

WildLife Rescue News

WILDLIFE-RESCUE.ORG / SPRING 2026



Dear Members,

Over the past several weeks we have received many calls asking us to assist domesticated and wild ducks and ducklings. Though Wildlife Rescue has been helping ducks and geese since our inception, there have been times, such as recently, when more of these charismatic birds than usual find themselves in need of help.

As you have often read in these newsletters, sometimes a happening today triggers vivid memories of animals from the pages of WRR's history. When we were operating on 21 acres near Boerne, we had a one-acre pond that enabled us to rescue more ducks and geese than ever before. Most of

the birds who came to us were unwanted domesticated ducks who had either been purchased as playthings or given as gifts, and the moment the adorable ball of baby duck fluff turned into the majestic white adult who quacked, leaving the endearing duckling cheeps behind, the magic wore off. Others were injured adults, hit by cars or nearly becoming a meal for the family dog. But they all had one thing in common—they were no longer wanted.

Not surprisingly we were also rescuing wild ducks who had been caught in fishing line or were found ill and unable to fly. I remember one of these wild birds, a demure **female blue-winged teal**, who was grounded

due to a badly bruised wing; we didn't know the cause, only that she was caught by a dog who managed to add to her woes. It was the dog's person who brought the duck to us.

When this stoic bird arrived, she was hidden in a thick layer of soft bedding at the bottom of a large cardboard box. She froze in terror while I examined her and persisted in trying to tuck her head under her wing; she just wanted to hide and the world to leave her alone. Determining that she had no broken bones I set her up in a sturdy, outdoor cage near the pond and safe from predators. It was an area about 50 feet square, tucked under some oak and juniper and

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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

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often used as the quiet recovery area for injured water birds. Here they could see the pond and be close to their fellows who had suffered similar fates. Each section of housing allowed the birds to be close, separated only by thick, soft screening. It was in this setting that this damaged, frightened teal found a way to heal, not only herself, but to save the life of one who had lost everything.

When one of WRR's members rescued **the only survivor of a family of geese**, she brought him to WRR. His siblings had all been killed when industrial mowers in the park where they lived had failed to drive around the nest; how this baby survived was a mystery. We assumed his parents had fled in terror when they could not stop the giant mowers that engulfed and destroyed their nest site and young.

Though we had no geese in our care at the time, we would do our best for this traumatized youngster. It is normal for orphaned water birds to cheep, especially when they are alone and frightened, but this gosling was eerily silent. The most he would do was drink and peck at his food. He sat in the corner on his bed of hay and stared at nothing, or perhaps he stared at something only he could see. We tried holding him, talking to him, any acts of kindness that might

calm or comfort a domesticated bird. Nothing we did could reach him. When placed in a shallow pool he simply stood still, staring into space. The adult Pekin ducks in our care tried to help; they would sit near the gosling and quack but no matter what they did, he did not respond. The sad fact was that we could keep him alive but we were not helping him heal inside or truly live.

In a few weeks as he began to lose some of his down, we moved him to the recovery area under the trees near the pond. Here he seemed to find some comfort; he became more active and moved around his caging exploring the grasses and leaves we gave him. A view of the pond was his favorite sight; here he would quietly sit and watch as other birds arrived, swam, dipped and dove in the cool water. Perhaps some memories



came to him of his family and the times his parents would lead him and his siblings to their ponds and play and swim in the sunshine. We could not know, but it was here that we always found him until one day when something changed.

There were no other domesticated ducks or geese who were housed in this sheltered enclosure; there was only the gosling and shy female blue-winged teal. Though obviously well aware of each other they had made no efforts, that we could see, to visit or acknowledge one another. Each would eat and sleep in their



own chosen area far from their shared screen wall. We even tried placing their food dishes where they could eat at the wall, but they weren't interested.

As the weeks passed nothing really changed for either of these beautiful but sad water birds. The gosling was growing, the teal's wing was healing—it seemed we were doing all that we could to help.

Near dawn on a Sunday morning, I was alone at the sanctuary doing rounds and feeding everyone. I kept hearing the faintest call, not a chirp, not a song, but surely there was a bird who was speaking. I stopped to listen and as I stopped, the song stopped. As I continued to work the faint call would come again and again but never anywhere I could locate. The sun had only been up a short while, the light was beautiful as it changed from dawn to morning brightness, and as the light of day emerged the bird call grew stronger until there was no doubt in my mind; I knew exactly where it was coming from. I slowly made my way to the enclosure under the trees near the pond and here I stopped and

stared and knew that **for one gosling and one blue-winged teal life had begun again.** That faint calling I had listened to was that of the teal who was talking to her young neighbor, one lonely, quiet gosling. And as I watched, the silent gosling suddenly found his voice and began honking that unmistakable raucous honk that only a mother goose, and now a blue-winged teal, could appreciate. This wild duck was what this baby goose, so long trapped in the silence of his grief, needed to come back to life, to feel enough joy that he must have used every cheep and honk he had stored all these weeks to talk to his neighbor, the only one who could reach him and heal him.

I opened the door in the screen wall that separated them and in only seconds the two were side-by-side. This giant of a youngster dwarfed his new friend, who barely reached his shoulders but that did not matter to either of them as they went about the hay and leaves probing for greens and seeds. When night came, they did not part. The teal tucked her giant friend alongside her as they fell

Cover image: Female blue-winged teal.
Images left to right from p.2: Ducks and geese at WRR; rescued gosling; blue-winged teal recovering from injured wing; blue-winged teal relearning to fly.

asleep in the hay. For the next few weeks the two were inseparable, and when we moved them to a larger enclosure near other ducks, they remained the perfect pair. I wondered if the female teal had had her own family when she was caught and injured. Had she left behind tiny ducklings and a trusted mate and when fate provided her with a needy baby, she felt compelled to respond? There was no way to know and what did it matter, for now there were two birds, one wild and one domesticated, whose futures had not been promising, whose tragedies were nearly all consuming and who had found, in their bond, the love and care they needed to choose to live fully again.



As I knew it would, the day the female wild duck would make her choice came and the now half-grown gosling and she had to face that choice and begin yet another chapter in their lives. It was a hot, hazy summer morning, the pond now a favorite of all the rescued ducks who were swimming and floating about.

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Lynn's Letter

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The goose and teal pair kept to their section of pond, as they had in past weeks, talking and dabbling with their beaks to find treats below the water. This day was different however as the teal would occasionally take to the sky and fly circles round the pond. The first time she did this the goose swam to the banks and frantically called to her. His pleas were heartbreaking and she quickly returned. By the fourth or fifth time he was less distressed but still he would call and beg her to come back.

As the hot afternoon came the beautiful blue-winged teal must have said her final goodbye to the youngster, for she left the pond, flew two complete circles around calling to her friend, and then disappeared into the endless blue of the sky.



All he could do was to call, call to the empty sky where she had vanished, but his calls did not bring her back. Watching him was almost unbearable and yet, I knew he had to know and even understand what had happened. But that did not make it any easier. I watched as he spent the remain-



Left: Young goose watching his friend fly away. Above: New friend arrives.

der of the day alone, floating on the pond and occasionally looking up, calling to her only to resume his endless floating.

The next few days were the same, the goose stayed on the pond, near the ducks but never with them; he kept eating though his demeanor had changed dramatically.

As life often does, it presented us with a gift for the goose. A woman and her daughter were moving and had to give up the goose they had loved and cared for since she was a tiny gosling.

This beautiful, young female honked and called as the only companions she had ever known left her in our care and drove away. But it was this sad honking that met the ears of one grieving goose who quickly made his way out of the pond and up to the carrier that held the new resident.

I have always believed in love at first sight and these two helped strengthen that belief. In only moments the two geese were one. As we let the female out

of the carrier the male overwhelmed her with his gentle, amorous attentions. He nuzzled the soft feathers of her neck and did all in his power to convince her of his devotion. As the two waddled their way to the pond, the male in the lead, I am sure she accepted his every word and gesture. **Now there was a new, inseparable pair** on the pond and this pair would live at WRR for over 15 years, always together and dying within days of one another.

If ever I wonder if the work done by Wildlife Rescue is enough, and I often do, I remember these animals whose lives were in our hands so many years ago and all those other animals whose lives are trusted into our care every day. Is it enough? If we give it our very best, then surely it must be.

Lynn

From the Executive Director

Dear WRR Members,

This January we received two macaques rescued from the "pet" trade and brought to us by U.S. Fish and Wildlife agents. We knew very little about them. When they arrived, we saw that one was small and curious about the staff who helped with his intake. The other was larger and more reserved in his behavior; he kept his limbs close and was huddled in the crate he arrived in.

After we had gotten the smaller one settled in his enclosure, we moved the larger male to the space prepared for him. His enclosure had an outdoor tower where he could enjoy the sunshine and a large warmhouse for hiding or seeking warmth. The outdoor section of the temporary space also gave him clear visibility into the adjacent enclosure. We hoped he would be willing to join the troop of three males who lived there.

Once the larger male was moved into the warmhouse the staff left and it was just the two of us. I silently watched him, not wanting to intrude on his overdue peace. Slowly, he started to look around and soon started to climb about in his new quarters. When he came near, I saw that he had a large tattoo on his chest that announced: "89". Which told me two things: he had come from a lab before being a pet, and there were 88 before him whose fate we didn't know.

In that moment, I pushed aside my feelings about this. He was waiting for his breakfast. He immediately took to the bananas, berries, and grapes, seeming less interested in the cucumbers. After he was satisfied, we opened the outdoor section of



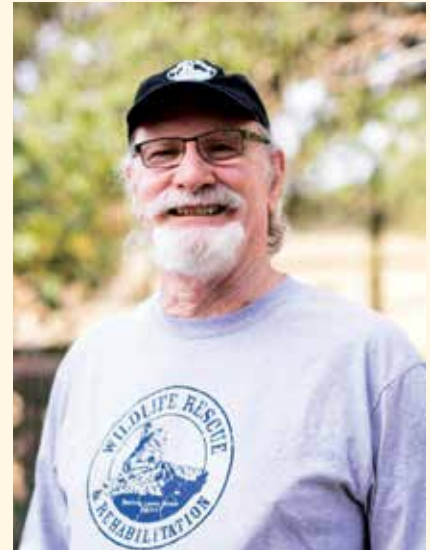
Macaque saved from "pet" trade.

the enclosure and he came out to collect more grapes that were waiting for him. Immediately, the three macaques in the neighboring enclosure came up; they watched him, he watched them. All seemed interested in one another, but soon after their initial observations he was off to climb and explore the outdoor section of his new space. It was a cool and windy day, and the little tuft of hair that stuck up on the top of his head was blowing in the breeze. We will never know what he had to endure before coming to WRR but we knew that he was here, he was safe, and he was on his way to having friends of his own.

Eventually, they were introduced to each other in the main section of the enclosure and established a new troop. Yesterday, when going around the Sanctuary, I saw him and the other males sitting on a large platform in the enclosure. It was a beautiful day, and they seemed to enjoy it.



Meet the Staff



If you have called the WRR Hotline during the past 13 years, there is a high probability you spoke with **David Bassi**, one of WRR's Rescue Hotline Specialists. For many who call, his voice is instantly recognizable, as is its kindness, knowledge, and compassion.

Each day, David takes dozens of calls from concerned members of the public, viewing each as "a chance to help a person and an animal." He first determines if the animal actually needs help. Often, he is able to give instructions on how to help animals where they are found so they can remain in Nature with parents or companions. But if he determines there is a need for human help, David guides the caller through the rescue process to ensure that both animal and caller receive what they need.

If you have a question about an animal who could be in need, just call our Rescue Hotline at 830-336-2725 to talk to David or one of our other dedicated Hotline Specialists who help answer over 17,000 calls each year. We are here to help.

Some People Help, Some People Harm

Each spring we see the number of Hotline daily calls quickly rise from 10-30 to 50-100+. Below are stories of calls received this year. They are unique, but the circumstances of these animals are not—we have seen them, or something closely related, many times over the years.

Intervening with Abuse



Sulcata tortoise rescued from pond.

Most of the people who contact us are calling to help an animal they've seen, but there are also times where people have an animal in need because they intervened with someone causing him direct harm.

- A caring woman called to say that she had a baby squirrel with head trauma. She said some children in her neighborhood had found the squirrel and were throwing him around like a ball. She stopped them, took the squirrel, and promptly drove him out to WRR for care. Unfortunately, he succumbed to the injuries caused by the children. But he died with dignity and care rather than for entertainment.

- A caller reported that a mother and her children were throwing around baby turtles in a park, apparently playing catch.

An onlooker intervened and asked us for guidance on what to do for the possibly injured turtles.

- WRR volunteer Nate Reed was at a pond checking on ducks and a cormorant possibly in need of help. While there, he saw a couple arrive and take a sulcata tortoise out of a backpack and throw him into the water. As **sulcata tortoises cannot swim**, the couple had signed his death sentence. Nate waded to the tortoise while asking others to try stopping the couple before they drove away but failing. Nate brought the tortoise to WRR.

When our Veterinarian examined the tortoise she found mild shell deformities, which are common among those poorly cared for. The tortoise undoubtedly had been their "pet," dumped when they lost interest. We were able to rehabilitate him and now he roams freely, no longer confined or abused by humans.

It is important to share these heartbreaking stories with you because, in the midst of so many horrors done to animals, it may seem like you as only one person can't make a difference. But as you read here, people can in fact make a great difference.

Wild Animals Are Not "Pets"

We received a call from a person who seemed to have the best of intentions for a baby animal he had found at his place of work. He called our Hotline thinking he had found a baby raccoon, but **upon receiving photos we saw he actually found a baby squirrel**. He switched then to asking for advice on how to keep her as a "pet".



Baby squirrel with unknown fate.

Over several days multiple WRR staff members tried to talk him out of this decision. Not only was keeping the squirrel illegal and unfair to her, but she was far too little to survive without specialized care. We were initially able to maintain communication with him. On one of the calls he said she had received some injuries when his girlfriend had taken the baby to a nail salon. These were apparent from bruising on her small body, but the internal damage from inhaling the chemicals and dust that are normal in nail salons couldn't be seen although surely felt in her little lungs.

Subsequently, calls dwindled and then stopped. Did he stop because he didn't want to listen anymore? Or did he stop because she had died, in effect from his own actions? We will likely never know.

Sadly, it is becoming common to see wild animals taken to keep as "pets", often confusing habituation with domestication, which is a process that takes hundreds to thousands of years. With social media, the popularity of some species as pets seems to change rapidly, with raccoons and now



Deer with head trapped in 5-gallon water jug; jug removed; the deer observed back with her herd.

opossums being popular.

We regularly get requests to take in wild animals who are ex-pets because people get bored with them, or tired of caretaking, or a time comes when they start acting like the wild animal they still are. Occasionally we can rehabilitate and release them but usually they are too habituated and must live in Sanctuary for the rest of their lives. We are glad to provide Sanctuary, but it is still a life in captivity that could have been avoided if someone had put their own desires to the side.

Helping in the Wild

We recently shared this story in one of our monthly Animals Matter emails, but want to include it here in case any of our Members haven't seen it. The story highlights how many of the hotline calls can be resolved with the animals remaining in their homes, and how communities can come together to help an animal when others have given up hope.

Sometimes the assistance an animal needs is not within a rehabilitation hospital but requires help to come to them. Last month, a woman from Canyon

Lake called WRR after spotting a **white-tailed deer left behind by her herd with a 5-gallon water jug stuck over her head.**

As an example of when even the best intentions can put wildlife in danger, the jug had a hole cut in the side and was likely used to hold feed. If so, it is understandable that the doe placed her head inside to reach for food, only to find that she could not pull away from the container, now enveloping her head. Not only does this predicament cause fear, panic, injury, and decreased defense against predators, but it also presents the risk of being unable to eat or drink.

Knowing the struggling doe needed help was the easy part; locating her again to provide assistance proved to be a challenge. WRR devised a plan that called upon the collaborative efforts of the community. WRR's Hotline number was shared with helpful neighbors who were instructed to call us immediately with any sighting reports.

Fortunately, the doe was spotted the next afternoon. A WRR veterinarian responded immediately, traveling to Canyon Lake. To safely remove the jug

and decrease stress for the doe, she needed to be darted with a sedative since, despite her condition, the doe understandably avoided the rescuer. With sunset approaching, the veterinarian patiently followed her through thick cedar for an hour until she could safely approach and grasp the container, allowing the doe to free herself and speedily depart from her well-meaning stalker.

While removing the water jug was pivotal to the doe's survival, the real success of her rescue was evident upon hearing the reports from neighbors—she was seen the next day with her herd.

SAVE THE DATE! WRR'S BABY SHOWER FOR WILDLIFE

Sunday,
October 25, 2026
10 am – 1 pm

Join us at The Veranda
in San Antonio.

Details to come.



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Sights from the Sanctuary



Top row: Bear sitting in his enclosure enjoying the breeze; baby opossums expressing their feelings; toddler spider monkey enjoying his breakfast. Bottom row: golden pheasant exploring his enclosure , tiny squirrel enjoying her breakfast; turkey and hen taking a morning stroll.