

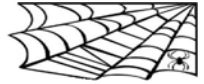
Fall 2009  
Edition



NEBRASKA WILDLIFE REHAB, INC.

# The Critter Chronicle

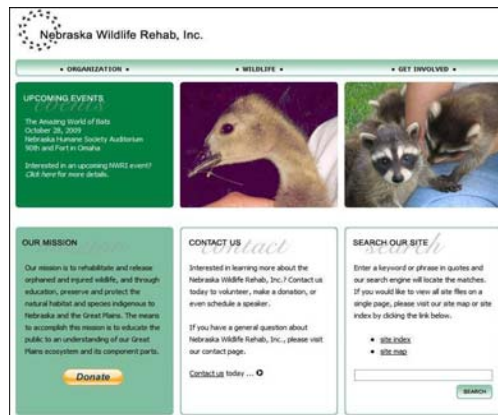
## At Work on the Web



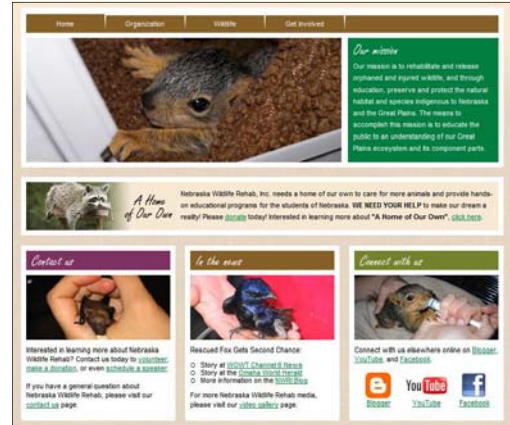
For those of you who have recently visited us on the Internet, you've probably noticed quite a few changes! Nebraska Wildlife Rehab, Inc., has expanded our web presence not only by updating our site design, but also by adding a blog, a YouTube channel, and a Facebook fan page. This has been our most significant online development since 2005, when we moved to our current home with our own URL.

These new online features are the result of our continually evolving presence on the Internet. In 2002, after Cox Communications dropped all locally produced pages at our former home, Discover-Omaha.com, then Board Member Tim Heller set up a temporary Web site using the free web service Tripod.com. This served as our web portal until early 2005, when Lynne and Jack Baldwin generously agreed to donate the services of their firm Baldwin Hackett & Meeks, Inc. (BHMI) to create a permanent and professional online home for NWRI. As the creators and administrators of our electronic animal tracking database, the Baldwins and their employees applied the same talent and dedication that made our database a success to what is now the NWRI Web site that we know today.

BHMI employee Robert Frank, who designed



www.nebraskawildliferehab.org before...



...and after its most recent makeover!

and maintains our Web site, spearheaded the new design, which went live on Friday, October 30<sup>th</sup>. He also revamped our blog so that it is consistent with the design of our site. Check out the new stories — and the new look — at: [www.nebraskawildlife.blogspot.com](http://www.nebraskawildlife.blogspot.com).

That's not all — head over to YouTube to see NWRI's volunteers at work in front of the camera, from home videos to broadcast news. Keep checking back regularly, as new videos will continue to be added throughout the year. Go to [www.youtube.com/nebraskawildlife](http://www.youtube.com/nebraskawildlife) and make sure you subscribe to our channel!

Another way to show your support and learn what we're up to is to become a fan of NWRI on our Facebook page. You can easily access our page by simply searching for Nebraska Wildlife Rehab via Facebook's search feature. Once you officially become a "fan," a feature is added to your account letting your entire network know that you support NWRI — as well as giving them the chance to click on our link and learn more about our organization.

With so many new online options to consider, it may be hard to keep them all straight! But each different web portal was created with a specific purpose in mind. (continued on page 6)

## Community Support Through Nebraska Furniture Mart

On Saturday, October 24, 2009, Nebraska Furniture Mart hosted its first ever **Community Support Day**. The Mart printed and distributed a coupon leaflet to local non-profit groups and asked them to sell them for \$10 each. Each non-profit group was allowed to keep all proceeds from the sale of the leaflets, which included coupons for \$10 off a \$10 purchase, 10% off an entire furniture purchase, a free bed frame with the purchase of a mattress set, and many others. NWRI sold leaflets prior to the event and even had a table in the main furniture entrance

to sell coupons on Community Support Day. Thanks to the hard work of our volunteers, and the never-ending support of the Nebraska Furniture Mart's furniture sales team, Nebraska Wildlife Rehab made over \$2,100 in less than 10 hours! Our heartfelt thanks go out to Nebraska Furniture Mart for their planning and generosity. This money is being used in part to increase NWRI's profile through our partnership with the Nebraska Humane Society, and to provide veterinary care for our animals. Thank you to everyone who came out on October 24th!

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## A Message From Our Board

As we wrap-up another successful year of wildlife rehabilitation and public education, we want to thank you all for your continued support this year! Beside rescuing and rehabilitating thousands of native wild animals again this year, NWRI accomplished many of our other goals, not the least of which was strengthening our partnership with the Nebraska Humane Society. We took several steps to streamline how our organizations cooperate, to make sure that the wildlife we handle has the best chance at survival. Read more about this on page 4!

This year was a year of firsts as well. Besides venturing into the realm of social networking for the first time this year, this was also the first year we decided to seek permanent housing for a non-releasable wild animal in our care. We did not make this decision lightly, because as an organization, we believe wildlife belongs in the wild;

however, in this case, Nova the fox was well-adapted to the blindness that rendered him unreleasable, and we were able to find him the perfect home in Colorado. You can read more about Nova's story on page 5!

As we head into 2010, we continue to map out our plans for the future of NWRI, from broadening the scope of our educational plans, to moving into a home of our own. If you are interested in learning more about any of our special education initiatives, please visit our Web site's *How You Can Help* page. If you want to know more about our quest for a central wildlife headquarters, visit our Web site's *A Home of Our Own* page, or just give us a call!

Your support continues to be invaluable in our mission. We wish you happy holidays—***Thank you again for making our mission possible!***

## Thank You 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.***

### ***Patron Members:***

Larry Batten  
Sheri Taylor  
Susan Townsend  
Theresa Andrews

### ***Benefactor Members:***

Cella Quinn  
Christine Weber  
Kay Ferguson  
Kim Baque  
Larry Kavich  
Lynne and Jack Baldwin  
Michelle Hinchcliff  
Phyllis Futch  
Renaë Rust  
Vicky Anderson  
William Walker

### ***Supporting Businesses:***

Baldwin, Hackett, Meeks, Inc.  
Animal Medical Center, Dr. Keith Halsey and Staff  
Nebraska Furniture Mart  
Veterinary Eye Specialists, Dr. Tanya McClain and Staff  
PetSmart, 72<sup>nd</sup> St. in Omaha  
Target, 180<sup>th</sup> and Center, Omaha  
Walmart, 132<sup>nd</sup> and L, Omaha  
West Center Automotive  
The Wild Animal Sanctuary

# In the Spotlight: Gini Magnuson



When Gini Magnuson first began fostering baby opossums, she wasn't entirely sure if she had made the right choice. But after just a day or two of handling the babies, or "joeys," she knew that she had made the right decision. "I was terribly afraid of handling opossums at first because of all those sharp little teeth!" she admits. "Now I've learned that opossums are very predictable, and I've grown to love them."

Gini began volunteering for Nebraska Wildlife Rehab as an animal transporter in August 2006. She had cared for pets all of her life; however, it was the wildlife of the Philippines, where she spent part of her childhood as a self-described "Navy brat," that always captivated her the most.

"I've had a special fascination with urban wildlife since I was a kid," she said. "In the U.S., I liked catching glimpses of raccoons and chasing squirrels far better than petting cats or dogs — probably since petting cats and dogs was a more attainable goal!"

Gini became aware of wildlife rehabilitation in her late teens, but knew that she would not be able to get involved until the time was right.



**Two young friends enjoy a meal...**

"I'm notorious for overloading myself with all kinds of activities," she said. Gini works as both a full-time compliance analyst and a part-time copy editor for the Metro Neighborhood News. Besides volunteering with NWRI, Gini is currently working toward her Spanish degree at UNO. She is also part of the Green Omaha Coalition, serving as a volunteer for events.

Her key to success is to take time for herself and find a happy medium. "It's all a balancing act that I've taken awhile to perfect," she said.

Despite her initial lack of experience, Gini decided to make the commitment to the NWRI after reading about the organization on the Internet. Her drive to challenge herself led Gini to expand her role within NWRI. She started caring for orphaned opossums in the spring of 2007, when she became Opossum Team Leader.

Today, Gini does everything from transporting animals to rehabbing different species, such as rabbits and birds. She also serves as an NWRI Board Member.

As for animals of her own, Gini has a dog named Inga, a miniature American Eskimo whom Gini calls "super smart." "She's alerted me to boiling water and an unattended iron be-



**Gini at NWRI's annual spring bat release—with a few**

fore," Gini said. "Inga is an amazing dog."

In August of 2009, Gini took on the responsibility of managing NWRI's Facebook fan page. After the page was up and running, she turned her attention to starting NWRI's blog, which went live in September. She continues to write the majority of updates to the blog.

Gini also credits her husband, Eric, for being behind her every step of the way during her work with NWRI. "He asks me really detailed, thought-provoking questions, which I then pose to Laura," she said. "We always have great adventures together and this was just another one!"

The services that Gini has provided to NWRI have truly been invaluable, from caring for baby opossums to manning the booth at volunteer fairs. "Gini is one of those one-in-a-million volunteers," NWRI Operations Chair Laura Stastny said. "She is smart, passionate and energetic and is completely committed to the goals of NWRI, wildlife rehabilitation and public education."



**Four joeys play hide-and-seek.**

For Gini, if just one person changes their perspective about urban wildlife because of her work, everything she does within the organization has been worth it.

"Telling friends and family what I've learned about wildlife has made a huge difference in their attitudes towards these animals," she said. "I really feel that putting a face, a story, a reason to the public for why they should care about wildlife welfare here in Omaha is crucial to garnering the support we as wildlife rehabilitators need to be able to continue our work."

# NWRI And The Nebraska Humane Society— A Partnership For Wildlife

NWRI and the Nebraska Humane Society (NHS) have been working together since 2001 to help the wildlife of Nebraska, but recently have instituted changes to strengthen our partnership and to make sure that the wildlife of Nebraska receives the care it needs.

As many of you know, the Nebraska Humane Society is under contract with the city of Omaha and many surrounding municipalities to provide animal control, licensing, and animal cruelty investigation services. What you may not know is that their contracts include ALL animals, not just domestic animals. This means that each year they receive over 15,000 calls about wildlife and take in several thousand animals, either through their animal control officers or their front intake desk; however, they do not have the facilities to hold rehabilitate or hold wildlife long-term.

NWRI has long taken the wildlife NHS receives for rehabilitation and return to the wild. We have also offered advice to their staff on wildlife handling and public inquiries, and provided the information for the wildlife section of NHS's Web site. In return, the Nebraska Humane Society's served as a convenient drop-off point for wildlife for the public when our volunteers couldn't pick-up the animals themselves.

Despite our long-term partnership, until recently our cooperation, although extensive, has been relatively informal. Many members of the public who surrender wildlife to NHS believe that the rehabilitation of wildlife takes place there. They may not realize that NWRI is truly the organization working to rehabilitate and return the animals to the wild. Additionally, the busy schedules of Nebraska Humane Society employees and NWRI volunteers have left little time for providing the NHS staff with formal training and advice about wildlife.

All of these reasons led NWRI and NHS to come together this summer to formalize our partnership and initiate some changes to make the handling of wildlife easier on NHS staff, NWRI volunteers, and most importantly, the wildlife. The first change was to ensure that all of NHS's wildlife-facing staff, including its animal control officers, dispatchers and assessment and customer service staff received formal wildlife training specific to their job duties.

Last August and September, Laura Stastny, NWRI's Operations Chair, conducted seven separate training sessions at the Nebraska Humane Society. She first worked with the Customer Service Department, teaching them how to work with the public that comes into the Humane Society and to resolve common nuisance wildlife issues. Next, she met with the Assessment Department to go over not only wildlife education, but practical handling and injury assessment techniques.

Since the Assessment Department handles wildlife more extensively, they also learned about common diseases and stress issues of wildlife. Later she trained the NHS's telephone dispatchers to resolve common wildlife issues, and to identify if a wild animal is truly in need of rescuing when they receive a call. Lastly, in four sessions with the Animal Control Officers, she gave them extensive information on wildlife education, nuisance issues, and practical handling and housing. Other topics covered at all of the wildlife training sessions were rules and regulations for releasing trapped wildlife, what kinds of wild animals NWRI can take, and how to set up each kind of wild animal for their brief stays at the Humane Society.

For Animal Control Officer (ACO) Tim Sabaliauskas, the most important information he came away from the session with was facts about each individual wild animal, such as how far they could travel on their own once they were relocated. "This was my first wildlife training class," he said. "It's given us a higher awareness of how to care for the wildlife we handle."

ACO Amanda Rutledge also benefited from the session. Since participating in the session, Amanda has lowered her intake for wild animals at NHS. "I had never had wildlife training with someone from NWRI before," Amanda said. "Laura gave good info on all the topics covered and she answered our questions nicely. I think these types of training sessions are very helpful, and NHS can obtain lots of useful info, especially for numbers intake."

Assessment worker Andrea White has handled wildlife almost daily during her three-and-a-half years at the Humane Society but was still able to learn new skills at this most recent session. "I learn something new in every session," Andrea said. "In general, the lessons teach me better ways to handle wildlife without stressing them or myself."

Public education was also stressed at the wildlife training session. "We are promoting wildlife rescue more now by talking to the public and handing out [NWRI] fliers," Andrea said.

The success of the latest round of wildlife training sessions marks a new chapter in the partnership between NWRI and the Humane Society. More training sessions will be given on an as-needed basis. Both NWRI members and Humane Society employees are optimistic about what the future holds.



**An injured snow goose, recently rescued and brought to NWRI via the Nebraska Humane Society**

"I think this gives us a chance to be on the same page with wildlife," Amanda said. "I think it makes us closer working partners."

In addition to training the NHS staff, NWRI and NHS have agreed to two additional changes. (Continued on page 6)

# Meet Nova: A Real-Life Fantastic Mr. Fox

Excerpts from the following article were posted to our blog this fall. Contributions by Gini Magnuson and Laura Stastny.

## Orphaned Foxes, Best of Friends

Early this spring, Nebraska Wildlife Rehab received a 4-week-old female fox kit. She was quickly dubbed "Pinball," for her tendency to bounce around when playing! We feared that Pinball would be raised alone, because at that time, no other rehabilitators in the area had a baby fox kit. But luckily for her, a month later we received a second fox kit, a male. He was about Pinball's age, but it was immediately apparent that he had a very serious problem. The new kit, named Nova, had severe damage to both of his eyes. Although he did have some peripheral vision, it was clear he could not see directly in front of him. Both of his corneas were badly scratched and scarred, and the prognosis from our veterinarian was grim. We decided to treat Nova medically as best we could and allow him to grow up through the summer with Pinball, so that neither would be raised alone.



**Pinball at 8-weeks old**

the animal, we must humanely euthanize it. But Nova had given so much to us, and to his friend Pinball. He had provided her with constant company throughout the summer while she grew and learned to hunt. His presence assured us that Pinball would not become habituated to humans, which would have ruined her chance at a happy, productive life in the wild. To NWRI's rehabilitators, it seemed cruel to euthanize an animal that had given so much to us, not to mention the fact that Nova was very well-adapted to his disability. We knew that unlike other wildlife, he was not overly stressed by his blindness, or



**Pinball frolicking in the pine needles**

his life in captivity.

## Seeking Sanctuary

We sought the advice of Dr. Tanya McInay, a board-certified veterinary ophthalmologist. She confirmed that there was nothing we could do to return Nova's sight; however, she assured us that with a simple procedure on his left eye, he could live pain-free in captivity.

After two months of treatment, it became evident that Nova's sight was getting worse, not better. Although we knew that he would not be releasable since he would never be able to hunt and find prey on his own, he and Pinball had bonded strongly, so we decided to keep them together until Pinball was ready for release. They were moved together into an outdoor wilding cage on a large private property in late June and spent about six more weeks together before it was time for Pinball's triumphant reintroduction to the wild. Their caretakers removed her from the wilding cage and gave Pinball her freedom on the property, leaving her to wander off, and leaving Nova behind in the cage. To our chagrin, Pinball was so bonded to Nova that she returned to the cage daily to sleep beside Nova against the fence.



**Dr. Keith Halsey of VCA Animal Medical Center working on Nova's eye.**

We knew then that for the good of both foxes, they would need to be permanently separated. Pinball needed to fully integrate into the wild, and she seemed unwilling to do so while Nova was so close at hand. We were facing a very difficult decision with Nova — when we have a non-releasable wild animal, by law, and usually in the best interest of

these majestic animals, a mission after our own hearts.

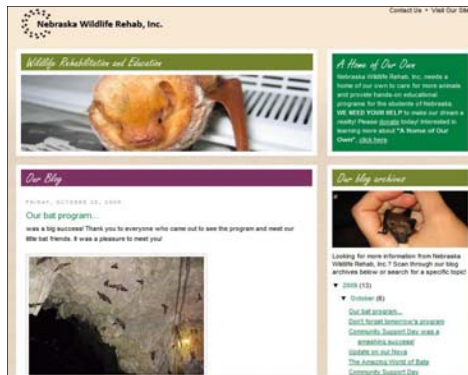
(Continued on page 7)

# At Work on the Web *(continued from page 1)*



Left: Our former blog site

Below: Our new blog design



See our website's new look for yourself:  
[www.nebraskawildliferehab.org](http://www.nebraskawildliferehab.org)

Get the latest news:  
[www.nebraskawildlife.blogspot.com](http://www.nebraskawildlife.blogspot.com)

Watch video clips on our channel:  
[www.youtube.com/nebraskawildlife](http://www.youtube.com/nebraskawildlife)

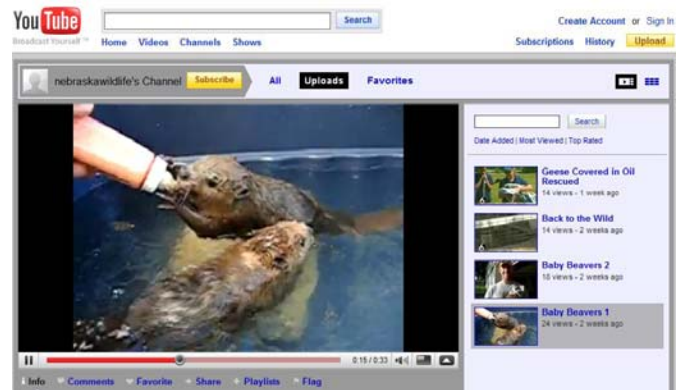
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E-mail us:  
[nebraskawildlife@yahoo.com](mailto:nebraskawildlife@yahoo.com)

Gini Magnuson, Opossum Team Leader and creator of NWRI's blog, knew that starting a blog would allow for more interaction between NWRI volunteers, as well as from members of the public. The blog went live in September.

"I thought a blog would be a good idea because each of us has so many fascinating animal stories," she said. "The blog will be a vehicle for more immediate updates; our hope is that people will feel more involved with, and informed by, NWRI. It's obviously a more casual medium with the aim of being more approachable — people can e-mail questions, leave comments, and in general feel more involved."

Gini also took on the responsibility of making our Facebook page, which was officially created on August 10<sup>th</sup>. "We want to be as accessible as possible, and we certainly don't want people to forget about us!" she said. "Having a strong online presence will ensure more and more people see our name, our stories and our message."



## NWRI and NHS—A Partnership For Wildlife *(continued from page 4)*

The first is to expand the automated telephone tree at the Nebraska Humane Society by next spring to include more practical wildlife tips in an automated format. It is hoped that through this format, more people will be able to find help for a wildlife issue without having to speak to a dispatcher at the Humane Society. We hope that this step will save many wild animals from unnecessary human intervention, and save the Nebraska Humane Society some time as well, in the already busy spring animal rush.

The second change is to expand awareness of NWRI through a postcard that will be given to every person surrendering a wild animal at NHS or turning one over to an Animal Control Officer. It is our hope that the extensive reach of the Nebraska Humane Society in our community will increase NWRI's profile and public support of wildlife rehabilitation. With increased public awareness and support of our mission, we believe we can find the resources to move into a home of our own in the very near future.

In just a few short months, we have seen these initiatives benefit both organizations and wildlife alike. We can't wait to see what a

difference they make as we launch into another busy spring season!

We are extremely grateful to the Nebraska Humane Society for their cooperation in making our partnership a success. Their hard work allows us to save more wildlife and reach more people every year. We look forward to long relationship with them!



# Nova's New Home (cont'd from Page 5)

Nova made his last visit to our veterinarian, Dr. Keith Halsey, on Wednesday, September 9<sup>th</sup>. He was fully vaccinated, neutered, microchipped, and had bloodwork and a health certificate issued. He also had the necessary procedure on his left eye to ensure that he remains comfortable throughout his life in Colorado. On Monday, September 14<sup>th</sup>, Laura Stastny drove him to Colorado to his new home.

*On Friday, October 23<sup>rd</sup>, Laura gave this description of Nova's trip to Colorado. Keep reading to find out about their time in the Centennial State!*

### Home at Last

The trip out to Colorado in September was uneventful. I have to say, Nova was a better travel companion than either of my dogs — quiet and surprisingly not too smelly! We made it to Keenesburg in about 7 hours and upon arrival, were greeted warmly by Toni and Pat at the Wild Animal Sanctuary. Once I was on the property, I knew we had made the right decision for Nova. The enclosures out there are spacious and well-designed, and everything about the staff was warm and professional. From their well thought-out site plan, to their diet and animal behavior knowledge, I was reassured that not only could they properly integrate our blind fox into a family group with their other two foxes, but that they would ensure that it was done correctly. I was given a tour of the facility, and had the pleasure of meeting the resident foxes, a black and white tree fox and a red fox. Both foxes are young, and were most happy to see the dogs that travelled with us in the truck out to their enclosure. The behavior of the foxes made it clear that they would eventually accept another into their "pack." I thought that leaving Nova would be sad, as we have all grown quite attached to him. But I have to say that I honestly never looked back, because I left knowing that he had found the best home a blind fox could hope for, with space, company of his own kind, and security for the rest of his life.



**Laura holding a recovering Nova, resting after his surgery that relieved the bulging pressure behind his left eye. (Photo by Jeff Beiermann, The Omaha-World Herald)**

In the past few weeks, I have received an update on Nova's condition. His left eye continued to cause problems, and a veterinary ophthalmologist in Denver made the decision to remove both of his eyes. Because Nova's eyesight was already gone, this procedure **did not** harm him in any way, and in fact eliminated the chances of pain or infection in his eyes in the future. Nova continues to stay in an enclosure of his own, but I am happy to report that he talks to the other foxes, and they talk back, and they all seem to enjoy the conversation. As soon as he has healed 100% from the surgery, he will be integrated into their enclosure to complete the family unit.

Pat Craig, the executive director of the Wild Animal Sanctuary, also e-mailed me this:

*He has really blossomed now that he doesn't have the physical issues any more. The other day he took his meat and buried it under the wood chips, and spent quite a bit of time making sure he did a perfect job of hiding it... then a minute later came back over by the meat and acted like he was staring at the area where it was buried — perked his ears up — and then leaped into the air and dove nose first into the wood chips as if he was catching a mouse tunneling underground (or under snow), like foxes do. He was having a ball playing his stalking and pouncing game — as he did it a few times over again."*

We are thrilled that Nova is doing well in his new home, and are certain that we made the right decision for him. It is NWRI's firm conviction that wild animals belong in the wild and that they should not be held in captivity; however, each individual animal is as unique as each person, and Nova will live a comfortable life in the Colorado and foothills - an ambassador for wildlife in the years to come!

**Stayed tuned to our blog to get updates about Nova, and the new animals we rescue in the coming months!**

## ***Yes, I want to volunteer to help our animal friends!***

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

I would be willing to help with:

- |                                       |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> fund raising | <input type="checkbox"/> publicity/PR     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> membership   | <input type="checkbox"/> special projects |
| <input type="checkbox"/> programs     | <input type="checkbox"/> education        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> supplies     | <input type="checkbox"/> cage building    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> newsletter   | <input type="checkbox"/> animal care      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> other: _____ |   |



**NEBRASKA WILDLIFE  
REHAB, INC.**

PO Box 24122  
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*Tiny lives leaving paw prints on our  
hearts.*

**We're on the Web!**

**[www.nebraskawildliferehab.org](http://www.nebraskawildliferehab.org)**

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 help.** Enclosed is my check for:

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

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