Dear Members,

I imagine it is perfectly natural after many years of any way of life to occasionally stop and take a look back, to reminisce over old ways, triumphs and tragedies, change and continuity. I do that from time to time as the volume of memories stored over those past 37 years at Wildlife Rescue is considerable and worthy of attention.

A young javelina recently came to WRR; like everyone who is brought to our doors he was in need of help. He had lost his mother and family. If scent triggers memories then images must surely do the same. When I saw this little fellow I immediately remembered another young javelina who was in dire need of rescue many years ago.

The caller was horrified at what she had seen in her neighborhood and was desperate to find someone to help. As she was walking a few blocks from her home she heard a crowd of boys laughing and talking and in the midst of the commotion she was certain she heard the cries of some Animal. She walked closer to investigate and there hanging upside down from a tree limb, his legs secured by rope, was a young javelina. Not surprisingly, this terrified young male was screaming and thrashing about. Our compassionate caller ran to her house and called WRR and we wasted no time in making our way to the scene.

There are images one will never forget and this was one of them. This poor Animal had been captured, his mother had been shot and now he was dangling from a limb about to have his throat cut. Diplomacy is the last thing on your mind and yet you know that if you do not find a way to say just the right words, all will be lost. The argument for compassion won that day and the frightened youngster was turned over to WRR.

We called on the veterinarian, who in those early days was part-time, and took the youngster to her clinic. Radiographs confirmed our fears that extensive damage had been done to his spine and he might never again have mobility in his rear legs, but in all other respects the javelina was alright. On the trek to our then small sanctuary the young male whimpered and moaned as I wracked my brain to think of a way to mitigate some of the damage done to this baby.

In those days WRR had only a few acres to call home. Interestingly, javelinas, also known as collared peccaries, are a species we were often called on to rescue...
Why We Do It

If you receive our monthly electronic newsletter you will have read a recent story about our effort to save the life of a crested caracara. These beautiful raptors, members of the falcon family, are only seen in this country, but not frequently, in central and southern Texas along with Arizona and Florida. Mostly they live south of the Mexican border and down to northern South America. They fly in and out of the sanctuary near Kendalia from time to time and are often greeted by the abundant ravens and vultures who live here.

The bird that sparked these reflections was brought first to the WRR Sherman Animal Care Complex in San Antonio in March and then transferred to the hospital at the sanctuary. He was a juvenile, badly injured and not in good condition by the time our vet staff evaluated him. He was one of the few of these birds who have ever been brought to us, and I’m sad to say that we were unable to save his life.

Wildlife rehabilitation is challenging work, to say the least. Baby animals represent one kind of challenge due to their fragility and the need for frequent feedings and constant attention. Severely injured adults represent another. They are often in dire condition when they arrive and many die before they get to us or shortly thereafter. Staff face emotional up’s and down’s almost daily as their best efforts sometimes are not enough.

Some might wonder why we bother and why our supporters continue to spend their volunteer time and donor dollars on behalf of these efforts, particularly when the recipients are often thought of as “common” or even “pest” species. There are many reasons.

- Since the beginning in 1977, when Lynn Cuny founded Wildlife Rescue in her San Antonio home, the motivation has been pure compassion, the unwillingness to see fellow creatures suffer, often from encounters with humans. Compassion is not simply a feeling; it arises from the sense that all life matters and that human lives are bound up with all other life and we owe it our active concern.

- Recognizing that human activities impinge on Nature—on all its glorious flora and fauna—in a thousand ways which result in damage, suffering, and death, animal care and protection offers a vehicle for restitution. In some small measure we act to restore some of what was endangered or destroyed.

- While the actual hands-on work is done by animal care staff, volunteers, and trainees, the existence of Wildlife Rescue and similar organizations provides a means for those who aren’t in a position to do the work themselves to participate in the compassionate and restorative endeavors through their financial contributions. There is so much that is materialist and self-centered in our society that the need to give and to care for others can get submerged. WRR is a reminder and a vehicle for expressing and meeting that need, for reaching outside the small world of our daily lives into a larger world toward which we can, if we allow it, feel reverence and the desire to manifest that in giving.

Many animals die. But many do not. They do not because some people decide that they will do what they can to save them. Lives saved, suffering mitigated, compassion unleashed—well worth our efforts and, we believe, essential aspects of good human lives.

Craig Brestrup, Ph.D.
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Opossums Galore

We received a call recently about an opossum family caught in a San Antonio park trash container. The details were sketchy but they may have been trapped for several days and currently were being harassed by kids passing by. Volunteer Jim Graham was quick to the rescue and brought them to the WRR Sherman Animal Care Complex. Because mother and babies appeared dehydrated and generally depleted they were then transported to the sanctuary hospital near Kendalia. After a few days of supportive care, they were released. The accompanying picture says it all.

Save the Date
MEMBERS’ DAY
at Wildlife Rescue

October 18, 2014 / 10 am – 3 pm
A chance for our supporters to see how their help is used to help the animals at the sanctuary near Kendalia and at our Sherman Animal Care Complex in San Antonio.
and consequently we always had one or two being rehabilitated. It was in vogue in those days to go out and track down a javelina herd, kill off as many adults as necessary to get to the babies, and take the babies home for "pets." In only a few months the babies began to behave as Nature intended and the novelty "pet" was no longer fun; this was when we were called to take in the emotionally scared little ones. The fact that this was a somewhat common practice ensured that WRR often had a small resident herd of these unique Animals. The challenge would be to integrate our newest youngster into this group.

Since time and rent were our only options for medical intervention, making the newcomer comfortable was our first priority. The javelina enclosure was spacious with several tall oaks for shade, and with a smaller introduction space that ran alongside it this seemed the best accommodation for the time being. As we huddled in and spread about several bales of soft, fragrant hay the resident javelina threesome were all eyes, ears and noses. Something was happening in their territory and they were not going to miss a moment of the goings on.

When the new occupant was gently carried in and placed in the bed of hay under a sturdy shelter the locals' hackles rose and the snorting began. It was encouraging to see that the new male did not back down; his hackles rose in response and the swiftness of four legs he bounded forward on merely two to confront his critics. Everyone met at the common fence to have words that only javelinias understand and as the discussion went on it was clear that decisions were being made and strategies planned.

Javelinias have the most amazing, tiny hooves; they are narrow and delicate and give them the appearance of being always on pointe like a ballet dancer. To see this small troop of ten-aged "peccaries en pointe" making such a fuss as they trooped about on their petite hooves was quite a sight. What made this sight even more pleasing was the injured male behaving as if he was equally mobile.

Though my first instinct was to calm the situation, it was apparent that doing so would only interfere in a process that these Animals were perfectly capable of taking care of. The fracas soon subsided and all parties went back to the business of eating and napping. Our new resident was busy learning how to maneuver on his two front legs as he pulled his rear legs along with each step. The sight of any Animal struggling to get about is heart-breaking, but this youngster had youth and time on his side and with his seemingly infinite patience for now this was the best we could hope for.

The weeks and months passed and as summer arrived the peccaries had made their peace—at least through the fence. Now we had the big test at hand—would they get along in the same enclosure.

As we convened for the introductions all those bright, shiny eyes and alert ears were on us when we opened the gate that would allow the peccaries to congregate. Being curious Animals, there was not a moment's hesitation, just a rapid rallying of raised hackles, scent marking and clicking of tusks. There was purr-ing and sniffing, group snorting and a general discussion about who would be allowed to do what and just where would they do it. The new male motored about the large enclosure; he seemed less interested in getting acquainted than in exploring.

"Now we had the big test at hand—would they get along in the same enclosure?"
all this wonderful new space. He swiftly moved along to the
stand of large oaks and there he stopped to investigate the
soft earth and any old acorns that might have been over-
looked by the others. He was immediately joined by the
locals and soon the small herd was immersed in their search
for food. All hackles were down as the peccary foursome put
aside all concerns and resumed life as a herd.

The months and years passed, other rescued javelinas arrived,
were cared for and set free, and all through this process the
once young and terrified male was here to greet them, make
them feel at home and direct them to the best wallow, the
shade under the oaks and the abundant food that was always
readily available. By now he was the elder and it was to him
that they turned to quell their fears and to learn as he had
that they were safe. The cruelty that marred his early life
left him permanently crippled so that he could never again
go back to the wild. Here at WRR he made friends and
said good bye to them, he welcomed the injured, the elderly
and the tiny babies, all who had suffered some trauma and
needed the safety and comfort of a place to rest and heal.

And on the day he died he was surrounded by three young males who
had been brought to WRR after their mother had been killed. They
arrived frightened but found waiting to greet them a brave companion
whose body had long ago been damaged but whose spirit soared even
now that he had gone.

Lynn Cuny

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Opossum Meets Dog

BY ANKUR GUPTA, VMD, WRR VETERINARIAN

A call came to the sanctuary hospital one morning from the WRR Sherman Animal Care Complex in San Antonio reporting an adult opossum with significant wounds sustained after attack by a dog. Despite the efforts of responsible companion animal people and the survival instincts of Texas wildlife, the wild-domestic animal interface remains a volatile source of unpredictable interactions, not to mention a common cause of wild animals being received by Wildlife Rescue.

After initial treatment in San Antonio, the opossum was transported to Kendalia for assessment by the veterinary staff. The patient was bright, alert, and responsive even though significant trauma had been sustained over the lower abdomen and groin area, with large sections of deep, contaminated punctures and lacerations present with marked swelling and bruising. It was unclear whether his urogenital system was intact given the severity of injuries, and the integrity of the body wall was also in doubt.

In general, bite wounds involve multiple forces, which commonly lead to swelling, compromised blood supply, and resulting tissue necrosis. Management of the wound, after initial stabilization and supportive care, involved general anesthesia for complete wound exploration. The area was prepared for surgery with the intention of removing all necrotic and infected tissue. The wound was left open after initial surgical treatment and covered with a sterile, permeable dressing. This was unavoidable because the severity of the trauma did not allow for immediate wound closure. One advantage to this approach is the ability to evaluate the wound on an ongoing basis. The opossum’s treatment plan included fluid therapy, anti-inflammatory medication, antimicrobial therapy, pain management, homeopathic treatment, nutritional therapy, and regular wound management and evaluation.

Intervention with this animal required collaboration of the animal care and veterinary staff to create a custom treatment plan. The provision of “individuallyized care,” as referenced in the mission of Wildlife Rescue, was integral to this opossum’s recovery. Due to his propensity to rub against the door and side grating of his cage, a special padded setup was constructed to keep him comfortable and safe. The difficulty in administering oral medication was alleviated by the development of a special medicated diet to ensure consistent medication delivery. Since the opossum required a clean, dry environment to prevent any contamination from affecting his bandaging and wounds, a special cleaning procedure was instituted. With these and other interventions, the opossum is enjoying a steady recovery.

While this animal’s hospital stay continues, his represents one of the many challenges Wildlife Rescue is posed on a daily basis. Thanks to the tireless efforts of Wildlife Rescue’s animal care staff, apprentices, interns, and volunteers, as well as good Samaritans willing and able to help, each animal in need of care is given the best chance to recover and be released. As the warmer months usher a greater number of animals to Wildlife Rescue, this collaboration will become even more integral. We look forward to a spring and summer full of working together, diligent care, and successful wildlife rescue.
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