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THE MOCKINGBIRD CHRONICLES

Newsletter of the South Plains Wildlife Rehabilitation Center, Inc.



1995

3308 95th Street, Lubbock, Texas 79423 • (806) 799-2142

Volume 1 Number 1

FIRST THINGS (at) LAST.....

Finally, after seven years, South Plains Wildlife Rehabilitation Center is getting its first newsletter into print. This has been one of those projects that has been on my "to do" list since our early days. It is dedicated to all of you who have helped to assist us over the years financially, and in hundreds of other ways - freely giving of your time and talents for the benefit of wildlife. Why *did* we wait so long? There never seemed to be enough time or focus to devote to such an important project. Now, thousands of birds, scores of volunteers, seven years and one computer later, it is becoming a reality.



The Common Barn Owl - A Natural Resource

MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

We are instituting a membership drive with this first newsletter. If you are able to help us, please see the last page for Membership Information. All members will receive the next six issues of the newsletter beginning in February, 1996. We sincerely thank you for helping us help wildlife.

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WHO ARE WE, and WHAT DO WE DO ANYWAY?

Wildlife Rehabilitation is caring for injured, ill, "orphaned" and displaced wildlife. Our goal is returning the animal back to the wild. We strive to provide the best and most humane care possible to the birds and mammals entrusted to our care. We hold current wildlife rehabilitation permits from the United States Fish & Wildlife Service on a Federal level, and from Texas Parks & Wildlife Department on a State level. We also hold "Special Purpose Possession" permits which allow us to legally retain a few non-releasable animals for educational presentations. We receive no monetary compensation for the services and care we provide. All work is done by volunteers, and there is no paid staff. The personnel at Animal Medical Center provides veterinary care to our patients at no cost for their service. Dr. Larry Farley and his colleagues are likewise licensed to provide medical and surgical care to wildlife casualties.

CONSERVATION OF WILDLIFE PRESERVES THE BALANCE OF NATURE

by Hope Hall

The quality of life on earth is dependent on the existence of wildlife. Creatures in the wild are responsible to a great extent for balancing natural resources. Many birds and other animals feed on insects which help keep the insect population under control. Raptors feed on rats and mice which help control the rodent population. Bats and bees pollinate plants. These are but a few examples that demonstrate the importance of the survival of wildlife. We hope as we encroach on the habitat of wildlife we will continue to be aware of the impact we have on our native species. Wise use of pesticides, protection of our natural resources, and concern for preservation of species are all ways we can insure a positive outlook for the future. Looking at the big picture, one can see that all life within the earth's ecosystem is connected. We must all strive to be good stewards of the land and its wild inhabitants, for without that, the future of life on earth is uncertain.

Letter from The Director

There is no way we can properly cover seven years of growth and change in our first newsletter, but this *will* be a beginning. Hopefully we can summarize some highlights of past years in subsequent



issues. It is our hope to publish a newsletter six times annually. Thousands of hours of volunteer time and effort, *and* thousands of dollars have gone into making the Center what it is today. We have provided care for seven years to over 5000 wild birds and mammals, presented more than 200 educational programs, worked with student interns at Texas Tech University, seen seven Eagle Scout projects completed, and entered the computer world. No day is boring, and each day is filled with new experiences...some, stressful and depressing, but others are exhilarating. We cherish them all. A volunteer once told me that what I did was "a luxury." I have come to know she was right: how many people can hold a Golden eagle or a hummingbird, raise a Barn owl chick or release a deer fawn? *Wildlife is a natural resource*, and those of us who continue to work for its benefit are rich in ways that some may never understand.

"You must not know too much, or be too precise or scientific about birds and trees and flowers. A certain free margin...helps your enjoyment of these things."

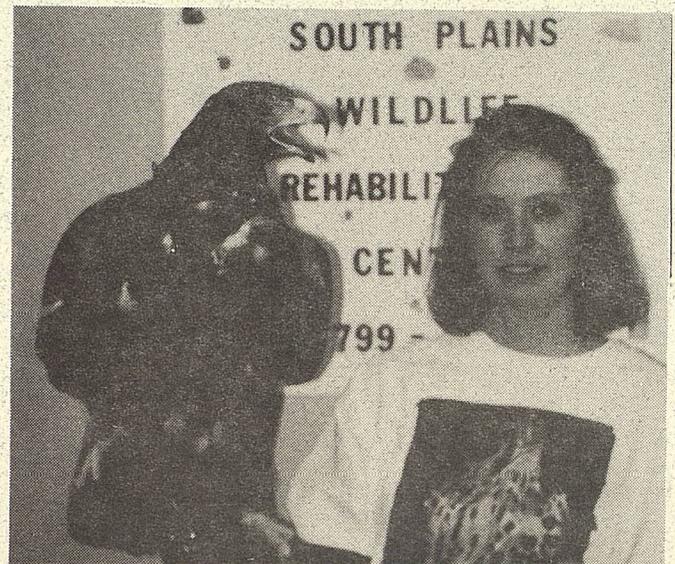
Walt Whitman

A special thank you to the heart of our operation: the Veterinarians and staff of
Animal Medical Center
5204 80th Street
Lubbock, TX 79424
794-4118

Without Drs. Larry Farley, Dan Leach & Lane Preston, we **COULD NOT DO WHAT WE DO**. We sincerely thank them one and all, for all the help they have provided, day *and* night, over the past **seven** years!

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

DEBBIE TENNYSON has been a volunteer since the Spring of 1992. In November of that year, she and her husband Rick, and 9 year old son Josh moved into the house at the center. Since that time, her job description has grown to on-site manager, volunteer coordinator, and fundraising chairperson. In two years she has been involved in more things than many people get to experience in a lifetime. In addition to rehabilitation and education, she has fixed leaky roofs and broken fences, tackled many a wildlife emergency, dealt with the public and endured a great deal of stress. Through it all, she always manages to smile and tell you, "there is always room for one more!" Rick has helped with *everything* that has helped us to grow. He has done most of the construction work, repairs and maintenance. He modified our mews and built the flight cage. We could not have made this progress without him. Their son Josh is a fourth grade student at Waters Elementary. He seems to be enjoying growing up with wild friends!



Debbie Tennyson with Eagle at Science Spectrum

OUR OBJECTIVES FOR PUBLISHING A NEWSLETTER ARE:

- To share information about what goes on at our Center
- To publicly thank the people who support us
- To provide tips about living with wildlife
- To share the highlights of what we do
- To share what we are doing about education
- To share what we are doing about fundraising

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE:

- Our Adopt-A-Bird Program
- People who have contributed to our success over the last 7 years
- *Species Profile* - The Blue Jay
- Euthanasia
- A summary of 1995's Federal & State records: what species we've had, how many hawks, owls, other assorted creatures...

OUR LONG TERM GOALS

Establish a Building Fund — 50% of all money from fundraising events will go toward building an on site Initial Care Facility, which will provide space for our incubators and new admissions; a volunteer work-area; office, classroom for workshops and educational presentations, kitchen, food storage and laundry area. Space will also be allotted for our non-releasable educational birds. We hope to have all of these functions in one place, and out of the manager's house, which is presently the situation.

OUR POLICIES

People ask us about our "policies" from time to time. As of 1995, they are as follows:

- Volunteers must be 16 years old, and we do accept some volunteers who have community service obligations, such as from Teen Court.
- We do not accept domestic cats or dogs.
- We do not accept skunks, foxes or bats because of the rabies risk, and *also* a current statewide ban on accepting these animals for rehabilitation.
- The state ban on accepting raccoons has been lifted, but we elect not to admit them on the basis of the rabies risk to our volunteers as of 1996.
- We *do* accept lost or escaped pet bird species, and try to locate an owner or place the animal for adoption.

"UP WITH PEOPLE"

On September 21, *twenty-six* volunteers from the "Up With People" production selected the wildlife center as one site in Lubbock to do their community service. Despite rain and clouds they prepped and painted two rooms for us. They represented 18 countries, including the U.S. We were honored to be selected by such an enthusiastic group of young people!

PLEASE RELEASE ME, LET ME GO

By Debbie Tennyson

This year has been a great year for successful releases. I have many glorious stories to share over the next months, and will now have this opportunity through our newsletter. I'll begin with a great release on November 8, 1995, when not one, but three raptors were given a second chance. The first was a Swainson's hawk, hit by a car. Suffering from severe head trauma for weeks, he was not even able to stand in his box. A few weeks down the road, he may have sensed we were contemplating euthanasia, because suddenly he was upright, eating on his own, and ready to be placed in larger quarters. Within a few days he was in a mew in the barn, and then was being flown on a creance for pre-release conditioning. We were excited, and his day finally came. He sat there only a moment after stepping out of his box, and suddenly he was out, up and off like a shot. Our second release was a Broad-winged hawk, a new species for the Center. This bird came to us in terrible shape...emaciated and weak, and for days either would or could not fly. Even in the absence of fractures, it could still mean a poor prognosis. He finally tired of force feeding, began eating on his own, and grew stronger each day. At last, he too could be fitted with leather jesses, exercised daily and flown on a creance. At the moment of release, he paused for just a moment to get his bearings. As a suitable breeze came along, he turned to catch it in his wings, and it lifted him to the sky. He soared beautifully, and we were ecstatic! Our third release was a little Burrowing owl which had actually been hit by a train (this was the third such case of an owl's run-in with a train). Early on we feared he would lose an eye, but fate was kind, and he recovered completely. He was let go near a colony of other Burrowing owls, and once free, he flew and flew until we thought he would never stop. A subsequent release on November 4th gave us the opportunity to release a Red-tailed hawk which had been hit by a truck. Fourteen of us happily watched him take off from the overlook on FM 400. He continued to fly until he was out of sight. Never once do they look back or thank us, but whether an animal is with us for a day or several months, it is **always** inspiring to give them another chance for freedom.

Since the center began in 1988, we have cared for approximately 125 species of birds, and 20 species of mammals.

It Started With a Mockingbird...

On an ordinary July evening in 1985, my friend Alice Friend brought me a fledgling mockingbird, moments before her cat was ready to pounce. She "just knew" I'd know exactly what to do with it. I didn't have a clue. I did remember I had one book on *wild orphan babies*.. when or why I had gotten it I didn't recall, but I did need it now! I do know if it weren't for the picture of the Mockingbird fledgling in the book, I'd never have known *what* species it was. I tried everything I could think of to get him to open his mouth. Finally, I put him in a cage in a quiet place and went to bed concerned about my little charge. Not to worry! At the first crack of dawn he was up on his spindly legs peeping his high pitched peep. His mouth was wide open, and I knew he would readily accept food. Over the next days, I did *everything* the book said, paying special attention to the line .." we have never had a wild bird leave us until it was fully capable of independence and survival." Leave us? I had not even considered that I was going to have to give him up! For 2 weeks he peeped his shrill high-pitched peep about every half hour from dawn's first light until dusk. He was really cute, but that incessant chirping *did* have a way of getting on your nerves. He grew and grew, and suddenly one day he was able to fly. Soon afterward he became restless, and it became evident he no longer welcomed the confines of his cage. I knew the time had come to begin thinking about his release. This would not be easy...I was already quite attached to him. I took the cage outdoors, and he flew out without hesitation. What would happen next was anyone's guess. However, he stayed close in my cherry tree, and continued to summon me about every thirty minutes for a bite of food. He did not leave the back yard, and flew onto my head at dusk to be brought back inside to the safety of his cage until morning. One day I decided he would have to be taught how to "catch" flying insects. I had no idea of what was "instinct" and what was not. I put a ladder up to my roof and threw Cheerios here and there. Dry, they flew off too fast, but "wet" made them just about right. He must have enjoyed trying to catch them, because we did this off and on for two days. During this time, I hoped no one would see or report me. These various rituals went on for nine days, but during this time he ventured farther and farther, and returned less frequently for hand-outs. On the 7th day he weathered a sudden heavy rainstorm, and returned cold and soaked. He also had a few feathers missing from the front of his head. A territorial scuffle? On the 8th day I watched him catch a huge beetle and eat it. I sensed his days of returning to me were numbered. On the 10th night he did not return at dusk. He called from a neighbor's tree as if to say, "I'm O.K., but I'm on my own now!" He stayed nearby for weeks, but then suddenly was gone. All that was left was my journal of this significant experience. The wild bird I had raised was now independent and free, and this was what I wanted for him all along. I always knew that if that little charge had died, I would not be taking care of wildlife today.

THANK YOUs TO... *David Scott Collins at Ginny's Printing and Copying, to Lois Tanner at Tech Type Secretarial Services, and to Carl Clapsaddle of The Reproduction Company for making this newsletter project successful. Thanks also to Hope Hall, Debbie Tennyson, Leslie Baker & Rob Lee whose contributions helped put this all together.*

FOR DONATING YOUR SERVICES, WE SINCERELY THANK YOU...

Thank you to attorney Edwin Price, who has assisted me in more ways than one as our organization got off the ground. He helped incorporate us in 1992, and has provided legal advice and help over the past seven years.

Thank you to Mr. Jimmie Mason, of Mason, Warner & Company, P.C. our accountant, for doing our tax-work, which includes our 501 (c) 3 exemption; this is one area which completely intimidates me, and I don't know what we would do without him!

Where Does Our Money Go?

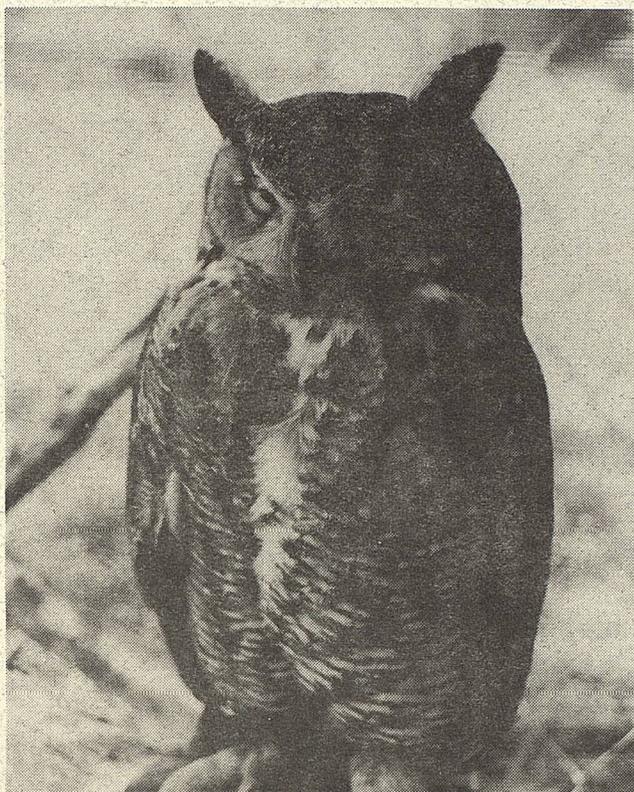
The donations the Wildlife Center receives are used in a variety of ways: Our priorities follow:

1. Taxes and Insurance - These are the bills which **MUST** be paid in order to keep our doors open.
2. Utility and other bills- Gas, Water, Electricity, Telephone, and Alarm Service Fee.
3. Food for all of our animals; this cost is higher in the summer months because our census is higher. However, proportionately, our raptors eat much more than our songbirds in terms of weight, and are with us longer, and make up most of our fall and winter census.
4. Veterinary **Supplies** - powdered mammal formulas, medications, syringes, first aid supplies, etc.
5. Emergencies - Electrical, alarm system, plumbing, structural, etc. Why is *this* 5th? We will feed our patients and keep our doors open first, in all probability!

-- SPECIES PROFILE --

THE GREAT HORNED OWL

With its razor-sharp talons, hooked beak, 5' wingspan, and aggressive, fearless attitude, *Bubo virginianus* is a formidable bird of prey. Skunks, frogs, rabbits, rodents and other birds make up much of the owl's diet. This owl has also been known to kill porcupines, domestic cats, and large birds such as herons, chickens, and turkeys. Ever resourceful, *Bubo* can outwit and outmaneuver virtually all other hunting birds, and is one of the most successful predators in North America. Hunting territory may be up to six square miles.



The owl prefers to sleep during the day. Soft plumage and special serrated edges on the primary wing feathers make the Horned owl's flight silent and deadly. It has very keen eyesight, and although the eyes are fixed in the sockets, it has 14 flexible neck bones, allowing it to turn its head about 270 degrees. Courtship occurs mainly in the early evening, and involves hooting, feather fluffing and bowing. Nesting may begin as early as January or February. The female will lay 1-4 eggs per clutch, and both sexes share the incubation responsibility. The incubation period of 25-30 days. The young fly about 9 weeks after hatching, and are independent at approximately five months.

OUR CHARTER MEMBERS

Individuals who have donated \$100.00 or more to us since our beginning, in funds or services:

Dr. and Mrs. Pat Allen
Carre Avian
Lee Battey
Cheryl and Dale Blevins
Dr. and Mrs. Robert Broselow
Dr. Nancy Chasteen
Dr. and Mrs. David Close
Dr. and Mrs. Robert Grant
Karen Greitzler
Ken Hargeshimer
Joyce Komkov
Robert Lee
Joyce Lisenby
Mr. Jimmie Mason
Wyman Meinzer
Dr. Louis Mitchell
James R. Newman
Kelly Paul
Mr. And Mrs. Edwin Price
Jay & Shirley Reichard
Dr. George Reichel
Shelly Underwood

Eagle Scouts

Brian Anderson
Cody Carver
Scott Crawford
Stephen Reynolds
Shad Rich
Ricky Rose
Shannon Spinks

and the following organizations:

Animal Medical Center
Bulls Horse & Hound
Double M Quarter Horses
Gafford Brothers
Llano Estacado Audubon Society
Nature's Gifts
New Neighbors of Lubbock
PetsMart
Pets Plus
Pools Unlimited
Sandy Henry and the Science Spectrum
The Pet Co.
Tuttle Landscaping
Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Everyone who joins us in 1996 will become a Charter Member and will receive 6 issues of the newsletter. Your tax-deductible membership will help provide the funds necessary to continue our wildlife rehabilitation and education efforts. All memberships will expire December 31, 1996. Please consider an affiliation with us and help us help wildlife.

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|--------------------------|---------------------------|----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Benefactor | \$500.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Patron | 100.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Supporting Member | 50.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Organization or Group | 30.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Family Membership | 25.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Individual Membership | 20.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Student or Senior Citizen | 15.00 |

Your Name: _____

Organization or Group: _____

Address: _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone: _____

Please mail this registration form along with your financial support to:

Carol Mitchell, South Plains Wildlife Rehabilitation Center, 3101 77th Street, Lubbock, Texas 79423

Make your check payable to ***South Plains Wildlife Rehabilitation Center, Inc.***

THE MOCKINGBIRD CHRONICLES

South Plains Wildlife Rehabilitation Center, Inc.

3308 95th Street

Lubbock, Texas 79423