

Media Contact:

Meaghan O'Toole, Marketing Manager

804-358-7166, ext. 316

motoole@maymont.org

MAYMONT WENT 'WILD' WITH ANIMAL ADDITIONS IN 2018 FOUR NEW MAMMALS AND BIRDS NOW CALL MAYMONT HOME

Maymont welcomed four new native animals – a striped skunk, an American kestrel, a red fox and an Eastern screech owl – to its wildlife family in the second half of 2018. As with all of the wildlife in Maymont's care, these new residents came through licensed rehabilitators after they were deemed non-releasable due to their inability to survive in the wild. Each animal is less than a year old and is in training to ensure that they calmly participate in their own care and are comfortable in their new roles at Maymont. The animals that live at Maymont not only bring delight to guests who visit the estate, but also act as important members of the environmental education team, participating in local public and school programs at Maymont and in the community.

"It's exciting to welcome these four new members of our animal family to Maymont," said Parke Richeson, Maymont Executive Director. "We're happy to provide a home for them and are thrilled they will share the wonders of the natural world with the community."

Most recently, Maymont welcomed a female striped skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*) named Daisy. Daisy, who was donated to Maymont by the Wild Bunch Wildlife Rehabilitation Refuge in November, participates in training activities five days a week and made her educational program debut during Winter Mini Camps in December. Striped skunks are widespread throughout North America, frequenting woods, meadows and urban areas. Easily identifiable by their distinct black and white coarse fur, striped skunks are nocturnal (active at night) but do not hibernate. They are most known for their defense mechanism of stomping their feet, raising their bushy tail, and emitting a stinky musk that stings predators' eyes and sticks to them, which helps other skunks smell them for up to quarter-mile away. Skunks can expel their musk up to 15 feet!

Another animal from the Wild Bunch Wildlife Rehabilitation Refuge came to Maymont in November – a male American kestrel (*Falco sparverius*) named Killian. Often referred to as the "Sparrow Hawk," the American kestrel is North America's smallest bird of prey, measuring nine to 12 inches in length. Unlike larger falcons, the kestrel nests in both rural areas and larger cities and captures its prey on the ground, rather than in midair. These birds are the only "sexually dimorphic" North American raptor in regards to coloration, meaning that the adult males and females have different colored feather patterns or plumage; males have slate blue wings and females have brown. Killian was named for his tendency to get excited when his trainers come to work with him and he makes a call that sounds like "killy, killy, killy."

A male red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), who is yet to be named, came to Maymont from the Blue Ridge Wildlife Center in August 2018 and made his public debut in the wildlife habitats in November. He shows keen interest in any enrichment item that he can shred to pieces and jumps high when he plays. The red fox is found throughout North America and much of the northern hemisphere, including central Asia and northern Africa. Their resilience and ability to adapt has allowed them to flourish in various environments such as forests, tundra, prairies, deserts, mountains, and even urban areas. Their adaptability is due mostly to the flexibility of their natural diet; as omnivores, they feed on rodents, rabbits, birds and other small game as well as fish, frogs, fruits and vegetables. Due to the red fox's long history and interactions with humans, they have become iconic characters in classic literature throughout the world. They are often depicted as mischievous, wily and cunning, all the while still being likeable.

A new male Eastern screech owl (*Megascops asio*) named Jiminy joined Maymont's team of education animals in July 2018 from the Wild Bunch Wildlife Rehabilitation Refuge. His name is a tribute to Cricket, a screech owl that passed away in early 2018 after serving as an educational animal ambassador at Maymont for 19 years. Jiminy is full of personality and shows his mood by fluffing out his feathers. He also appears to love bath time, during which he splashes water everywhere, soaking his entire enclosure. The Eastern screech owl is the smallest native owl species in Virginia, measuring ten inches or less in height. Named for its screech-like call, these owls can be red (rufous), brown, or gray in coloration, and have ear tufts and yellow eyes. Often found in wooded habitats and suburban gardens and parks, Eastern screech owls nest in tree cavities and bird boxes, and they feed on mice, smaller birds, insects and invertebrates. Like most owls, they are nocturnal, but also can be active at dusk.

Maymont Manager of Animal Training, Anaka Nazareth, said, "We're happy to act as a refuge for these animals that are unable to care for themselves in the wild. We look forward to continuing to train these new additions to Maymont; they will undoubtedly give our guests a deeper appreciation and understanding of the extraordinary wildlife in Virginia."

These new animals will act as ambassadors for their respective species, participating in various educational programs to help Maymont's educators talk about the characteristics of mammals, nocturnal animals and birds of prey. Guests can see the red fox daily in his outdoor habitat and can take part in special experiences with the striped skunk, American kestrel and Eastern screech owl during educational programs in the community and at Maymont, such as Richmond Parks and Recreation Programs, Behind the Scenes tours and VIP Animal Experience tours. For more information, call 804-358-7166, ext. 310 or visit maymont.org. To help feed and care for the new skunk, kestrel, fox, owl and the rest of the animals, Maymont welcomes donations to its Adopt an Animal program at maymont.org/adopt.

Since 1975, Maymont has been maintained and operated by the nonprofit Maymont Foundation. The Foundation must raise more than \$3 million each year through donations to keep the estate open to the public.

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