

# The Mockingbird Chronicles



Newsletter of the South Plains Wildlife Rehabilitation Center, Inc.

Number 1/ 2009

## Happy Spring!



"I had a second chance at life and freedom!"

### Highlights:

Ferruginous Hawk Release.....p. 3  
Nests: Avian Architectural Masterpieces..... Center  
The Virginia Opossum.....p. 9



### Letter from the Director



I'm a big traveler. I love planning a trip and saving money to fulfill a dream to go some-

where I've never been before. It always amazes and pleases me when I see how universal the love for wildlife is no matter where you are in the world. My trip two years ago was to Scotland. We arrived in Edinburgh for the Fringe Festival and had a marvelous time in the arts scene that the city embraces one month out of the year: a time when if you are a performer, they'll find you a venue. Our next stop was Inverness. We wanted to see Culloeden Moor and Cawdor Castle where Macbeth, the Thane of Cawdor lived. Okay, so today it's Lady Cawdor. Coming out of the train station, what do we see, but a man with an Eagle Owl perched under an awning, raising money for the local wildlife rehabilitation center. I thought about our own owls, Bubo, Huey and Grumbles as I made a donation.

Flash forward to this year's grand trip to Australia. Fourteen hours on a plane from Los Angeles to Sydney, but it was worth every cramped muscle. In Sydney, the other wildlife/human interaction asserted itself: the exotic animals. In Sydney, it's the ubiquitous pigeon and the Laughing Myna, instead of the feral pigeon, House Sparrow and European Starling, as it is here in the U.S. I personally love the pigeons. They have a personality that won't quit and they're eating machines, not even allowing an injury get in the way of a meal. There in Hyde Park was a woman covered from head to toe in pigeons and the Laughing Mynas were everywhere. "Oh, they're not native here." I'm told at the zoo.

Off we go to Cairns, near the Great Barrier Reef. Our first day trip was to Kuranda, a shopping area where they sold ice cream at a tiny trailer - even ice cream containing alcohol. It's Australia after all. There on the wall of the trailer were pictures of kangaroos, wallabies and Sulphur-crested Cockatoos that are cared for at the local rehabilitation center.

I bought ice cream and told the woman to keep the change. She asks me if I'm sure, and when I reply affirmatively she says, "Thank you so much, we spend 20,000 Euros on food alone." That's something I can identify with!

In Melbourne, there's a huge pigeon loft erected in Batman Park. To control the pigeon numbers, pigeons are allowed to roost -but their eggs are replaced with artificial eggs. It also provides a home for the birds other than on downtown buildings. It appears to be working and I was grateful that the Melbournians are trying non-lethal methods to control pigeon populations.

So, as we embark on a new year full of possibilities and needs, think about our local Wildlife Center when you listen to bagpipes or have an ice cream... with or without alcohol.

*Dorothy*

### Mark your Calendar

Please come by and meet some of our wildlife ambassadors on the First Friday Art Trail (FFAT) **April 3, 2009** between 6 - 9 PM at the Tornado Gallery, 1822 Buddy Holly Avenue. The FFAT showcases art and artists downtown and throughout Lubbock. Check out locations which are continually updated in the weeks before each event to see what there is to look forward to. Catch a bus or trolley at many locations, pick up a map online (<http://www.ffat.org>) or at any of the venues to see the art that can be found throughout our community each month during this event. Special thanks to Gallery owner, Mr. Larry Simmons.

The Wildlife Center presents March's program for the Llano Estacado Audubon Society, Tuesday evening **March 24th, 2009** at 7:00 PM. It will be held at the Lubbock Garden and Arts Center, 44th and University Avenues. It's free and open to the public. Our wildlife ambassadors and volunteers will be on hand. Photography is welcome.

Our annual summer Open House will be held **Saturday, June 20th, 2009**, between 11 AM and 2 PM. This is a chance to see our completed baby bird building and all our summer babies.

*The Mockingbird Chronicles* is a quarterly publication of the South Plains Wildlife Rehabilitation Center Inc. (SPWRC). The organization is an IRS determined 501(c)(3) non-profit facility that cares for orphaned, injured, ill and displaced wild animals with the ultimate goal of returning wildlife back to its natural habitat.

SPWRC holds state and federal permits but receives no funding whatsoever from either regulating agency. SPWRC operations are maintained through donations, gifts, education programs, quarterly newsletter subscriptions, memorial contributions, "wildlife ambassador" sponsorships and fundraising events. Donations are tax-deductible to the extent the law allows.

Executive Director Dr. Dorothy Tinkler  
Founder; Executive Director, retired Carol Lee

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Dr. Mark Wallace  
Dr. Mike Hooper

South Plains Wildlife Rehabilitation Center Inc. is located at 3308 95th Street, Lubbock, TX 79423. (95th and Indiana, East side of street).

We can be reached by phone at 806-799-2142, or learn more at our website at [www.spwrc.org](http://www.spwrc.org)

**Cover:** Our patient, a Ferruginous Hawk, prior to release



## Volunteer Spotlight



**Patricia Harris**

Born in Mississippi, Pat Harris grew up in Louisiana and moved to Texas after college. She married high school sweetheart, Jim Harris, at the end of her freshman year of college, and they've been married for over fifty years.

Pat's first degree was a BA in journalism from LSU. Years later, a part-time job sparked an interest in accounting, and when she and Jim moved to Lubbock in 1975, she enrolled at Texas Tech University and graduated with a MS in accounting in 1978. She joined Mason Warner & Company at that time and stayed with them until she retired in 2004.

When SPWRC incorporated, Pat became a member of the original Board of Directors and has acted as CPA/Treasurer for the Center since then. Most of her volunteer hours are spent on accounting tasks. She also acts as Treasurer for Executive Forum, a networking organization for women in management or who own their own business.

Jim is a retired landscape architect. The Harris' enjoy traveling, gardening and indulging their houseful of cats. "There must be a "Sucker" sign on our fence as all pets have just appeared and moved in". A new pet takes an immediate trip to the vet for spay or neuter to ensure no little ones will appear—the price for free food and lodging.

One of the main joys of being retired Pat says, is being able to indulge herself in reading for fun, but she's rapidly running out of space to stack all her mystery books.

The Harris' one daughter, Lisa, lives in Santa Fe, NM, and has inherited her parents' love of animals and wildlife.

## A Note from Founder Carol Lee

Times are tough and almost everyone is cutting back. For some non-profit organizations, cutting back isn't optional, it's mandatory. Sometimes we conserve to save money, only to see utility and other costs rise.

The Wildlife Center is no exception. In the face of possible huge water increases, we ask our volunteers to safeguard resources – conserve water when doing laundry and dishes, turn off lights not being used; turn down heat or air conditioning at night, being mindful of our expenses versus our donations, as we're not "funded" by our regulatory agencies.

As a service organization we have no control over how many patients we'll admit over any given period, although one thing is certain after twenty-one years: during spring and summer our admissions increase exponentially.

Baby songbirds must be fed about every thirty minutes during daylight hours until they reach the "juvenile" stage. Little mammals and doves eat every two to four hours depending on their age and condition. Food consumption is astronomical. Paying utilities is not optional, nor is trash pick-up or phone service. Foundations and other philanthropic organizations have lost funds in the sour economy, and they, too, are cutting back on what they can allot to charities. Such is life, and we have no choice but to ride it out and hope for brighter times.

That said, we sincerely hope that everyone who brings us an animal in need over the next few months will make a donation on its behalf; we hope to not have to turn any casualty or orphan away due to lack of funds.

On another note, we're toying with two ideas: offering an electronic copy of our newsletter as a pdf file. Since 1995 we've published a newsletter - quarterly is our goal, although sometimes factors beyond our control prohibit producing four issues.

If necessary, we'll cut back to three issues,



offered every four months. If you have an opinion, e-mail me at [spwrc@suddenlink.net](mailto:spwrc@suddenlink.net). Please visit our website periodically at [spwrc.org](http://spwrc.org) and check Carol's Chatter. Click on the link and then click "read more" for a new wildlife-related column about once a month.

*Carol*

## Our Cover Bird

The Ferruginous Hawk on the cover was admitted December 28, 2008 with a wing break close to the wrist. We took it to Above & Beyond Pet Care Hospital in hopes it would be a candidate for an external fixator. An external fixator is basically scaffolding that holds a bone together until it mends and is then removed. We knew this bird was a fighter and had high hopes for it. Feeding time was something of an event because the hawk grabbed food from a plate and swallowed it whole.

Birds with broken wings must be confined while they're healing, so it spent its time in captivity carefully removing its bandages and we spent our time carefully putting the bandages back on. After two weeks, we removed the wraps and exercised the wing once a week, then rewrapped it. Physical therapy keeps the wing from freezing in position and increases the chances that the bird will fly again. At about five and a half weeks, the hawk removed not only the bandages, but also the carriers that kept the pins in place. Back to the vet it went to have the pins removed just shy of the normal six week mark.

The days after pins are removed are the most exciting and nerve-wracking as we determine if the bird can fly after six weeks of daily care and feeding. After pin removal surgery, we put the bird in a mew to get used to having its wing free. After several days it was with relief that we saw it flapping its wing. It spent its last days with us in the flight cage where each day it flew to a higher perch. The hardest part about flying is getting off the ground, so several times a day we exercised the hawk, forcing it to use its flight muscles to fly to a high perch. When an adult raptor lifts off successfully and flies to a lofty perch in one flight, it's ready for release. Our lucky patient was released February 22, 2009. After eight weeks of caring for this beautiful, feisty bird, all our work flew out of our hands to freedom, just as we hoped!.....Dorothy Tinkler



## May Fundraiser promises Fun!

SPWRC is excited to announce its tenth annual "Night on the Wild Side." McPherson Cellars Winery and Event Center will host our event this year Saturday, May 2, 2009, from 7:00-10:00 P.M. The winery is conveniently located in the Depot District at 1615 Texas Avenue. We're excited about having our venue at the beautiful new Lubbock winery with an outdoor patio where you can enjoy wine and an array of hors d'oeuvres, while visiting with friends and bidding on Silent Auction items.

We have wonderful Silent Auction items this time around including four one-day passes to Disneyland; a signed and numbered Robert Bateman print of a Burrowing Owl; a Jim Eppler rabbit sculpture; signed Peterson Guide, gift cards to area restaurants and much more. Tickets are a \$25.00 donation and will be available shortly. Please watch our website at spwrc.org for further information. Attire is casual. We hope to see you there! Special thanks to owner, Mr. Kim McPherson, a longtime supporter of our efforts for wildlife.



## More thank yous...

Thank you to Linda and Jimmie McDowell for their behind the scenes help with our bulk mailings and labeling of our newsletters.

Thank you to Jay Reichard of Big Spring, Texas, for maintaining our web site.

Thanks to Tate Marshall for designing our May fundraiser invitations.

Special thanks also to supporters Bill Van Pelt of Washington, D.C. and to Bebe and Art McCasland of Big Spring, Texas, for their ongoing gifts of supplies.

## NEWS and NOTES

\*Thank you to Dennis McDaniel for his service on our Board of Directors. Dennis will be relocating to Wyoming in the near future.

\*A Pacific Loon was sighted in Lubbock during February, as well as a Brown Pelican. Approximately 410 avian species have been documented in our area that call Lubbock home, or pass through during their annual migrations. On March 9, birdwatcher Anthony Hewetson of Lubbock saw the first Turkey Vulture of the season. If you're interested in knowing what species are sighted here, subscribe to the local Llano Estacado Audubon's Listserv. There aren't many posts, and it's interesting to see which species are coming and going to and from the Texas South Plains. To subscribe, send mail to [LISTSERV@MILEPOST1.COM](mailto:LISTSERV@MILEPOST1.COM) with the command (paste it).

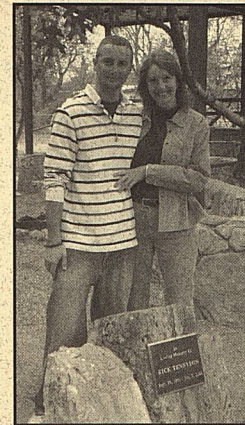
\*Our intern at the Wildlife Center right now is Mark Pennington. His professor is Dr. Susan Tomlinson, and he's enrolled in the Honors program at Texas Tech's Natural History and Humanities Program. His ninety hours of volunteering is part of the work for the three-hour course. Marks' major is Journalism and Photography, but he chose South Plains Wildlife Center to learn about native wildlife and the ecosystem. He's not yet sure on what his plans will be following graduation.

\*Eric Jaskoviak recently received his Eagle Scout Award. His Eagle project was completed August 26, 2006. He received his Eagle Scout Award in December 2008.

Eric and fellow scouts did an wonderful job of mulching and landscaping along the front of the property. The area was planted with native plants and perennials, and looks wonderful every summer. Plants were selected because they're drought tolerant once established, a major consideration in our area. Eric's Scoutmaster was Gary Mitchell.

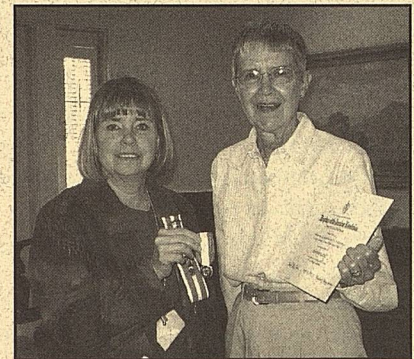
\*Center Manager Katie Stafford took three online courses in wildlife rehabilitation offered by the IWRC (International Wildlife Rehabilitation Council) for which she'll receive credit.

\*Catch the noon news on Fridays on KLBK-TV to see volunteer Gail Barnes introduce some of our very interesting patients shortly after 12:00 PM. This is a segment we've done for the better part of ten years!



pictured with son Josh last Thanksgiving after the bronze Memorial plaque added the finishing touch to the area near Ambassador Row.

Wildlife Center Manager for fifteen years, Debbie Tennyson moved to Atlanta, Georgia, after her husband Rick passed away. Many donations were given in Rick's name, and she wanted to create a garden area on the Center's property as a Memorial. Here she's



A photo of Big Spring wildlife rehabilitator BeBe McCasland wasn't available for the write up in our last newsletter.

Last October, Bebe received a prestigious award from the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution for her work in conservation of natural resources. She's pictured here (R.) with DAR member Gail Barnes who submitted Bebe's name.

Again, our congratulations on the award!

"The sun, with all those planets revolving around it and dependent on it, can still ripen a bunch of grapes as if it had nothing else in the Universe to do." .....Galileo



## Tributes

### Honorariums

Pam Taylor of Ralls, Texas, sent a donation in Honor of Mark McDuff and girls of Colora, MD; Clay McDuff and children of Spring Hill, FL; Chris Kelley and Jake Johnson of Louisville, KY; Ken and Dixie Welch of Baird, TX; Josh and Amy King and girls of Baird, TX; and Katy and Kelly Welch of Baird, TX.

Mark Merrill sent a gift on behalf of his parents, Jean and Larry Merrill, of Peru, NY.

Jean Doumeng made a donation in Honor of the Newton, Goedel-Lopez and Leary Families.

Shelly and Aaron Ross of Bend, OR, gave donations in Honor of Sara Becker, Ellen Blackstone and Chris Altwegg. Shelly was one of our former newsletter designers.

Larry and Gail Barnes made a donation in Honor of The Blake Gordon Family of Syracuse, NY, Mr. and Mrs. Pat Gordon, Patrick and Aidan of El Paso, TX.

Susie Williamson made a donation in Honor of Kathy Phillips; Sherilyn and Elton Pharr; Ms. Judy Butcher and Debby May.

Loretta and Mike Owen of Lubbock made a donation in Honor of Alexander Danchak. Sharon and Mike Danchak were notified of their kindness.

Marilyn Crow of Garland, Texas, made a donation in Honor of Wildlife Center volunteers Larry and Gail Barnes.

### Adoptions

Melinda Mason adopted "Bubo" and "Vincent."

Dorothy and Stan Hanesworth of Matarador, Texas, adopted "Windie" for Avery Hodges and "Maddie" for Mary Hodges.

Mary Asbell and Allan Mackenzie adopted our Bobcat, "Bobby."

Former volunteer Ludim Pedroza adopted "Jasper." Ludim now lives in San Marcos, Texas.

Cub Pack # 402 adopted "Bobby." Long-time Wildlife Center supporters Sheri and Jim Mason are Scout Pack coordinators.

### Memorials

Kay and Ernest Chapa, Wichita Falls, TX, sent a donation in Memory of Mrs. Sondra Nichols' beloved dogs, "Prissy" and "Lexie."

Debbie Carter of Lubbock made a donation in Memory of her mother, Mary Carter.

Jimmy and Janet Duke made a donation in Memory of Jay Ingersoll. Tracie Loy of Johnsburg, IL, was notified of their kindness.

Susie and Ruben of Williamson Interiors made a donation in Memory of Martha Grimes. Melissa Grimes and family were notified of their kindness.

Mary Lee Schuette of Ransom Canyon, TX made a donation in Memory of Daniel Schuette. His wife, Billie Schuette of Slaton, TX was notified of her kindness.

Linda Shough of Lubbock made a donation in Memory of her husband, Dan Shough.

Susie Williamson made a donation in Memory of Eleanor Dobkins Littlejohn. Linda Grimes and family were notified of her

Stanley and Denise Davis made a donation in Memory of Rhonda Madrid. Jerry and Beverly Wilbanks of Artesia, NM, were notified of their kindness.

Sympathy is extended to volunteer Gail Barnes on the death of her brother, Donald Blake Gordon III of Syracuse, New York, earlier this month.

Sympathy is also extended to supporter Pam Marshall on the loss of her dog, Lily.

### Number Crunching

During 2008, the Wildlife Center admitted a total of 1672 animals, including songbirds, birds of prey, small mammals, large mammals and reptiles.

We cared for 1002 birds, including 164 raptors (birds of prey). Of songbirds, most numerous was the Mourning Doves, with 196; next was White-winged Doves, 117, Ring-necked Doves 112, (a non-native species), and only 5 Inca Doves this year. Incas periodically appear and disappear; some years the diminutive doves are more abundant.

During 2008, we admitted seventeen species of mammals totaling 456. The most numerous mammal was cottontails, 147; next was Eastern Gray Squirrels, 131 and Virginia Oposums, 123.

We cared for 49 reptiles representing seven species, and the most numerous were Box Turtles at 25.

A total of forty-nine education programs were presented to approximately 4,509 children and adults.



### New Board Officers



#### 2009 Board Members

Left to Right : Dr. Jim Moyes, President; Pat Harris, Treasurer; Carol Lee, Secretary; Charles Swift, Vice-president

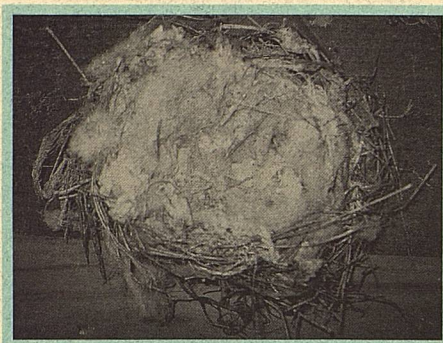


**NOTE:** All gifts, Memorials and donations received after Monday, March 9, 2009, will be acknowledged in our summer quarterly newsletter. If your name or gift was inadvertently omitted, we apologize. Please notify Carol at spwrc@suddenlink.net so it can be included next time.



## Achitectural Masterpieces

The epitome of avian craftsmanship, a nest is an intricate work of art and sometimes an architectural masterpiece. Every spring, birds construct delicate-looking but sturdy collages of twigs, grasses, leaves, bark, moss and a host of other natural and manmade materials.



**Nest interior is soft and fluffy**

Nest building is inspired by seasonal, environmental and demographic factors as well as the release of hormones. Once the nest building instinct is triggered, almost nothing will stop it.

Birds are ingenious at home building and it begins with a design that's unique to each individual avian species. Not all birds build a nest; some species simply lay their eggs directly on the ground, in a hole, or on a bare surface. Even though a nest is used only for a brief period, it must be sound if it's to endure egg laying, incubation, hatching, and rearing of active youngsters.

Nests differ in size, shape, and construction materials while the actual placement and design help provide protection from severe weather and predators.

Location is as important to birds as it is to human home buyers. A potential spot may include anything from a shrub, tree, artificial

hanging flower basket, manmade birdhouse, rain gutter, chimney - the list goes on and on.

Some nests are flimsy like Mourning Doves build. A storm often sends the loosely knit twigs tumbling to the ground, along with the contents that may include eggs or offspring. Other nests, however, are built to withstand harsh conditions.

To minimize predation from other birds, snakes, cats, opossums or other marauders, birds may build nests that are nearly inaccessible, well hidden in underbrush, some have more than one entrance, or are camouflaged amid their surroundings.

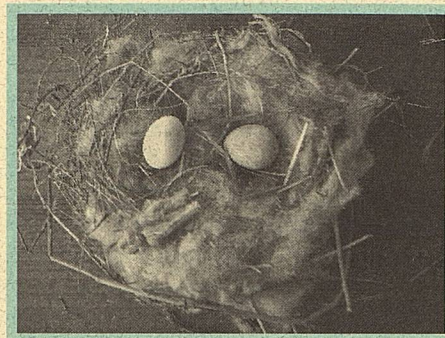
Even though there's a remarkable array of nest types, there are several basic ones: a simple depression in the ground, used by some shorebirds and nighthawks. Burrowing Owls use burrow nests. Cavity nests in trees or cacti are used by a number of species including woodpeckers and owls. Platform nests are flat and may be on the ground, on a manmade structure or in a tree.



**Chimney Swift nest  
Saliva holds twigs together**

The most frequent type nest among North American songbirds like robins is the simple cup nest, usually lined with fine grass or other soft material.

Countless other things can be found in nests that help support and cushion, insulate, and hold the clutch together. Birds use natural materials including leaves, hair, fur or feathers, stones, moss, bark, pine needles and twigs, as well as man-made materials like paper, tissues, bread ties, plastic wrap, and cellophane.



**Both soft materials and twigs make  
this nest a welcoming place**

Some species utilize spider webs, mud, saliva, or plant fibers to help hold nest parts together, and these are extremely durable. A typical hummingbird nest is tiny with an interior no bigger than a sewing thimble; the outer part is covered with moss, plant down, fibers, and even lichens and spider webs.

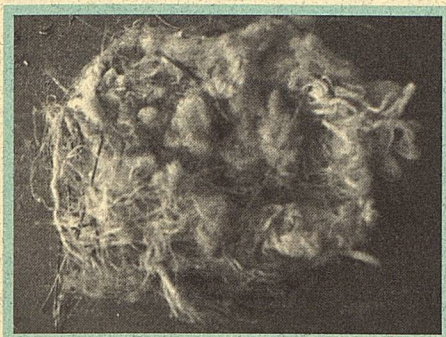
Many hawk species including Mississippi Kites that arrive here each spring, periodically add fresh green leaves to their large stick nests, which may help check infestation by insect parasites.

Small birds build nests over a few days while some larger birds may take weeks. Some birds use the nest of a different species, like the Brown-headed Cowbird. Some species use nests over again; a pair of Bald Eagles may maintain and reuse a nest for decades: one book recounts a 36-year-old nest of a Bald Eagle that eventually collapsed during a storm along with its supporting tree that contained two tons of accumulated material.



## Home Sweet Home

Barn Owl nest sites are likewise messy – often they simply choose a ledge and nest material is nothing more than their regurgitated owl pellets, containing bits of undigested feathers, bones and fur – all remnants

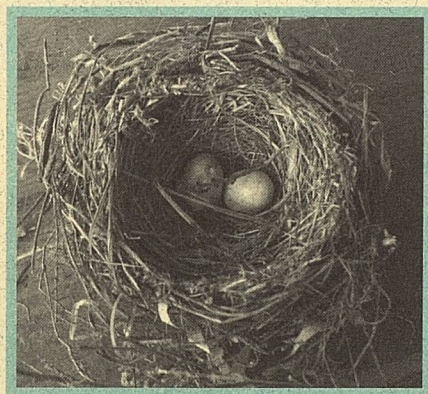


### Cottony fluff lines this nest

of earlier meals consumed by an adult.

Birds use materials found in their particular habitats, and virtually anything that can be carried can be incorporated into a home site.

Over fifty species of North American birds use birdhouses; unfortunately, only a few of those species are found here on the Texas South Plains.



**American Robin nest - a cup nest held together with mud**

Sometimes smaller birds use birdhouses for a roosting cavity during cold or stormy weather.

Make sure your birdhouse is made of durable wood (never use pressure treated wood) and your house doesn't have a metal roof – it will get too hot inside during summer. It should be easy to clean with ventilation and drainage holes, and placed away from shrubs where predators can hide.

Some guides tell you how high to place boxes on a sturdy pole or post for certain species. Ideally, houses should face south or southeast in an open, sunny spot.

Clean birdhouses after each brood and throw away old nesting material. Scrub thoroughly with a 10% bleach solution and dry completely in the sun before remounting.

Avian ingenuity is seemingly boundless, so next time you come upon an empty nest, think about the resident who made it, using only a beak and legs to create a place to start a family.

You can help backyard songbirds during nesting season by putting out commercial nesting material, **short bits** of string, dryer lint, or hair.

Never use long threads or anything that tiny legs can become tangled in later.

In the United States it's unlawful to collect nests of migratory birds without a permit; the law exists to protect birds in the wild from disturbance.

If you're lucky enough to find a nest on your property, remember to give the parents privacy - too much activity may prompt the adults to go elsewhere, or perhaps even abandon their youngsters.

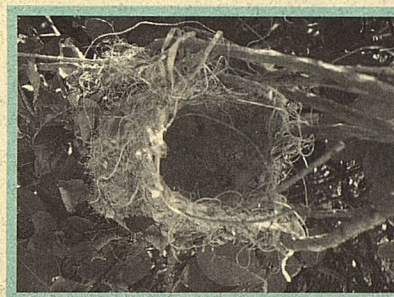


### Barn Swallow Nest

Maryjo Koch wrote several books, including, "The Nest," and "Bird\* Egg\* Feather\* Nest." Clearly, birds' nests are one of her favorite subjects, as they are mine.

A foreword in Koch's book "The Nest" by Gretel Ehrlich, sums up the nest eloquently: "A nest is a cup of space, a swinging cradle, an anchored platform, a wedge between boulders, a pocket in bark or dirt, a scrape on a rock, a dent in the sand. It represents the still point in a bird's fast paced life, the place where past and future meet.

The nest is the place where the wing beat of the



**A deep cup nest provides a good start for the tiny eggs that will be laid there**

hummingbird is quieted; where the California Condor's soaring flight to 15,000 feet is brought down to earth. It's where the red-tailed hawk's shrill whistle falls silent, its thick talons folding softly over white eggs."



## Many Thanks!

Thank you to the Lubbock Area Foundation for their gift of \$3,100 to the Wildlife Center. This was made possible thanks to the Ruth Wright Component.

Thank you also to the area businesses and individuals who donated items for our Holiday Open House, and to our event coordinator Sheila Johnson

Betty & Stan Foster, Yellow Daisy Crafts  
Plainview, TX  
Gift Baskets, Shelley Martin, Owner  
Dr. Jeanette Lubenau, Above and Beyond Pet Hospital, Lubbock  
Linda & Luddy Faris, My Cup of Tea Starbucks Coffee  
Pam Marshall, Box of Rain Floral  
Nabisco Foods  
Linda Kirk, Owner, Bakery Creations



### Cub Scout Pack 513 visits the Wildlife Center bearing gifts

Cub Scout Pack 513 played Santa's Elves for the Wildlife Center this year. On December 13, 2008, the scouts arrived bearing all kinds of needed supplies and gift cards.

Each year the Cub Pack selects a charity to help and this year they chose the Wildlife Center, and we're very grateful for their help. Thanks also to Scout leaders Janine New, Patty Shipton, Eric Wanjura and Brad James for inspiring their Scouts to be good members of the Lubbock community.

## Brick Walkway Donations

As noted in our last quarterly issue in December, SPWRC created a way for everyone to have an opportunity to leave a meaningful and permanent mark on the Wildlife Center.

A Memorial Brick Walkway was created - a walkway of memories composed of individual bricks inscribed with names, personal messages, or memorable quotes. This is a good way to support the Wildlife Center while honoring a family member, friend or beloved pet.

The walk is an attractive brick pathway in front of the amphitheater on the Center's grounds. Each commemorative or memorial brick along the walk is available for purchase and will be inscribed according to your wishes. The 4"x 8" size will accommodate up to three lines with a maximum of 15 characters per line. We hope to have inscribed bricks in place by our summer Open House in June. This project will be ongoing until all bricks are sold.

Please make a donation and communicate your own love of the wildlife of the Texas South Plains and the Wildlife Center that has been caring for them for the past twenty-one years.

Special thanks to Board Member Beth Bartley for spearheading and executing this plan.

Visit our web site at [spwrc.org](http://spwrc.org) and click on the "Order a paving brick" in the left column. You can print and mail the instructions for your brick or bricks.

### Brick Walkway donors last quarter:

Edna Mary Asbell in Honor of Allan and Mary Mackenzie  
Beth Bartley  
Travis and Lisa Bruster  
AJ and Cindy Burkes, Denver City, TX  
Dolores Buscemi and Dominick Casadonte  
Marla Carver  
Dr. Donald and Mrs. Gail Davies in Honor of Robin, Jack, Caden and Avery.  
Dr. Donald and Mrs. Gail Davies in Memory of Michael Davies.  
Freda and Ron Glauer of Sugarland, TX, in Honor of Homer and Juanita Howard, Littlefield, TX.

Dr. Guy and Mrs. Reta Hirsch in Honor of Harry Hall, M.D.

Dr. Hakam Kayasseh

Fred and Jackie Kennedy

Richard and Lois Kroeker, Levelland, TX

Don and Mary Lewis in Honor of Sheila and Barry Johnson

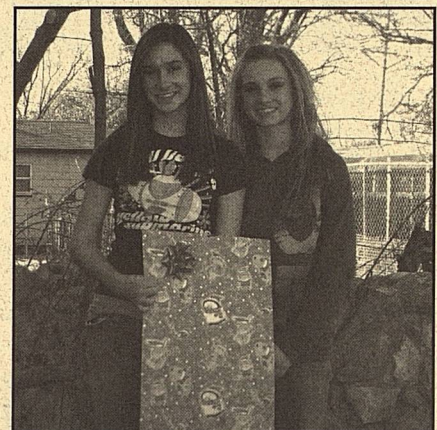
Dr. Jim and Mrs. Dee Moyes in Honor of Jerri Lynn Moyes, Nicholas James Moyes and Daniel Franklin Moyes.

Judy Rainger

William Van Pelt, Washington, D.C.

Susie Williamson

Inadvertently omitted in our last issue were Patricia and Robert Wise - we apologize for the error of omission



### Adrian Smith (L.) and friend Hannah Cleveland (R.)

Adrian Smith of Lubbock had a birthday party and designated that her friends bring gifts for the Wildlife Center. Adrian and friends donated cash, cleaning and other supplies and many other items. Adrian is now fourteen, and is a student at Lubbock-Cooper High School. We are sincerely appreciative!

Thank you to the following for supplies: Pam Casto; Jim & Angie Gibler; Lynda Grimsley; Lewrie Close; Judy & Bill Pesetski; Nina Sinclair; Paula Yeager; Christ the King 5th & 6th grades; Juanita Howard



## Often feared and misunderstood: The Virginia Opossum



### Two young Opossums

The North American Opossum or the Virginia Opossum, is the only marsupial (mammal with a pouch for carrying and nursing young) native to North America. They have grayish-white fur, weigh 4-15 pounds and are 2-3 feet long, including their rat-like tail. Their tail is capable of grasping and holding objects, but they don't sleep hanging upside down by their tails as some tales suggest. They have dark, "beady" eyes and plenty of teeth.

Primitive and slow-witted, opossums are abundant here and we receive many calls about them. Opossums mate in late winter; they create a den in hollow trees or take over other animals' vacated burrows. In urban areas, they may den in a brush pile, crawl space, under buildings, porches or sheds. The gestation period is a mere thirteen days. There are one, two, or even three litters in a season.

Babies are born with their eyes closed and furless. In twelve or so days they're about the size of a bee. Instinctively, they crawl up the mother's abdomen to the pouch after birth. She can only nurse thirteen offspring; any 'extras' will die. Young stay attached to nurse for about sixty days. Later, mom can control the pouch opening to allow youngsters to enter and leave as necessary. They may stay with the mother for a number of months. If young opossums appear healthy and are 7 inches long (not including the tail) they're mature enough to be on their own. Opossums have a keen sense of hearing and smell, and forage for food at night. Their diet includes a wide variety of

foods, including small birds, grasshoppers, beetles, ants, roots, garbage, mice, snails, vegetation, eggs and fruits.

Commonly found in residential areas, they're easily attracted to yards by uncovered trash or food and bowls of pet food left out at night.

The opossum has fifty sharp teeth, the most of any mammal. When confronted, an opossum may show its teeth and even hiss, but they're actually shy and inoffensive. Despite their lethargic appearance, they can - and will - move very quickly if frightened. Opossums may play "dead" when threatened, which is an involuntary reaction to a high degree of stress. Hence, the term, "playing possum."

Opossums have a short life span of about three years. They have a high mortality rate at all stages (10-25% of young still in the pouch don't survive.) Many are hit by cars.

The opossum is a beneficial scavenger and seldom causes damage. More complaints are generated out of concern for their presence rather than for problems they create. The most effective way to deter visits by opossums is to secure trash containers and remove pet food at night. If opossums inadvertently enter your house through a pet door, a broom usually does the trick to nudge them back outdoors.

Occasionally people purchase or rent a live trap to trap opossums. **Please**, if you set a trap for an opossum or any other animal, check it **frequently**, so the animal is not forgotten and left to die in the trap. Second, call us at (806) 799-2142 for advice on where to release an opossum. We'll be happy to assist you in finding suitable habitat where the animal can be promptly relocated.

The opossum's well-known catatonic state can last for hours, and sometimes rehabilitators keep a stethoscope handy so they can tell the difference between a dead opossum or one just playing "possum." In the absence of trauma or injury, it's usually the latter.

The incidence of rabies in opossums is very rare.

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## Avian Parade of Homes



Northern Oriole Nest

Northern Orioles breed in Lubbock, and I've had the privilege to raise several feisty but beautiful orioles over the years. In spring the female oriole is the primary architect, and she constructs an eight-inch deep woven sack.

On one occasion I saw an oriole nest while on a hike that was made up almost entirely of artificial bright green Easter basket grass.

A second oriole nest within two feet was made of grass, twigs, and monofilament fishing line and even suspended from the tree branch with it. Read more about nests and look at some of the great nest close-ups

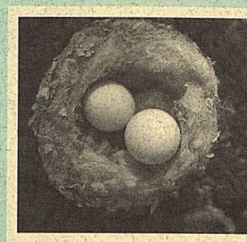
at <http://audubonmagazine.org/features0803/truenature.html>

The nest on the upper right is carefully woven of tiny twigs. The tiny hummingbird nest on the bottom right was constructed of moss, lichen, bits of cotton fluff. The female lines the interior with down from plants like thistle and dandelion, and silky strands from spider webs.

Some of the largest, sprawling nests are made by English (House) Sparrows, and they're not particularly fussy, finding suitable real estate in, over and behind shop signs, rain gutters and in manmade bird-houses. Check out Palemale.com - the famous Red-tailed hawk and mate Lola are adding once again to their massive nest on New York's 5th Avenue!



Cup Nest



Hummingbird Nest



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