

WILDLIFE RESCUE & REHABILITATION NEWS

APRIL 2015

Dear Members,

Amidst the bears and cougars, the raccoons, opossums, skunks, and the birds and the reptiles, lives an assortment of personalities. Each of these remarkable beings possesses much that makes them unique individuals. Though I would consider it intruding into their worlds, to have cameras poised to capture myriad meaningful moments would surely be both a treat and an educational opportunity for us. But since we respect their privacy, we must be content to observe what our limited time in their presence allows.

These are often incomparable experiences, those few minutes of standing silently by while two snakes commune in their sleek and seemingly soundless manner, or to watch quietly from a nearby window as a peahen takes her last breath and bids good bye to her sister...moments before her determined steps

take her to her final and chosen resting spot beneath a large oak. These are not moments one ever forgets; they are, in a sense, stolen but come with the consequence of enlightening the observer.

Having been that observer over the years I want always to do my best to bring you, our members, close to that interior and private world, the world we all work so hard to support and protect for the animals we cherish. Like this one that I remember so well...

He was not much more than a charred bit of whitetail fawn when he was found after the fire. His cries and the singed

fur told his story in a sadly stark manner. The fire had taken his home and we had no way of knowing if his mother and other members of the herd had perished

or managed to evade the blaze. To look into the eyes of one so young, so terrified and so void of hope, sears a visible memory into your brain and heart.

We had our work cut out for us as all physical contact was painful for him. But his wounds and scorched flesh were in need of help if they were to heal. We began the tedious process by restoring moisture to his parched skin; his dull, dry eyes could not bear the sting of sunlight so his room was cast in a dim, dawn-like light. A humidifier hummed life-giving moisture into the air both day and night. His bedding was dense, cooling fabric that cradled his taut, slender frame.

WRR animal care staff worked around the clock providing nourishing and soothing fluids to his desiccated mouth and throat, and over the days he began to suck on the soft nipple attached to his bottle of formula. Each day he lived in our care was another day that intensified our hope for this tiny shadow of a fawn. His courage and tol-

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WILDLIFE-RESCUE.ORG



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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Matching Gifts

Some ways of expressing your support for the life-saving work of Wildlife Rescue are easier than others, but all are equally important. You know when you donate to us that it supports the animals and our effort to help them and you want to make the most of your money. Corporate matching gift programs make your contribution go twice as far and sometimes farther. Matching gifts are like going shopping and getting a two for one deal. So it can make a big difference for you to find out if your company matches charitable donations. One in ten do.

Why do companies match donations? They want to support employees in supporting the causes that they care about. They want to help employees give more and help nonprofits provide service to the community, which most people agree is good both for companies and communities.

Which companies give matching gifts? They range from Fortune 500 corporations, such as Coca-Cola, to start-ups, like LinkedIn. They include Dell, State Farm, Starbucks, Verizon, Apple, HCA, Bank of America, Merrill Lynch, and DirectTV, among many others. Matching gift programs have various procedures for requesting a matching donation and companies match in various ways. Some match gifts for full-time employees, part-time workers, spouses, board members, and retirees. Some match only current employees. Matching gifts are offered by companies around the world.

How can you get your company to match your gift? Procedures and deadlines vary. Some companies give matching funds at the end of the calendar year, others a set number of months after the date of the donation, and some at the end of January, February, or March in the year subsequent to when the donation was made. There is generally a form to be filled out.

I encourage you to check with your Human Resource department to see if your employer offers corporate giving and how the process works if they do. If you are retired and the company you retired from does not allow retirees to participate in their matching gift program, you can still let your friends and family know about the opportunity to double their donation to Wildlife Rescue by checking with their employer about corporate matching gifts.

Why is this important? Doubling or even tripling contributions without spending any extra from your own funds is always a winning combination, for you and for the animals at Wildlife Rescue.

Cyndi Nelson
Executive Director
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erance of our persistence on his behalf seemed a sign of his utter resignation to his fate in the hands of his captors. For to him that is who we were.

His wary eyes flashed with recognition at our arrival in the dim light of his room. His hunger won out over fear, and it was that hunger that enabled his caretakers to gently swath his near naked skin with therapeutic ointments and salves as he slowly took in the warm, nourishing formula. Each time his skin was lubricated it would emit an odor of smoke and ash; it was as if the woods that burned around him as he ran for safety had scented his flesh and hooves. Now he was free of the flames but alone, and though safe, he wanted only to flee this world as he had fled the fires. But we were matched in our determination to save this small life.

The scorched fawn was not our only patient that season for it was early summer and the passing months had been ones of typical Texas drought. The oppressive heat had only worsened these conditions and the native wildlife were all suffering. The orphans were arriving by the box load every day and often into the night—these small, furred babies, whose mothers' milk had been so scant that they were found wandering and hungry and whose reed-like bodies were now ours to restore and make fat and healthy again.

The insect-eating birds were faring only slightly better as there was a robust population of grasshoppers who had moved into several nearby counties. But those who relied on seeds and berries were finding little to eat. So it was clear to each of us how we would be spending our days and nights.

Although there were hundreds and hundreds of famished bodies and souls, all wanting and needing much the same thing, there was a deep sense of collective calm about this sad population who now filled the WRR hospital. Perhaps because for so many the requirement was simple—they shared the common want for nourishment. The formulas

were as diverse as their numbers but the need varied little from being to being. The birds were fed several times in an hour and were put to bed with the setting of the sun; the mammals ate less often but required their nourishment well into the night. For us, the single focus was keeping every one alive. The entire hospital was a whirl of activity. Making formula and cleaning bottles, bowls and bedding defined our days, nights and very lives. And for all those newborns and youngsters whose needs were straightforward, there was another patient whose life and needs were far more complicated.

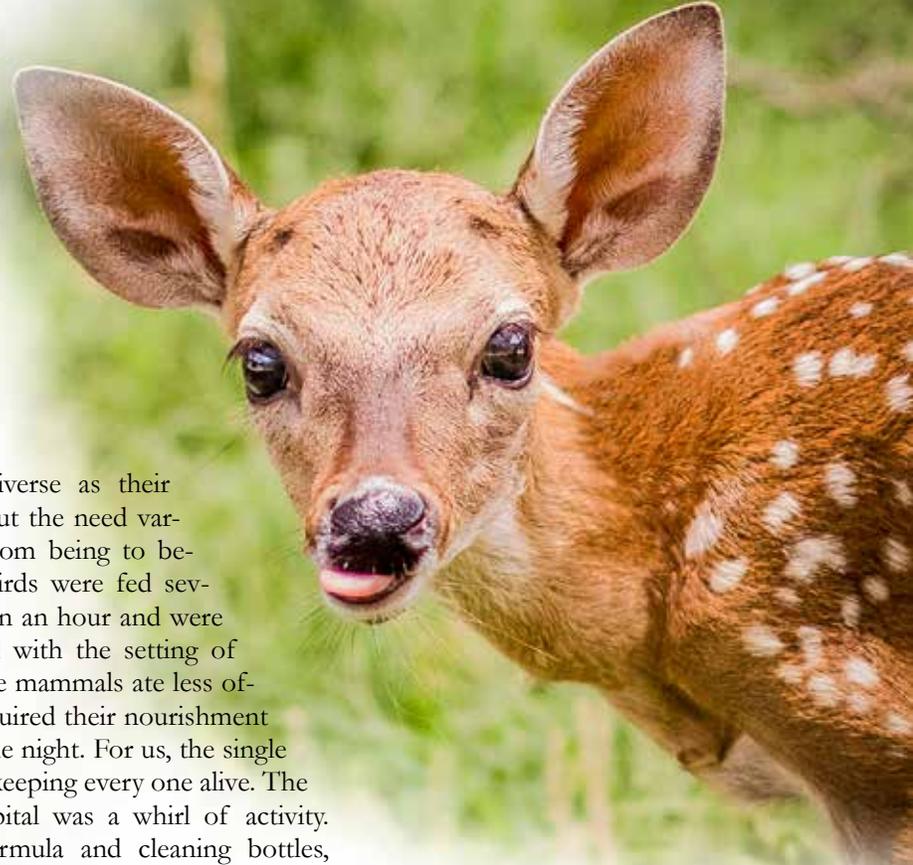
In the weeks that had passed the once barely recognizable fawn had shed much of his dead and burnt fur. His skin had large patches that were healthy-looking and even soft; this was quite a change from the crispy, dry coating that covered him upon arrival. A pink plumpness covered that once slight frame and it was a great relief to see that soothing salves were no longer necessary and that our fire fawn could be finally placed outside. It was not that he had become tame for he was as wild as the day he was found, but his weeks of isolation during the critical time he would have been closest to his mother and his herd had changed this unfortunate fawn. Now he and we were faced with yet another challenge. Somewhere deep in his deer heart was the knowledge of his true nature. In that place that humans cannot fathom there was the light of wildness, the spark that was his understanding that he was a whitetail deer. But his time in our care had dimmed that light and clouded his under-

standing. Now when finally he could be in the company of his own kind it was that very company from which he fled.

The growing herd of juvenile whitetail who were gracing our fawn yard were a curious lot. They would, one by one and some in twos and threes, approach this odd looking newcomer with intense curiosity. To them he brought a peculiar scent of smoke; for him, they smelled of grass and oak leaves for there had been gentle rains enhancing the landscape and all this was new and strange to him. When they offered to lick his new skin he leapt and bolted to avoid their touch. When they pursued him he dropped, hoping the tall grass would conceal him and his fear. Human intervention had once been the answer to his survival but now he must be on his own, he must face this new old world and find his way to reconnect with it, for in doing so he would once again find himself.

It was painful to see him run, sad to see that he felt no association with the very deer who must become his new family. When he arrived so terribly burned all we wanted was for him to survive, and

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now with his physical life restored what was to be done to restore his spirit?

The herd was becoming independent, there were no bottles of formula, no need for the watchful eyes of the caretakers, but in our daily rounds we always saw that lone figure, the now only slightly scarred body who chose to keep to himself, to remain aloof and a sad mystery to us all.

The months passed and with that the summer; fall was drawing near and the white-tail would soon be set free. The release site had been chosen; as always it was privately owned land where no humans, guns or threats to the wildlife could enter. The first herd was few in number, only twenty yearlings would be introduced to the several hundred acre woods that were dense with trees, thick with underbrush and complete with a small creek. As the deer were urged into the darkened, padded trailer the fire fawn was caught up in the movement. He tried to avoid the crowd but his preference for isolation was ignored by the others also trying to avoid capture. There was no way to tell these reticent recipients of our hard work that at the end of this trauma will be what they want most. Now they were all in this together and as the trailer pulled away from the sanctuary inside there was a silent calm.

The thick padding kept them safe in the darkness as the miles disappeared along with

WRR behind them. What goes through those sharp, complicated deer minds during this journey back to the wild? Their keen sense of smell informs them of the world passing-by outside that trailer but whatever other communications take place among them, it remains a mystery to us. We only know what we see upon their arrival, but on that particularly damp, cool autumn day we were to have a glimpse into that private world of those gentle beings.

Each of these whitetail fawns came to us hungry and frightened but one *particular* fawn had been trapped and burned in a fire and he was now once again our focus of concern. But our concern was unfounded. Something happened during those few hours in the space of that quiet trailer. Something happened that we will never understand and could only observe with grateful eyes.

The trailer was parked and as its large gates opened the mist and warm sunlight mingled, passed into the interior and brought light to the waiting herd. There, with ears pricked and noses quivering, they stood awaiting their new freedom. This was a scene we

had witnessed hundreds of times, whitetail deer about to rejoin their lives with the wild that was their natural home. But today there was an added “spark” to this familiar scene. For there at the very front of that transport, standing calmly alongside his friends was one particular fawn, one former patient who had come to WRR burned and frightened and who had remained so until this very day. But somehow in that darkened trailer, in the company of his own kind, he had rekindled his spark and once again come to understand that he too was a whitetail deer and that now he was ready to go back to the world he had known not so long ago.

Lynne Cunniff





News from the Sanctuary

The hills around Kendalia are dotted with neon green bursts of color – evidence of new growth and that winter is making her last stand. Our residents, human and animal alike, are grateful for the respite from the chilly winds and freezing rain. And none happier, perhaps, than our bachelor group of long-tailed Macaques, who are the newest occupants of our huge Porcupine-Primate enclosure. Formerly housed in Macaque enclosure #3, these six gentlemen spent the winter biding their time and working out their hierarchical differences in preparation for the move into their new home.

After a period of getting to know one another in the close quarters of their new warm house, they were given access to their new enclosure (which they share with three African-Crested Porcupines). It was an exciting moment for staff as well as the monkeys, I'm sure, as three of them came bursting out of the chute, eager to lay claim to the best trees. Slowly, the other three macaques made their way out of the warm house and into their new space. They soon discovered that tree space was not really at a premium and took off into their new forest to look around. It was so satisfying to see the culmination of months of patient in-

roduction and other preparation by our sanctuary staff pay off.

Elsewhere on property, the farmed animals are sporting new spring looks with freshly-shorn coats and neatly trimmed hooves. Life in the pasture continues to be peaceful and pleasant while across the way our new fawn yard is a beehive of activity. Thanks to a grant from the Stevens Foundation in Kerrville, the fawns and adult deer have a greatly expanded space in which to grow and strengthen before release. But there is still much work to be done, as we scramble to complete construction of new fawn shelters and finish treating the fence line with sealant. Completion of this task owes a great deal to the help of our recent volunteer group from the University of Arizona Alternative Spring Break Program.

We were fortunate to have the University of Arizona volunteers on-site for three full days! They were tireless workers and brought a great energy to the place. In addition to the fawn yard, they crafted enrichment toys for the birds, helped prepare the Porcupine-Primate yard for occupation, and created a hammock for one of our pumas out of donated fire hose. He hasn't taken to lying on the hammock

yet, but he lies under it all the time – it's his new favorite spot! The volunteers also completed a fence connecting an old fence to the fawn shelter. With this completed, we can now move llama and donkeys back to the water bird pasture. Not only will this give them much more space, but they'll be able to socialize with their old friend Freddy, another donkey.

The Hospital is also seeing its fair share of activity as we have officially entered into Baby Season. Every day we receive dozens of baby opossums, squirrels, cottontails, and other animals all in need of our care. It is an around-the-clock job, and our apprentices are unbelievably dedicated to the care and rehabilitation of these tiny babies. We are so lucky to have the wonderful apprentice caretakers that we do, because they are the backbone of our rehab and release program. We are anticipating another very busy spring and summer, but we are ready. A big thank you to all of you who have helped us weather this past winter—be you staff, volunteer, or donor—because, as a fine expression says, it takes a village!

Sarah Hanners
Director of Animal Operations

From the WRR Sherman Animal Care Complex

Spring has sprung in San Antonio! For the staff at the Sherman Animal Care Complex that means busy season is upon us. From the outside the it may look like a quiet, serene facility, but inside there is a flurry of activity! Most native wildlife have their babies between March and September, and as the main drop-off location for injured, sick and orphaned

We spend the time prior to baby season preparing our animal care staff and volunteers to assist with the influx of animals. New animal care apprentices are trained to perform basic animal examinations on each incoming animal, to assess their overall health, and to perform triage care to address any immediate needs. Sherman Animal Care Complex vol-

a baby bird who has lost his parents) to more complex (freeing a deer trapped in a fence), and the training sessions educate and prepare volunteers to rescue wildlife from these various situations.

One of the most rewarding experiences for our staff is being involved in releasing animals back to the wild. After successfully raising or rehabilitating an animal there is no better reward for a wildlife caretaker than watching the animal return to his/her natural environment to thrive and continue with life. That is our goal with every animal, and our staff, apprentices and interns enjoy seeing their hard work pay off.

The Sherman Animal Care Complex is always in need of additional supplies and volunteer help during baby season, so if you are interested in getting involved or know someone who might be, please fill out a volunteer application on our website. Another easy way to help WRR is to donate items like bleach, laundry detergent, linens and dish soap that we use on a daily basis. We would not be able to rescue and rehabilitate these animals without assistance from our generous donors, so thank you for supporting WRR!

Carolyn Asselborn
Sherman Complex Manager



unteers are trained on proper feeding, cleaning and observation techniques for baby squirrels and baby songbirds and work side-by-side with WRR staff, apprentices and interns to care for these animals. Hands-on feeding and care of orphaned wildlife is a very rewarding experience and is always a favorite activity of our volunteers.

We also train our volunteers how to properly rescue different species

wildlife in San Antonio the Sherman Complex receives thousands of songbirds, squirrels and opossums – just to name a few! – every year. A lot of hard work and dedication goes into caring for such a variety of animals.

of animals. Since WRR staff are so busy tending to the needs of animals currently in our care, we rely heavily on volunteers to rescue animals and bring them to our facility for continued care. These rescues can range from simple (picking up



Big Give S.A. is part of the national day of giving called Give Local America. There will be prizes and you can help Wildlife Rescue win extra money for bringing in the most donations in Bexar County. All donations are made on-line May, 5 from midnight to 11:59 p.m.—go to thebiggivesa.org and select the WRR donation page. And please send messages to your friends and family and ask them to make their donation on-line, directed to WRR, on May 5th. With your help we can make Big Give S.A. turn into Big Receive WRR.

Banishing Bags to Save Wildlife

Since the beginning of the widespread distribution of plastics in the 1950's, the world has witnessed the ever-growing problem of plastic debris in both terrestrial and marine environments. Human carelessness combined with the fact that much litter will eventually find its way to the ocean via runoff or wind have created a serious danger to marine life, especially considering that plastics do not degrade quickly. Animals then often become entangled in, or mistakenly ingest, plastic bags and other plastic debris items.¹

For many species of marine life, such as sea turtles, it is very difficult to tell the difference between a jellyfish (bottom) and a plastic bag (right). According to the NOAA, the Texas shoreline is considered critical habitat for the Kemp's Ridley sea turtle, among many other highly endangered species of marine life, who might fatally ingest stray plastic while searching for a jellyfish to feed on. For this reason scenes such as the one pictured above, of a deceased juvenile Kemp's Ridley sea turtle have become all too common along the Gulf Coast (the orange spray paint is used to deter turtle shell poachers and to indicate that the body has been examined).

In addition to these cases of mistaken identity, we must also consider the overall environmental cost of plastic bag manufacturing. The EPA

estimates that Americans use 380 billion petroleum-based plastic bags each year, requiring approximately 12 million barrels of oil to produce. This process requires that oil be not only shipped over long distances to refineries, but also that additional air and water pollution occur when crude oil is processed.

In light of this, many lawmakers around the world have sought to reduce the use of plastic bags. According to a press release by the European Union, plastic bag production and consumption is to be cut drastically in member countries. Here in the United States cities such as San Francisco, Los Angeles, Seattle and

many others have successfully banned plastic bags with the goal of reducing the environmental impact of their respective populations.

Texans have also been working hard to ensure that their cities are more environmentally responsible, banning single-use plastic bags in Austin, Brownsville, Dallas, Fort Stockton, Freer, Kermit, Laguna Vista, Laredo,

Port Aransas, South Padre Island and Sunset Valley. In fact, Texas legislators have even visited the idea of statewide bans on plastic bags before: in 2011 (SB 908/HB 1913). While these bills were not passed, their consideration indicates that many Texans are ready to leave single-use bags behind in exchange for sustainable alternatives. Still, not everyone agrees. Governor Greg Abbott sees these and other pro-environmental bans as a sign that Texas is becoming "California-ized." According to the Texas Tribune, this is not a new argument for Abbott. During his tenure as the state attorney general he held that bans on plastic bags, which included a fee, were against state law.

So, what is the big deal about banning plastic bags? Many plastic consumers and producers argue that these items can simply be recycled post-consumption. In fact according to Plastics Europe, if Europeans were to simply recycle used thermoplastics (plastics that can be remolded/reused) they would be saving the equivalent of 25% of France's annual oil consumption and reducing carbon emissions by 9 million tons each year. In this case it is important to note that such an approach requires a widespread change in behavior. This is a change that we have yet to see in practice here in the United States. In fact, according to the EPA, only 9% of the 32 million tons of plastic waste generated in 2012 found its way to a recy-



cling bin. This is true despite widespread efforts to promote recycling. In light of information like this, we must consider both what we recycle and what we consume in the first place. Citywide bans on plastic bags may not solve the problem all together, but consider this: With participation from large Texas cities such as Austin and Dallas alone, nearly 2 million Americans are coming together to put the environment first. That is certainly a step in the right direction, and something worth protecting and expanding upon in the years to come.

Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation has joined this campaign by pairing with organizations such as Texas Campaign for the Environment, to reduce single-use plastic bag usage in our state.

Myстера Samuelson, M.S.
Director of Education
and Outreach

¹Barnes, D. K. A., Galgani, F., Thompson, R. C., & Barlaz, M. (2009). *Accumulation and fragmentation of plastic debris in global environments*. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B*, 364(1526), 1985-1998.



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