Dear Members,

Because this story is a favorite of good friend and WRR board member, Gen. Chris Divich, I have done a rewrite of it in his honor. Many years ago, when WRR had moved out of my backyard and to our 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 that he didn’t know what a grackle looked like, it seemed likely that this bird was a grackle. I asked him to cover the bird gently with a towel or pillowcase, place him in a box, and bring him 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 of the truck 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 that she wanted to make it clear that she was decidedly 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 was emaciated and severely dehydrated.
Are you part of our Wildlife Rescue Sustainer family?

For more than 40 years, Wildlife Rescue & Rehabilitation has been fortunate to count on the unwavering support and generosity of thousands of people. Your donations enable us to purchase formula for orphaned infants, special diets for the injured adults, and medicines for the sick of all ages and species. It costs more than $2 million to care for and house the thousands of animals who come through our doors each year. Without you, WRR would not exist and we can never let that happen. All donations—any amount—make a difference.

An important way donors can ensure that the work of Wildlife Rescue continues long after we have left this world is by becoming a Wildlife Rescue Sustainer.

If helping ensure the future of Wildlife Rescue interests you, please consider becoming a Sustainer.

Wildlife Rescue Sustainers are a special group of people who provide a reliable, steady stream of support to WRR by making a monthly contribution to support our life-saving work. The collective power of your gifts funds essential needs and gives WRR budgetary stability so that fluctuating fundraising cycles are reduced.

Just think: your gift of $10, $25, $50 per month—or whatever amount fits your budget—will create significant assistance over a year while representing only a small portion of your monthly spending. By becoming a sustaining donor, you will:

- Budget your charitable donations and save time.
- Help WRR focus more on life-saving work and streamline the donation process. Automated recurring donations are efficient and cost effective.
- Invest in the rehabilitation and sanctuary of wild animals year-round.

**Monthly and quarterly giving means so much.** There are three ways you can become a Sustainer:

1. **With debit or credit card online:** Set up recurring monthly or quarterly donations at wildlife-rescue.org
2. **Mail a check to Wildlife Rescue** (P.O. Box 369, Kendalia, Texas 78027). Complete the enclosed envelope and check the box that states you would like to be a Sustainer. This would require monthly contributions.
3. **Via automatic bank draft** ($25 minimum per draft). Contact Diana Reyes, at dreyes@wildlife-rescue.org or 830.336.3733 ext. 315 to sign up. We will need the amount and frequency of your donation and a voided check to complete the process.

If you are not currently a Wildlife Rescue Sustainer, please consider making this lasting commitment that will save lives. And if you are a Sustainer, thank you for your monthly/quarterly contribution.

To learn more about the Sustainer program and member benefits, please visit wildlife-rescue.org/support/become-a-wildlife-rescue-sustainer/.

DIANA REYES, CFRE
CHIEF EXECUTIVE & DEVELOPMENT OFFICER
Once we cleaned her wounds and treated her for the infection, it was time to find the new patient 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 being in 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 cage. Even though she could no longer fly, she did enjoy climbing to the top of the tree in the enclosure. It wasn’t long before she seemed to adapt to 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 and wade in the pool, often right alongside the ducks, then have her breakfast of fresh meat before returning to the tree tops. Being intelligent animals, vultures are also very playful and this girl found various ways to entertain herself. One of her favorite pastimes was playing a game she invented for the resident ducks. There was no doubt about it, the vulture had chosen her favorite spot.

For years after her final flight, the black vulture spent her days with other rescued, flightless vultures sitting in the tops of trees. One thing still made her unique. 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 that day that she once again took flight and had her day in the sky.

All too often we think of vultures as ugly or dirty, a bird we would never think to call beautiful or intelligent. But, like all animals, vultures are unique in their own ways, ways that most humans will never have the opportunity to observe. In the hearts and souls of animals there dwell depths of emotions and a connection with Nature that humans have long ago lost.

Non-humans possess a dignity and strength, an innate gift to accept with courage. This vulture, had she been allowed to choose, would have never been shot from the sky and left for dead, she would never have chosen to lose her wing and her family. But it was foisted upon her and with her quiet dignity, she prevailed.

CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE
Especially over recent years, Wildlife Rescue has seen a steady increase in the number of native and nonnative animals brought to our rehabilitation hospital. As the number of animals cared for by WRR grew from around 7,000 to more than 10,000 improvements and adjustments to our operations and facilities needed to take place. Thanks to the generosity of longtime donors who named Wildlife Rescue in their wills, we were able to fund many vitally needed animal projects. In addition, those of you who are current donors have been kind enough to fund even more enclosure expansions that directly benefit the animals. In total, this translates to over 20 new expansions for the animal care program.

In March 2018, the nutrition center at WRR underwent renovation. As one of the most heavily used buildings on property, the nutrition center houses all of our produce, meat and dry food, serves as our recycling center, and provides storage for equipment such as crates, squeegees and medical equipment. Diet preparation for the entire sanctuary is completed daily inside the nutrition center. To help make the sanitation process easier, the interior walls and ceiling were replaced with metal panels. In addition, storage space for crates was added and the majority of the shelving was replaced.

In February 2018 WRR expanded the permanent resident coyote enclosure to include an additional half-acre of land. With an increase in requests to house “ex-pet” coyotes, the expansion was becoming a necessity. WRR currently houses five permanent resident coyotes with several requests coming in each year. When possible, WRR rehabilitates and releases these coyotes back into the wild but will provide permanent housing if they are too habituated to humans to be set free. The expansion offers additional access to covered shelters, platforms and enrichment and of course plenty of space to romp about.

WRR is home to more than 60 rescued pigs and each week we receive calls asking if yet another pig can be given sanctuary. From pot-bellied pigs found roaming the streets to pigs rescued from the slaughterhouses, to feral pigs who have been trapped or orphaned, WRR is often their last hope. In order to provide all the pigs with more than ample space, a new pasture was necessary. The new pig pasture is several acres large and includes a pig pond with a cabana and two spacious shelters.

Last year WRR took in almost 500 raccoons for rehabilitation. Raccoons are susceptible to both feline and canine diseases which makes proper sanitation an integral part of their care. It is critical that we keep these babies healthy and free of life-threatening diseases and in order to do this, their housing must have concrete-bottomed floors to allow for complete sanitation. These new enclosures provide a safe and clean environment in which these raccoons can grow and be prepared for life back in the wild.

A new enclosure for the eight permanent resident marmosets is underway. Because of their diminutive size, the enclosure for these tiny primates must be fully topped over so that they cannot escape or be seen as food by an owl or hawk. Each metal beam must be welded to provide a sturdy base that withstands the weight of double fencing and mesh. In addition to their new home being larger, it also includes a 30-ft oak tree that provides these upper canopy dwellers a space similar to their natural habitat. The new marmoset enclosure enables us to rescue even more marmosets in the future.
Wild Animals Are Not Companion Animals

Recently I came across an article in the NY Times written by a woman who’d encountered a “pet” fox whom the “owner” was wheeling around a pet store in a stroller. She was taken aback but discovered that it was legal so long as the animal was of a species not native to their state.

The sanctuary at Wildlife Rescue is home to a large variety of animals who endured efforts to make so-called pets of them that did not work out and who eventually found their way to us. It is usually a journey laced with considerable suffering and never one that benefits the animal. Mountain lions, monkeys, lemurs, coyotes, bobcats, and more: each is represented at the sanctuary as a casualty of the “pet” trade.

Most people are fascinated by wild animals, which is hardly surprising. We admire, and are a bit astonished at, their self-sufficiency, the way they make it through the world in ways that are always somewhat mysterious. They are elusive, wary, and often beautiful to behold, and some primordial part of our minds may remember that we too were much like that until ten thousand or so years ago.

Along with fascination, many people are led to want one of these animals for themselves, as others do dogs and cats. The desire is not surprising—we often want what we admire—but yielding to it is always the wrong thing to do. When we have a companion animal, such as a dog, it benefits both the dog and us. He receives a home, care, and companionship while we get a special relationship that other humans can’t offer. It’s a mutuality that many of us prize and can hardly imagine living without.

But with a wild animal who has been dragooned into the “pet” role, the benefits are all one way—the human gets whatever psychological satisfactions possession of the creature offers but the animal is forever a stranger in a strange, for him, land. One of the remarkable qualities of wild animals is their adaptability, their apparent ability to be at home in the world, even a strange world surrounded by humans. So they sometimes appear accepting of the role. But make no mistake—a tamed wild animal is no longer the same animal; his life is as distorted as his imposed surroundings are compared with those to which he was born. And his being procured from a captive breeder rather than stolen from the wild makes no difference. Both are equally wrong and terrifying for the animal.

So the temptation to make a “pet” of wild animals must always be resisted. To do so is the right thing to do and it will prevent a world of suffering by animals who deserve better.

Craig Brestrup, PhD

Wildlife Rescue is home to 600 animals who cannot be released due to physical disabilities or because they are nonnative.

Marino

Separated from her mother as an infant, fed cereal and junk foods, and carted around in her “owner’s” shirt pocket, this sociable girl has found peace and companionship with other marmosets at Wildlife Rescue.

Bobcat

Stolen from his den after his mother was shot, the killer cruelly tried to force him to be a “house cat.” Before being rescued, he was malnourished, declawed, and terrified. Today, he and other bobcats with similar histories share a heavily wooded 1.5 acre enclosure in a remote part of the WRR sanctuary.

Snow Macaque

This young male snow macaque was confiscated in Hidalgo County and is just one of the thousands of victims of the wild animal “pet” trade. He now resides at the Wildlife Rescue sanctuary.

Visit Facebook.com/wrrtx to read his story.
How often have you read our messages pleading with people to leave wild animals in the wild? Unfortunately, we have to repeat this message every year, especially during spring and summer months, which are known to us at WRR as “baby season.”

I understand the well-intentioned person who sees a fawn curled up in the grass or standing, seemingly alone in a field, and wants only to help. The fact is, more often than not, that fawn and thousands of other young wild animals do not need or want our help. In fact our “help” could prove to be hurtful or even deadly for that youngster.

Everyone from baby bobcats to baby birds are out-and-about this time of year and though they are often vulnerable, this does not warrant our taking them from their parents. Every wild baby has his or her very best chance for survival if they are left in the care of their parents. For all the time and effort we put into caring for orphans, it is impossible for any human being to replicate the care and nutrition that is provided by either the mother or both parents, depending on the species.

Do we save these tiny orphans? Yes, by the thousands, we save them and return them to the wild. But the untold trauma for each of these animals and how profoundly it affects their life into adulthood we can never know. Nature is not flawless; there is suffering and death, but Nature is what wild animals know best. Nature in all her forms has been their home for eons and is what they trust and understand. The ways of our species are foreign to them and should remain that way.

When a wild baby animal is truly in need of help, WRR is here to provide that assistance; making certain they receive care is the right thing to do. The tragedy is when a perfectly healthy baby is taken from her parents unnecessarily, albeit with the best of intentions, but which is not in her best interest.

What becomes of the little bobcats, raccoons, skunks, cardinals, fawns and countless other baby wild animals who are brought to WRR? We so often talk and write about these babies but rescuing them is only the beginning of what is often a very long road.

When they arrive each orphan is assessed by a WRR staff member. Once we know they are stable, we assign each to an appropriate area where their care will begin. Nestling birds and infant mammals are placed in incubators with the same or a similar species where they will be warm and comfortable.

Then the day-to-day care begins. All orphaned mammals must be fed several times a day and often into the night. Their needs are dictated by age, the condition in which they arrive, how long they were with their mother, and other factors. Birds require even more attention; they must be fed dozens of times during daylight hours. Just think of how often the parent birds fly to and from the nest with food for their nestlings. This is what we must replicate in our hospital, which is no easy feat. Since mammals and birds all require species-specific formulas these are purchased during the winter in preparation for baby season. These formulas cost tens of thousands of dollars every year and the babies consume gallons every day.

Once the young ones are able to feed themselves, fresh fruits, vegetables, meats, meal worms, and other choice food items are added to their meals. This is often the time when the young ones are moved to larger, outdoor housing. Their “day cages,” as they are called at WRR, must be cleaned each day; they are furnished with tree limbs, hay, shelters, small pools, and other items which encourage the growing animals to climb, forage and gain a sense of how they will live once they are set free. This is also the time when we observe each orphan to see how they are growing and learning and moving toward independence rather than looking to humans to satisfy their needs as companion animals must.

All of these stages are equally critical to the long term survival of each orphaned animal we rescue. WRR staff, apprentices and volunteers work long hours, 7 days a week ensuring the care and survival of these vulnerable little ones.

When the day for release finally dawns, WRR staff carefully cage and load the juveniles and young adults into one of our trucks and prepare for the drive to a protected release site. These sites are all privately owned by WRR members who allow no hunting on their property. There is year round water and every site is chosen only after we have walked it and know that it is suitable habitat for the species we are releasing there.

The day we have all waited for, the day that all our hard work has pointed toward, has now arrived and with a mixture of joy and hopefulness, staff open the carrier doors and watch their former patients take their first steps into freedom, sometimes hesitantly and sometimes vigorously. We can never know exactly what they are feeling, but for us it is always moving and poignant.

LYNN CUNY
FOUNDER/PRESIDENT
Volunteer Training & Workshop Calendar
WRW Sherman Animal Care Complex Education Center
1354 Basse Rd, San Antonio, TX 78212

JUNE

7th: Volunteer Info Session; 6PM-7:30PM
9th: Volunteer Info Session; 10AM-11:30AM
13th: Appreciate Nature & Animals; 10AM-NOON
13th: Human Impacts on the Environment; 2PM-4:30PM

JULY

12th: Volunteer Info Session; 6PM-7:30PM
14th: Volunteer Info Session; 10AM-11:30AM
18th: Living With Urban Wildlife; 6PM-7:30PM
25th: Appreciate Nature & Animals; 10AM-NOON
27th: Human Impacts on the Environment; 2PM-4:30PM

Young Friends of Wildlife
For ages 11-14

Coming this Summer!

Young Friends of Wildlife will explore different topics within wildlife rehabilitation, advocacy and conservation, and will complete a group volunteer activity each month.

Monthly topics include:

June: Introduction to Wildlife Rehabilitation
Wednesday, June 20th 1:00-3:00

July: Animal Adaptations and Food System Interactions
Wednesday, July 18th 1:00-3:00

August: Wildlife in Your Backyard: Squirrels and Opossums
Wednesday, August 15th 1:00-3:00

REGISTER NOW:
Wildlife-Rescue.org/services/wildlife-education
(830) 336-2725 ext. 326