shaw in 1989, BTN has rescued over 100,000 injured, orphaned, and displaced wild animals, giving them a second chance at life. Guided by our mission to *"rescue, raise, rehabilitate, and release injured or orphaned native wildlife and educate the public about respecting and preserving the environment,"* we remain committed to carrying forward Carmen's vision of compassion, conservation, and community education for generations to come.

Construction Completed in 2025

After closing to the public in early 2023 for construction, Back to Nature finally reopened on July 7th, 2025. Orange County worked to complete the new facilities and infrastructure. We are excited to reopen with enhanced amenities, including five new buildings: a Visitor Center, Education Building, Clinic, Administration Building, and Food Prep Building. The Education Building is available for rental to the public.



On site tours - 2

On-site events

- **Ribbon cutting with Mayor** – July 7
- **Grand Reopening** July 12
- **Hosted FWRA seminar** – September 20-21
- **Owloween** October 11
- **Holiday Market** Dec 6

Off-site events

- **Sleuths September 6**

Thanks to our attendees, sponsors, and auction bidders who joined us for a sold-out Sleuths Mystery Dinner Show, an evening of crime-solving fun to support Back to Nature, raising over \$50,000.

- **Wine for Wildlife Nov 7**

Wine for Wildlife was held at the Pavilion at Avalon Park. Thanks to all who attended, bid on auction items, and sponsored this event to support the animals. We raised over \$36,000.

Events held by others for BTN's benefit

- **Faded Kindgom** (Tactical Brewing)
- **Pumpkins for Opossums** (the Prometheus)
- **Crooked Can End of Year Event**
- **Red Dress Run**



In the News

- BTN featured on Florida on a tankful and Jim Colbert radio show.

Eagle and Girl Scout Projects

- Revamp Fiona Fla box turtle habitat
- Revamp Kiwi iguana habitat
- Revamp Memorial Garden
- New benches Rose the lemur

Workgroups

- Mytharia, Disney Volunteers, Hope Presbyterian, Charles Schwab, Artemis Lifestyles, and Team Depot

Events we participated in

- Make em' Smile, Duck Derby, Oddities Fair, Pet Palooza, Public Works appreciation day

Call To Action!

- **Visit Back to Nature**

General Admission: \$5 donation per person (children 3 and under free)

Annual Pass 2026: In honor of our 37 years passes are \$37 for two adults and up to 4 children, unlimited visits in 2026.

Hours: Tuesday - Sunday 9 am to 4 pm

Closed Mondays & Holidays

- **The Wildlife Walk is now open to the public.** Come and see our new buildings. The gift shop and the education building are open to the public. We have three additional buildings for wildlife rehabilitation, food preparation and laundry, and administrative offices. The Education building can be rented for private parties, meetings, etc. Rental information is available at the gift shop or by sending an inquiry to rentals@btnwildlife.org

“We don’t have any other help. We only have you.”

■ \$10,001-\$25,000

Knopf Family Foundation
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Sara Meyer, Atlas Wealth Advisors, Thrivent ►

■ \$5,001-\$10,000

Dr Phillips Charities
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► Special Event Sponsors

***Back to Nature is grateful to its
many individual donors, corporate
supporters, and in-kind donors.***

***Thanks also to those who give
through our Amazon wish list,
volunteers who donate their time
and skills, and local businesses who
provide in-kind goods and services.***

2025 By the Numbers

Wildlife Walk Visitors 2,593
 Offsite Program Reach 35,930
 Volunteers 175
 Interns 24
 Volunteer & Intern Hours 45,000
 On site tours 2

2025 Intakes

1,040 opossums 92 American crows
 25 fish crows 57 cardinals
 32 misc species
 58 red bellied woodpeckers
 67 common grackles
 20 chimney swifts
 20 Eastern blue birds
 6 oven birds 20 sparrows
 17 tufted titmouse 151 mockingbirds
 3 great crested flycatchers
 31 ground doves 64 Carolina wrens
 13 downy woodpeckers
 11 boat tailed grackles
 16 brown thrashers 41 bluejays
 227 Mourning Doves
 46 shore and water birds 32 birds of prey
 686 squirrels 131 raccoons 33 reptiles
 387 cottontail rabbits 60 Marsh Rabbits
 6 white tailed deer 5 field mice
 13 armadillo 1 red fox 7 bats 8 rats
 2 otters 8 moles

TOTAL: 3,436

Volunteers 175 volunteers
24 Interns total: 6 spring,
 14 summer, 4 fall



2025 Operating Budget

REVENUE

Donations	\$208,500
Wildlife Walk Admission	\$00,000
Grants	\$90,000
Government Contracts	\$36,000
Program Revenue	\$15,000
Facility Rental, Education Building	\$12,000
Investments	\$5,000
Gift Shop Sales	\$1,000
Special Events	\$30,000
In-Kind	\$85,000

TOTAL REVENUE:

\$482,500

EXPENSES

Animal Care Personnel	\$262,700
Contracted Services Accounting	\$10,500
Office Supplies	\$8,500
Utilities	\$22,500
Animal Food	\$22,000
Repairs & Maintenance	\$5,000
Travel	\$400
Animal Supplies/Vet Costs/Caging	\$15,000
Staff Safety, Seminars, Uniforms	\$7,000
Gift Shop Merchandise	\$2,000
Insurance - Non-Employee	\$32,000
Membership Dues	\$400
Staff & Volunteer Training	\$1,000
Volunteer Appreciation	\$500
Bank Fees	\$5,000
Advertising	\$2,500
Other Fees & Permits	\$500
In-Kind	\$85,000

TOTAL EXPENSES:

\$482,500



BACK TO NATURE Wildlife Refuge & EDUCATION CENTER

Visit Back To Nature

General Admission: \$5 donation/person (children 3 and under free)
Hours: Tuesday - Sunday 9 am to 4 pm, Closed Mondays & Holidays

Support Back To Nature

**Donate: btnwildlife.org/donate
and consider becoming
a monthly donor**



**Sign up for our newsletter:
btnwildlife.org**



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Back to Nature Wildlife, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Federal ID#59-2961216. CH #5022.

All contributions are tax-deductible within the limits provided by the law.

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