

WildCare Foundation Matters

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www.WildCareOklahoma.org

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The First 25 Years As A Wildlife Rehabilitator

By Rondi Large

Frequently I am asked how I got into wildlife rehabilitation. Honestly I don't think I had that one moment when I just knew this is what I wanted to do with my life. I have always wanted to be involved with wildlife; the thought of helping them regain their freedom to me has been addicting. Maybe it's because we as humans take so much from them that it is my way of giving something back to them. I am sure what keeps me going is that every day I get to hold a great horned owl in my hands as I splint his leg. I get to look into the eyes of an infant fawn and wonder what she is thinking. I get to hear the chatter, cooing, and chirping of hundreds of infant songbirds as they double in size, almost as I watch them. But most of all **I am moved every time I release my hands and watch them soar to new heights. They are truly Wild and Free!**

The last 25 years has filled me with memories. I remember taking in my first songbird; a house sparrow. Every chirp was magical. I watched each feather emerge. This year we took in 174 house sparrows.

I remember washing the few animal dishes in the downstairs bath tub in the winter. After I stopped up the drain, I was exiled to a wheelbarrow in the back yard with cold water from the hose. I also remember the first sink that was installed in the garage and how wonderful having hot water inside was! Now WildCare has 4 inside sinks and 3 outside sinks.

I remember our children saying to a friend "Don't touch anything on the bottom shelf of the fridge!" That was where the animal food was kept. Now WildCare runs 5 fridges and 6 freezers and we are searching for more space.

I remember building the first 3 enclosures that were 10'x16' with a perimeter fence of 40'x40'. I thought this was

the largest space ever. Now WildCare has 13,400 sq ft of mammal enclosures, 26,100 sq ft of bird enclosures and 2,600 sq ft of inside space scattered on 5.5 acres.

I remember in 1993 taking in 136 animals that year and **I felt overwhelmed.** Now WildCare takes in over 4,000 a year and we do it without missing a beat.

I remember the first volunteer and the first person I hired to help feed the babies. I really thought they would both stay "till death do us part". I now understand that I must release my hands and watch them soar to new heights. Now I have the pleasure each year of introducing over 100 volunteers to wildlife rehabilitation. We hire 7 Interns each year and have 3 full time employees. **I am so proud of my WildCare family** as they take their flight and become veterinarians, teachers, park naturalists, environmental educators, aeronautical engineers and lobbyists in Washington DC, promoting laws that are kinder to animals and the environment.

I remember when I had to take the baby animals to my office each day so they could be fed on schedule. This was fun the first few years. Then one day I had 6 baby birds, a litter of opossums, and a litter of raccoons in my office. My boss came in and looked around and didn't say a word. I knew I had to make a decision. My mind knew I needed to work to buy the food, medication, and enclosures the animals needed. My heart asked if I didn't continue, where would these little ones go? It was my love for wildlife or my job. I made the scariest decision in my life. I left my job to follow my heart.

I remember the first few donations after WildCare became a 501 (c)3 organization. I was thrilled that the next item we needed could be purchased. But what really touched me was that there

was someone out there in the world that agreed with me that this one little animal's life not only could be saved but should be saved! **You were willing to join forces with me and save this life.** And then another life. **Together, in the past 25 years, we have saved 47,600 lives.** That would be like filling 3/4 of Boone Pickens Stadium at OSU with wildlife. Can you imagine?! Talk about a wild crowd.

I remember looking at the financial records at the end of each year. I saw a small figure **but it was in black!**

I remember those early years like they were just yesterday. I am so very proud of how our facility has grown to meet the needs of the animals we help. I am honored to work with each of the Staff, Interns, and Volunteers over the years. You all are truly family of WildCare and to me!

With every donation I am moved at your thoughtfulness, your generosity, and caring of a life that you might not ever meet. You believe that a blue jay, a bobcat, a chickadee, or a turtle all deserve the chance to be wild and free! Thank you for the last 25 years! I am looking forward to the challenges and relationships we will forge together in the next 25 years.

May you find holiday blessings in every tree this year!



2010 Was A Stormy Year

We will look back on 2010 and remember that we weathered the storms. First the ice storm. WildCare's 60'x100'x20' Eagle Flight was covered in an inch and a half of ice. Then we got 6 inches of snow. Normally the snow falls through the netting, but it was iced over. The first day the cables and utility poles strained. That night 2 of the 18 poles snapped, and half of the enclosure tumbled to the ground. Luckily the bald eagle that WildCare is working with was not injured. The ice also stretched many of the other enclosures almost to the breaking point. After the ice thawed, there were many months of clean up and rebuilding!



Ice too much for the eagle flight



Franklin Gulls and a Ring-billed Gull recover from hail storm

Then there was the spring thunderstorm. Over 100 song birds and baby mammals arrived at WildCare needing shelter after the storm.

Shortly after that was the hail storm. 80 gulls survived being hit by the hail with broken wings and legs. We had just finished our last surgery on them when the tornado missed WildCare by only a few miles. Country Boy grocery store in Little Axe was not as lucky; they were leveled. This was significant since all of WildCare's produce was donated by them. The Country Boy in Harrah stepped up and donated twice a

week. Then the Value Foods in Norman started donating 3 times a week. Now fresh fruits and veggies are available to all the animals at WildCare. **Thank you Country Boy and Value Foods!!**

Thanks to all of you that donated towards the repairs and re-build! Special Thanks to O.T. Sanders who donated the labor to rebuild. It just proves that whatever Mother Nature throws at WildCare, with your help we can stand strong! **WildCare has weathered each storm because of you.** Thank you for always being there for the animals and WildCare.

How Do Owl Pellets Help Cottontails?

A new opportunity presented itself this year when two of the staff were able to sell enough owl pellets, \$1,300, to go to the NWRA Wildlife Rehabilitator Conference in Bellevue, Washington. The Conference for 2010 taught new techniques for feeding baby rabbits, enrich-



Owl pellets for sale

ment ideas and more. Armed with these new tips on how to better help the animals, WildCare was ready to tackle 2010!

The most significant improvement was changing our protocol used to raise cottontails. They are the most difficult species we raise, and they are the most abundant at WildCare.

We have **accepted 658 cottontails** so far in 2010. Using the information from the conference we **raised our release rate 12%!**

WildCare has sold \$7,200 in owl pellets this year. Owl pellet money is used to



Bigger better bunnies thanks to owl pellets

benefit the staff like attending conferences, reference materials, safety equipment, and rabies shots. Owl pellet funds purchase Gatorade to alleviate dehydration of the animals and staff. Pellet money is also used to meet the staff's chocolate requirements.

WildCare Foundation

provides people a place to bring wildlife struggling to survive with the goal of releasing them back to the wild.

WildCare is a state and federally licensed facility dedicated to wildlife rehabilitation.

Since the Director's first license in 1984, the numbers of orphaned and injured wildlife brought to WildCare has increased dramatically – from fewer than 100 per year to more than 4,000. This increase prompted the need to incorporate as a non-profit organization in 1994. All of these animals certainly would have died without your support. These are not just statistics. They are precious lives of magnificent wild creatures that desperately need your help to survive.

Your tax-deductible contribution will help to ensure that our work will continue. Donations to WildCare's Endowment Fund can be made by contacting Pylar Pinkston with Morgan Stanley Smith Barney, 1(800) 527-5814.

Show Your Care – With a WildCare Membership

Duckling Membership: \$25/year—Receive: WildCare's newsletter and an invitation to WildCare's Baby Shower. This is a rare opportunity to tour our facility.

Cardinal Membership: \$40/year—Receive: Above plus an opportunity to see one of WildCare's patients being released.

Owl Membership: \$100/year—Receive: Above plus an invitation to the annual Open House and tour the facility.

Eagle (Corporate/Individual) Membership: \$1,000/year—Receive: Above plus invitations to all events for your coworkers or 10 friends and their families.

Membership Level _____ \$

See above for descriptions, types, and amounts of memberships.

WildCare

Holiday order form

Please fill out and mail this page back to WildCare with your donation!

Adoption kits \$15

Includes: certificate of adoption, species fact sheet, and photo of the animal adopted

Short eared owl _____ # at \$15 = \$ _____

Barred owl _____ # at \$15 = \$ _____

Skunk _____ # at \$15 = \$ _____

Raccoon _____ # at \$15 = \$ _____

Beaver _____ # at \$15 = \$ _____

Porcupine _____ # at \$15 = \$ _____

Fawn _____ # at \$15 = \$ _____

Bald Eagle _____ # at \$15 = \$ _____

Give a Buck for Wildlife

Includes: laminated photo tree ornament and story of fawn's rescue, including before and after pictures

_____ # at \$10 = \$ _____

Memorials

M.B. Garlow, Mary Ann Teague, Louis Person, Louis Delaney II, Joyce Kulbeth, Willie Mae McNatt, Jeannie Brewer, Robert Harry, Ruth Hicks, Nancy Savage, Justin James Hues, Wadean Wade, Shelly Curtis, Steve Braucht, Jim Reading, Georgia May (Nikki) Hummer, Claude Nichols, John McNatt, Darrel Kuhlmann, Richard Dean Nunneley Jr, Jerry Francis, Coty Mefford and beloved dog, Israel Hasley

Honoraria

Glenn Lane, Claire Nelle Moore, Vicki Thompson, Charlotte Smith, and Arlan Johnson's 9th birthday!

We Get Along With A LOT of Help From Our Volunteers

"Will you scrape the poo from that towel?" "Will you cut that fish into bite size pieces?" Will you help with the 8pm milk feeding?" "Will you take that group of skunks to their release site?" Many of our 55 volunteers had never been asked these questions before, but now that they are **WildCare Volunteers** they are asked some very unusual questions. The awesome thing about it is that they don't say, "No!" They persevere, they perspire, and they return week after week. Our many thanks to them all and especially: Jeff, Paul, Debbie, Lisa, Rachel & Family, Marlys, Jamie, Kyle, Kristi, Brian, Jamie H, Michelle, Jamie J, Esther, Annie, Angela, Sage, Mollie, Kristy, Diana, Chris, Sabina, Robert, Carter, Jasmine, Courtney, Wendy, Sabina, Katherine & Laura, Frank, Jim, Jessica, Erica, Sheila & Terrie.

Mail the following gift _____ to

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/St/Zip: _____

Total Adoption Kits \$ _____

Total Give a Buck \$ _____

Total Memberships \$ _____

Total Memorial \$ _____

Total In-honor of \$ _____

Total Most Needed \$ _____

Total tax-deductible

donation _____ \$

Donations on line can be made at

<http://www.wildcareoklahoma.org/donations.html>

Thank you for caring about wildlife!

WildCare Intake In 2010

4,000 Total so far this year

- 651 ~ Cottontails
- 416 ~ Opossums
- 349 ~ Fox Squirrels
- 212 ~ Starlings
- 186 ~ Raccoons
- 175 ~ House Sparrows
- 135 ~ Mallards
- 130 ~ Mississippi Kites
- 128 ~ Pigeons
- 106 ~ Robins
- 101 ~ Mourning Doves
- 87 ~ Eurasian Collared Doves
- 67 ~ Blue Jays
- 59 ~ Skunks
- 57 ~ Canadian Geese
- 52 ~ Cedar Waxwings
- 48 ~ Cardinals
- 45 ~ Mocking Birds
- 37 ~ Common Grackles
- 36 ~ Barred Owls
- 33 ~ Red Eared Sliders
- 32 ~ Red Bats
- 29 ~ Great Horned Owls
- 28 ~ Purple Martins, Red-tailed Hawks & Three-toed Box Turtles
- 25 ~ Red Shoulder Hawks
- 23 ~ House Finch & Franklin Gulls
- 22 ~ Field Mice
- 20 ~ White-tail Deer
- 17 ~ Barn Swallows & Ornate Box Turtles
- 16 ~ Kestrels, Chimney Swifts, Screech Owls & Night-hawks
- 15 ~ Bewick's Wrens, Great-tailed Grackles
- 14 ~ Wood Ducks
- 13 ~ Muscovy Ducks
- 11 ~ Peking Ducks
- 10 ~ Western Kingbirds

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WildCare's 2010 Intern family

By Lacy-Jean Rhoades

Every year around February, WildCare begins taking in the first babies of the year. By March, there are so many mouths to feed that it becomes nearly impossible to do so with only 3 staff members, and with more babies on their way WildCare begins hiring Interns. **Our interns come from all over the nation** and stay with us from 3-9 months. This year we had the privilege of working with Mollie Baldwin (Erie, PA), Andrea Brennan (Edmond, OK), Annie Burke (Wichita, KS), Katie Cole (North Hampton, MA), Charlotte Downs (Clairemore, OK), Guinevere Stice (Norman, OK), and Debbie Roppoli (Oklahoma City, OK). Jackson Oldham (Oswego, KS) and Helena Rivera (Ochsenfurt, Germany) are work study students from the University of Oklahoma.

A majority of our interns are students or recent graduates with degrees in biology, zoology or wildlife. **"It is the perfect job for my major,"** says our newest work study student Jackson, **"and it's awesome. It's been incredible to get to work here."** Jackson is currently a freshman at the University of Oklahoma where he hopes to graduate in 2014 with degrees in Zoology and Criminology. Charlotte is also attending OU this year, as a senior looking to graduate in December. Charlotte has been working and volunteering at WildCare since 2007. **"I love [that WildCare] never turns down animals based on species or condition,"** Charlotte says. At WildCare, interns are hard at work from 7am to 10pm every day of the week. They have the unique opportunity to work with baby songbirds, mammals and raptors that are native to Oklahoma. Katie says it was this **"amazing opportunity"** that brought her to us this past summer. It is the opportunity that brings interns to WildCare, but it is the mission and the visible difference they make in these animal's lives that keeps them coming back. Debbie started volunteering in 1998 and has over 1,000 hours. She joined the Intern family for 2008, '09, and '10 as our baby songbird Team Leader. Mollie says, **"It's really nice to work someplace where I can actually help animals. I've been looking for nine years"**.

We were sad to see some of our interns leave Oklahoma this year, but we enjoyed the time we had with them. Andrea has gone to Texas to work at Fossil Rim Wildlife Center, Katie has returned to Massachusetts where she hopes to work with large mammals, and Annie (a volunteer/Intern of nearly three years) has graduated from OU and is now in Chicago studying epidemiology as a graduate student.

We are eternally grateful to our interns for going above and beyond to provide the best quality care for our animals. We couldn't survive the summer without their dedication and hard work. We look forward to working with Debbie, Mollie, and Guinevere next year when the babies signal the coming of spring!

WildCare's Newest Full-Time Priceless Volunteer

WildCare is seeing one face more than usual lately, and we LIKE it! OT Sanders has been our newest **full-time volunteer** at WildCare since he retired last year as an Associate Director of Medical Affairs Western Region after 26 years in the radiopharmaceutical business. OT says he used to have "WildCare weekends" where he would take care of maintenance and grounds keeping. Now he has time



OT Sanders, PhD

for enclosure design and construction. So he gets to "play" everyday, 1,800 hours so far this year! OT's efforts **reduce WildCare's cost of building new enclosures by over 50%**. OT says, "I enjoy construction and I do it because I can."



Jackson



Katie



Annie



Mollie



Debbie

I Am Proud To Ask You For Your Donation <http://www.wildcareoklahoma.org/donations.html>

By Rondi Large

As I write this newsletter my concerns are for a bald eagle that flew into the windshield of an 18 wheeler; his impact broke the windshield and he lay on the highway. A game warden brought him to WildCare in the nick of time. The eagle barely struggled under the weight of a towel.

A few days later Dr. Joe Carter and his staff performed surgery. They stitched together the skin covering the back of his skull. They also splinted the broken wing and put a pin in the femur that was broken in 4 pieces. A few days after the surgery, the blood work suggested that the eagle's liver was also damaged.

Sadly, this is an old story to us. We've seen it time and again; **an injured wild creature with his head held low as if it was his fault that he is hurt.** The lightning speed of his talons gone and a look of despair in his eyes, and yet he doesn't complain.

This bald eagle along with the other **4,000** wild birds, mammals, and reptiles WildCare treats each year can't ask you for help. So I do it for them. In fact, **I'm proud to ask you to support WildCare Foundation.** What we do for them clearly saves lives and relieves suffering. Beyond that, we grow into better people as we reach outside ourselves in compassion for their benefit.

I hope you agree with the staff, volunteers, and me, that **it is such an honor to be a part of their life.** Regardless of how much effort is required they can count on us to help them regain their freedom. We will not rest – we cannot rest – until all the injured and sick creatures like this Eagle are flying again. But we can't accomplish this task without your support. **Your donation is so necessary for them to even have a chance at survival.** With your help, we can provide the care our wildlife need so desperately. Your donation of \$100... \$75... \$50... or even \$25 will speak of your own love and respect for wildlife, like this Bald Eagle. To make a donation on line go to <http://www.wildcareoklahoma.org/donations.html>

Believe me, I wouldn't be asking you if I didn't know how important your support is. **Together, we must be ready for the next animal** that needs WildCare's help to survive another day. Thank you for your donation. **I look forward to working with you** next year to help the wildlife that call Oklahoma HOME!

WildCare Staff

We are lucky to have three full-time staff this year at WildCare. Terrie Girlinghouse has been with WildCare for five years. She specializes in reptiles, raptors and has a soft spot for crows. Miranda Vesey has been the Outside Keeper and Supervisor at WildCare for nearly three years and is fantastic at keeping anywhere from 300-600 animals fed and cleaned while keeping up with food preparation and outside maintenance. Lacy-Jean Rhoades started with us as a Nursery Intern in 2009 and stayed on as an additional Outside Keeper/Supervisor. She is currently enjoying her

second winter with us. Although all three women have "their areas" they frequently share responsibilities to ensure that all animals are properly cared for daily.



Lacy-Jean, Terrie, & Miranda
thank a donor for their coats

WildCare Intake In 2010

(Continued from Page 4)

- 9 ~ Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, Killdeers, Coyotes, Cooper's Hawks, Chickadees & Crows
- 8 ~ Brown Headed Cowbirds, House Wrens & Snapping Turtles
- 7 ~ Brown Thrashers, Toads, White-winged Doves, Yellow Billed Cuckoos, Red Bellied Woodpeckers & Cattle Egrets
- 6 ~ Red-winged Blackbirds, Phoebes, Turkeys, Armadillos, Gold Finches, Domestic Geese & Bobcats
- 5 ~ Scissor-tailed Flycatchers, Common Blackbirds, Great Egrets, Great Blue Herons & Eastern Phoebes
- 4 ~ Prairie Dogs, Common Loons, Grey Foxes, Eastern Bluebirds, Ring Billed Gulls, Little Blue Herons, Brewer's Blackbirds, Missouri Cooter Turtles, Jackrabbits, Gophers, Turkey Vultures & Purple Finches
- 3 ~ Carolina Wrens, Baltimore Orioles, Red Foxes, Broadwing Hawks, Eastern Kingbirds, Flying Squirrels, Cotton Rats, Roadrunners, Sharp Shinned Hawks, American Coots & Beavers
- 2 ~ Cowbirds, Bald Eagles, Moles, Orchard Orioles, Black Crowned Night Herons, Lark Sparrows, Yellow Bellied Sapsuckers, Frogs, Meadow Larks, Soras, Green Herons, White Crowned Sparrows & Yellow Shafted Flickers.
- 1 ~ White-winged Dove, Nashville Warbler, Yellow Crowned Night Heron, Ground Skink, Poorwill, Muskrat, Guinea Fowl, Horned Lark, Common Water Snake, Quail, Gadwall, Least Shrew, Junco, Yellow Rumped Warbler, Australian Snakeneck Turtle, Mississippi Mud Turtle, Tufted Titmouse, Piliated Woodpecker, Common Yellow Throated Warbler, White-throated Sparrow, White Pelican, Rat Snake, Ring Neck Pheasant, White Dove, Chuck Wills Widow, Dickcissel, Hairy Woodpecker, Horned Lizard, Swainson Hawk, Belted Kingfisher, Burrowing Owl, Cliff Swallow, Soft-shelled Turtle, Virginia Rail, Osprey, Mexican Free-tailed Bat, Ferruginous Hawk, Downy Woodpecker, Barn Owl & Lincoln's Sparrow.



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Released Flying Squirrel

WildCare Foundation provides people a place to bring wildlife struggling to survive with the goal of releasing healthy individuals back to the wild

The Smell Of Home

By Mr. Coyote

The sun was coming up and I knew I needed to get back home. Last night's hunting had not been very successful so my belly over-powered my brain. "I'll look across the road one more time." I heard the rumble on the gravel road and thought I could make it. The next thing I knew I was tossed across the road. My body hurt all over. I tried to stand but my front leg buckled under my weight.

The next thing I knew I was in a cage. As the car drove I felt myself getting further from where I call home.

I was taken to a place where they covered my eyes. They carefully put their hands all over me. I remember a little prick and then I became more relaxed. They supported my leg



gently as they cleaned the open bone. They put bandages on the wound and wrapped it securely. "I'll lick that off later", I thought.

When I woke up I felt warm. There was something to eat and water to drink. I smelt all sorts of scents around me especially one between my shoulders. I then noticed the ticks were dropping off me.



The next day I was back in a car. I felt another prick and when I woke up the bandages around my leg were replaced with metal rods and screws. "I'll chew that off later", I thought but I never did.

After a few days I was feeling stronger and tried a few steps. Although uncomfortable, I could get up and stand. As I grew stronger I became more aware of my surroundings. One evening my attention was keen on the

scent of rabbit. I was quickly moved to an outside area by the trees. It smelt more like home and I had room to walk. In the next 8 weeks my fur grew thick, my weight improved, and my leg felt strong.



One more time I felt a prick and when I woke up the metal was gone. My leg felt great. I returned to the area by the trees where I could run. The next week I was feeling restless. A net was placed over me and I was in the car again. When it stopped I sniffed the air. Everything smelt familiar. The cage door opened. Could it be? As I ran for cover I knew, **"Yes, this smells just like home!"**