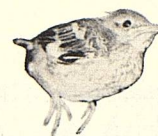


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E MOCKINGBIRD CHRONICLES

Newsletter of the South Plains Wildlife Rehabilitation Center, Inc.



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

Volume 2 Number 2

Spring ahead...

Literally, and figuratively! Spring is breeding season, and *our* busiest time is upon us. Suddenly, the days are not long enough. Over the next five months, the Wildlife Center will admit hundreds of baby birds and mammals. We expanded this issue of the newsletter to devote to topics about "baby season." Many of the youngsters brought in to us are thought to be "orphans" although *this is usually not the case*. Hopefully, the tips provided will help illustrate the difference between "rescue" and "kidnap." We will discuss healthy youngsters that should not be *kidnapped* as well as wildlife casualties that need to be *rescued*.



FLEDGLING BLUE JAY

"I Have A Baby Bird in my Yard..."

Spring marks the beginning of baby season for rehabilitators everywhere. Here, raptor chicks will appear in late winter and through the spring and summer months. Baby doves and sparrows begin leaving the nest in March. By May, we see the larger songbirds such as Blue jays, Mockingbirds and Robins. We always know *almost to the minute* when baby Blue jays are leaving the nest. How? Our phone suddenly starts ringing about 50 times

a day. Nearly every call starts the same way: "I have a baby bird in my yard, and it can't fly." Our first question goes something like this: "Is it not able to fly because it is *too young* or is the bird *injured*?" You can almost hear the caller thinking on the phone! Suddenly they realize there is a big difference between the two situations. We'll try to help you sort through the maze of what to do next. Here some things to consider: First, birds leave the nest for a variety of reasons. They may be removed by a predator; they may be blown out during a storm; some are pushed out prematurely by larger nestmates; others are simply *ready* to become independent to explore the world on their own. Birds do not leave the nest automatically knowing how to fly and soar effortlessly. Many times, they crash land or flop to the ground. *During* this time on the ground (3-5 days, average) one or both parents continue to feed these youngsters until they learn where and how to find their own food. *These "lessons" from the parents are essential, and these few perilous days are extremely important. This is the time the young bird practices and perfects its flying, learns to seek shelter, learns to avoid predators (including well-meaning people) and begins to fend for itself.* If the youngsters don't survive these tests of skill, they will not make it to adulthood. Bringing a *healthy* bird to the center for "help" at this moment actually sets the bird (or mammal) back, by placing it in an unfamiliar environment. Suddenly its diet is different, it may not eat and it may require force feeding. This can cause a great deal of stress for a young animal. A fledgling well on its way to independence may die soon after admission, because it was brought to us by someone unaware of the *kidnap vs. rescue* difference, and the toll that *stress* can take. Sometimes, we cannot return the bird to the parents, because the animal was left on the porch in a box without a name or address. Each day we make every effort to explain these things when people call or arrive at the Center, and most times the finder is content to return the youngster to the parents. So, back to Square One: if the little fledgling looks like a miniature adult, but with short tail feathers, is otherwise bright eyed, alert, hopping around and *trying to get away from you, it most likely does not need your help.* The parents are nearby, even though you may not always see them immediately. The impact of the dozens of kidnapped birds also takes a toll on the

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resources of the center. The next important point is that *birds have no sense of smell, so handling these youngsters when necessary will not cause the parents to abandon them.* You may touch the fledgling, and should move it if it is "in harm's way." Some fledges manage to leave the nest land in "safe" yards. Others aren't so lucky, and may be near a busy street or a yard with a dog...do move these birds to a safer location nearby. They will make their presence known to the parents. If a baby bird has *no* feathers, and it is found on the ground, try to put it back into the nest. However, this is often *not* possible. You can provide a makeshift nest, like a berry box or plastic basket lined with tissues, and wedge or tie it into a tree. However, even if the baby is being fed, it may die of exposure or predation. Without feathers, or a parent to brood it, it cannot regulate its body temperature. Occasionally people will call and say, "I haven't seen the parent for three days, we need to bring the bird in..." we reassure them that the youngster would not still be alive if the parent *weren't* coming by frequently with food. So remember, if the bird you have zeroed in on is not injured, do what is right for the bird (not for you!) and please leave it alone. Your well intentioned intervention can be very detrimental. You can suspect injury or illness if the youngster remains in the same place for a long period of time, if you see bleeding, a drooping wing, lameness, or if the animal appears ill. Cat injuries should always be brought to us. Place the bird in an appropriate sized box and take it to the Center as quickly as possible. Time is of the essence, as young birds must be fed every half hour or so from dawn until dusk. Please do not feed it yourself, as the incorrect diet can also be harmful. Stress and malnutrition are two of the biggest causes of death in young animals. At the Center, we always try to increase the animal's chance for recovery and return back to the wild, where it belongs. Many times, this is simply a matter of helping the caller determine whether a youngster should or should not be brought in.

Doves:

Doves are fed a special formula with a small baby bottle and nipple. They do not require feeding as often. Dove parents are not aggressive like jays and mockingbirds, but the same rules apply...leave healthy youngsters alone.

A Word About Killdeer:

Don't pick up Killdeer chicks...this is one of the most common precocial birds brought in to the Center.

(Precocial birds are more developed when hatched; their eyes are open, and they can stand and walk within minutes. They are covered with down, and their feathers appear within a week; this group also includes quail, pheasant, ducks, etc.). We send the healthy birds back immediately with the finder. These little chicks are always easy targets for children...they are tiny and fuzzy, and have long spindly legs. Several years ago, we took a young fledgling back to Berl Huffman soccer field, where it had been birdnapped. We got a pretty exact location, and set off on the grand experiment. We sat patiently in the car with binoculars focused on the tiny bird. The chick covered an eighth of a mile in no time at all, calling for the parents almost constantly. Within twenty minutes, two adults glided to the ground on either side of their little offspring, the happy reunion now complete!



YOUNG OPOSSUM

Baby Mammals:

In the case of displaced or injured baby squirrels, know that mammals are said to sometimes reject an offspring if it has been handled by people. Again, use common sense...if a very small youngster has been lying in the same spot for hours and there is no sign of the mother, it's time to rescue. (The father squirrel will be of little help in nursing the offspring!) You will want to rescue *sooner* if the weather is very hot, cold or wet. About 50% of the time, the mother squirrel *will* return and carry the baby back up to the nest. Cottontails are a little different. The mother most likely will not be seen; she comes to the nest about twice a day, at dawn and dusk, to nurse her offspring. She doesn't stay, lest she attract predators. Don't assume a nest is "abandoned" because,

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as with birds, the bunnies would not live if she weren't coming to care for them! Cottontails are born blind and helpless, and if the mother is killed, the young need to be brought in. They require formulas containing goat's milk. Jackrabbits are born with their eyes open and are independent very early on. Make your initial assessment from how the animal *looks*: alert and active, or lame and sickly.

Our first downy Barn Owl chick arrived April 8th from Denver City. We appreciate Renee Meunier meeting the folks half-way in Brownfield to pick up this displaced bird. It was badly in need of a helping hand and a proper diet!

Some Thank Yous!

In addition to our new members and friends, we want to thank the following for their support: To Lois Tanner of TechType Secretarial Services for typesetting this newsletter; Ed Pruitt for a large cage; The Pet Co., Pets Plus and PetsMart, Cub Scout Pack #502, Lubbock Fishing Hole, plus our volunteers, Carla Davis and Judie Marquis, all for needed supplies; Betty Bisbee for food; to Jarrod Hall for fixing our pipes in the barn; to Hope Hall, Debbie Tennyson, Mary Baze and Rob Lee, for their help with this newsletter. To David Etheredge from South Plains College and Larry & Marion Farley for meat; to James Cockendolpher and Joe Bill Rogers for food; Kidscare brought us baby food for our infant wild bird syringe diets and St. John Newman Preschool donated supplies. Kathy Boatwright brought us some needed linens. Rob Lee contributed to our postage bill. Drew Adams and James Cokendolpher put our newsletter on the Internet. Thank you to Dr. Clyde Jones, and Dr. Steve Demairis for sponsoring our two Texas Tech student interns. Many young people from Alpha Phi Omega screened in the pond end of our yard to protect our many ducklings from ground and aerial predators. Thanks also to Rick Tennyson for tree work and repairing the tracks on our barn doors, and to Todd Blackburn of Todd's Home & Fence Repair for donating the labor to make an outdoor enclosure for our bobcat! I would also like to thank the Llano Estacado Audubon Society for their continuing support of our Center, and to Jill Haukos for her help in co-hosting Andy Sansom's visit to Lubbock. Andy is the Executive Director of Texas Parks & Wildlife Department in Austin, and former Director of the Nature Conservancy

in Texas. He spoke at Texas Tech the afternoon of April 2, and to our local Audubon Chapter that evening. Last but not least, thank you to Jason Spinks, John Hardin, and Eric Gransberg, who will be getting their respective Eagle Scout projects underway in the near future. These are the 8th, 9th and 10th such Eagle projects, which have provided a few additions, plus some needed changes and modifications around the Center for our wildlife!

TOP SECRET TOP SECRET

BIG SURPRISE! On May 18 at 7:00 PM, we are having a FUN-draiser! We are going to "roast" Dr. Larry Farley at the County Line Restaurant. He has given freely of his time and talent on behalf of wildlife for many years, and not *just* the last 8 years helping us! Tickets are \$20.00 each; half of this money will come to the Wildlife Center to help meet our summer expenses. If anyone who receives our newsletter would like to join us, we would be delighted! Please call Debbie at 799-2142 to RSVP. **This is a surprise!** Bring a gift, or gag gift if you like!

Bon Voyage!

by Hope Hall

Heather Walls has been a volunteer at the center since September of 1995. She is also a LEAP honor student at Lubbock High School. Heather was one of the students selected to go to Australia and New Zealand this summer. She was selected from a college list to be interviewed from a letter of interest that she wrote. She was then chosen as one of the students with the best interpersonal relations skills. While she is there, she will live with a few families, attend school, and meet with local governments to learn about the culture of the people in these areas of the world. Heather is receiving credit for her two semesters of work at the center by her teacher Pam Thomas.

Those who wish to pet and baby wild animals "love" them, but those who respect their natures and wish to let them live normal lives, love them more.

---Edwin Way Teale

It is Spring! Plant some native plants; use pesticides responsibly; recycle; don't prune or clean chimneys during breeding season; keep cats indoors.

Duck Tales

Special thanks to our newest volunteer Chad Craddock for rescuing two ducks at one of the local playas. He took his Jet ski out on March 30 and in no time had them safely at the Center. Both ducks are doing fine and will be released soon. This "successful" ending was not the case when we attempted a rescue in February: A number of individuals had called us about an injured Canada Goose on the playa at 82nd and Nashville. Kevin Christopher and our friends at Kawasawki Jet Ski came to the rescue once again, amid much fanfare and many onlookers, including the media. Great for the Goose, but it made the rest of us feel rather sheepish, when it took off and FLEW out of sight! It was labeled a "Feathered Fiasco" on the evening news, but it was a really cute story anyway, and it *did* have a happy ending! This, by the way, is also how the phrase "wild goose chase" got its name!

Letter from the Director

Putting this newsletter together is a big task. It not only takes a lot of time to write, edit, and re edit, but it requires the coordination of many different individuals. If you did not receive a newsletter for any reason, please let us know. We hope that we are providing something of worth for you, so you will feel *your* funds are being put to good use, (and not only for this newsletter, but for food and formulas, operational costs, projects, veterinary supplies, etc). Your membership is tax-deductible, to the extent the law allows. Please forgive us if an issue or two arrives late, as our workload in summer is crushing. You will still get six issues a year. As of April 1, the Center has admitted its 100th animal, and the *really* busy season is still a month away, when the larger songbirds start arriving daily. The most difficult part of all is writing for the wide spectrum of people who support us. If you have comments or suggestions, please feel free to drop us a line!



We are an equal opportunity wildlife rehabilitation facility, and accept wildlife without regard to color, species, or popularity with the human race. (But please remember we are prohibited from accepting coyotes, skunks and foxes for rehabilitation because of a statewide temporary quarantine law). Carol Mitchell

Well Meaning People

by Debbie Tennyson

Since I have been managing the center, I have seen a lot of tragedies, but none quite as heart wrenching as the ones that could have been prevented. Wild creatures are unique and diverse and so are their nutritional requirements. Wild animals die as often from stress and malnutrition as they do from their initial injury or illness. *Each species is unique*, and their digestive systems cannot tolerate immediate disruption. For instance, nighthawks & woodpeckers do not eat seeds, but these birds have been brought in for a wing injury and ended up dying because the finder tried to force bird seed, bread, or even milk down the throat. We must always know what species is being admitted, so we know *what* to feed it. Jays eat seeds, insects and fruit; Mockingbirds eat fruits and insects. Herons eat fish; Hawks eat insects, birds and mammals, depending on the species. In 8 out of 10 baby mammals we get, they have been fed cow's milk from the refrigerator. This is one of the worst things that can be done, it cannot be digested, and soon leads to diarrhea, dehydration, and perhaps even death. In another case, a lady thought she did the right thing by feeding two Red-tailed hawk chicks hamburger without any vitamins, for over a week before contacting us. The damage had already been done. Their bones were brittle, and the birds could not stand up. We tried everything to reverse the effects of poor nutrition, but as their conditions deteriorated, we knew euthanasia was the only solution. Both were crippled, due to "pathological fractures." Mockingbirds cared for incorrectly can develop rickets. These are the reasons we feel strongly about educating the public. We'd like to think these tragedies don't happen very often, but unfortunately they do. That's why the center is here today, to help answer questions about wildlife, care for the displaced and injured, provide education, and most importantly to help keep our wildlife where it belongs, free and wild.

Volunteer Spotlight . . .

by Mary Baze



Our featured volunteer this month is Mary Wesley. She has been associated with the South Plains Wildlife Center since its early days. Originally from Nacona, Texas, she has lived many years in Lubbock. She attended Amarillo College and West Texas State, where she majored in Nursing. She currently works as a teaching assistant at Atkins Jr. High, where she also worked as a school nurse. Parents always thought she could fix *anything*, so one day a man brought Mary two fledgling Blue jays. Her baby Jays, Pip & Squeak, went to school every day with her so they could be fed every half hour. Pretty soon they were crawling out of their basket, riding home on her shoulder or steering wheel. She called several veterinarians who provided only a little information. Soon afterward, she saw Carol on television and called her. This was the beginning of her work in wildlife rehabilitation. That first summer it was just Mary & Carol, all season long. She was there 8-4 every weekday, and sometimes much later. Occasionally she sensed that Carol had gotten swamped *after* she left, so she would go home to give her husband dinner, and then come back again! Softhearted soul that she is, she walked into the outdoor aviary one day and two tiny newborn mice dropped to the floor from a crack in the ceiling. Not wanting to use the little guys for raptor food, Mary took pity on them and raised them too, as if she didn't have enough work! "Star" did not live, but "Comet" lived several years with the Wesleys as a very pampered and personable rodent. He was later released, to live out his life as a free mouse! Mary is a sub-permittee on Carol's permit. Since last summer she has raised 3 raccoons, brought by Texas Parks & Wildlife Department. These raccoons are part of the

"Rabioral for Raccoons Program," directed by the Texas Department of Health Zoonosis Control Division. They were wintered over so the study could be completed for the State. The raccoons were immunized against rabies with special "bait," by Dr. Farley. Later, blood samples were taken to collect data on the animals' immune response. They have recently completed *their* parts, and will be released in the near future. Mary lives with her husband Mike. (Thank you Mike, for sharing her with us over the years! Editor)



SPECIES PROFILE

The Mississippi Kite

(*Ictinia mississippiensis*)

This species was first described in Louisiana, in 1806. The first specimen was collected and given its scientific name in Mississippi. This kite has been described by many other names, including the American kite, hovering kite, blue darter, grasshopper hawk, snake-killer hawk and locust hawk. The kite has long pointed wings, and adults are dark gray above, and paler gray below, with dark red eyes. The kite has a wide range across the Southern United States. This is a highly social and migratory species, and these hawks winter in South America. They are usually returning to Lubbock skies in April and May, and begin building their nests. One clutch of eggs is laid each year, and almost always consists of two bluish white eggs. Nests are large, made of twigs and sticks, and fresh leaves are added regularly. The young hatch asynchronously in about 30 days, but it will be five more weeks until they can fly. Weather and predators take a toll on the nests; predators include crows, jays, ravens, owls and raccoons. They are aggressive parents,

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and will vigorously attack intruders. This gives them quite a bad reputation on golf courses where they commonly nest. Both parents tend to the nestlings, feeding newly hatched kites three times per hour, increasing to 5 times per hour by the time they reach 10 days of age. Their diet is mainly insects, and they are especially fond of cicadas and grasshoppers. During the spring and summer, we are frequently asked for advice to resolve conflicts involving these birds. Again, we hope education is the key to the understanding and appreciation of these beautiful and graceful hawks.



MISSISSIPPI KITE CHICKS

Common Sense

There are so many factors to consider when we try to sort through a caller's information about the best course of action for wildlife youngsters. We may spend 5-10 minutes with each caller, *not* so we can play Twenty Questions, but so we can determine what, if anything, should be done. We would rather spend a few hours on the phone each day, than spend 3 or more weeks raising healthy birds which should not be brought in in the first place. Occasionally we tell the caller they can "buy time" for the fledgling; that is to move it for a day or three to keep it safe from predators *during the hours of darkness*. You may pick it up, put it into an appropriate sized box with a lid so the animal can move around, and line it with a pillowcase (no towels..it can get tangled). At dusk, set the box with the bird indoors, in a quiet place, and leave it completely alone. Please never handle the youngster or allow your children to "play" with it, or otherwise stress it. Do not feed or give it water! The bird will quickly settle down and go to sleep overnight. Very early, put it outdoors again, near a shrub or protected

spot as close to where you picked it up as possible. This will help protect the youngster and buy a little time for him until he can fly to the safety of a tree or shrub within a day or two. Next, please don't place baby birds back in the tree. Remember that they do not leave the nest as great flyers, and they may end up falling to the ground and breaking a leg. Individuals bring us several birds each year because this has happened. Sometimes, a person bringing an injured animal to us is surprised to learn we will not always be taking it immediately to the vet. Many times, the animal is in shock, or is severely dehydrated, suffering from exposure, or exhibiting stress-related problems. A Barn Owl, having been hit by a car, may first need electrolyte fluids; he may need to be warmed, given medications for stress/shock, and his fractured wing immobilized until he is stable. If these critical problems aren't addressed immediately, we may end up "saving the wing, but losing the owl." We do many procedures on site, such as administering oral or parenteral fluids and antibiotics, tube feedings, bandaging, splinting and immobilizing. Treating shock, bleeding and other life threatening conditions initially at the center saves many lives. Dr. Farley and his staff is then better *able* to do x-rays, surgery, or other procedures. One final thing about common sense: if it is a 103 degree day, the little casualty should not go onto a heating pad (these are not good anyway), because it is probably suffering from heat exposure.

Our Golden Eagle & American Kestrel have been "adopted" by Carla Davis & Jeff Hickman, respectively.

National Wildlife Rehabilitation Association's 1996 Symposium

In March, Rob Lee and Carol Mitchell attended the National Wildlife Rehabilitation Association's 1996 Symposium in Houston. Over 400 rehabilitators, veterinarians and vet techs attended. There were 91 concurrent lectures & workshops. Speakers included experts in many areas. Those of us from Texas were able to meet with an 8 member panel from Texas Parks & Wildlife Department and the United States Fish & Wildlife Service, our regulatory agencies. Carol will return to Austin to TPWD May 3rd to serve on a small panel to again discuss possible changes in the laws & regulations pertaining to rehabilitators. "I am honored to have been chosen to have input into this cooperative effort to help make regulations more workable for both sides. (Our team also won the Silver Medal for the "Wildlife Olympics! ☺)."

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Our Charter Members: Individuals and Groups which have contributed \$100.00 or more in funds or services since our beginning:

Dr. & Mrs. Pat Allen
Carre Avian
Lee Battey
Cheryl and Dale Blevins
Dr. & Mrs. Robert Broselow
Dr. Nancy Chasteen
Dr. Larry Farley
Dr. And Mrs. Robert Grant
Dr. & Mrs. David Close
Russel Gould-United Grocery Store
Karen Greitzler
Ken Hargeshimer
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Mr. Jimmie Mason
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Mr. Kelly Paul
Leesa & Edwin J. Price, Esq.
Dr. Lane Preston
Jay & Shirley Reichard
Dr. George Reichel
Shelly Underwood
and the following organizations:
Animal Medical Center
Bulls Horse & Hound
Double M Quarter Horses
Gafford Brothers
Llano Estacado Audubon Society
Mason, Warner & Co., P.C.
Nature's Gifts; Rick Cohen, Mgr.
New Neighbors of Lubbock
PetsMart
Pets Plus
Pools Unlimited
The Pet Co.
The Science Spectrum & Sandy & Alan Henry
Tuttle Landscaping
United Grocery Store, 50th & Indiana
Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.

Our Eagle Scouts: Brian Anderson, Cody Carver, Scott Crawford, Stephen Reynolds, Shad Rich, Ricky Rose and Shannon Spinks

NEW MEMBERS- Winter, 1996

Benefactor:

Dr. & Mrs. Harold K. Smith

Patrons:

Marla Riddlespurger
Dr. Alan Row
Dr. James E. Shotwell

Karen Steinert
Lois Tanner & Tech Type Secretarial Services

Supporting:

Herb & Kathy Boatwright
Mr. Fred Weber & Dr. Cheryl Weber

Organization Members

Dr. Don Hegi & The Animal Care Clinic

Family Members:

Mr. and Mrs. Robert Blacker
Tom & Robin Boudreaux
Jamie Casper
Marla & Charles Huddleston

Individuals:

Elayne Banks
Beth Claybough
June Ducker
George & Bonnie Hager
Thomas & Wanda Hager
Robin Hinn
Dodavah Lawrence
Claudette Miller
Bob Rasa
Jerrie Rodgers
Sellie Shine
Ted Simon
Jane Stuart

Spring 1996 Members

Benefactor:

Carla Davis
Dr. George Reichel
in addition to his earlier contribution

Patrons:

Dr. & Mrs. Pat Allen-contributing at this level again

Mr. And Mrs. Glenn Joyce

Supporting Members:

Martha and Jon Cieszinski
Mr. And Mrs. R.C. Hurmence
Jackson Elementary School
Judith Temple

Organization Member:

Liz Rylander

Family Memberships:

Dr. and Mrs. Robert Bisbee
Mr. and Mrs Robert Blacker
Danny and Maggie Hancock
Richard and Ann McGlynn
Dr. and Mrs. Lynn Hatfield

Individual Memberships:

Darice Bauer
Boots Kendrick
Michael Adams Parks
Betty Yandell
Dr. Brad Snodgrass
Dr. P. Carter Snodgrass

On behalf of our native wildlife species, our sincere thanks to each of you who believes in us, and what we do.

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MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

If you will consider becoming a member, and help our organization continue to help wildlife, please send the attached form, along with your tax deductible check Please consider an affiliation with us and help us help wildlife.

- | | |
|--|----------|
| <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.**

RECRUITING VOLUNTEERS

Seeking individuals, 17 or older, who love animals and don't mind a little hard work. Even if you have only one hour a month or several to spare, we *need* YOU! Baby season is fast approaching (and we will have baby birds which need to be fed about *every 30 minutes about 12-15 hours each day*, beginning in April, through August, plus infant mammals) and we need as many volunteers as possible. To set up an orientation date, please contact Debbie at (806) 799-2142.

**VOLUNTEERS GAVE 224 HOURS IN
JANUARY, 250 HOURS IN FEBRUARY,
AND 300 1/2 HOURS IN MARCH!**

THE MOCKINGBIRD CHRONICLES

South Plains Wildlife Rehabilitation Center, Inc.

3308 95th Street

Lubbock, Texas 79423

