Dear Members,

This past spring and summer brought us hundreds of tiny orphans; the majority of these were, as is usually the case, birds. Every day in the WRR hospital there were incubators and net cages occupied by small, often naked, and always hungry little feathered beings. Some had fallen from their nests, others had been grabbed by cats, and still others had been robbed of the right to simply live and grow up in the care of their loving parents—they had been intentionally removed from their nests and families.

Though I do not believe we can really know the emotional experience of anyone other than ourselves, where non-human animals are concerned we can watch, pay close attention, and interpret what our eyes and hearts tell us. For every baby bird and mammal who comes to WRR we are here providing the care they need to survive, but more than that we watch and feel and learn from every little life who spends time in our hands. Animals have an almost magical ability to take what life sends their way and make the best of it, and even though they do this with profound dignity they most certainly suffer from their experiences of separation and loss.

The female grackle came to WRR with a severe injury to her wing. She was thin, could not even hope to fly, and had been found near her dead fledgling who had been killed when someone decided that grackles should be shot with bb guns and left on the sidewalk to die. I could only imagine what she had witnessed but I did not have to imagine what the incident did to her spirit and her heart.

Grackles are amazing birds; they are bold and brave and know how to fight when they have to and once she was in the hands of humans she was good and ready to fight. Every time we approached her cage to treat her wounds and offer her food her response was to flap her wings and inflict whatever damage her beak could manage. From our perspective this was nothing but good news!

She was kept in the room in the WRR hospital where dozens of other birds were also recovering from injuries and when you walked into the room the cacophony of bird sounds was near deafening…again a good sign from those who refused to lie down and give up the fight to overcome and one day win against all odds. The room next door housed younger birds, those who had also lost all they had known and loved: parents, the safety and familiarity of life in nest and tree, the fresh air and warmth of summer days. For these youngsters their chances were better as they arrived uninjured but their challenge was to overcome the loss of the knowledge gained from being raised by other birds.

We are skilled at WRR and capable of caring for and demonstrating to young animals what it is they must do to care for themselves, but Mother Nature provided them with the very best of teachers and that was not Homo sapiens. The only advantage to rescuing so very many animals is that we can group them in similar and like species and in doing this allow invaluable information to be shared animal to animal. This is especially important for the youngsters. But there is always an “outcast” or two and this particular summer was no exception.

The tiny starling had been brought to WRR as a nestling and had been in the hospital for some weeks; although she was stable she was missing that spark that tells us the will to live was alive and well. She would eat and was even gaining weight but it seemed that she never recovered from the trauma of losing her siblings and parents. Her siblings were all killed when their nest had been removed from a dryer vent and tossed into a trash can; she

(Story continued on page 6)
A Note from the Director

Three months ago I joined Wildlife Rescue as the Executive Director. I have spent these early days observing the rhythm and flow of WRR efforts, all focused on the care and welfare of the wildlife brought to us. I began my new role here with the words of our President and Founder, Lynn Cuny, ringing in my ears: “We are respectful of all animals, and we always do the right thing, no matter how difficult. This is who we are.” I watched and listened and silently considered how to find the fit with these words. These are some of my first observations.

Work by apprentices: I am pleased to tell you that based on the work ethic, attitude, respect, capacity to learn, teamwork, stamina, and kindness that I have observed, the world is in good hands. These energetic young people are the future of rehabilitation and rescue efforts. I am amazed everyday when I listen to how they treat each other and the patience and dedication they show to the native wildlife. Many duties are certainly not glamorous, like hand-washing bottles and feeding bowls, but they are as necessary as providing hands-on care, such as feeding a tiny baby opossum by syringe. They persevere even though it may be more difficult than they imagined. I am so proud of them and pleased to support and advance their learning experience here at WRR. This is who we are.

Staff and Supervisors: The animal care staff and program supervisors who work with non-native wildlife are focused on care and their own observations of the animals’ behavior. They understand their physical needs and the importance of caring for an animal’s mental welfare as well. For wildlife for which WRR is their permanent home, the staff constantly researches ways to provide a stimulating environment. We are grateful to our donors for helping animals’ quality of life by providing funds for enrichment activities such as bubble machines and wooden climbing structures. Our wish list has other items as well that will enhance the lives of the animals and provide the staff additional ways to observe behavior and know which enrichment activities work best. This is who we are.

Rescue and Release: I have witnessed the kindness of the San Antonio community, surrounding areas and beyond. I have observed the public’s care and concern for wildlife. I have witnessed the relief experienced by people as they get advice on handling a wildlife issue when they call our 24/7 hotline. I have seen the relief people feel when they bring in an injured animal and find WRR staff ready to step in to provide care and rehabilitation. I have witnessed the excitement of staff who accompany animals ready for release back into the wild. They see their work truly make a difference and the release is reward for their hard work. This is who we are.

Donors and Volunteers: I have observed the dedication of volunteers who come to the sanctuary and are willing to do anything to help: file papers, feed egrets, do laundry, or transport food or an injured animal. Our donors open their hearts and are eager to support our needs to care for all wildlife that need help. This is who we are – because of you!

My next focus will be to apply my observations, along with input from the staff and Board of Directors, to develop a Strategic Plan--a map to the future--that builds upon the deep history of WRR and moves us to the next level so that rehabilitation, rescue and shelter here will continue for many generations to come.
Early morning, a few years ago, found me jogging along the county road adjacent to the Wildlife Rescue sanctuary near Kendalia. Fences run parallel to the road on both sides, and many of these are the eight foot version called “high fence.” There are few houses visible and only occasionally cattle, goats, or sheep. Traditional ranches no longer flourish out here but “gentleman” versions crop up from time to time. The topography is typical central Texas hill and valley dominated by juniper and oak.

Since I am out early most mornings I often see wildlife flashing across the road or slipping into the brush. But on this morning what I saw was a porcupine apparently trying to slip under a high fence along a path well worn by the feet of hundreds of small mammals over many years. He moved about vigorously but got nowhere for he was caught in a snare. I turned back to the WRR hospital and returned with animal caretakers who released the desperate creature, miraculously uninjured. A week later this scenario was replayed a half mile farther down the road but on the same ranch, the victim this time being a raccoon.

From then on I kept a close eye on all the little animal paths that emerge on one side of the road and pick back up on the other. For obvious reasons, these are favored places for installing snares by those who wish to extirpate what they call “varmints” (or pests or vermin), but which we at Wildlife Rescue simply call neighboring indigenous wildlife. Over the following couple of weeks I found several more snares on these pathways, including where we had released the porcupine and raccoon. Each time I disabled them, and eventually they stopped reappearing. (My antipathy for these things is intensified by my having a dog who once went wandering and was found three days later caught in a snare; she survived but to this day has a deep scar encircling her torso.)

I do not know whether the snarer that I write about was the property owner himself, or if, as often happens, he solicited someone else to do the job. There is, for example, a division of the U.S. Department of Agriculture called Wildlife Services which commonly does this sort of thing. In general, its purpose is to prevent wildlife damage to such items as bridges, livestock, crops, and human health and safety. Its mission statement claims that it aims “…to provide Federal leadership and expertise to resolve wildlife conflicts to allow people and wildlife to coexist.” Its Vision is “…to improve the coexistence of people and wildlife.” Last year Wildlife Services’ coexistence strategies involved killing 4,378,456 wild animals. With “coexistence” like that wildlife might prefer outright hostility.

Among the animals killed were these: red-winged blackbirds (365,000), cowbirds (1,100,000), doves (46,000), Canada geese (23,000), grackles (201,000), rock pigeons (89,000), starlings (2,000,000), coyotes (75,000), timber wolves (320), and beavers (24,000). Even cardinals (3,500), cattle egrets (5,800), finches (3,400), and foxes (3,700) were coexisted into oblivion.

Over the coming year Wildlife Rescue intends to pay particular attention to Wildlife Services’ Texas activities (which cost $10.7 million last year) and to keep you, our members, informed about them along with national advocacy efforts to expose the killing and demand accountability and explanation as well as fewer killed animals. We all know that wildlife suffers immensely from inadvertent consequences of human enterprises and activities; for the government to compound this by deliberate killing adds insult to already grievous injury.

WRR is founded on the conviction that the community of life deserves our deepest respect, even reverence. In practice, this means, among other things, that we take responsibility for our actions that affect other forms of life and do everything possible to minimize harm. It’s a crowded world, which means that conflict is inevitable, but it is presently also a threatened world with biodiversity plunging and climate change a slowly rolling disaster which will take even more life. We must take care—of one another, of Nature, of Earth. What could be more important?

Craig Brestrup, Ph.D.
Development Associate
Camino2@gvtc.com
Wildlife Rescue apprentices and staff caretakers are busy all year caring for the animals who find their way to WRR’s hospital. But beginning in March and going through September, they are working even more intensely and tirelessly caring for thousands of baby birds, squirrels, fawns, opossums, raccoons, bobcats, skunks, and more. These babies are fed as often as every thirty minutes to every few hours between 6am and 11pm daily.

Every year brings new challenges, but with a hard-working staff who put the needs of the animals as their top priority, we work through them. From sending WRR’s veterinary staff to assess calls we received about deer with objects like PVC pipe and metal sprinkler heads stuck on a leg, to caring for a huge influx of raccoons, bobcats, opossums and egrets, to tending a sulcata tortoise who was brought to WRR after being kept by someone for five years with an injured leg and no veterinary assistance and who now needs specialized care on a daily basis.

One of the highlights of this baby season was putting to use a brand new aviary that was built as a result of donations to “Fund A Need” that were made at our 2013 Win a Wild Ride fundraiser. This aviary was completed prior to baby season and allows birds time to acclimate to the weather, to practice flying, and to have minimal contact with human caretakers as they are readied for release. This large aviary, which includes six small aviaries within it, housed a wide variety of bird species this year including egrets, herons, mockingbirds, grackles, blue jays, sparrows, finches, and nighthawks.

Another highlight included rescuing and releasing a hawk who was trapped in the basement of the Ripley’s Believe It Or Not Museum in downtown San Antonio. And we much appreciated a new hutch built by a local Eagle Scout to house opossums and ducklings.

WRR’s baby season is slowly coming to an end with the last of the fawns, squirrels, raccoons, bobcats, opossums and birds being released after spending anywhere from a few weeks to a few months at the sanctuary. As the season draws to a close, our apprentices and staff caretakers will now begin preparing for the next baby season, which will begin in less than six months. WRR would like to say a special thank you to all of the volunteers who helped by folding laundry, washing dishes, cleaning enclosures, and feeding baby birds and mammals. Volunteers hold a special place at WRR assisting the caretakers in their daily tasks.

Kimberly Stephens  
Director of Animal Care
In our last newsletter we told you about the hundreds of snowy, cattle, and great egret chicks who had been brought to Wildlife Rescue from their rookery in Brackenridge Park adjacent to the San Antonio Zoo. They were brought in during the spring and now that autumn is upon us you may be interested to hear how they have fared.

Around 250 egrets were brought in, mostly fragile nestlings, many dead on arrival—they were babies and the handling and unnecessary removal from their nests and the loving care of their parents not surprisingly took a terrible toll. There was no way that such an intrusion into young lives could help being dreadfully damaging, despite our best efforts. But even with the odds against them, close to half survived and have been returned to natural habitats.

Seeing these beautiful white birds taking wing made it worth it.

WRR animal caretakers (staff, apprentices, volunteers) had their hands more than full with the unexpected arrival of so many young, hungry birds. Seven or eight hand-feedings per day were necessary to fill stomachs along with continual attention to these energetic creatures to ensure that their inherent competitive tendencies didn’t result in injuries to one another from their long sharp bills. They stayed at Wildlife Rescue until they were big and strong enough to fly and, equally important, until they had demonstrated the ability to hunt for their own food. It was an immense amount of work by a lot of dedicated WRR people, but the satisfaction of lives saved and seeing these beautiful white birds taking wing made it worth it.
would have died as well if a caring neighbor had not heard her cheeping for help. She was so weak that she could not lift her tiny head and her parents had not been able to reach the nestlings and continue caring for them. So here she was at WWR doing her best to survive but refusing to interact with other birds.

We let her share spacious net cages with others her age, sparrows and jays, mockingbirds and grackles, but all she would do was hop to a corner and sit quietly, her eyes partly closed. Finally, we gave up and decided that for her perhaps being alive and growing in size and ability that would allow her to be set free was all we could hope for.

As time passed and she began picking up food on her own, using her now strong legs to perch, she still remained anti-social; this girl was a loner and we had real concerns that this would create serious problems for her in the wild. One of the many tragedies of wild orphaned animals, both mammals and birds, is that they are deprived of the rich social connections that only family members can provide. Though we can do our best to replicate this in the captive care settings, it is simply never the same as what takes place in the wild.

While the young starling female was busy growing up in her preferred solitary setting, our adult grackle was recovering nicely from her injuries. She was feisty as ever and now she was gaining weight and regaining the use of her wing. She continued to fight our unwavering efforts to calm her, but the important thing was that she was making the progress necessary to reclaim her life amongst the trees and fresh air. Her determination was such that early one morning she fluttered from her cage and led us on a merry chase in the hospital. We could not find her and with all the other lives to tend to we felt it best to let her rest and remain hidden so that we could accomplish the important tasks of providing breakfast for the hundreds of hungry little youngsters who were not about to wait. In all the rooms that were open and provided cubby holes for hiding we placed shallow dishes of water and food; this bold bird knew full well how to care for herself and it was in her best interest to simply let her do so as we went about our tasks.

The day and the feeding and cleaning wore on; every so often we would hear that distinct grackle squawk and see a flash of black feathers darting from behind one cage only to discover an even better hiding spot behind boxes and bins. Now we knew that she was in the room where the young birds were housed so we kept the feeding to a minimum. Even with the feeding reduced to a minimum, with the lights and put the birds to bed, we finally realized where our wayward grackle had spent her day.

Crouched behind the soft netting of the young starling's cage was one feisty female grackle and next to her was a calm, consoled and no longer solitary starling. While the adult bird had hidden there, the juvenile bird had taken comfort in her presence. She no longer sat in her lone corner with her eyes partly closed; now her bright, dark eyes were alert and alive, as was her spirit. She cheeped and called out to our new companion and the grackle was compelled to remain and once again take on the role of being a mother, a role that had weeks ago been stripped from her life.

We placed the birds in the large cage and it was only a split second before the fledgling and the adult were side by side. Here they spent the next week before being placed outside in a flight cage. The mother grackle continued to do what mothers do best and her new youngster responded as if these two strangers had never known separation or pain. From that day until the day they were set free the grackle and starling calmed and cared for one another; they healed the pain of the past and found in each other what no one else could give them. On the day we returned them to the wild they flew free and strong in opposite directions. We could not know if they ever came together again but what really mattered was that they came together when they needed each other the most.

We marvel at their winged splendor and we love the sweetness of their birdsongs, but sadly our ability to appreciate the beauty and exquisite richness that all species contribute by their very existence is sorely lacking. It is this lack in our species that results in the profound harm to all other species who want only to live a life of peace. Perhaps the day will come when humans wake up to our shortcomings and realize that all life is both precious and worthy of respect and protection.

The non-humans already know this. The injured grackle and solitary starling knew it and for them the choice was clear. They chose to step outside what we might call the “accepted norm” of behavior and open their hearts to each other. When life in the wild was restored to them they chose to go their separate ways but when they needed greatest they chose compassion. Surely we can do the same.

“She cheeped and called out to her new companion...”
WRR’s Sherman Animal Care Complex may look like a small, quiet building from the outside but inside big and important things happen every day. Wildlife Rescue receives around 7,000 sick, injured or orphaned animals each year and a majority are brought here before they are transferred to our rehabilitation hospital in Kendalia for continued care and/or release. During baby season (March through September) we receive anywhere from 30-60 animals a day, in addition to caring for the songbirds, cottontails and squirrels who remain with us until ready for release (about a quarter of the total). There are always animals to feed, enclosures to clean, food to be prepared and projects to complete. Thankfully we have very dedicated and involved apprentices and volunteers to assist us with these tasks.

As a new manager at the Sherman Complex, working with and getting to know the volunteers here has been one of the highlights of my position. There is not a day that goes by that our volunteers don’t impress me with their willingness to pitch in and help with everything from wading into the river at Brackenridge Park to rescue a drowning bird to unclogging the kitchen sink. I am continually touched by their stories of what wildlife and this work means to them and the lengths they go to in order to assist WRR achieve our mission.

Among the thousands of animals we see, there are always a few who stand out. One of those this year was a young yellow-billed cuckoo. This bird came to WRR as a tiny nestling who had lost his parents. When he arrived at the Sherman Animal Care Complex none of the staff had ever seen a cuckoo before since they are only migratory in this region of the country. It was both sad and thrilling to see this species since they are dwindling in number in the wild and any orphaned nestling saved would contribute to the survival of the species. This baby turned out fine as he was well cared for by WRR and later released.

Now that the days grow shorter and fall approaches there are fewer animals in need of help. Most native species of wildlife have their young during spring and summer and WRR’s focus now shifts to injured adult animals, such as deer caught in fences, skunks and raccoons caught in traps, animals hit by vehicles, and on and on. It is a time for staff, apprentices and volunteers to relax… but only briefly. Soon we begin preparation for next year’s repeat of thousands of animals in need when, as for almost forty years, WRR will be ready to help.

Carolyn Asselborn
Manager, WRR Sherman Animal Care Complex
The name of the animals alone raises the question, “What does Wildlife Rescue have to do with these animals from so far away?” Not that we don’t have a variety of other creatures living here who come from Africa and S. America, mostly birds and primates along with a few reptiles, but these are particularly unusual.

Five of these porcupines came to the sanctuary this summer, parents along with their youngsters. We don’t know if the parents were captured and brought over as part of the wildlife trade but if not then surely their ancestors were. It’s an unsavory business that causes considerable suffering. Fortunately, there are sanctuaries such as ours that can take them but vacant space is usually hard to come by.

These five first came to rescuers’ attention a few years ago when they were on exhibit at a “game farm”, really no more than a roadside zoo, in New York. Foster Parrots, an excellent organization in Massachusetts that WRR has collaborated with for many years, took them in when the zoo closed down, but they realized that Wildlife Rescue was better situated to care for them and arranged for their journey south.

They’ve been here for a few months now and have adjusted well to their new surroundings. They live in a large enclosure (1+ acres) on a bluff that is heavily wooded and dense with shrubs and grass. As nocturnal animals, WRR staff must check on the porcupines around the time when most other sanctuary residents are going to sleep. In the near future we will be introducing a small troop of primates who will share this wooded space with these porcupines. Up to now, the monkeys and porcupines have been neighbors as they share a common fence line. This sort of interspecies combination is something that we do occasionally and it works well for all concerned, allowing us to care for more animals and adding interest to their lives.

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A North American Porcupine at WRR

WRR receives thousands of orphaned and injured babies every year. Some species we see more often than others, for instance, raccoons, opossums, squirrels, and skunks. And some we don’t see quite as often, like armadillos and porcupines.

The orphaned porcupine baby in the picture was brought to Wildlife Rescue a month or so ago. He was found alone in a woman’s yard. She did the right thing and attempted to reunite him with his mother by placing him in a safe place where he could wait for her to come back, but she never returned.

Upon arrival the prickly little fellow (porcupines are born with quills already in place, albeit very soft ones) was slightly dehydrated and weighed less than a pound. He also had a minor puncture wound on his leg that was healing well on its own. After a period of bottle-feeding, he was given soft foods and later browse so he could practice the chewing and gnawing which he will depend upon in the wild.

Good care combined with nature’s resilience and soon the youngster weighed in at 7 pounds. He is living in an outdoor enclosure now with plenty of space and soon he will be taken to a safe release site where he can resume the natural life that was interrupted by the loss of his mother.

Playing Possum

Opossums are known for “playing possum,” that is, going into a state where they appear dead. This is involuntary, not unlike what happens when a human faints, and the animal gives every appearance of having actually died. Lips recede, saliva bubbles out, eyes close, and they suddenly smell terrible, courtesy of certain anal gland fluids. Stiff and unresponsive, they can be picked up and moved without reaction. They will remain in this state for an hour or longer. It seems to be an amazingly effective defense mechanism.

As you see in the pictures, ours was no dead possum. She was very fortunate to have “come to” before being carted off. Many thanks to the resident who recognized the situation and called WRR, and to the volunteer, and to our veterinarian and animal care staff. It sometimes “takes a village,” as the saying goes, to save wildlife.
October 18, 2014 10am – 3pm

Come and enjoy vegetarian lunch, socializing with other WRR members and staff, and going on guided tours of the sanctuary and animal hospital.

Wish List Needs
As you know the animals are in constant need of many items to make their lives at WRR clean, comfortable and healthy. Please consider bringing some of our Wish List needs (at right) with you. We will have a truck at the gate ready to receive them when you arrive.

- Dry dog food
- Dry cat food
- Cat litter
- Wild bird seed
- Paper towels
- Cotton balls
- Bleach
- Kleenex
- Dish soap (gal.)
- Trash bags (55 gal.)

Reserve Your Place Now
4 convenient ways to register at right.

REGISTRATION:
$35 per person
$60 per couple
$15 per child

EMAIL: Debbie at dcrwoford@wildlife-rescue.org

PHONE: Debbie at 830-336-2725 x 308

MAIL: Fill in coupon on page 8, clip & mail

ONLINE: Go to wildlife-rescue.org, click the Members’ Day ad in right sidebar, fill out form on the following web page
You may use the enclosed envelope (filled in) by itself if only making a donation; if registering for the Members’ Day event, please fill in, clip and send this coupon.

MEMBERS’ DAY REGISTRATION
Saturday, October 18, 2014 10am - 3pm
($35 per person; $60 per couple; $15 each additional person)

☐ I plan to attend # _______ $ ____________
☐ I cannot attend but would like to make a donation $ ____________
☐ I would like to volunteer

ONE-TIME GIFT DONATION

☐ $35 ☐ $50 ☐ $100 ☐ $250
☐ $500 ☐ $1,000 ☐ $ ____________

WRR SUSTAINERS (minimum of $10/month)

☐ I want to be a WRR Sustainer and make a monthly gift of: $ ____________

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

Name ________________________________
Address ________________________________
City ________________________________
State _______ Zip _______ Phone ____________
Email ________________________________

Expiration Date ____________ *CVV Code ____________

Signature ________________________________

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