

WildLife Rescue News

WILDLIFE-RESCUE.ORG / Fall 2026



Dear Members,

Because this story is a favorite of good friend and Wildlife Rescue board member, Gen. Chris Divich, I want to include it here in his honor. Many years ago, when WRR had moved out of my backyard to a new four-acre site near Leon Springs, we received a call from a man who had found a large, injured black bird in his field. I asked the caller if the bird was a grackle. Although he said he didn't know what a grackle looked like, it seemed likely that was the identity of this bird. I asked him to cover her gently with a towel or pillowcase, place her in a box, and bring her to the sanctuary. The man replied that all he had was a minnow net and he would do what he could with that.

Within the hour, an old blue pickup truck with a battered camper arrived in our driveway. The man stepped out and said, "Lady, I've got your grackle." I immediately went to the back of the truck and opened the camper door. There, sitting with a minnow net draped like a mantilla over her head and down to her large feet, was one very disgruntled black vulture. She cocked her head and looked up at me. I could only imagine she wanted to make it clear that she was not a grackle.

Once I removed the tangled headdress from the vulture's body, it was easy to see that someone had tried their best to kill this bird by shooting her out of the sky. Whoever had shot off

most of her right wing had also left her for dead. The wound was infected and the vulture emaciated and severely dehydrated.

Once we cleaned her wounds and treated the infection, it was time to find her something to eat. Contrary to what most people think, vultures can be picky about their diet, especially when they are dealing with the stress of captivity. But this vulture was not interested in being picky. She was only interested in eating. After consuming a huge platter of fresh meat, she was ready to sit back and rest.

For the next several weeks, we kept the injured vulture in a large flight area. Even though she

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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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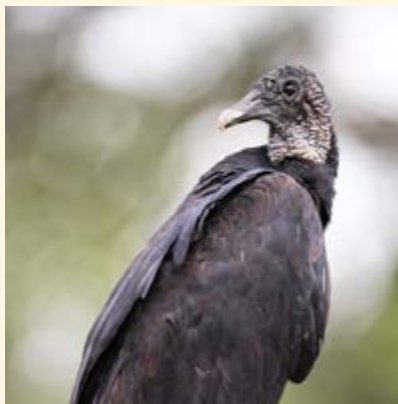


Wildlife Rescue & Rehabilitation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. We rely on contributions from individuals and foundations.

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Wildlife-Rescue.org

Lynn's Letter

Continued from page 1



could no longer fly, she did enjoy climbing to the top of the tree in the enclosure. It was not long before she seemed to accept a life without flight. She had developed a remarkable way of getting up into the very top of her tree. She would use her beak and feet the way a parrot does and climb to the heights of the tall oak.

One day I decided to let her out of the enclosure to walk around the sanctuary grounds. Since the property was completely fenced, she would be safe. After about an hour, the vulture was nowhere to be found. We looked everywhere...except up. This resourceful bird had climbed to the top of the tallest oak tree, which grew just outside the back door of the small house that was the sanctuary office and kitchen. At the foot of this tree was a large pool for the resident ducks. There was no doubt about it—the vulture had chosen her favorite spot.

Each night she would roost in the tree and every morning she'd climb down from her lofty perch, wade in the pool (often right alongside the ducks), and have her breakfast before returning to the treetop. As intelligent animals, vultures are also very playful and this bird found various ways to entertain herself. One of her favorite pastimes was

playing a game she invented using small sticks. She'd hop around and gather-up twigs, carry them over to the side of the pool, drop them one by one, dance around them with her wings spread, and amuse herself for about an hour before jumping into the pool and splashing about.

It was always a joy to watch this beautiful black bird come alive after suffering such a traumatic injury. Again and again she made the best of her less than perfect situation. But little did we know that she had not seen the end of her days in the air. On April 1st of the following year, the black vulture was to have one more grand flight.

The day started out as most do. There were orphans to feed, dishes to wash, phones to answer, animals to rescue and care for. Everything was normal, except on this date at approximately two o'clock in the afternoon, a severe storm warning was issued for our area. High winds



and heavy rains were predicted. Preparing for the worst, we had all the animals in sheltered areas quickly. The free-roaming ducks and the black vulture were finding their own shelter and weren't interested in any protection we had to offer. As it turned out, the weather forecasters were half right. There wasn't any rain, but there were winds of 70 miles per hour. I do not remember the wind actually



sweeping anyone into the sky, but the trees bent to the ground and blinding dust filled the air.

When everything finally quieted down and it was time to survey the damage, there was only one really noticeable difference. The new resident vulture was nowhere to be found. She was not in her tree or on the ground. We searched the entire four acres and it was clear she was gone. I called volunteers to form a search party. We put up signs as far as five miles away and notified store owners, neighbors, newspapers, and anyone else we could think of.

Day one passed with no word. Days two, three, and four passed and still no sign of the flightless bird. By day five, I had decided that after being blown away in the storm, she must have landed so hard she had been killed on impact. The only consolation was that perhaps in the moment of becoming airborne, she was once again happily united with the sky, the very place that used to be her home.

One week after she disappeared, I was at the sanctuary standing at the back door talking on the phone. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw something dark up by our gate. I thought it was a garbage bag blowing in the wind. But then slowly I realized

instead of a bag, there was one very tired vulture making her way down the path.

This remarkable bird barely noticed me as she trotted by, intent on getting into her pool. As she hopped into the water and cooled her feet, she had the most relieved look I have ever seen on the face of a bird. After being blown what may have been miles away, she managed to find her way home.

For years after her final flight, the black vulture spent her days with other rescued, flightless vultures sitting in the tops of trees. She had shown them all how to climb and reach the tree tops they loved. But her memory of that dramatic day lived on and



every time the wind picked up, she would come down from the tree, sit quietly on the ground, and wait for the danger to pass. I feel certain that neither of us would ever forget the day she once again took flight and had her moments in the sky.

All too often we think of vultures as ugly or dirty, a bird we would never think to call beautiful

Cover image: Vulture in WRR meadow.

Images this page: Vultures being cared for at WRR.

Photos by Jay Kazen.

or intelligent. But, like all animals, vultures are unique in their own ways, ways that most humans will never observe. In the hearts and souls of animals dwell depths of emotion and a connection with Nature that humans lost long ago. Animals possess a dignity and strength, an innate gift to accept what life presents them and carry on with courage. This vulture, had she been allowed to choose, would never have been shot from the sky and left for dead. She would never have

chosen to lose her wing and her family. But these losses were forced upon her, yet with quiet dignity, she prevailed.

Lynn

WRR's 212-Acre Refuge Built for Wildlife

Caring for wildlife requires a multitude of resources at every stage of rehabilitation. WRR's centralized 212-acre property in Kendalia brings together a range of specialized spaces, veterinary resources, equipment, nutrition, and expertise to care for animals with complex and changing needs. These capabilities allow our staff to provide exceptional depth and continuity of care to help each animal recover and return to the wild.

Intake Building

Located at the front of the property, our brand-new Intake Building provides an accessible point of arrival for the public and WRR volunteers bringing in animals. A dedicated Program Support Specialist greets each rescuer and receives the animal, allowing an initial assessment to begin immediately in a private triage room.

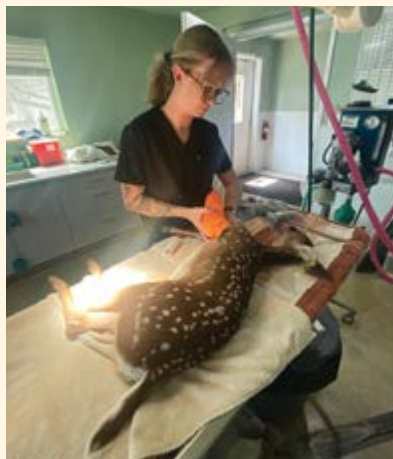


Staff quickly assess their overall condition, identify any immediate medical needs, and provide a warm, quiet space for animals to rest before a more comprehensive medical evaluation by WRR's veterinarians. Staff can also quickly recognize urgent needs and mobilize additional support when necessary for critical cases.



Our new Intake Building. Below: Support Specialist at work, and veterinary staff treating animals in the Sherman Wildlife Veterinary Clinic.

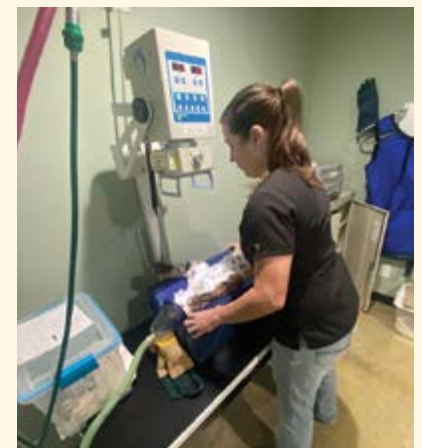
The Roger and Phyllis Sherman Wildlife Veterinary Clinic



Completed in 2022, our Veterinary Clinic offers an extraordinary level of specialized medical care. With a surgical suite, heated surgical table, digital radiographs, monitoring equipment, ultrasound, therapy laser, dental equipment, full pharmacy, and in-house bloodwork capabilities, our veterinary staff has the tools to diagnose and treat a wide range of injuries and

illnesses giving every animal the best chance of survival.

WRR clinic staff, including technicians, assistants, and two full-time veterinarians, work together to evaluate each animal and determine the next steps in care. Specialized intensive care rooms allow animals to be separated according to their needs, including sick or injured adults



and orphaned animals. Multiple quarantine rooms mean animals can receive the care they need without putting other compromised animals at risk. Once an



The Agnes Grenrood Cuny & Robert Cuny Wildlife Rehabilitation Hospital & Nursery.
Below: baby bobcat under care.

animal is medically stable, they will be moved to our rehabilitation hospital.

Agnes Grenrood Cuny & Robert Cuny Wildlife Rehabilitation Hospital & Nursery

The Hospital is a large building where animals continue to receive the daily care they need to heal, grow, and develop the skills they will need to survive on their own. Multiple rooms allow animals to be cared for according to their species, age, medical needs, and sensitivity to noise and activity. Particularly sensitive animals, such as young rabbits and songbirds, receive care in quiet rooms designed to reduce stress.

A dedicated kitchen in the center of the hospital supports the daily preparation of specialized diets for the many animals in rehabilitative care, especially during baby season. Every animal is monitored by experienced caretakers each day, and care is



adjusted as the animal grows stronger and progresses toward independence.

Outdoor Enclosures

As animals approach release, they begin transitioning into outdoor spaces where they can acclimate to natural temperatures, sounds, sights, and conditions. They have the chance to exercise and engage in natural behaviors. The goal of every building and every member of staff is to help each animal regain health, strength, and the skills to live independently to give them the absolute best chance of survival after release.

The Growing "Baby Gang"



Earlier this year, we shared the story of seven orphaned spider monkeys rescued through the Wildlife Trafficking Task Force after losing everything they knew. Affectionately referred to as the "baby gang," these young primates have spent the past months developing confidence, forming strong social bonds, moving outdoors, and even welcoming newly rescued orphans.

For arboreal animals like spider monkeys, climbing is essential to healthy physical and behavioral development. The "gang" wasted no time utilizing their new outdoor enclosure with trees, large climbing structures, and plenty of space to play and grow.

While rescue work often has seasonal peaks, the Wildlife Trafficking Task Force operates year-round. We cannot give these young primates back the families or the wild lives they lost, but we can give them the opportunity to grow up with their own kind in an environment that allows natural behaviors. As more rescued primates arrive, we must continue expanding the enclosures, resources, and specialized care that make success stories possible.

Stormy Summer and What it Means for Wildlife

After years of drought, this summer has brought much-needed rain. Rivers are flowing and lakes are filling. For wildlife, that water can bring relief with more places to drink, increased food sources, and renewed aquatic habitat, but the intensity of this year's rain presented hardships as well.

Repeated rounds of severe weather have brought heavy rain, flooding, strong winds, and tornados across the region. While the damage to buildings, roads, and communities is often



Severe storms bring much needed water, but can also harm wildlife habitat.



Feral pigs manage to appreciate the downpour.

immediately visible, the effects on wildlife can be harder to notice. At WRR, we see those impacts firsthand.

Storms can destroy nests and flood dens at the very time of year when young animals are least able to survive on their own. Fast-moving water can separate babies from their mothers or force adult animals from their homes. Others may be injured by trees, debris, or floodwaters, while displaced animals also face danger when

they find themselves in unfamiliar places including roadways or yards where people may not welcome their presence. Animals who survive the storm may still be left cold, wet, or hungry, and we see the increase in need every time a major storm moves through.

From May through July alone, WRR hotline specialists responded to over 6,000 calls from people concerned about wildlife. On an average summer day, the hotline may receive

50-75 calls. The days after a storm, those numbers more than doubled.



Woodpecker in care at WRR.

Not every call means an animal needs to be brought to WRR. Sometimes, the best thing we can do is help a person understand what they are seeing and coach them through a successful reunion or reneating that reunites wild families. Keeping a healthy wild animal with her family and in her natural environment is always the goal when possible.

Other animals need more extensive help. They arrive at WRR soaking wet, covered in mud, injured, orphaned, or separated from their families. And because summer is the peak of baby season, many of



Baby birds and baby squirrel in care after the storms.

these animals are especially vulnerable as they are still dependent on their parents.

Since May 1st, WRR has rescued more than 2,500 animals, bringing the total number of rescues to over 4,000 this year.

When severe weather affects the area our response must change with the needs that confront us, and even more directly the animals. That may mean providing warmth to a chilled animal, medical care to one injured in a storm, or specialized care for a baby that has lost his mother. This may mean helping someone successfully reunite a baby hawk with her parents or stepping in when that reunion is no longer possible.

The storms may be unpredictable, but WRR will continue to be here when wildlife needs help. As Texas continues to experience changing weather patterns, responding to wildlife emergencies means continually adapting to what animals need most.



WildLife Sustainer



Become a Wildlife Sustainer

Wildlife Rescue & Rehabilitation's mission depends on the support of those who believe that all animals are deserving of our care, attention, and respect. Wildlife Sustainers are a special group of supporters who provide critical monthly support that helps fund lifesaving care year-round.

As wildlife faces increasing challenges from habitat loss, human conflict, and environmental changes, consistent support is more important than ever. A monthly gift provides reliable care throughout every season and can be changed or canceled at any time.

Year-round contributions as a Wildlife Sustainer are especially crucial in helping provide:

- Around-the-clock care for orphaned and injured wildlife, including fawns, opossums, squirrels, ringtails and raccoons.
- Medical treatment and rehabilitation for animals injured by human activity and environmental changes.
- Lifelong sanctuary and compassionate care for animals who cannot return to the wild and have suffered at the hands of people.

For more information on how to become a Wildlife Sustainer contact:

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