Dear WRR Members,

It was impossible to know their exact origin, but finding them discarded in a dumpster in downtown San Antonio, two burdened by pink ribbons around their necks, told the story. They had been held captive by someone after being born in the wild. Whoever they were, they had grown tired of these four infant raccoons and decided the best course of action, certainly the easiest for them, was to toss them into a nearly full dumpster.

How is it that good fortune, following on very bad circumstances, finds some animals, while others are left to suffer and perish? One more mystery in this life that shall never be solved. But these four had been smiled on by fortune—that very morning when the behemoth dumpster-moving machine had come to empty this particular collection of trash, the giant lever stalled causing the driver to leave his seat and investigate the problem. When he did so he heard the cries of the infant raccoons and in he climbed to retrieve the frightened foursome.

It was early in the morning when he arrived at the WRR Sanctuary, but the staff went right to work examining the little ones. Each was covered in diarrhea, emaciated, dehydrated, and starving.

Their plaintive cries were constant and enough to break the hearts of their caretakers. After seeing hundreds like these four, we knew their prognosis was not promising. Over the course of a few hours the infants were washed, weighed, given IV fluids and tube-fed warm, nourishing formula. By noon they were comfortable, clean, and fast asleep. The babies nestled in a furry pile—they had been through so much and were not going to venture far from each other.

Now the real work began. The task before us was to keep them alive while also keeping them wild. Every infant brought to our doors faces the danger, from being in our company, of believing that humans are safe and trustworthy. This is never an acceptable attitude for someone who will one day have to live in the wild, independent of human assistance or protection. The odds

Cont’d on page 2: Lynn’s Letter
Lynn’s Letter

were against these four; they had to have been taken from their mother when very young. She had probably given birth to them in an attic and was then live-trapped and taken far from her babies. The homeowners likely decided to keep the babies, until the day they tossed them into the dumpster. So this litter, though never treated kindly by humans, were already far too accustomed to our presence. To mitigate some of the damage done, we assigned only two caretakers, one would take the morning shift, the other the night shift. As is always the rule, no talking or unnecessary handling of wild infants is allowed. Thank goodness these siblings had each other. It was to one another they must turn for comfort, not to us.

The coming weeks were ones of slow progress and discouragement for the infant raccoons. They did not respond to bottle-feeding and loathed being fed by a tube. Their days were filled with restless sleep, and the scheduled interruptions of feedings only made them more anxious. One of the smallest of the tiny family had chronic diarrhea and dehydration threatened her very survival. In addition to their woes, one of the WRR caretakers had been injured in a car wreck and we had to assign someone new to the babies. Animals never fail to notice changes in their world and a new person seemed to add to their ever-increasing discomfort.

When two months had passed, the youngsters had failed to gain much weight, dehydration was a constant threat, and only one had agreed to take a bottle. We were keeping them alive, but we were far from helping them take the developmental strides that were necessary. It was time to make more radical changes to their care.

Because we were still in the beginning stages of building the new Sanctuary and the new hospital, the facilities available for these needy infants were limited. We did have one outdoor area, an old, green barn that was weather-proof and quiet and might feel more natural to these babies. We moved the litter into a large, open-topped wire cage, filled it with thick bedding and soft toys and gave the foursome some time to settle in. The babies seemed to like the smell and ambiance of this area. They could hear the birds singing outside and Nature was just a bit closer, offering all her comforts that wild animals know, love, and respond to.

In one short week the difference was remarkable. The restless, tossing and turning of their troubled sleep was a thing of the past; there were now two babies, a male and his sister, who were readily taking the bottle offered. The little female’s diarrhea had vanished. Each day brought new promise for the family’s future and every night we witnessed the once distressed, frightened, and sickly siblings climbing, purring that unique raccoon baby trill, and romping about in their new nursery. Finally, they were well enough to more fully express their curiosity and a larger and more interesting set of toys and limbs with foliage were introduced to their small world.

We all felt very proud of the wisdom of our brilliant idea. But that was to be short-lived. It was late one warm, early summer night. The air carried scents of a passing spring giving way to the bloom of summer flowers and the chirp of June bugs. It was Baby Season and I was working late. The animal care staff had completed their shifts and were off to bed. I wanted to look in on the raccoon brood before calling it a day. The light in the old green barn was intentionally kept dim but I could clearly see
the foursome frolicking. In fact what I saw was a “five-some.” He was easy to spot, this new member of the family, in this small crowd. He was large and the color of just baked caramel. I had seen him often, hiding under the dense juniper or waiting for the welcomed food we placed in small bowls around the grounds. He was one of the most stunning, yellow cats I had ever seen. A perfectly placed “bulls-eye” of darker fur swirled about both sides of his ample body. We all knew he was a male; it was obvious as he darted away if we came too near. He was an expert at eluding every live-trap we set in order to capture and neuter him. And now, here he was providing comfort and supervision to a litter of once weak, frail, and orphaned raccoons. I stood perfectly still as I watched him lick and clean each little wild baby; one by one he would begin his regimen at their nose, gently wash their mouths and ears and, though they tried to escape, he would hold fast until his job was done, the baby was presentable, and then, and only then, were the infants allowed to resume their nocturnal frolics.

I had no way of knowing how much time he spent with them every evening, much less how he managed to find his way into the seemingly secure barn. Perhaps the moment we left he assumed his role of loving father. It hardly mattered. For what was important was that this big, lone cat was the reason the litter of raccoons, who had long ago lost their mother, who had been discarded and left to perish in a filthy dumpster, were now restored to health. They were no longer afraid, for he had found them and stayed with them; he made them understand that now, with him, they were safe. This big tomcat, who could easily have ignored their cries, chose instead to go to them and take over the role left vacant by the mother they were missing. It was his love and his care that saved these four helpless lives; it was his presence in that dimly lit barn that told them they were safe and had nothing to fear.

Later that summer, when the raccoons were strong and moved to an enclosure far from the green barn, we would find the yellow cat there, waiting on the periphery, perhaps just making certain they were safe. His visits became less frequent as the litter grew and on the day they were taken to a release site he waited, farther away now, in the juniper as they disappeared from his view off to begin their new lives. I do not know if he was sad to see them go or just accepting, as animals so wisely are, but I was sad for him. He had given so very much and done such a wonderful thing for those tiny raccoons. I suspect they would never forget their unique father who, almost like magic, appeared late one night to save their lives.
I am pleased to announce that WRR now has a new Executive Director, whose letter you can read below. Kelly McCoy has been with Wildlife Rescue for over nine years and has repeatedly earned my trust and the respect of the entire staff. She has consistently demonstrated her commitment to animal protection and to this organization and I am confident that she will continue her good work as she moves into this important role. I look forward to the coming years as Kelly and I continue to work closely together to do what is best for the animals and for WRR.

Thank you,

I am writing you all today as the new Executive Director of Wildlife Rescue and reflecting on my time with the organization. I was first introduced to WRR in January of 2013. As a new college graduate, I was anxious to begin my career and determined to make a difference for wild animals. I packed my car days after graduation and began the drive from Missouri to Texas, unsure of what the future would hold but confident I was moving in the right direction.

I arrived at WRR ready to begin my apprenticeship and was immediately in awe. Although I had prior experience in animal care, I had never witnessed what a true sanctuary looked like. As I took in the expansive, tree-filled, open-topped enclosures for the primates, the rocky cliffs for the mountain lions, and the shady pools for the bears, it became abundantly clear that every decision was made with the animals’ best interest in mind. With each passing day, as I learned more and more about the work being done, my commitment to the mission deepened and I knew that I had found more than a career.

Now, nine years later almost to the day, as I walk through the hospital or around the sanctuary, I am still in awe. During my time with WRR, I have worked in several areas; first as an apprentice, then I left WRR to pursue various positions but the most important of those was my job as a veterinary technician. This further developed the necessary skills and prepared me for my return to WRR where I worked as what at WRR is called “Above Gate” Supervisor. This is the area where the vast majority of farmed animals live as well as non-native birds and reptiles. From there I was promoted to the position of Director of Animal Operations. In the last 5 years in that position, I have seen immense change and growth. Our success rate in rehabilitation has climbed 10%, our staff has grown to almost 50 employees, we continue to increase our dedicated volunteer base, and we recently broke ground on a nearly 3,000 square foot veterinary suite. From taking in around 5,000 animals a year in 2013 we have increased to now over 11,000 annually.

This life-saving work does not come without challenges. However, despite the long days and emotional toll that all too often accompany animal protection, I find myself constantly humbled and inspired. Not only by the animals but also by the employees whose dedication and tireless work saves thousands of lives every year. Witnessing the resiliency of the wildlife—able to overcome far more than we ever could—watching a primate, subjected for years to a tiny cage and tested on repeatedly, learn to trust again, or admiring the pigs rooting around the pastures, never again forced to live in small confinement or having to fear what tomorrow will bring... these are the kinds of things that make it all worth it.

As I settle into this new position as Executive Director, I am excited once again for the opportunity to grow and help the animals in different ways. Although I am well versed in the animal operations, I look forward to getting to know the other facets of the organization and the members who through the years have shared my same devotion. I am grateful for the continued success of WRR, the lives we are able to make better, and the opportunity I have been given to be part of a truly inspiring organization.

Regards,

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Regards,
Your Contributions at Work in 2021

We are ever-thankful to our dedicated donors, our staff and volunteers for enabling the work of WRR to continue with so much success.

Animals Rescued by Class

Most Frequent Animals Rescued by Biological Group
Dear Members,

We have just welcomed in another year and for WRR it is a momentous one—Our 45th Anniversary! Reaching such a milestone tends to make one reflect on time’s passage. When I look back over the years I cannot honestly say it feels like yesterday that I decided to start this wonderful organization; it does not. But it certainly does not feel like forty-five years have passed. If someone said this is our 20th year that might feel more believable. But it has been over four decades and the changes have been innumerable, as have the people who have been involved with this work.

I have such bittersweet memories of the animals I was fortunate to encounter over these years—so many sad stories but, for the most part, helping them back to the wild or giving them sanctuary, which gives me great joy and satisfaction. What is also forever in my mind and heart are those early days of immense struggle and constant work. The paper route I threw from two till six in the morning every day of the week, the rescues that stretched long into the nights, that little wood frame house where it all began. I did not realize at the time but those years of shaping this organization were shaping me as well.

I well recall putting out our very first newsletter; the mail list was small and I had to rubber stamp each return envelope with WRR’s address. I remember going to the post office days later and finding those envelopes in the box and fearing they had been returned due to incorrect addresses, but finding instead they were donations, which touched me to my core. The contributors in those early days were mostly strangers to me. I had only brief encounters with them when I rescued an animal they called about and here they were sending WRR a donation.

The trust that every donor placed in me cemented my resolve to live up to that trust in everything I did and continue doing to this day for WRR. Because of my own desire to make this organization succeed and that trust of strangers, I knew every goal I had for WRR must be fulfilled. I thought of little else than work. I had a plan and every day every animal I took in moved me along the road to making that plan work and reaching my goal of a large sanctuary. I was determined to make WRR something that would make a difference to as many animals as possible. And with that determination, the boundless moral support of my incredible parents and the people who were drawn to help WRR, bit by bit the dream became reality, the plan took shape, the goal was realized.

There is not room here to tell you the whole story or all the details of what it took to bring WRR to this moment, but I can tell you that had I chosen any other life’s work, I cannot see how my life would be as fulfilled as it has been with WRR. As the people who support this work, I can tell you how indebted I am for every contribution you have sent. It is those donations, the hard work of others, and our determination to make WRR a success that I am so thankful for every day. There is much that still needs to be done; animals, in many ways, are in more peril today than ever before, and we must do what we can to help them. My commitment to Wildlife Rescue has never wavered and with your continued help, it will go on to save more lives and be a bright light of hope for the animals we all cherish.

It is important to recognize and celebrate WRR’s 45th Anniversary and at this year’s Baby Shower we will be remembering the hundreds of thousands of orphans who have been brought to our doors over the many years. We will also have a Member’s Day at the sanctuary this autumn. Watch your newsletters for more details about these events. And thank you for all you’ve done to help.

Lynne
**Become a Wildlife Sustainer**

Wildlife Rescue & Rehabilitation Sustainers are a special group of WRR supporters who make a monthly contribution to underwrite our life-saving work. Imagine the benefits that add up over the course of a year when many of you come together in this way. Every month your credit card will be automatically charged for your designated gift. *But you remain in control,* meaning you can change or cancel your monthly commitment anytime you choose.

The advantage to this way of helping is that a monthly gift can be made *with little or no effort on your part.* Over months your gifts will add up to more than you usually give in one or a few larger gifts throughout a year.

**Your monthly contribution will help:**
- Feed hungry orphaned babies
- Rehabilitate injured wildlife
- Provide sanctuary for native and non-native wildlife and farmed animals

**As a Wildlife Rescue Sustainer:**
- Your membership will continue year after year unless you request that it be discontinued
- You will have the satisfaction of knowing your monthly gift is helping save thousands of wild lives every year

**For more information on how to become a Wildlife Sustainer, contact:**
Chelsea Berkowitz
Development Associate
(210) 538-9763
or visit *Wildlife-Rescue.org/Support*

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**MARK YOUR 2022 Calendar!**

*Events will be held in person unless otherwise noted. More information at [www.wildlife-rescue.org/get-involved/specialevents/](http://www.wildlife-rescue.org/get-involved/specialevents/)

- March 2-3
  - Amplify Austin

- April 9
  - Wildlife Baby Shower

- June 10-17
  - Enrichment Drive

- August 19-26
  - Food Drive

- September 22-23
  - Big Give 2022

- November 29
  - Giving Tuesday

- December 8
  - Artistic Animals
Please Join Us for Our
Wildlife Baby Shower!

Day/Date: Saturday, April 9th
Time: 12:00–2:30 pm
Location: WRR’s Sherman Animal Care Complex
         1354 Basse Road
         San Antonio
Festivities: Hear from Founder/President Lynn Cuny,
            meet WRR staff, and visit with fellow
            members. A light vegan brunch and snacks
            will be served