

February, 2003

Edition



Featured: Red Fox

NEBRASKA WILDLIFE REHAB, INC.

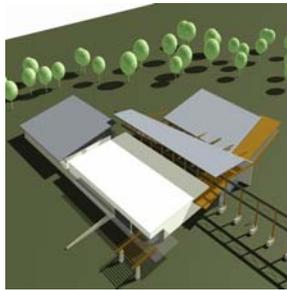
# The Critter Chronicle

## Wildlife Rehab Center

... soon to be a reality?

NWRI plans to build a wildlife hospital/Environmental Technology Center to serve Eastern Nebraska.

The Environmental Technology Center will be located at the defunct Rumsey Station Railroad stop in Sarpy County and will house a high technology education and research facility for the



study of Nebraska's native species and their habitats. The educational unit will provide unique opportunities for young people to participate in real-time, computer-based environmental

studies and activities. The facility will further serve the public as a drop-off point for injured and orphaned wildlife.

The Wildlife Center will be located on the 52-acre Rumsey Station Wetland Area on Highway 370. The land will be leased from the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District (NRD) and will fulfill both the NRD and NWRI's desires to focus on public education with a special emphasis on teens. The land includes native prairie remnants, oak savannah, woodlands and wetlands.

Tentative architectural plans for the center have already been created and are aimed at creating an environmentally responsible complex, utilizing natural energy sources where possible and landscaping with native grasses and prairie

plants. In kind services for the excavation and construction of the facility have been donated totaling more than \$2 million.

NWRI has kicked off it's campaign to raise funds to build this complex. Look



for information and updates in future newsletters in regard to our progress.

\*Information courtesy of the Papio/Mo. Natural Resource District newsletter.

## Membership Drive Underway for 2003

During the month of January, NWRI kicked off the 2003 annual membership drive. Since Nebraska Wildlife Rehab, Inc. is a not-for-profit organization, membership fees and contributions from the public help offset the expenses incurred by our volunteers.

Going forward, we have now annualized this event. If you joined or renewed your membership prior to September 1, 2002, renewal membership dues are being requested. If you renewed after that date, you are being "grandfathered" for the year 2003.

If you haven't already, please remember to renew your membership for 2003 as soon as possible. Your renewals can be sent to our P.O. Box using the form provided on the last page of this newsletter. Thank you for your ongoing support.

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## Meet Laura Stasny ... a Wildlife Care Provider



**Laura Stasny** joined NWRI over two years ago after returning to Omaha from northern Minnesota where she had been the executive director of a small humane society. Her new job in Omaha had nothing to do with animals, and as she indicated, “I never seem content unless I am involved in some sort of volunteer work.” So she decided to contact NWRI because she felt that caring for wildlife was not something she had done extensively in the past, and it was different from her domestic animal experience.

Laura came to NWRI with a lot of experience. Prior to moving back to Omaha, she had been a veterinary sec-

retary, a veterinary assistant, a veterinary technician, an animal cruelty investigator, a kennel worker, a shelter manager and a shelter executive director.

While Laura is currently the Team Leader for Bats and Carnivores as well as the Co-team Leader for Raccoons, when asked what is your special interest species, she stated “That’s a hard one. Bats of course, but I enjoy all of the large canids and felids, too. Bats are misunderstood and little understood. They are totally amazing animals that are unlike any stereotype that may exist. They are diverse and are more common than many people suspect. They are beautiful and fill several unique, ecological niches. So, if it’s bats because I want to understand them, it is the large carnivores because I do understand them. Much of my experience easily translates to these species.”

In fact, Laura has rehabbed all types of wildlife ... 5 bat species (there are over 1400 species), bobcats, coyote, fox, raccoons, squirrels, bunnies, songbirds, woodchucks, opossums and feral cats, too. Each year, Laura cares for over 250 bats, at least 30 or so raccoons, 3 or 4 carnivores, and many other species.

Being a care provider is enjoyable because she feels she is part of the solution to the problems that arise

*“Bats ... are totally amazing animals that are unlike any stereotype that may exist.”*

(continued on page 5)

## Thanks to Our Many Friends and Donors

NWRI is deeply grateful to the following individuals, foundations, and businesses for their contributions to our work in providing medical management and compassionate care for the injured, sick, and orphaned wildlife that come to our volunteers.

- Dr. Stacy Curro/Predators and Prey Animal Clinic
- Lawson & Olga Entwistle
- Friedland Family Foundation
- Harper Family Foundation
- Greg Kluck
- Maggie Lehning

- Merry Meadow Farms
- Cella Quinn
- Dr. Barbara Teeter/Pet Clinic
- Kuba Travnicek

# Featured: The Red Fox

## INTRODUCTION

Red foxes are found throughout much of North America. They occur throughout most of the Carolina mountains and Piedmont but are rare to absent in the eastern coastal plain. The red fox is one of two fox species found in the southern mountains. The other, the gray fox, is sometimes mistaken for the red fox but is somewhat different in appearance and frequents slightly different habitats.

## DESCRIPTION

The red fox resembles a bushy-tailed, medium sized dog. The usual coloration is a bright rusty-red with black feet and legs and a whitish belly. A good identifying feature is the long tail which is tipped with white/black. Other color varieties of the red fox also occur including black, silver, and a cross phase in which a dark area crosses over the shoulders and down the middle of the back. Red foxes measure in total length from about 39 to 41 inches and weigh between 10 and 15 pounds.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

For many of you living in the communities surrounding the Omaha metropolitan area, the red fox, *Vulpes vulpes*, is a common backyard visitor. If you are like me, the sight of a fox basking in the sunlight or watching over her kits as they wrestle in the grass, is a sight that fills you with joy and excitement.

Red foxes are mostly solitary animals, traveling singly or in mated pairs. Adult foxes are solitary hunters, preying mostly on small animals.



They are omnivores, and in addition to small rodents, birds and rabbits, will also eat insects, fruit, eggs, fish, vegetables and carrion. Red foxes give birth to an average of 5 pups in the early spring. The family unit stays together throughout the spring and summer until the young can hunt on their own. They leave their parents in the late summer or early fall to establish territories of their own.

The main threat to foxes in our area is human beings. Natural competitors and sometime predators to foxes in our area are bobcats and coyotes, although they are much less of a threat to the overall fox population than humans are. Foxes seem to adapt much more readily to the pres-



ence of human beings than their carnivorous counterparts, the coyote or the bobcat. For this reason, they are often seen near human habitation, on golf courses and in public parks. Such habitats abound with small rodents, the mainstay of their diets, and lack the competition for prey and threat that coyotes pose.

Although many of us greatly enjoy the presence of foxes on our property, it is a good idea to take basic measures to deter them from becoming too familiar with our presence and our homes. If foxes are too familiar with our properties and habits, many negative outcomes can result, usually for the fox. Many of the calls about injured foxes that we receive each year

are a result of the family dog taking a dislike to the neighborhood fox. Many times the injury to the fox is



fatal. It is also important to realize that foxes can pose a threat to our outdoor cats, although this is not a common problem.

The main disease we see in foxes in our area is sarcoptic mange. If you see a fox that appears sickly, unafraid and/or is losing patches of hair, it is likely this fox has mange. Rabies and distemper can be present in red foxes, but they are an uncommon problem in this area. The most important thing to remember is that you should, as with all wildlife, admire foxes from a distance and do not try to come into physical contact with them. If you happen upon a fox in your yard, on the golf course, or when out for a hike, please enjoy the sight from a distance and do not disturb the den or handle the fox pups. If you encounter an orphaned, injured or ill fox, please do not try to contain it unless absolutely necessary. Contact NWRI (341-8619) immediately for further direction.

To deter foxes from becoming too familiar with your property, avoid providing regular food sources for foxes outside your home, such as domestic dog and cat food. You may also want to avoid heavy foliage cover close to your house.

Please do not allow your domestic dogs and cats to roam free in areas where there are foxes. And, when in doubt, please call us if you are in a situation that you are unsure of regarding a red fox or any other wild animal.

(Continued on Page 4)

## Featured: The Red Fox (continued from page 3)

### INTERESTING FOX FACTS

- A male fox is called a dog and a female fox is called a vixen. Young foxes are commonly called pups or cubs, and are sometimes called kits as well.
- Foxes can jump as high as 6 feet vertically in the air!
- They can hear the squeak of a mouse as far as 150 yards away! This is a distance of 1 ½ football fields!
- It is not uncommon for a fox to give birth to up to 10 pups in one litter!
- Foxes are usually monogamous animals. In the best of situations, foxes will mate for life. The male and the female will raise their young together; however, they usually part ways in the winter after their young leave the den.

### MEET OUR RED FOXES

Last spring NWRI received a total of 6 red foxes from the area surrounding Omaha. Four of those foxes were pups brought to the organization this spring. Three of these four pups were littermates whose mother was killed just as they were beginning to eat solid food. They were collected and brought to NWRI for care.

At the same time, a fourth pup approximately the same age as the first three was found in the Takemah area and also given to NWRI for care. These foxes were in great health and thrived all spring and summer long due to loving and expert care. They were taught to hunt and retained their “wild” instincts and were not domesticated in any way, thus insuring their future release into the wild.

In late July, the young foxes began displaying signs that they were ready to strike out on their own. They were hunting successfully, beginning to “cache” their excess food and attempting on a daily basis to dig free of their enclosure. On August 2, the foxes were transported to a rural property north of Omaha with the appropriate kennel facility to prepare for a smooth

release of these four healthy and adventure-bound pups. After one week in the kennel area to adjust to the sights, smells and sounds of their future home, the gates were open and they were free! Well, not quite. They weren’t so sure that they wanted to venture out into the world anymore nor were they too happy about the people with cameras “hiding” on the hill to get just a glimpse of their first taste of freedom.



After what seemed like ages for



those of us wanting a photograph of their first steps into a new life, one pup, by far the most courageous in the group, sauntered out into the open field.

We all struggled to maintain absolute silence as he sniffed the ground and the air in the waning light of day. After one false start (a frantic dash back to inquire if the others might like to come along), he confidently pranced

down the path into the sunset and was later seen bounding over the tall grass.

The other three decided to wait for everyone to leave before venturing out into the world. By the next day, all four



Anyone else coming??

foxes were gone. As is standard with an NWRI release, a volunteer returned each day to insure that the entrance to their artificial den was open and that there was food provided for them there should they return. The food was provided in decreasing amounts to allow the young foxes to transition completely to a diet they obtained wholly for themselves.

For the first several days, there was no sign of their return. After nearly a week, volunteers found signs that they had visited their old home and had taken advantage of our generous offer of dinner. We continued to check in on them for several weeks before finally closing down the kennel area to complete their transition into the wild. Neighbors have heard the young foxes calling to each other in the woods and we hope that they are becoming secure in their new home.

If you find an injured or orphaned animal, please call NWRI's hotline at **341-8619**.

## SAVE THE PRAIRIE DOGS: Lawsuit seeks to stop extermination of colony



The city of Lubbock, Texas, is preparing to exterminate one of the Southwest's largest remaining prairie dog colonies, but Defenders of Wildlife and other environmental groups have filed suit to stop the eradication. The city claims the estimated 50,000 prairie dogs in the colony are contaminating groundwater, but there is no scientific evidence to support this claim.

After Texas DEN (Defenders' Environmental Network) members bombarded the city with e-mails last winter, officials delayed their plans, but only for a few months. Black-tailed prairie dogs are known as a keystone species because of their importance in nature. An estimated 170 species of wildlife rely at some level on prairie dogs for survival. For more information, refer to the internet site [www.defenders.org](http://www.defenders.org)

## Meet Laura Stasny ... a Wildlife Care Provider (continued from page 2)

when wild animals and people try to coexist in close proximity to one another.

She loves presenting to the public, educating them on our animals and the solutions that exist to their perceived problems.

Knowing that animals survived and are living the life they are supposed to live, in the wild, because of her help, is what truly keeps her going when at times she feels there are just too many to help.

Currently over 110 bats are being housed at Laura's home during their hibernation period until spring arrives when they will be released. Some bat diseases are little understood and critically ill bats seldom survive, despite her efforts. Also,



dealing with the public in preserving bat species is sometimes very difficult as the stereotypes are hard to overcome.

When Laura was asked what was her most memorable rehab experience, she replied "there are so many!" Her first mass bat release, as well as the recent bobcat release, are probably her happiest memories. "Letting 100 bats fly away from you in a well-lit parking lot at night is incredible. However, chasing an injured fox down the median of highway 370 during lunchtime traffic, net in hand, is probably the most scary and memorable. I eventually caught it!"

We're happy she did and that she chose to join us at NWRI.

### Upcoming Event/ Large Mammals of Nebraska

Nebraska Humane Society Auditorium  
8929 Fort Street  
Omaha, Nebraska

**February 17**  
**7 P.M.**

Please pencil this date in on your calendars. On February 17, NWRI will sponsor a Mammals of Nebraska presentation by Dr. Sue Fairbanks, a UNO Professor of Biology.

This informational seminar is being offered to the general public and will introduce the audience to the Pronghorn antelope and Bighorn sheep of Nebraska. The session will begin at 7PM. Voluntary contributions will be gratefully accepted at the door.



Laura carefully cradling a baby Red bat

# Technology Environmental Education

As the number of injured and orphaned animals increases each year and natural habitat diminishes at a rapid rate, it has become evident that more environmental education projects must be offered to assist citizens of all ages to become productive stewards of the earth's resources. Providing educational projects for children, youth and communities is a vital and important focus in the NWRI mission statement. The projects and programs designed by the NWRI education staff are relevant, exciting, and hands-on; they are infused with a variety of technologies and are action oriented.



In the Lab

college during the summer months. Participants attend computer workshops each day engaging in technology infused environmental



In the Field

children select a forest area to photograph in "slices", that is many photos taken in a 360 degree circle. In the computer labs, these photos are put into **1. Quick Time Virtual Reality** to be stitched together forming a panoramic view of the forest scenes. The remainder of the week, the children add to their collection of forest scenes and study their section of forest.

Other workshops include: **2. NASA's DataSlate** - utilizing satellite images of earth pulled down in real time for studying deforestation, viewing the channelization and changes of Missouri River from the 1930 to present, locat-

A highly successful NWRI project is the week-long residential Environmental T R E K s (Technology Resources Exciting Kids) for children and youth held on the campus of Dana Col-

lege during the summer months. Participants attend computer workshops each day engaging in technology infused environmental activities. A typical day begins as the children, armed with tripods, digital camera, and rolls of film, jump in vans for a ten minutes ride to DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge. Each group of three

ing dry lakes and disappearing wetlands, observing the changes in their own back yard over the past 90 years, and planning an environmental project with guidance from NASA trained instructors. **3. Web Quest** - using the rich resources of the web to enhance their research projects. **4. Hands-on Environmental Science** - an exciting workshop packed with activities that stimulate



With the Simulator

children to think like scientists. **5. Raptors** - students learn about migratory birds and raptors through vivid stories, video and live birds demonstrations. **6. Fly the Space Shuttle Simulator, Horizon**—students don NASA uniforms, headphones and microphones to launch and land the Horizon. During the flight they gather data (via satellite images) for solving environmental problems and gain problem skills as they work as a team of researchers and scientists.

A wide variety of evening activities is available for students including the Mad Scientist from UNO; Environmental Chemistry; Chemistry Magic; Night hiking; swimming; Outward Bound activities, then bedtime. The culminating event is the Awards Ceremony. Every young



At the Awards Ceremony

person showcases his/her environmental project to family, friends and guests and receives awards, honors, and NASA souvenirs. Watch for information about the next NWRI environmental technology program being planned for the summer of 2003 during the week of July 21st —24th.

***"The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated." - Gandhi***

## NWRI New Web Site

As you may or may not be aware, NWRI was one of more than 200 community groups using the free Web pages at DiscoverOmaha. With Cox Communications dropping all locally produced Web sites, it means the end of NWRI's current Web pages.

NWRI is currently working with a local agency to identify a new host and to create a new web site. More information will be made available in the near future.



## Bats in Your Belfry?

Maybe not, but several could be seen at the Bat-a-Rama (bat educational seminar) that was held at the Nebraska Humane Society and sponsored by Backyard Birds on December 9.

Our speaker, Scott Pedersen presented a very thorough overview of the many different species of bats that can be found in the world; the audience came away with a heightened respect for the environmental contribution these mammals make as well as a better understanding of these remarkable creatures. Scott Pedersen, PHD is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Biology at South Dakota State University in Brookings, South Dakota. Scott specializes in bats and spends his summers in the Caribbean studying them.

Several different live species were available for viewing (compliments of Laura Stasny/an NWRI Care Provider), door prizes were handed out and beverages and snacks were provided. The event was very informative.

Look for a Bats of Nebraska feature in a future NWRI newsletter.

If you find an injured or orphaned animal, please call NWRI's hotline at **341-8619**.

Please cut out, complete this form and send it along with your check.)

### Make me a member of NWRI!

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed is a check to cover my annual membership fee.

- \$25 general
- \$50 patron
- \$100 benefactor

I would be willing to help with:

- fund raising
- membership
- programs
- supplies
- newsletter
- publicity/PR
- special projects
- education
- cage building
- other: \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to:

**Nebraska Wildlife Rehab, Inc.**  
**P.O. Box 24122**  
**Omaha, NE 68124**

### Calendar of Events and Dates to Remember

January 20	NWRI Board Meeting
February 1	Membership Drive
February 17	Mammals of Nebraska Educational Seminar
May 19	NWRI General Meeting (topic to be determined)
September 15	NWRI General Meeting (topic to be determined)

**NEBRASKA WILDLIFE REHAB, INC.**

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*Tiny lives leaving paw prints on our hearts.*

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**We'll be back on the  
web soon! Watch for us!**

NWRI ... Nebraska Wildlife Rehab, Inc. ... is a 25+ year old, not-for-profit (501c3) organization whose mission is to *rehabilitate and release orphaned and injured wildlife, and through education, preserve and protect the natural habitat and species indigenous to Nebraska and the Great Plains. The means to accomplish this mission is to educate the public to an understanding of our Great Plains ecosystem and its component parts.*

**Become a NWRI donor!**

**Please, help give our wild friends a second chance.**

*All contributions are tax deductible .*

**Yes, I want to become a donor.** Enclosed is my check for:

\$25      \$50      \$100      Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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