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# MOCKINGBIRD CHRONICLES

Newsletter of the South Plains Wildlife Rehabilitation Center, Inc.



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

Volume 2 Number 5

## The Irresistible Summons

**M**igration season is upon us. Migration can be defined as the periodic movement of an animal from the place it had been living to a new area, and its subsequent return journey. A definite inherent action drives the animal on towards its goal. Migration evolved through thousands of years by natural selection and it is an adaptation that allows birds to best use all available habitat and food. It benefits most species by making it possible to find insects and other food all summer in the temperate zones, and all winter in the tropics. All birds do not migrate. Those that do, do not all migrate at the same time. Most of the long distance migrants fly at night, especially the smaller birds. Migration in North America is essentially north and south along four principal routes or "flyways:" Atlantic, Mississippi, Central and Pacific. This area is on the Central flyway. Most birds fly below 500 feet except during migration. Generally, the long distance migrants seem to start out at about 5,000 feet, and then climb progressively to about 20,000 feet. More than 20 million shorebirds migrate through the US to the Arctic each year. Shorebirds undertake some of the most spectacular long distance migration of any North American birds. Many species cover over 15,000 miles going from the Arctic nesting grounds to winter in Central and South America, and then return to the Arctic the following spring. Some fly at altitudes above 10,000 feet, and "cruise" at speeds of about 50 mph. The greatest threat to the preservation of many North American birds occurs south of the U.S.-Mexico border. Rapid and continued decimation of tropical rain forests where many migrants overwinter is a critical factor in migration. Another area of concern is that remaining areas of undisturbed natural environment will be reduced as human populations continue to increase. More information on migration follows later in this issue.

## THE BAMBI MYTH

**F**awns, just like infant wild birds, are often kidnapped by people mistakenly thinking the animal needs "help." Every year, fawns are picked up by well meaning individuals who assume they are "orphans." The young animals lie very still while the doe forages for food nearby and she seldom wanders out of earshot of the fawn's call. She may be away for long

periods. As the fawn gets older and more curious, it may wander off on its own. The doe may not allow the youngsters to follow her while she is feeding until they are about three weeks old. Again, allow common sense to prevail, and do not jump to conclusions. Obviously if the mother has been killed or the fawn has been crying for an extended period, or is weak and emaciated, the youngster should carefully be transported to a rehabilitator.



## NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE WEEK

**A**merica is home to over 500 national refuges. National Wildlife Refuge Week, October 5-13, 1996 is timed to coincide with the annual fall migration, so millions of birds are sure to fly in to most refuges in the lower 48 states on their way south. Birdwatching should be at its best. Other special wildlife-dependent recreational events are planned at refuges across the country. Refuges are carefully maintained so that these areas can be passed along for future generations to enjoy. Three refuges are within a few hours' drive from Lubbock: Muleshoe NWR; Buffalo Lake NWR, and Bitter Lake, in Roswell, New Mexico. For additional information on National Wildlife Refuge Week and a brochure with a map of the refuge system and basic visitor's information for every refuge, call 1-800-344-WILD.



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### *Letter from the Director...*

#### **Exhilarations and Exasperations**

"Baby Season" is finally over, and it is the season in which we *try* to catch our breath. This year, that has not been easy. The Wildlife Center has already surpassed last year's total census, and we have several months to go. Following is an overview of our past weeks, including why this particular issue is several weeks late. Workload aside, there are other reasons for the delay: The end of August was earmarked for vacation. That part was great, but "homecoming" was to a basement and its contents flooded in water. A hot water pipe had broken *somewhere*, and water had entered through the air conditioning cold air return valve for at least 12 or more hours until it was discovered by my son. A 2x3x2 hole was jack hammered through the cement in the garage, looking for the leak. Unfortunately, it was not to be found there, and during the "wait and see" period, the entire basement (now empty) flooded again 48 hours later. A *second* similar size hole was dug under, of all places, my office, and worst of all, my computer table. Needless to say, now the office, basement, and part of the garage contents over the holes were now lying covered up all around the house in complete and utter disarray and disorganization. As this is prepared for the typesetter, the leak has been found and repaired, the holes filled and drying, the computer up and running again. There is something to be said for homeowner's insurance. We have also updated our computer, thanks to the help of my brother Jay Reichard from Colorado, Brian Carpenter and Circuit City. A minor problem has been adapting to and navigating in Windows 95; Again, I hope you will forgive us for being late! We continue to have a lot of young animals to care for, and are involved in educational presentations once again.



*Carol Smitchell*

### *Notes.....*

The Mockingbird on the cover of this newsletter is original art drawn for us by Michael Nickell.

Thank you to Stephen Thrash and HubNet for their service to us. The valuable exchange and availability of information regarding wildlife has definitely been an asset to us.

Thanks to Jerrie Rodgers for her planning and obtaining several large artificial Christmas trees for our aviaries...they add not only colorful greenery, but the birds love the hiding places they afford during their convalescence.

On September 11, it was reported to us that two geese at the Godecke Library playa had been hit with blow darts...one dart lodged in the cheek of one bird, and through the top of the head in the other. Two rescue attempts from the land failed. A posse of volunteers again tried the following day with the wonderful assistance of Kevin Christopher and the Kawasawki Jet ski folks. This time both were nabbed and taken to Animal Medical Center for care. They were released again a few days later. September 16, Kevin and his staff helped AGAIN...a third goose was netted at the same playa...this one a victim of monofilament fishing line deeply embedded in his right leg. Dr. Farley removed the line, and this goose will be sent on his way shortly. Thanks to KLBK for covering the stories, and to the Kawasawki staff for once again helping us with wild goose chases!

Our three Lubbock High "Leap Honors" students are back with us for another year: Tracy Allen, Katrina May and Heather Walls. Thank you to Pam Thomas for sponsoring them once again.

There is never a dull moment: Volunteers at the center panicked some weeks ago to suddenly smell smoke, then find the barn filled with smoke. A neighbor's metal trash receptacle caught fire as a result of spontaneous combustion. Firemen quickly arrived on the scene. It took our raptors, which are housed in the barn, the rest of the day to calm down. In May and June, the heavy rains and hail destroyed the roof on the house. Subsequent rains further rotted the beams and created much water damage. By the time the roofers arrived in mid-August, one of the men fell through the ceiling! Fortunately, he was not injured, but a little surprised! Our animals housed in that room did not seem too unnerved by the commotion.

### **MORE ON MIGRATION**

Many of our familiar songbirds and birds of prey are called neotropical migratory birds. These are birds that



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migrate between the neotropics (tropical areas of the New World) and their breeding areas to the north. It is well documented that many species are declining. Texas Parks & Wildlife Department is especially concerned about the problems facing these birds because so many pass through this state. Almost half of the almost 600 species documented in Texas are considered neotropical migratory birds. These include songbirds, hummingbirds, warblers, orioles and peregrine falcons. Declines of some favorite songbirds were noticed in the 1970's, but it was not immediately known just how widespread the problem was. Breeding bird survey information coordinated by the USFWS provided data indicating that 54% of our neotropical migratory bird species declined between 1980 and 1989. Some species of bats and butterflies also face many of the same problems birds face. Approximately half of the bird species that breed in the US and Canada migrate south each fall to Mexico, Central & South America, and the Caribbean. Six to nine months later they return north to nest. Habitat loss forces migratory birds into smaller areas and pesticide problems also continue to be a threat south of the border.

### VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

This issue's "Volunteer Spotlight" is on Peggy Cogan. Peggy is a Lubbockite who currently is a receptionist at Standard Sales. She plans to go back to school to enable her to do veterinary or zoo-related work. Her favorite part of work at the Center has been caring for the white-tailed deer fawns. Her most memorable experience: When our resident bobcat "Bobby" was brought in at the age of two days. She learned about our Center after an article appeared in the University Daily several years ago. Now, over two and a half years later she says, "It's like my second home." Peggy has helped with virtually every fundraiser, and has been at the center faithfully almost every Saturday morning since her first day. Her husband, Topper, has helped us out of more than one pinch, and is not above picking up the slack for us when we are short handed.



### MORE NEWS

- Debbie was awakened recently at midnight by TPWD warden Audie Hamm. This time, much to her surprise, he had a *crocodile*. Ready for anything, she set up temporary quarters for the 5' reptile. He first turned up at a physician's home near 114th street before arriving on our doorstep. After spending a few days with us basking by the pond, he was returned to his permitted owner by Texas Parks & Wildlife officials.
- We now have seven White-tail deer fawns this season (3 more than last year), all growing and thriving. We plan on transporting them to the private ranch in Junction, TX in mid-October. The females we released there last year still stay close to the house. Recently another new species arrived...a very weak thin female Mule deer. She is doing much better, and has found companionship with the white tails.
- A Rufous hummingbird released recently after being caught in a large spider's web at a warehouse. Caring for, feeding and then releasing a beautiful and tiny hummingbird was a wonderful experience...definitely one of the joys of the work we do. No matter what else happens in a given day, this is one of those highlights you never forget.
- We have continued to release many animals—songbirds, kites and kestrels, waterfowl, opossums, cottontails, and squirrels. The bobcat kitten was transferred to San Antonio where he will continue to grow up with other cats his age, and then be set free.
- We recently had two additional new species: a Pectoral sandpiper, and a Hoary bat. We do not usually accept bats for care because of the rabies risk, but this fellow was picked up by Dr. Farley's wife. We hoped he would be a good candidate for release, as he had no fractures. He died despite care, but he was an interesting little creature, and it was an opportunity to learn more about bats in general, and this species in particular. We also admitted two White-faced Ibises, and a young American avocet. The ibises both had fractured wings; one died and one was euthanized. The avocet was released.
- The October 1996 issue of *Natural History Magazine* is largely devoted to raptor migration.



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- The house at the Center now has a new ceiling and sunroom floor and carpet. The work on these two projects was done by our managers Rick & Debbie Tennyson. What a nice new difference it has made in that room! A window air conditioning unit was donated by Peggy Cogan, and a new refrigerator was also donated, thanks to Kyle & Maxine Hollingshead.



### MIGRATING KITES & HAWKS

**M**igrating kites and other hawks can be readily observed during this fall season. The birds that move through the Texas Panhandle and South Plains begin their fall migration as early as July. A schedule of fall migration of this area lists a few of the following examples: July 28-August 3 -- shorebirds, such as sandpipers and plovers. August 4-10-- Chipping sparrows. August 18-24-- Yellow warblers, Wilson's warblers; September 1-7--Merlins, Hermit thrushes; September 15-21--Sharp shinned hawks, American goldfinches; September 22-28--Long eared owls, Cedar waxwings. September 29-October 5--Sandhill cranes; October 6-12--Bald eagles, Song sparrows, Dark eyed juncos. October 20-26--Harris's sparrow; November 10-16--American tree sparrow. One of the best times for viewing fall migrants in this area is the week of September 15-21. However, the birds are unpredictable - a trait that ultimately draws so many of us to them; one is never quite sure what birds may be spotted on any given day of the fall migration.

(Contributors to this article were Jill Haukos; the fall migration list in our area was reprinted with permission from The Prairie Horned Lark, newsletter of the panhandle Bird Club-article by Kenneth Seyffert. Ed.)

### SPECIES PROFILE

#### RED-EARED SLIDER

*(Trachemys scripta elegans)*

**T**he slider is a medium sized turtle best identified by a red or sometimes yellow patch found just behind its eye. The red streak may be broken up into 2 or 3 spots and may vary from orange to deep red. A few have no streaks. The top of the shell (carapace) is smooth, curved slightly and changes from green at the hatchling stage to a dark brown-black color as the turtle ages. This species is almost exclusively aquatic and vegetarian. It rarely ventures out of the water except to lay eggs or migrate to a new water body if necessary. The female lays multiple (up to 3) clutches every year, with breeding season being between March and July. The number of eggs per clutch ranges from 12-15. A shallow hole is dug on shore. After the eggs are laid, she will cover them up with soil and materials to seal them for protection both from weather and predators. Young turtles hatch 60-75 days later, but may spend winter in the nest. Preferred habitat is quiet freshwater systems with muddy bottoms and abundant aquatic vegetation. They are widely distributed throughout Texas and can be frequently seen basking in the sun on logs. This species is very easily frightened, and will quickly slide into the water if approached.

### Cliff's Notes

*The following information was compiled by our local Audubon Society member and long time birding expert Cliff Stogner:*

**D**id you know that 410 bird species have been recorded here? About 70 species are found in our area year-round. Winter residents number about 65 species, and summer residents about 35 species. About 100 species are migrants that come and go. This leaves about 140 species recorded here *at some time* during the year, but not normally expected to be here (such as the Trumpeter swans that visited last Spring).

### WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP MIGRATORY SONGBIRDS

Many neotropical migratory songbirds depend on insect larvae for protein. Investigate before you use chemicals in your yard and trees. You may be eradicating sources of necessary bird food. Call the National Pesticide Hotline (1-800-858-7378) for questions and information. Spraying



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kills indiscriminately, destroying not only beneficial insects such as butterflies, lady bugs, praying mantises and bees, but all of the minute insects that attract birds to our gardens and yards. You can also plant a "wildlife friendly" habitat, including native plants! Provide food, water and cover. Keep cats indoors as much as possible.

### EARNEST

We seldom mention the other visitors we get, namely those without fur or feathers. "Earnest" was one of those visitors: a Red-eared slider turtle, this issue's species profile. "Earnest" was boldly painted in hot pink letters across his back, telling us he was probably a back yard captive somewhere. He reminded me of the tiny sliders one could buy in dime stores years ago...many to perish as the result of improper housing, diet and care. (The Center for Disease Control banned the sale of red-eared slider turtles in the early 1970's). This turtle was very large. He was brought in by an elderly woman who was concerned for his welfare. After careful assessment, and in the absence of injuries, I took Earnest to a deep playa one Sunday morning, and set him near the water's edge. He knew immediately what to do, and when to do it! As fast as his legs could carry him, he made for the water and within three seconds disappeared completely from sight in it. Yes, even these releases make us feel great!

If you find a turtle, be sure to identify which species it is. This area is home to a number of terrestrial and aquatic species, such as snapping turtles, mud turtles, box turtles, and 4-7 other species. Turtles have long life spans and require special care to remain healthy in captivity.

### ANOTHER COMPLETED EAGLE SCOUT PROJECT

Jason Spinks and members of Scout Troop #530 have done an exceptional job of planning and executing a much needed project at the Wildlife Center earlier in the summer. His project was a sprinkling system designed to facilitate watering our grounds and trees. Habitat is a critical concern at our location, since so many animals are released from this site. Many hours of thought and design have gone into his project. Initially, all of the existing lines had to be plotted out before any digging could be instituted. Jason coordinated this with the help of the utility companies. Materials were secured from building and hardware companies, and he had all of the materials *donated*. A Ditch-witch was "borrowed" without cost to

us, to dig the trenches to lay the PVC pipe. Several trees were donated by a local landscape business. A great number of hours of planning *plus* the labor went into this very large undertaking. This was a very professional job! We were so happy to have been selected for this very much needed project. Everyone worked together, to do a wonderful job for us, and it is greatly appreciated!

Our thanks, and continuing thanks to the following people for ongoing financial help, supplies, food, Veterinary care, newsletter and other personal help, etc. etc! Drs. Larry Farley, Dan Leach Lane Preston, and the Animal Medical Center staff, Debbie & Rick Tennyson, Joyce Lisenby, Joyce Komkov, Karen Steinert, Glenn Joyce, Carre Avian, Rob Lee, our wonderful volunteers (who will be listed individually in our year-end issue), Richard Lopez, Stephen Thrash, B & B Game Birds, Joe Bill Rogers, KLBK-TV, Mary & Mike Wesley, United Store (50th & Indiana, Russell Gould, Mgr.), Kevin Christopher & the Kawasawki Jet Ski folks, Brian & Susan Carpenter, Dr. George Reichel for accepting our deer again this year, Llano Estacado Audubon Society, Bill Davis, Pets Plus, PetsMart, The Pet Co., Lubbock Small Animal Emergency Clinic for cages, Lubbock Fishing Hole, Charles Swift, Dr. Carl Andersen for releasing much of our wildlife on his ranch; Mr. Jimmie Mason, our CPA, and Mr. Edwin Price, attorney; the folks at Vintage Press, and to Lois Tanner of TechType Secretarial Services for typesetting! Because of the constant activity at the Center, namely doorbell rings & knocks, calls, drop-ins, questions, emergencies, distractions, problems, crises and other disruptions, if we have inadvertently missed thanking someone, please forgive us; we try very hard not to just keep our "records" of admissions, but also the day to day goings on, period. Sometimes it can be rather difficult. Again, forgive us for being late. We will publish one more newsletter before the end of the year.

***Please be thinking of how important your membership is to the growth of our center, and about renewing your subscription over the next two months. Not only do the membership funds help to publish the newsletters, but these funds help feed and care for the ever increasing volume of wildlife that we are faced with each year.***



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### *Thought for the day. . .*

Several years ago, a young lady brought a bird and visited the wildlife center for the first time. As she left, she said, "I have something you would like, and I will bring it for you." The following day, she brought a framed picture, with a starfish inside, and a story. It's origin is unknown. I have since read several versions, but this is my favorite:

As the old man walked the beach at dawn, he noticed a young man ahead of him picking up starfish and flinging them into the sea. Catching up with the youth, he asked him why he was doing this. The answer was that the stranded starfish would die if left until the morning sun. "But the beach goes on for miles, and there are millions of starfish," countered the other. "How can your effort make any difference?" The young man looked at the starfish in his hand then threw it to safety in the waves. "It makes a difference to this one."

### — YOUR HELP IS NEEDED —

This is an especially difficult time of the year for us financially. The number of wild bird and mammal admissions has *already* exceeded that of 1995. We have depleted the donations of supplies that students contributed last winter and spring as thanks for doing educational programs. The "big eaters" are just now coming in as they do each fall and winter: Hawks, owls and Great blue herons. Last but not least are the Holidays, and everyone has other priorities for their discretionary cash. **PLEASE CONSIDER RENEWING YOUR MEMBERSHIP FOR 1996.** Following is a list of supplies we are always in need of:

Flannel baby receiving blankets	Trash Bags
Bath Sized towels without fringes	Mixed bird seed
Sunflower seed	Nuts, in and out of the shell
Plastic Wrap, Paper Towels	Zip-loc Bags
Laundry detergent	Dawn Dish Liquid
Kleenex	Purina Brand Cat Chow
Pet-Taxis	1 Rubbermaid Heavy Duty Plastic Wheelbarrow
Paper towels	Small dishes and crockery

### *Did You Know???*

In the U.S. over 2.5 billion dollars is spent annually on bird seed, feeders, bird baths and nesting boxes.

### OUR NEXT NEWSLETTER

We had hoped to publish 6 newsletters, but due to circumstances beyond our control, *and* our dwindling bank account, we will publish only one more end of the year issue. Included will be articles on Raptor Electrocution, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, The US Fish & Wildlife Service's role in conservation, and a species profile on the Golden eagle. All of our members and volunteers will also be listed.

### Burrowing Owl Eagle Scout Project Completed

Ethan Dalley completed his Eagle Scout project October 4th and 5th. He planned and designed an artificial Burrowing owl burrow. We have had a need for this, as a site for owls to be returned to after rehabilitation, and also to eventually establish a new colony of owls. Ethan constructed two of these on the grounds of the Center. Ethan, a LHS senior, is in Explorer Post 500, under the direction of Mr. Chris Sigerson. A similar project was undertaken at Lakeridge several years ago. The Wildlife Center, our USFWS agent Rob Lee, the land developer, the Lakeridge Golf Course personnel, and a TTU graduate student (who had done her Master's work on that species) combined efforts to design and dig an artificial burrow to relocate the owls. Area residents were concerned because a road was to be placed directly over the active burrow. Eleven eggs were also moved into the "new" burrow. Several years later, the burrow remains in use with a current population of about 8 owls.

### *Saying Good-Bye*

The seven fawns and one mule deer were released at a ranch in South Texas over the long weekend of October 12-14. Thank you to Rob Lee for providing the trailer and helping with the relocation. The transport trailer was parked at the Center for several weeks so the animals would become accustomed to it. For a few days before departure, they were also fed inside it, so they would willingly enter "when the time came." We do not use any tranquilizers. Once all eight were inside, the doors were closed quickly. They are only briefly wary. As the journey gets underway, they settle down on the blankets, and continue to eat. Frequent checks find them calm and settled. We arrive in Junction 297 miles later and meet our hosts, Dr. George Reichel and Pat Reichel. We stop and open the trailer doors; the deer come out hesitantly, and stay close by. Bags of apples await them, which seem to



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put them instantly at ease! Within an hour, they are exploring nearby, discovering the deer feeders and the water cistern. Just a short distance from the Llano River, they will soon find that water source as well. Several also discover the Prickly Pear cactus, and we have to remove the cactus spines from their legs. They periodically wander off, sometimes together, sometimes in pairs or groups - but all eight are in the front yard the next 2 mornings. They forage and rest throughout the day, apparently very content to now be at home in Texas Hill Country. We know we have done all we can for those raised this year, and now they are on their own.

Three of the four fawns released there last year visit at dusk, and all three continue to sleep near the house. The buck left the area after about 2 months. - Ed.

### THEY KEEP COMING. . . . .

**A**s this goes to press, the animals keep coming....From mid-September through mid-October we have admitted 73 additional birds and mammals, including several nighthawks, robins, doves, jays and flickers, a Merlin, 2 Great blue herons, a Burrowing owl, 4 Barn owl chicks, 13 baby mallards, a double crested cormorant, pied-billed grebe, porcupine, opossum, several squirrels and cottontails. We are hoping for a slowdown!

### GETTING READY FOR SPRING GARAGE SALE

Our recent garage sale raised \$602.00. Please save your castaways for our spring sale. Date will be announced.

### THANK YOU TO. . .

**T**hank you to Target Stores, Inc. for the donation of supplies. Mr. George Sanford is the store manager, and Cheryl Johnson the assistant manager. Thank you also to Whiteside Elementary for their monetary contributions!

### *New Members*

#### — PATRONS —

Animal Care Clinic, Dr. Don Hegi & Staff  
Dr. Susan and Dr. Clyde Kendrick  
Robert & Loretta Dunn, Fort Worth, TX  
Robert C. Lee, Sr., Manteca, CA

#### — FAMILY MEMBERSHIPS —

Freda Bartlett, Crosbyton  
Cheryl & Dale Blevins (again)  
Howard & Elnora Fogg, Lubbock  
Art Rousseau, Lubbock  
Scott & Sandy Shannon, Lubbock  
John Snively, Lubbock  
Tom & Marvel Otto, Lubbock

#### — GROUP/ORGANIZATION MEMBERSHIP —

Nature's Gifts, South Plains Mall (Rick Cohen)  
Donna Snow, Lubbock

#### — INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIPS —

Wanda Billings, Littlefield, TX (again)  
Alice Bryant, Lubbock  
Paula Davis, Lubbock  
Mr. C. L. Eudy, Lubbock  
Holle Humphries, Lubbock (again)  
Boots and Jack Kendrick, Anchorage, Alaska (again!)  
Deborah Kirwin, Lubbock  
Karen & Wendell Medlin, Lubbock  
Mary Moreno & Tammy Maxwell, Lubbock  
Janice Norton, Lubbock  
Lee & Frances Parrish, Lubbock  
Larry & Rhonda Stovall, Floydada  
Bill Van Pelt, San Francisco, CA



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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.**

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