

Wildlife Rescue News

WILDLIFE-RESCUE.ORG / FALL 2025



Dear WRR Members,

During a recent conversation with a Wildlife Rescue volunteer, as we talked about rescuing opossums I was taken back to the very early days of this work and what it meant to keep WRR alive along with the animals I managed to rescue. WRR, as you all know, has humble roots and I always keep those roots fresh in my mind.

Those early days were filled with hardship, but there were always precious moments of small victories. The organization at the beginning had only the meager support of a paper route I threw from two to six every morning. WRR was just getting known and

recognized in the community so the calls were in the dozens, not the thousands they are today. But every call was a direct link to animals in trouble and I had the great good fortune to be on the front lines in those days getting out at all hours and to the animals firsthand.

The calls, though not very different from what we hear today, were less diverse. Most of the raccoons were those who had babies in attics, birds were nestlings needing only to be placed back in their nests, opossums were victims of dogs and cars. But there were also those calls at odd hours of the night when native wildlife were out and about living their

lives and avoiding contact with humans.

But not all opossums managed the latter successfully and the call on this night was for a mother opossum who had “offended” the wrong person, someone with a gun. The woman caller could only say that her neighbor shot an opossum and the poor animal had only made it as far as her alley before she crawled under some bushes to hide. It was well after midnight but even though the caller lived south of downtown San Antonio I had time to get to the injured animal before heading for my paper route on the far north side.

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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

Continued from page 1

The city, that time of night in those days, was unexpectedly dark. I found the general neighborhood on my map but was surprised when there were very few houses and mostly local small businesses, the only one open being a bar. It was also the only place where I could find someone to give me better directions. I parked and made my way down the dark sidewalk, flashlight and blanket in hand, to where people had gathered. A dim light and music that often accompanies drinking, poured out of the small building to illuminate and entertain the several men



who preferred the outdoors and were talking, beers in hands, and laughing. Being just under six feet tall and having very long blonde hair, I should not have been surprised that I was the last thing anyone expected to see at that early morning hour. What I was doing with my blanket and flashlight I am sure no one could imagine. Silence struck the crowd and the dim light and muted music dominated.

There are images, visions, and moments that once experienced stay with us forever. The looks on the faces of those men was one of those...I may as well have dropped from the sky for all they could tell.



But I was on a mission and I had to find the opossum. I spoke up and introduced myself, which didn't go over very well and was met with more silence. I went on to say that one of their neighbors had called me about an opossum... nothing. So I further explained that she was injured; hoping to at least get a grin, I added, the opossum is injured, not your neighbor... more silence. It seemed the next best step was to enlist their help so I showed them the address, explained that I needed to get into the alley behind that house, and I wanted their help in finding an injured animal.

Finally, I had broken through their bewilderment—perhaps asking for help is the universal language that moves humans to kind actions. One fellow stepped out from the back of the small crowd and asked to see my note. I thanked him and showed him the sketchy information I had. He passed my little piece of paper to all his friends and, one by one, the thaw set in and in only moments I was surrounded by the entire group of men. Some wanted to know what I was doing out alone; others simply didn't understand how it came about that I was there so I told them about my organization and what it was that Wildlife Rescue does and that I had started it and

did not yet have much help so I would go out alone to get animals.

Though I was not sure they thought it worth all the trouble, every single one of those men chose to help me that night. We must have been quite a sight half a dozen men and me, blanket and flashlight still in hand, as we made our way past several buildings to that utterly dark alley where our search began for the poor, injured opossum. Our squad of rescuers were thorough, but with only one flashlight we had to proceed in a closeknit knot, bush to bush, where the men gently parted branches to peer into the meager stream of light. It was the fourth tangle of brambles where we found her. As I reached in to gently collect the opossum I heard a soft shuffling of shoes behind me; opossums had an unwarranted bad reputation and it had not occurred to my rescuers that she was harmless.



I recognized an opportunity that might change their minds. As I cradled her bloody body in the blanket and lay her in the grass, the unexpected events of that night were not yet over. From the warm safety of this injured mother crawled several fluffy,



frightened baby opossums. There we all were, total strangers only a short time earlier, in a dark alley in the dead of night in total silence looking on at this innocent, helpless mother animal and her little ones who wanted only to be alive. Apprehension and fear vanished; every one of those men wanted to know how they could help, if she would be alright, and what was I going to do with her. I assured them that she would be fine, that I had a veterinarian who would help her, and that, once she was well, I would set her and her young free.

They insisted on carrying her back to my car and as we said our good nights I wanted to hug each one of those wonderful fellows. I knew that would seem weird so I didn't, but we all shook hands and I gave them my phone number and thanked them. They all watched as I drove away and I like to think that they, as I do, remember our encounter and that rescue fondly, and that from then on they thought kindly of opossums. I would have no way of knowing but I hoped they

kept my number and would even call if they ever found an animal in trouble.

It is these all too rare, but precious, moments when we have the opportunity to show kindness and put our fears, worries, and preconceived notions aside. I was never afraid that night but I knew there was a chance I was being foolhardy; not that it mattered, I saw no options other than rescuing that opossum and, as it turned out, in doing so maybe some hearts and minds were opened.

The mother and her babies survived, despite being shot several times with a pellet gun.

I often look back on those early days of Wildlife Rescue and miss those almost magical moments of connecting with the most unlikely people and by joining with them, making all our lives a bit better.

Lynn



WRR 212 acre Kendalia sanctuary, grounds, buildings and enclosures from above.

Looking Back, Looking Ahead



Whitetail fawns in rehab in Kendalia.

I have been working alongside Lynn Cuny at Wildlife Rescue for 25 years, ever since the turn of the millennium. That puts the start of my tenure at roughly the halfway point in WRR's lifetime, which began in 1977. Things have certainly changed during this time with both budget and animal numbers burgeoning in synchrony.

Operations were first based in Lynn's San Antonio home and backyard, then moved for a few years to Leon Springs, then to Boerne (where they were when I

met Lynn), and finally to Kendalia. Coincidentally, the funds to buy the Kendalia property were donated just before I came along so I have been pleased to help with raising the money to build the buildings and enclosures, the clinic and hospital, and all the rest of what it takes to do the work of caring for thousands of animals.

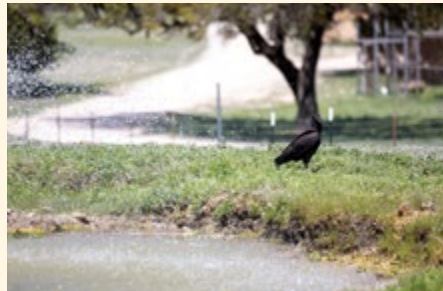
Lynn spearheaded this from the first day and it has been her vision and willpower, combined with inspiring confidence in donors and foundations, that raised the funds that supported it. She and they realized that Wildlife Rescue was one of the best ways to make this part of the world a better place for animals and the people living amongst them.

During the years leading up to 2010 we realized that Wildlife Rescue was going to need

expanded facilities to provide for the expanded numbers of ill, injured, and orphaned wildlife that were being brought in, chiefly as a result of urban growth and people's belief in WRR's ability to help with its casualties.

About this time Roger and Phyllis Sherman, longtime friends of Wildlife Rescue, were deciding to close their family foundation and wanted to ensure that the remaining funds were well used for purposes that were important to them. This led them first to WRR and, after considerable discussion and planning, to the decision to buy a building in San Antonio that could serve as an Intake and temporary care facility until arriving animals could be taken to Kendalia for rehabilitation.

As with the Kendalia operations, over time this one also had to grow



Photos of our Kendalia sanctuary, clockwise from left: Large rehab enclosures; aerial view of animal enclosures (photo: Christine Williams); one of the three waterbird ponds (photo: Jay Kazen); preserved stone building now WRR Admin offices (photo: Jay Kazen); aerial of fawn enclosure (photo: Jay Kazen).

Below: Juvenile raccoon in veterinary clinic (photo Jennifer Leigh Warner); infant squirrel being fed (photo Christine Williams).



to meet the demand and moved a couple of times before arriving at its most recent location on Rustic Lane. What began as an effort to expedite care of native wildlife in need was a great success, but the numbers at the beginning were half what they are today, which meant that the earlier efficiencies and responsiveness were being swamped along with the resources of both staff and funds dedicated to providing for them.

Animal caretaking is emotionally and physically demanding work, for obvious reasons; watching young animals die after receiving the very best care one can offer does not come easy to anyone, especially the mostly young people who give that care. For this and many other reasons turnover is high. Further, it is one thing for demand to double over a few years

and another to double the money, staff, and volunteers necessary to sustain it. The Shermans have been extremely helpful and a number of longtime supporters provided generously in their wills for WRR's work; with this and help from several other enormously caring and kind people, we have managed to get along even though the necessary resources have been strained as the demand has continued to increase.

For about two thirds of Wildlife Rescue's existence it did its work solely from single locations outside San Antonio, and for the last third it added to this a facility inside the City. But it has become time to combine services in Kendalia where with 212 acres there is space, staff housing, hospital and veterinary clinic, enclosures, quarantine

facilities (when needed), storage, maintenance, and more. Efficient use of resources will increase when a single venue replaces two that are 50 miles apart as well as will responsiveness to the dire conditions that animals often arrive with.

Still, I have to say that it saddens me to make this change in spite of its necessity under present circumstances and the gains that will come with it. Having the San Antonio outreach location made good sense when it began and for many years afterward, and in the best of all worlds where all necessary resources flowed abundantly and fewer nonhuman animals were put in jeopardy by the actions of their human neighbors, this necessity might not have presented itself. But reality is what it is and we must bow before it while doing all we can to turn it to the benefit of wildlife.

Craig Brestrup, PHD
WRR Development

From the Executive Director

Dear WRR Members,

Before becoming Executive Director, my tenure at WRR was comprised of roles based out of the offices at the Sanctuary. Days were spent in spreadsheets, databases, or in meetings that focused on day-to-day operations or personnel matters. While the involvement was widespread, it didn't touch the true depth of the physical and emotional labor that is required at WRR.

This year, in my new role, my responsibilities changed considerably. I have had the pleasure and honor of seeing and learning so much this year—some of my favorite moments are recounted below.



Coyote suffering with mange upon arrival at Kendaia Wildlife Hospital.

When a community in the Dallas area had been monitoring a coyote who was separate from her pack, missing a leg, and had extreme mange, they called on WRR for help. They monitored her for months, pooling their money to hire someone skilled in darting wildlife so she could be brought to WRR for care. The night she was caught a woman named Olivia, kind beyond measure, immediately drove her to WRR. She and the coyote arrived around 1am and, as I

she helped me carry the coyote into the vet suite. After a quick talk Olivia promptly drove back to the Dallas area, noting an early morning appointment, despite her long overnight trek to Kendaia. Saying Olivia went out of her way to help this coyote would be an understatement of indescribable proportions. She has my deepest respect.



Juvenile armadillo also at our Kendaia Wildlife Hospital (photo: Ari Guerrero).

When driving back from town recently, I came across a woman in the middle of the road (quite literally, she was in the middle of the road). She was about 20 miles away from the Sanctuary, her car idling before a sharp curve on a notoriously dangerous section of narrow backroad. When I drove past I saw that she had stopped to help an injured armadillo, and positioned her car to block others from harming him further. I turned and found that the woman was actually a WRR staff person—Caty Burken, WRR's dedicated Rehabilitation Training Coordinator. Her actions did not have her own safety in mind; what impressed me was Caty's utter dedication to do what was required to save a life.

These are only two examples of people being their best selves. WRR staff members and volunteers, who day in and day

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out show up to do their part in providing for the thousands of animals in our care, are each part of every story, every important victory where a wild animal is helped. The sheer volume and stability of WRR's work never fails to amaze me. Though the animals have no interest in the details, what they experience is the results of our work. The big picture comes down to thousands of decisions made to ensure that as many animals as possible can be in the wild again.

It is easy to get bogged down in the heartbreak of any work where you constantly see harm and abuse inflicted on innocent lives. However, being surrounded by kind, hardworking, and compassionate people who do this work willingly and gladly makes all the difference. So, I thank you all, deeply and without reservations, for the support you give to Wildlife Rescue.

Ashton Kuhn
Executive Director

Under care in our Kendalia Sanctuary



A Look Back Focused

Above is the front page of one of our newsletters from the earlier days at WRR. Like Lynn's story in this 2025 newsletter, this is from the winter of 1992 and also highlights an opossum rescue.

While much has changed since WRR's origin, one thing, unfortunately, has remained the same—animals are still in desperate need of help. That is why WRR was created, and why we will always need to be here.

As we approach Wildlife Rescue's 50th anniversary, we will highlight publications from various periods of the organization's history. When reading these, we hope you enjoy reminiscing and seeing the changes and the continuity in all we do.

Sidebar photos from top: Rescued ducklings in rehab at WRR Kendalia Wildlife Hospital (photo: Jay Kazen); caracara examines WRR animal caretaker (photo: Jay Kazen); infant squirrel being fed (photo: Christine Williams); grey fox in Kendalia rehab enclosure (photo: Jay Kazen); bobcat kitten (photo: Jay Kazen).

Cover photo: Young opossum in Kendalia rehab (photo: Jay Kazen).

From Lynn's Letter, pgs. 2-3: Images of opossums receiving care in Kendalia, left to right: Juvenile opossum (photo: Jennifer Leigh Warner); baby opossum considering a strawberry; elder opossum in rehab; injured mother opossum with her babies.





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