

Wildlife Rescue News

WILDLIFE-RESCUE.ORG / SUMMER 2024



Dear WRR Member,

Recently I was called on to help a woman whose son wanted to purchase a kinkajou as a "pet." She asked me to give her several reasons she could use to dissuade him. Thinking back to the first kinkajou we rescued, that was easy to do.

It was 1979 and Wildlife Rescue was still in its infancy, still located in my house, and had yet to have anything close to a true sanctuary. The animals had to find sanctuary in the two-bedroom home, with its small kitchen and large living room, that was shared by two bobcats, one albino skunk, several cages holding baby raccoons, and me. When I was asked to take in a kinkajou, I was not sure where

or how he would fit in. But when I saw where he was living, the decision was made for me.

Like far too many wild animals who are exploited by the wild animal "pet" trade, this young arboreal resident of the rainforest, the natural home he had never known, was confined in poor conditions, in his case the back of a feed store. The room was dark and his cage was a 4' x 6' wire box caked with feces and old food. Though I had little to offer him, I knew he could not stay there. He had been purchased from a local "pet" shop and had ended up in this dismal setting.

It may be difficult to imagine comparatively but picture a "normal" house with doors on each room. In my case, I had

replaced bedroom doors with screen doors and in one of these rooms were the first two bobcats WRR had taken in; the living room was furnished, on one end, with large tree limbs, all the storage cabinets had animal bedding and sleeping boxes inside, the kitchen cabinets mimicked these, and there was a large sleeping box on top of the refrigerator. The **kinkajou**, enjoying his first opportunity to use his short strong legs and prehensile tail to reach something higher than the floor, chose this as his hiding place. Because, like most of the other residents, he was nocturnal, I would see little of him during the day. But once the sun set he

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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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Lynn's Letter

would come to life and take every opportunity to leap from limb to bookcase to refrigerator to linen cabinet and tops of doorways for some invigorating exercise. With

manner in which he would grab a piece of juicy fruit, tilt his head back, and let the sweet nectar trail down his throat, told me where he belonged. It was equally clear that the life he and countless other captive kinkajous were forced into would never come close to where they truly should be. Even now,



Kinkajou eating banana

the **albino skunk** roaming the hardwood floors and the bobcats peering out from their room, there were no dull moments as I sat and fed the orphaned **raccoons** and others who were in my care in those early days.

It was not an ideal situation—far, far from it—but for the kinkajou it was a type of liberation. For me it was a moment-to-moment stark illustration of what wild animals are forced to endure when bred, sold, and bought as household “pets.” I watched this intelligent, agile, oddly built mammal with his long, muscular tail, his round head and ears, and his long, narrow probing tongue, and it was easy to see how Nature had built him for a life in the green, misty dampness of the tree-studded rainforest. It was clear that everything about his body, the way he moved, the



Red Necked Wallaby

living in a two-bedroom house making the best of a better but not nearly good enough situation was not enough.

I wonder how much thought we give to the plight of wild animals in captivity, captivity for any reason, even those who have to live in sanctuaries. Does it ever occur to us what their lives must be like when their genetic histories are so rich and designed for close relationships to Nature? Humans



Owl Monkey

have grown so accustomed to seeing these animals in zoos, theme parks, and circuses that I fear we forget this is never a life they would choose for themselves.

Picture this: a lush, green rainforest, the quiet only broken by the sounds of birds and other native animals, the incredible diversity of species who call it home and whose ancestors have done the same for countless generations; the birds and insects, the reptiles, all who share this environment in relative peace. Once upon a time, this was their home.

When we see wild animals advertised for sale—adorable **baby monkeys, kinkajous, coatis, wallabies,** and countless others—does our sense of them harken back to the times we have seen these very animals in captive settings rather than where they live in the wild? Most likely it does and that is a real tragedy because not recognizing that stark difference makes it easy for us to assume that the captive life for wild animals is perfectly suitable, when it is far from it.

Every time WRR has provided sanctuary to a wild animal wronged by the profoundly cruel “pet” trade, we have taken them from cages in backyards, chained to trees, confined in dingy backrooms or basements—



White Nosed Coati

always they have been held where they have little to no freedom, little to no access to the outdoors, where instead they are kept close to their human captor, used as a novelty to be shown to friends, and on and on. And yet, every one of these people will tell you how much they love this animal. It is a strange and unhealthy form of love and one the animal does not benefit from.

It will never be enough, the sanctuary we do provide, even with its natural settings, tree-filled enclosures, and interaction primarily with their own species rather than humans, but for the hundreds of animals in our care it is a tiny step back to the world where Nature would have placed them.

For the **kinkajous** at WRR, I can tell you that, several years ago, we constructed an enclosure I had long dreamed of. It covers three live-oak trees that are over 25 ft. tall. The **kinkajous** and the neighboring **owl monkeys**, both being nocturnal, spend their days sleeping in the treetops and their nights climbing about as they see fit. It is not enough but it is that tiny step back toward allowing them to reclaim a modicum of their history and the kind of lives they should naturally have had.

Numbers in Action

January–June 18, 2024



**4,812 ANIMALS
RESCUED**

**2,777 Mammals
1,930 Birds
84 Reptiles
1 Amphibian**



**6,967 HOTLINE
CALLS**

280 VOLUNTEERS



**4,250 VOLUNTEER
HOURS**

Baby Shower for Wildlife



and release thousands of wild animals. Every one of these babies receives specialized care aimed at saving their lives and relieving their suffering. This level of care requires significant resources to help each baby regain strength, learn essential survival skills, and ultimately thrive in their natural habitat.



We are happy to announce that WRR's annual Baby Shower for Wildlife was a resounding success! This year's event surpassed expectations, thanks to support from our dedicated members and caring sponsors.

We extend our thanks to all WRR members who attended the event and generously donated. Your involvement is crucial in helping us care for the orphaned, injured, and displaced wild baby animals who are brought our doors every day. Special appreciation also goes to our sponsors—Chewy, Whole Earth Provision Co., Far Out Creative, Parker's Ice Creams, Grey Moon Vintage, The Good Kind, River

City Strength, and Freetail Brewery—who kindly donated items for the raffle baskets and silent auction.

Thanks to sponsor assistance, monetary contributions, and in-kind donations, we made significant progress in helping to accomplish our mission. Every donation, no matter the size, played a vital role in the success of this event. We are grateful for your dedication and unwavering support.



Our busiest time of the year, wildlife baby season, spans February through September and often extends beyond. During this critical period, our dedicated staff and volunteers rescue, rehabilitate,



We love hosting our annual Baby Shower for Wildlife because it gives WRR members a unique opportunity to learn firsthand how their support directly benefits over 6,000 baby opossums, squirrels, songbirds, raccoons, and other species in need.

Together, we are making a difference in the lives of wild babies, giving them a second chance to thrive in the wild. Your ongoing support is the heartbeat of our mission. We couldn't do it without you.

Sanctuary Updates



The Wildlife Rescue & Rehabilitation Sanctuary continues to provide a natural, peaceful setting for over 600 permanent resident animals. Our commitment requires year-round attention to the details of care for every bird, mammal, and reptile who lives here. This includes appropriate meals prepared by staff in our Nutrition Center, maintaining a high level of varying and interesting enrichment, and giving particular attention to animal enclosures and the plants and other features that make them unique. Here are some updates we hope you will find interesting.

Coatis are among the many animals we offer haven; these close relatives of raccoons are native to Central and South America as well as parts of Mexico. In recent years, we've seen an increase in the number of coatis needing sanctuary as they have become popular and profitable among those who exploit wild animals. To make space for them we have expanded and improved their enclosure. Over time, some sections had become overgrown with juniper and vines; while we encourage the growth of dense underbrush, too much of a good thing can choke out living and roaming areas that the animals enjoy. Clearing



some of this understory made room for new shelters, pools, and shaded areas, which are particularly important when summer temperatures soar. These additions were made possible due to the contributions of donors and hard work of volunteers.

Over the past weeks, timed to take advantage of the much-needed rainfall, WRR staff spread hundreds of square feet of grass seed to provide lush, inviting greenery in this enclosure and select areas around the sanctuary. We're also in the early stages of designing a "skywalk" that will connect the oak trees within the enclosure. While this endeavor is labor-intensive and requires additional materials, it will offer the coatis even more opportunities for

exploration and enrichment. One of our goals as well is to involve our community in this project. We are engaging volunteers in the construction of the skywalk as well as other projects that directly benefit the animals.

At present we are caring for 11 coatis in our sanctuary, and since we frequently receive calls to rescue more of them, the number will likely be growing. With members' continued support, these and other important projects will be completed and we can continue bettering the lives of residents.

In addition to our ongoing efforts to enhance the coati enclosure, we are proud to highlight some of the other significant improvements funded by your donations this past year.

• **Water Lines for Pigs:** During the summer of 2023 we installed new water lines for one of our largest herds of pigs. This included a reserve tank that was a real challenge as their enclosure is located on 16 of

Continued on page 7: Sanctuary

The Sad but True Impact of the Wild Animal "Pet" Trade

Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation (WRR) includes a sanctuary dedicated to the care of nearly 600 permanent residents encompassing a diverse range of both native and non-native species. These animals, each with their own unique story, have faced damaging circumstances that left them diminished in their ability to manage autonomous lives, permanently injured, or unable for other reasons to return to the wild.



Bobcats are the most common wild cats in North America, resulting in frequent contact with humans. WRR has rescued hundreds of bobcats who have been habituated to human contact, declawed, and even had their teeth removed in attempts to make them suitable "pets." Once this permanent damage is done, the cats cannot be set free. The bobcats in our sanctuary live in compatible groups; though they are solitary in the wild, in captivity they enjoy each other's company. There is also one blind bobcat and two others who have impaired movement due to neurological damage. Their specialized care and environmental accommodations



are a high priority for WRR and enable them to have a rich and interesting life.

Rehabilitation and release are part of the core missions of Wildlife Rescue. We prioritize returning animals to their home territories. Unfortunately, this is not always possible. **Skunks**



Left: Bobcat. Top: Lemur. Above, left to right: Spider Monkey, Gray Fox, Marmoset.

and **opossums**, for example, face significant challenges due to urbanization. They are often taken in as orphans and treated as if they are "pets." This disrupts satisfaction of their dietary requirements leaving them unhealthy and at risk of disease and early death. Annually, we receive dozens of these mammals who have become "too much" for their "owners" to handle. Case by case, we work to rehabilitate them teaching them to forage, hunt when necessary

and identify their natural food sources and to avoid human interaction. Overall, this is successful, but we do have a few permanent residents in our sanctuary. Among them are a skunk whose scent glands were removed making him vulnerable to predators, and an opossum with a metabolic bone disease resulting in limited mobility. These two animals live together in our sanctuary.

Spider monkeys are not bred in captivity. The pet trade relies on paid poachers shooting the mothers in the wild and taking their babies off their lifeless bodies. Those monkeys who survive this trauma, and many of them do not, are confined to small cages and kennels, a stark contrast to the vast treetops and freedom they are used to. When

spider monkeys are brought to WRR we work diligently to integrate them into small troops. Their enclosures like all of those at our sanctuary, are spacious and tree-studded. For these primates, spending their days in the treetops must be especially comforting.

Though popular as "pets," **marmosets** are a species often used in laboratory research. As "model organisms," they are considered easy to maintain and breed in laboratory settings.

Their lives consist of genetic and biological testing while living in small cages often confined their entire lives. This is in stark contrast to their nature as socially dependent and highly intelligent primates. We are caring for five marmosets at Wildlife Rescue. We go to great lengths to meet their complex needs, providing large topped-over enclosures that protect them from predators and warm-houses since they are sensitive to temperature changes. Their diet is carefully prepared with small pieces of food and a variety of insects, their favorite treat.

Many influences go into why a species can become a target for the "pet" trade. Media attention is often a factor; the Western world saw a rise in the demand for lemurs as their popularity in animated cartoons became more prevalent. These animals are both endangered and an internationally protected species. But these laws do not protect species who are captive born of captive bred-parents, hence the reason they are brought to us in overwhelming numbers. **WRR is home to 26 lemurs**, ring-tailed, brown, and ruffed. The rise in these requests has Wildlife Rescue looking to build and expand enclosures.

While we strive to create environments that closely mimic their natural habitats and meet their complex needs, true progress requires broader awareness and action. **By not participating in the exotic "pet" trade and advocating for the protection of wildlife, you can help reduce the demand for these animals and ensure they remain where they truly belong—in the wild.** Together, we can diminish the wild animal "pet" trade and give these animals the lives they deserve.

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Sanctuary Updates



the most remote acres of the Sanctuary. It was particularly important that we address this as water access had become unreliable for these pigs.

· **Wildlife Hospital and Vet Clinic:** We have invested in new generators to ensure uninterrupted care for wildlife patients. These generators are a crucial addition to our infrastructure guaranteeing that our hospital and veterinary clinic can reliably perform surgeries, keep incubators functioning, carry out lifesaving medical procedures, warm infant formula, wash mountains of animal food bowls, and so much more even in the most inclement of weather conditions.

We cannot possibly overstate the importance of the role that you and your donations play in bringing each of these and countless other projects to fruition. Though you hear us say it over and over, the fact is that if your donations stopped coming into Wildlife Rescue, all of these plans would grind to a halt.

Those of us who work at WRR may be the people who carry out these tasks but it is ***each of you, our members***, who provide the fuel that makes our work and the rescuing of so many animals a reality. ***For that, we are personally and forever grateful.***

MARK YOUR 2024

Calendar!



Animal Food Drive
(Online)

Monday, August 19 to
Monday, August 26

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Big Give

(Online Campaign)

Thursday, September 18 to
Friday, September 19

~

WRR Artistic Animals



(In-Person Event)
TBD Fall 2024

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Giving Tuesday

(Online Campaign)
Tuesday, December 3



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Sights from the Sanctuary



Clockwise from top: Dove, Vulture, Blue Jays, Macaque, Coati, Bear.