

WILDLIFE RESCUE & REHABILITATION NEWS

SEPTEMBER 2015



Dear Members,

For almost forty years, whenever wild animals have found themselves faced with illness, life-threatening injuries, or loss of parents and siblings, they have had the almost immediate assistance of Wildlife Rescue & Rehabilitation. Though we can never have our eyes on every square inch of landscape in the Central Texas area we serve, our hearts and minds are unfailingly focused on the wild animals who inhabit this vast terrain.

After being here so long and always at the ready to take them in, we have a crystal clear perception of what mammals, birds and reptiles experience when their homes are destroyed for the sake of another shopping center, for example, and how so many helpless babies find themselves orphaned when their mothers are live-trapped and removed. We have also seen the devastating effects of the less common truly natural occurrences such as flood and drought, bitter cold and searing summer heat. We live in a region that frequently experiences volatile weather events and these quick changes from rain to drought to high winds

can wreak havoc on wildlife and their habitat. An old, majestic cypress tree that has stood through the ages and provided a home for squirrels, birds and others can one day unpredictably come crashing to the ground. And when this venerable life is lost those who were comfortably situated in the welcoming limbs come crashing to the ground with the tree. This happened in San Antonio this summer, and WRR was the only hope for the 35+ egrets left flailing in the dirt with wings broken, legs shattered, and bodies bruised and aching.

The call came mid-morning—the cypress tree had fallen during the night and there were the egrets: frightened, injured nestlings and fledglings whose parents could not mend their wounds but only watch over them helplessly in spite of their desire to protect and recover their young.

The snow white birds were gathered up and taken to WRR's Sherman Animal Care Complex in San Antonio. Sadly, two had already succumbed to injuries but all

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OUR MISSION

To rescue, rehabilitate, and release native wildlife, and to provide sanctuary, individualized care, and a voice for other animals in need.

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Here & Hereafter

Wildlife Rescue has 10,000 members. Most of you care deeply about the natural world and are devoted to the wildlife who call it home alongside us humans. And you want to be part of protecting those animals by standing behind WRR with your donations of money and time. It costs over \$4,000 every day, seven



days per week, to do our work relieving the suffering and saving those lives, and **since the very beginning it has been you, the individual, that has made it possible** for WRR to keep the animals fed and the lights burning bright. It has never been more true than it is today that **every gift counts!**

Few of us are so well off as to be able to give support without thinking about how much we can afford. Even after deciding that Wildlife Rescue is one of the most effective and responsible organizations to give to, it's still necessary to consider how much, when, and how. Two of the best ways you can provide help for the wild animals and for Wildlife Rescue in the here and now and the "hererafter" are through joining the WRR *Sustainers Group* and/or including Wildlife Rescue in your estate planning.

Sustainers are those who have found that they can increase their annual giving level and decrease the difficulty of it by making monthly gifts—they authorize us to automatically charge their credit or debit card for a set amount at the same time each month. **This works well for you, and it works well for WRR because it gives us more certainty that the funds to care for the animals will always be there when they are needed.** Depending on their ability, members commit to anywhere from \$10/month to \$100/month or more. And they have our assurance that anytime they wish to stop or change this they can do it instantly with a call, email, or letter.

Sustainers give here and now, whereas providing for Wildlife Rescue through your will or other estate planning vehicle allows you to give "hereafter." Once you ensure that your loved ones are provided for, you can gift anything from cash to stock to property of all sorts and know that the commitments you had in the present will continue to be supported hereafter. Some of our most generous and effective gifts come through such bequests.

The donor slip and/or return envelope that came with this newsletter allows you to become a Sustainer at whatever level suits you. And a call to your estate planner can arrange your hereafter gift. Either way (and some choose both) gives direct support through WRR to the animals we and you care so much for. And either or both ways are deeply appreciated.



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the others were evaluated and given fluids, clean warm bedding, and emergency care as needed. We see countless situations that deeply sadden us but to know that only hours before these birds were safe and secure and that now they were faced with life-threatening injuries was heartbreaking.

While in care at the WRR Sherman Animal Care Complex each bird was cleaned and stabilized. The minute we knew they were able to travel, the injured patients were transported to our Kendalia Hospital to be assessed by WRR veterinarian Ellen Haynes. Each fragile bird was carefully examined to determine severity of injuries and overall needs. Previously warmed incubators were at the ready to soothingly sustain each patient. The tiny nestlings, weighing only 32 grams, experienced immediate benefits from the climate controlled accommodations, and their larger rookery mates, weighing over 250 grams, recuperated more rapidly and were able to then be moved to larger caging. A nourishing slurry of fish, vitamins and other

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beneficial supplements was prepared and carefully tube-fed to each egret. At the time of this writing the distressed egrets were thriving in the care of our skilled staff and apprentices and their prospects for release appeared excellent!

Every year WRR receives dozens of egrets; these high strung, winged beauties are one of the several species of wading birds in our care. Great blue herons, green herons, yellow-crowned night herons, bitterns and more have both challenged and saddened us as we struggle to keep them calm and cared for, something that is never easy in a captive setting, which the birds would prefer to be free of.

The egrets who suffered when their lofty tree home crashed to the ground brought back memories of two particular egrets who came to WRR in our early days. It was one of those summers with raucous weather and both birds and mammals were being brought to WRR by the carload. Whether downed by driving rains or caught off guard in high and damaging winds these delicate egrets, along with cardinals, jays, mockingbirds and sparrows, all found themselves in serious trouble.

WRR was younger then but just as determined as now to step in and save those lives. In the midst of all this bedlam of bodies there were two juvenile egrets; it appeared they had been nestlings and remained as inseparable as if they had simultaneously hatched. Both had broken beak tips so they were easy to identify in

the multitude of the needy. The weeks of tube feeding were a breeze compared with what these girls were up against when it became necessary to spear their own meals. It was clear that some special tactics must be employed on their behalf.

There was little to no research on such injuries in those days. WRR was one of the only organizations of its kind and we were constantly seeing patients whose needs had simply never before been addressed. Everything from imagination to investigation came to mind as we wanted these two birds to be able to survive in the wild. We talked about filing their beaks to create a new and sharper point, keeping them in captivity longer and feeding them a “man-made” diet; we even considered super-gluing new tips onto their dull beaks.

What we discovered was far more interesting than anything our creative minds could contrive.



We built a large, natural setting for the egret girls; shallow pools, rugged oak limbs and willow branches graced their outdoor housing. The idea was that while we devised a way to recreate the broken beaks the birds would have a nice space in which to grow. The “fish gruel” was to be fed from a bowl and we concealed meal worms amongst the limbs and rock to stimulate their curiosity and appetites.

Their first day outside was one of great excitement for the pair; the fresh air and sunshine was a refreshing change from

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the confines of indoor living. With the egrets settled in to their new housing we scheduled their next feeding and went about the work of caring for the hundreds of other animals at WRR.

The next few days were business as usual; the birds reluctantly took their hand-fed gruel as we struggled to find ways to repair their snub-nosed beaks. The meal worms seemed to be of little value to the two as they simply escaped and moved on to safer quarters. We decided to add more interest to their lives and added several shiny, silver smelt to their pool.

The sharp egret eyes detected them in a heartbeat. They would perch and watch, not moving so much as an eyelash lest they scare the tiny (albeit dead) fish away. This was both encouraging and sad. We were pleased to see they fully knew how

to hunt, but with their damaged beaks it would do them little good. During our frequent visits to hand-feed the birds we thought we must be miscounting the fish we had placed in the pool since there were regularly fewer than we thought we had left. We corrected our record keeping and still the shiny bodies vanished. Humans are not always the brightest beings on the planet and it took us a full day to realize that our miscalculations were not regarding the number of fish but instead the brilliant minds of the two egrets.

The loss of their beak tips was in our minds a tragedy, but for the two egret girls it simply meant time to adapt. And as we struggled with what to do next, they created ways to deal with what fate had handed them; broken beak tips were no longer a problem for them and perhaps never were.

We watched with great admiration as the duo strode gracefully about jabbing here and there and when every third strike proved successful, we knew they were on their way back to life in the wild, and like the egrets in our care this very day, their lives would be lived alongside gently running streams and sandy banks, wide open pastures and tree tops where they would blend into the landscape as they waded and hunted and never again give a moment's thought to the fact that months ago they had suffered terrible injuries and lost parts of their beaks and that a caring group of humans had underestimated their innate intelligence and ability to survive.

Lynne Cury

ARTISTIC ANIMALS!

JOIN WILDLIFE RESCUE & REHABILITATION FOR OUR ANNUAL ANIMAL-CREATED ART SHOW

Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation's fourth annual Artistic Animals on Earl St. will take place on **Saturday, December 5th** from **2:00 PM until 6:00 PM** at WRR's Sherman Animal Care Complex at 137 **Earl Street in San Antonio**. Come explore truly one-of-a-kind artwork that was created by the animals when simply given the tools to create each piece of art. The art makes a great holiday gift that everyone would be proud to display in their home or office.

This year's gallery showing will more boldly step into the art world with the inclusion of three human artists who are already stars in their mediums. Lauren Browning, sculptor; Heather Gauthier, painter; and Jay Kazen, photographer; will each show select works inspired by animals. These art pieces will also be available for sale during the special exhibition.

All proceeds support the work of Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation. Visit www.wildlife-rescue.org or call (830) 336-2725, x307 for more information.



Hawk's Nest by Lauren Browning

Meet Our New Veterinarian

“My wildlife philosophy is that wildlife centers such as WRR are important both in meeting a need in the community and in making an environmental impact by saving wild animals. People need to have somewhere to take animals when those animals need help.”

—Dr. Ellen Haynes



Wildlife Rescue is proud to introduce our new veterinarian. Dr. Ellen Haynes grew up in Pittsburgh and had a love for both animals and cello. “I started in fourth grade and played all through middle and high school. One summer I attended two camps: one was an environmental/conservation program, and the second camp was a really intensive music program. About halfway through the music program, I realized I didn’t want to spend all day everyday practicing cello! I really missed math and science and at that point began to look into other careers. I started to think about wildlife medicine. There are many horrible things that happen to wild animals and being able to do something about that really appealed to me. I wanted to try to give these animals a second chance.”

Ellen was accepted at Cornell for veterinary school, and graduated from there in 2013. Graduating from such a prestigious program wasn’t easy. “Vet school was really difficult; I studied all the time. I enjoyed my summers when I did a lot of wildlife work. At that point, my family was living in Chicago, and I worked at a wildlife center there. I worked in the clinic alongside the veterinarian and was basically a junior

vet. I was doing treatments, helping with surgery, making many of the same decisions that the vet makes. I really enjoyed that, not to mention that I made friends who were really interested in wildlife. So vet school was hard, but I really liked learning about all the different conditions and what you could do to treat them.”

After graduation from veterinary school, Dr. Haynes spent a year in a small animal internship at a specialty and emergency practice in Philadelphia. After that, she moved to Massachusetts for a one-year internship at Tufts Wildlife Clinic, a prestigious place of learning. In fact, Tufts University is considered one of the places that set the standard for wildlife medicine. Ellen says, “Tufts was a wonderful experience. We saw 2,500 cases a year, and it was great to work with other vets and working to teach vet students about wildlife medicine.”

After that internship, Ellen started looking for full-time jobs, which was lucky for us at WRR, as we had an opening! “I was perusing all the websites and I came across WRR’s listing on the National Wildlife Rehabilitators Association website. Immedi-

ately, I was intrigued because it sounded like such an interesting place. Full time wildlife medicine is exactly what I was looking for.”

Ellen also found that her philosophies were a good match for WRR’s. She says, “My wildlife philosophy is that wildlife centers such as WRR are important both in meeting a need in the community and in making an environmental impact by saving wild animals. People need to have somewhere to take animals when those animals need help. From a conservation perspective, being able to return animals to the wild whenever possible is very important.”

“My favorite part about working here is the variety of animals I work with on a daily basis. From injured doves to raptors, from raccoons to opossums, from monkeys to bobcats, I’m always being challenged to think about new cases and figure how to treat different species.” Dr. Haynes is getting used to being a new Texan as well, and is enjoying exploring the area and serving as a tour guide for her visiting family and friends. And that cello? She still plays occasionally. But the animals receive her hands-on treatment and that’s a kind of “practice” she can do all day.

Life Matters

People the world over came together in grief this summer as a beloved lion, called “Cecil” by some, was brutally hunted down merely for a “trophy” and whatever proud satisfactions go along with that. Many of us were outraged at this sad loss of life and the loss of our confidence that designated wild areas really are protected. But I can’t help but wonder, as we are all justifiably upset at what’s going on in Africa, are we equally as concerned about what’s transpiring on our own soil? We justifiably mourned for the African lion; would we do the same for the American lion?

The American lion is, of course, the mountain lion, also called cougar, catamount, puma and panther. Cougars are obligate carnivores; they must eat meat to survive. They are the number one predator of white-tailed deer, but unlike deer, there are no legal limits to how many cougars may be killed in Texas; there is no “season” for killing this majestic cat. They receive no protection here and in some other states and so are in danger every day of their lives.

While it is rare for cougars to threaten most domesticated animals, as the population of humans grows and encroaches on traditional mountain lion habitat more conflicts are inevitable. Out of mostly



groundless fear many people want the mountain lion eliminated from human-populated areas. In our imaginations, Africa is the land of the wild. Lions belong there. But not here. We forget that our very own lion is as much a part of our mountain, plains, and woodland ecosystems as the African lion is a part of the savannah. America was once just as wild as Africa. We can still save the American lion from the ill fate that is so close at hand for the African lion.

In the wake of the African lion killing scandal, there was much unrest on social media and in the public as people argued over whether the killing of a lion should have sparked as much outrage as it did. Should we care more about starving children? Should we focus our attention instead on global warming, habitat loss, or any of the other ecological disasters waiting to happen? The fact is that we don’t have to choose—we can care about children and the natural world simultaneously. And it is very likely that we will find that as care and compassion are extended on one direction, it may arouse care in other directions as well.

The time is right now for us to extend compassion as widely as we can, to African lions and American lions, African and American children, to any vulnerable beings who need it. Let your government



representatives know that you care about American lions as much as you care about Africa’s. Together, we can shift away from tragedies toward an enduringly safe future for the lives remaining and those yet to be born.



Turtles: A New Generation

Wildlife Rescue & Rehabilitation often rescues animals who no one else will from situations that no one else dares get involved in. It's what makes the organization special. But we knew we had an exceptionally unique case on our hands the day a turtle was brought to our hospital in Kendalia with multiple injuries. The turtle, a spiny soft-shell, was found in the road after severe flooding this summer displaced many animals and people. She had been hit by a car. When she arrived, WRR vet staff immediately began working to save her life. Some of her injuries were achingly obvious: a cracked carapace and serious head wound that was clearly life-threatening. X-rays were taken to determine the extent of any internal injuries.

That's when it was discovered that she was gravid—she was carrying eggs. Turtles carry eggs internally for a period of time specific to their species, then, when the time is right, they dig an underground nest for the eggs to continue to develop. Upon hatching, the babies must first dig themselves out of the ground and next find water all on their own.

It was becoming clear that these tiny turtles-to-be would not have their mother much longer. Staff worked tirelessly to keep her alive and pain free as long as possible. The longer she survived, the better chance her eggs would have. Sadly, she lasted less than a week. She did the best she could for the next generation. Would it be enough?

Upon her passing, WRR vet staff had to open up the mother's lifeless body to retrieve the eggs. She would not be able to dig a safe nest for them and lay them with care inside. It was up to us now.

The sixteen eggs were placed in an incubator under the care of WRR Vet Tech, Diane Thovson. Animal Care Staff had no idea whether any of them would hatch, nor how long it might take, but they knew they had to try.

A week passed with no change. Two weeks and then three. Finally, one morning Diane made her daily check on the eggs she had been so carefully watching. Amazingly, four had hatched! Four hatch-

lings, perfect miniatures of their mother, were alive and looking for food. Diane fed them and they were happy to cooperate by downing their very first meal. And soon, their "surrogate" mother Diane took them to their preferred habitat and watched as they took their slow steps into their wild home.

These four babies are a shining example of the care that staff gives every day. WRR sees 7,000 animals every year come through our doors. Do the staff ever get tired? Are there some days when they are discouraged? Yes. But even against all the odds faced by the animals in their care, they persevere and do what must be done for every animal. It is an extraordinary quality of the people who work at WRR. For those four turtles, and thousands of other animals, that care is the difference between life and death.

Thanks to the WRR Animal Care Staff and our donors. Together, we do amazing things; we save lives.

Bring WRR your Special Skills

Do you have a special skill in mechanics, carpentry, plumbing, HVAC, electrical work, or more? Our Maintenance staff is stretched thin with acres of fencing, dozens of buildings, and over 20 vehicles to take care of. This includes the ATV's that we use every day to transport food to the animals. Tell us all about your special skill

and how you might be able to help us as a volunteer, and we will purchase the materials you need and have them here at WRR ready for you to use. With your help, we can make sure that both the sanctuary and the animals get the best care possible! Contact our Maintenance Manager Art Gonzalez at agonzales@wildlife-rescue.org and he can get you started.



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(Address Service Requested)



Wildlife Rescue Donation Registration Form

You may use the enclosed envelope (filled in) by itself or fill in, clip and send this coupon.

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 \$100
 \$250
 \$500
 \$1,000
 \$ _____

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Your card will be charged this amount on approximately the 5th of each month.

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Payment Enclosed: Check Cash Charge (Check card type below)

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Expiration Date _____ *CVV Code _____

Signature _____

*3-4 digit security number on the back of the credit card