Reflecting & Planning
Whitetails, Winter & WRR
The Savannah Monitor
Duck Walk
A Lion’s Share
Community News
Business as Usual
OUR MISSION
To rescue, rehabilitate, and release native wildlife and to provide sanctuary, individualized care, and a voice for other animals in need.
We send our stories to you in late January of the New Year 2014. Each newsletter brings a small sample of the work that is done at the Kendalia sanctuary and the WRR Sherman Animal Care Complex in San Antonio—a really small sample when you consider that 27 staff members, fifteen or so apprentices, and dozens of volunteers work to keep the life-saving, life-affirming services at these facilities humming seven days a week. Thousands of wild, farmed, and companion animals along with thousands of human animals directly benefit, in their individual ways, from all this effort.

Most of you who read these stories have a personal investment in the work that all these good people do. Emotional, financial, ethical, spiritual—usually some of each—you recognize the interweaving of lives within the great creation we are privileged to participate in for our short time here. And you express that by reading our stories, caring about the impact of our work, knowing that the animals you read about represent thousands of others whose stories won’t be told because of time and space limitations, offering your volunteer time and dollars, speaking up when circumstances call for it on behalf of Wildlife Rescue and the honored place wild and other animals occupy in existence as a whole and in your personal lives as well.

If a year’s end is time for reflection on how well we lived it, then a year’s beginning is the time to use the learning that life and reflection deliver and put it to use in planning for and living the time ahead. At Wildlife Rescue, because of the lives that depend upon it and the conscientiousness of our people, the ending and the beginning aim at recognizing where we may have come up short and using that knowledge, along with technical expertise and uncommon devotion, to always improve on what we are doing. The animals reveal their judgment through their progress in rehabilitation, their behavior and health and overall well-being. I ask that you, our members, let us know what you think more directly with a call or an email. Your donations keep the lights on and care rolling out to the animals who require it, while your opinions keep us self-aware and self-critical.

Craig Brestrup, PHD
Development Associate
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Whitetails, Winter & WRR

BY LYNN CUNY
Dear Members,

Every winter we rescue many white-tailed Deer who are hung in fences. Tragically, their injuries in this situation are often fatal. For every Deer who is able to run away when we cut the fence, there are dozens who fall to the ground unable to move, a hip dislocated, a fragile pelvis fractured, or with permanent crippling nerve damage. For Animals who spend most of their time walking, nervously on the watch for predators, being unable to stand and walk is simply not an acceptable way to live. At WRR, we believe the humane thing to do in these cases is to put an end to their suffering. In well over thirty years of pulling Deer out of fences, the WRR staff know how few survive such entanglement. This is the story of one who did (an old story, which I first recounted to you many years ago).

Winters in the 1980s were frequently bitterly cold. I remember so often going out on calls in the middle of the night to rescue frozen Birds who had just fallen to the ground, still alive, but so cold they were unable to move. A call came in early one January morning, just before sunrise. A college student visiting her parents had gone out for a walk on their property. Looking down the caliche road she noticed an odd looking figure along the fence line. As she walked closer, she could see there was a Deer hung in the fence. She ran back to her house and called WRR. I knew there was no time to waste. Depending on how long the Deer had been hanging there, his chances of survival might not be good.

I grabbed heavy blankets, wire cutters and medications and rushed to the site. I drove my car as close as I could without frightening the stranded Animal even more. There at the bend in the road was an old section of barbed wire fence and dangling in the rusty barbs was a huge white-tailed Buck, and only yards from him standing watch was a Doe.

The Buck’s face was scarred with age and experience; I could tell he had survived many hunting seasons. It was too much to think that this fence would be the death of him. There was nothing to be done but cut him free and wait to see if he could stand. As I silently approached and covered his head the Buck tensed and his huge cinnamon brown eyes flashed. At once I began working to cut the wire.

In several snips of the sharp instrument, the Buck was free. His heavy body dropped almost gracefully to the frozen ground. He could not get up. His once strong legs would not serve him now. He could not run from the enemy standing over him.

Quietly, cautiously, she approached the fallen Buck and paused several feet away from him. His antlers stretching out like frozen branches, he immediately calmed. The Doe stopped at his side and began to nuzzle his face as he laid his head on the ground. The doe comforted him, nudged him, and encouraged him to stand. The white-tailed Buck would not budge. For twenty minutes the Doe tried to coax him to follow her, but he would not move. Finally, perhaps in frustration, she lay down beside him.

For two hours they lay there quietly, breathing in unison, looking out into the frozen pasture. I knew that the more time he spent on the ground, the less hope there was of his ever getting

Continued next page
up again. Three hours passed. The Doe seemed anxious; she could wait no longer. She rose to her feet, licked the male twice, then turned to walk away. The desperate Buck cried out to her—his call hung sad and heavy in the freezing air. She was going away, leaving him alone with no hope of survival. I knew now what I had to do. I turned to go back to my car to retrieve the deadly injection that would put an end to his suffering and an end to the life of this beautiful white-tailed Deer who had survived many winters but who would meet his death at the grip of this cruel fence.

Again, I heard the male cry out to the Doe, but this time she stopped, turned around, and walked back to his side. She stood over him, looking down with her piercing gaze. He struggled to stand. The Buck’s front legs were strong and steady as they rose up under him but his left rear leg trembled and strained. The wire had cut deep into his flesh and his back had been twisted and contorted by his struggle to be free. His rear leg was bleeding and weak, and as he stretched around to clean his wounds, hope failed him and he shuddered and collapsed.

Now it was all up to him; there was one final chance and I had no doubt that he knew it. Suddenly, slowly, this magnificent creature found somewhere in his soul the will to try again. You could see in his face that he was in pain but he fought to keep his balance in spite of the injuries. With one rear leg of little use and an aching back, he must rely on his other legs to stand firm. And stand he did. The white-tailed Buck knew what he had been through. He knew that if he was to survive, he had to stand and walk. He had to be able to follow the female as she walked ahead of him. The Buck took several shaky strides, his three legs carrying his weight. He did not falter; he did not look back but only ahead to watch as the Doe, stopping only to nibble on some dried leaves, looked back to see if he was following.

Because of this persistent, caring Doe the white-tailed Buck would once again stand silently in winter’s cold mornings and walk majestically through the coming seasons.

Signatures:

In the article:

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This is the Story of a Savannah Monitor Lizard

BY DIANE THOVSON – ANIMAL CARETAKER

Of the 7,000 wild animals brought to Wildlife Rescue every year for rehabilitation, virtually all are native to Central Texas. But there is the occasional exception.

Last October a Savannah Monitor Lizard arrived and in very poor condition. He had been found at a local shopping mall and taken home, but his rescuer soon realized that he was not well and needed medical attention. WRR veterinary staff recognized that he was severely dehydrated and very ill. For a week he was given subcutaneous fluids but food was withheld to avoid stressing his system. He slowly began to respond and liquid food was carefully given via a feeding tube. In addition, his environment was carefully monitored to ensure proper heat and humidity.

After three weeks he recovered enough to open his eyes, after which solid food was provided and he began to eat on his own. Now he has gained almost 2 pounds and will spend the winter in the hospital in a room set up with rocks, dirt for digging, a basking area, and a small pool and hiding areas.

Although the Savannah Monitor Lizard is not what most people would call beguiling in appearance or behavior, we of course make no distinctions when an animal is in distress. This one was fortunate to find his way to WRR. His species is native to Africa and thousands of individuals are forced into commerce for their skin, their meat, and as “pets.” Like most wild animals drafted into serving as somebody’s idea of a quaint pet, they do not do well in that situation. These lizards require very specific habitats with deep dirt for digging burrows, high ambient temperatures and humidity, and basking areas. Dehydration and metabolic bone disease are very common and frequently chronic. Often by the time an illness is noticed it is too late to correct.

It cannot be said too often: People should not try to make wild animals into “pets”.

It will not be easy, but Wildlife Rescue will make a place for him at the sanctuary. We believe that all animals, like all humans, deserve the freedom to live each’s version of a good life, and although his world here will never replicate an African landscape, we feel we owe him the best we can offer.

It cannot be said too often: people should not try to make wild animals into “pets.” It insults their dignity and is bad for their health and general well-being. There are still thousands of dogs and cats being put down at shelters for lack of a home to take them in—give them a good home and leave wild animals to their homes in Nature.
In late August, after phone calls and rescue efforts, a Muscovy duck entangled in a fishing line was brought to Wildlife Rescue. The line was wrapped tightly around the duck's right leg, which could no longer bear his weight. A complete physical examination revealed an animal who was bright, alert, and responsive, with good body condition and adequate hydration.

The fishing line had created a circumferential, penetrating wound that had lacerated the leg's skin, subcutaneous tissues, and musculature, as well as causing a complete fracture of the tarsometatarsal bone. Only a small amount of tissue at the rear part of the leg was preserving its lower component and allowing the tissues below the wound site to remain viable in the face of this severe injury. A sterile dressing was applied to the site of injury until surgical debridement could be performed. Initial stabilization included fluid therapy, pain management, antimicrobial, vitamin and nutritional therapy, and homeopathic treatment.

Once stabilized, the patient was anesthetized for further evaluation. Radiographs confirmed a simple tarsometatarsal fracture. In addition to the heavy contamination of the wound, the duration of the injury had resulted in a fair amount of tissue at the wound site having lost its blood supply and requiring surgical removal. As a result, reattachment of the important structures of the leg could only partially be performed. While a strong blood supply and nervous tissue remained intact at the rear of the leg, only a small amount of neurovascular tissue could be salvaged, as well as small sections of muscle and ligamentous tissue.

Following wound management, the fracture was stabilized. Overall, the serious damage to the leg resulted in a guarded prognosis.

The first couple of weeks of treatment required regular wound management, consisting of further debridement due to loss of vascular supply. This included portions of the subcutaneous tissues as well as fragments of the bone. The duck was not bearing weight on his right leg at this time, which was maintained in a cast.

With several weeks of care, the soft tissue structures healed nicely. The bone gradually stabilized, and serial radiographs illustrated new bone formation bridging the fracture. The duck steadily became more comfortable and finally began to bear weight on his right leg as he took his first steps. After a long process of wound management, fracture stabilization, and supportive care, the leg stabilized, the duck's ambulation continued to improve, and the external support was removed.
Wildlife Rescue has always had much to give thanks for and last Thanksgiving was another, and particularly unusual, occasion. An extended family and friends (all of whom wish their giving to be anonymous) came from all around the country during the holiday week and, once assured that the lions were in lock-outs, moved themselves, their tools, and a small mountain of materials (which they had bought and brought with them) into the African Lion enclosure. A few days after their arrival, two new spacious and elaborate platforms had been constructed on top of which the lions now enjoy surveying their surroundings and taking the sun. They had worn out their previous platforms, which even at the beginning were considerably less impressive than these new penthouse versions.

Our visitors were a unique group of people: skilled at this construction work, professionals in their other lives, moved by a spirit of love for one another and compassion toward others. The tradition of giving in this manner began several years ago as a way to honor one of their birthdays and recognize Thanksgiving as a time for...giving thanks for all the gifts that life had bestowed upon them. One year they took on a project in Madagascar, and they plan on going to Haiti next year for another. In the words of one of these unusual people: “We certainly felt that our efforts resulted in platforms that would be of enduring benefit to the animals. We came away closer as a family and with a greater appreciation for the work of organizations like WRR. The tour at the end was a perfect capstone that drove home the importance of treating all animals with dignity.”

Recognizing the dignity of all life and responding as needed with compassion—the more of these, the more there is for Thanksgiving. We at Wildlife Rescue honor these people and send them our gratitude for the gift and for the spirit in which it was given.
Following a period of cage rest, the duck was moved to a larger enclosure and started on a physical therapy regimen to strengthen his leg. He has enjoyed steady improvement with therapy. He is able to bear weight on his right leg, though he does exhibit a mild lameness, and is able to swim reasonably well in a pool. Proper weight-bearing and gait will be necessary for this bird to avoid long-term complications, such as “bumblefoot.” The nerve function of his leg, which was initially in doubt, is showing signs of improvement and will be closely monitored as the duck’s recovery continues.

While this animal’s rehabilitation is not yet complete, his progress is noteworthy not only in the recovery he has enjoyed but also in epitomizing the narrative of the urban wild animal. Tragically, the circumstance associated with his injury is all too common. Given the advocacy efforts and educational programs of not only WRR but also other community organizations, the public consciousness continues to grow. While these animals will remain victimized by human imposition and carelessness, it is of occasional comfort to see the miraculous recoveries and rehabilitation that these animals can experience. Misplaced fishing line, an unsupervised family pet, or an inattentive drive down a dark road can unintentionally and irrevocably change the life of a wild animal. We must work as individuals and as communities to decrease the incidence of these events. And, in turn, perhaps, be inspired by a wild animal overcoming all odds to walk again.

Ankur Gupta
VMD, WRR

COMMUNITY NEWS

WRR wins $10K in Austin’s Big Give: a grant for excellence in donor relations

WRR’s Mary O’Hara accepts check

I Live Here, I Give Here of Austin wanted a way to recognize nonprofit organizations who provide superior donor stewardship, so they launched a campaign last year to encourage people to tell why they give to a charity and what compels them to stay with the organization. WRR received 450 responses to an online survey asking these and similar questions.

- “I was thanked promptly and the impact was communicated.”
- “Each thank you is personal. This makes the donors feel a part of the group and encourages further contributions.”
- “…WRR keeps their donors informed, aware of the importance of the group’s work, and the deep abiding appreciation the group has for its donors.”
- “Communications from WRR are always touching, but they do not rely on a heart-breaking message to ‘guilt’ you into donating.”

At Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation, we could not save thousands of lives every year without the loyalty of our donors. We are deeply grateful to everyone who responded to the survey with such praise and especially appreciative of Mercedes Benz of Austin for their generosity in making the Big Prize possible. THANK YOU!!

And How YOU Can Help

Get ready for I Live Here, I Give Here’s exciting, intense 24-hour online giving campaign coming up on March 20-21 from 6am to 6pm. More than 300 nonprofits benefitted last year from a total of $2.8 million raised through your generosity! Central Texans are passionate, driven, and generous volunteers of their time, talent and resources. Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation is an active participating partner and supports the goal of nurturing our home-grown arts. So don’t miss the action, visit AmplifyATX.org and donate during the 2013 festival of funding.
Business as Usual

Wildlife Rescue’s people just doing what they do 365 days per year. As “baby season” grows near, we honor their hard work knowing that more is on the way.
HELP!

One of our trucks died and even the caretakers at Wildlife Rescue couldn't save it. If you have a pick-up (preferably compact, but anything in good condition will do) that you're ready to let go of, we could use it (and use it and use it...).

Please call Lynn at 830-336-2725 x309 about making the donation.

WILDLIFE RESCUE & REHABILITATION DONATION COUPON

WINTER 2014

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