

Winter 2008

Edition



NEBRASKA WILDLIFE REHAB, INC.

The Critter Chronicle

Farewell to Betty



In October, Nebraska Wildlife Rehab, Inc. lost a dear friend, talented colleague, and mentor, and the world lost a great champion of the animals. Betty Tatum rehabilitated wildlife in the Omaha area for almost 20 years, and was an avian expert. She served as a team leader for both the songbird and waterfowl teams throughout the years, and most recently focused mainly on waterfowl and wading birds. Her great love of wildlife, and her amazing talent for sharing her knowledge, made her an irreplaceable member of the NWRI family. Betty's love and dedication did not stop with wildlife—She was a proud mother and grandmother, a fiercely loyal friend, and a generous spirit. She was always thinking of those in her life and she let them know it with a call or even a meal! She believed in staying active in mind and body, and had a zest for life and the world around her. We will miss her constant presence, her quick mind, and her laughter. We love you Betty!

Volunteer Profile—Betty Tatum

Ed. Note—This is a profile on Betty from the November 2002 Critter Chronicle.

Betty Tatum has been a volunteer care provider for approximately thirteen years. She learned of the organization through her involvement with Fontenelle Forest. Betty currently leads the waterfowl team which was most recently the recipient of an endowment specifically for the care of Nebraska waterfowl. Betty's rehab expertise is focused on Nebraska's avian species. Both the song bird and game bird rehab teams have benefited from her support and expertise during her tenure with NWRI. When asked what she enjoyed most about being involved in wildlife rehabilitation, Betty responded, "The release. It's such an adrenaline high!"

Betty's love for waterfowl has been exhibited time and time again and is evidenced by the number tended and released back to their natural habitat. The waterfowl team cares for several hundred of our feathered friends annually. The waterfowl team clients include geese, heron, and egrets. However, wood ducks are Betty's current avian favorite. For her, the "woodies" offer an extra challenge because of their high mortality rate. Betty stated "those little wood ducks are psychotic! They need to be on Prozac." Wood ducks are among the most high strung and easily stressed species in the avian population. It takes special habitats and special care providers to enable successful rehab and release of the woodies. Through many years of rehab experience and perfecting care protocols, Betty's team enjoys one of the highest success rates nationally for waterfowl rehab.

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This summer and fall have been seasons of great triumph and progress for NWRI, and a time of great sorrow.

Our triumphs include seeing the animals through yet another busy season. The full numbers have yet to be tallied, but expect to see them soon in the next issue of our newsletter.

The hectic summer rehabilitation season was fueled by the late June windstorm that brought many birds and bats with traumatic injuries into care, as well as other tree dwelling mammals such as squirrels and raccoons.



Although most of the animals were released months ago, fall and winter herald the start of the "busy season" when we begin to receive bats that are out of hibernation for a variety of reasons and need care until spring.

We are already about two months ahead of a normal season in terms of numbers, so the winter of 2008-2009 is shaping up to be a record breaker for bat numbers.

Besides our animal success stories, we are proud of our continued efforts to educate the public and engage in community outreach. Our partnership with the South Dakota Working Bat Group detailed on page 4 to bring books to local elementary schools is just the start of what we hope will be a long line of efforts to reach out to our community and get students involved and habitat and wildlife conservation.

We are also excited to work with Baby D Theater. We are honored to be chosen as their "non-profit" of choice for the season, and are excited to support local, independent theater at the same time.

The loss of Betty Tatum has affected each of us personally and profoundly, but in her spirit and memory we celebrate what we have accomplished together this year, and continue the great work to which Betty had dedicated her life. We dedicate this issue of "The Critter Chronicle," and the work we do each day, to Betty.

Thanks to Our Friends and Donors

Barnard and Margaret Fink Foundation
 Jack and Lynne Baldwin
 Dr. Ken Barjenbruch
 The Savoy Family
 Joanne Luebbert
 Sharon Hair
 Kay Ferguson
 Kim Baque
 Patti Smith
 Phyllis Futch
 Wal-Mart—132nd and L St., Omaha

Baby D Theater Benefits NWRI



This article was contributed by Erika Zadina, a Baby D artist, and NWRI volunteer.

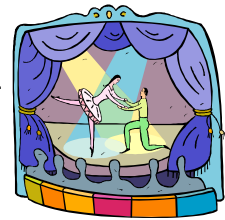
Baby D Theatre, Inc. is back with a new mission. This

time we're doing it for the animals. Lorie Obradovich, the artistic director of Baby D and the brainchild of the theatre, has been acting since the tender age of 12 and has been directing since 1994. She first opened Baby D at the corner of 61st and Military in 2001, where it ran for five successful seasons. The theatre then relocated to the Millennium Theatre for the next two years. Baby D became a critically-acclaimed, award-winning theatre even in its first season. During the seven seasons it was active, Baby D Theatre won awards for best director, best actor/actress, best drama, best props, best ensemble, and more. The "little theatre that could" became known for its integrity and its guts. We had a loyal following of theatre-goers who expected to see work chock full of fine artistry, and time after time, Lorie Obradovich delivered everything they were looking for and more. Since winter of 2006, Baby D Inc. has been on hiatus due to the need for a reorganization that would help us to support animal welfare organizations.

A year or so ago, I ran across a beautiful website for Nebraska Wildlife Rehab, Inc. I read about the organization's plight to find a permanent home – a storefront to grow its educational programs. I read about the plans NWRI is developing for a wildlife hospital. I signed up for a volunteer meeting with the intention of getting some theatre friends together to create a fundraiser to raise awareness for this worthy cause. Between the time I signed up for the NWRI volunteer meeting and the time it took place, Lorie called me and said, 'I've decided to put Baby D back together, but I only want to do this again if I can do it for animals.' We talked about reorganizing the theatre with the goal of supporting animal welfare organizations, and I told her I had already hoped to put together some sort of fundraiser for NWRI. That conversation led me to a score of meetings with Lorie and her niece, Ondrea Ringlien, also an avid animal lover, and one with an organized mind (to keep us creative types focused) and experience in fundraising. Over the course of the next few months we put together a board of directors and crafted a show that we performed at the Scottish Rite in July for the purpose of raising

money for a permanent space in which we could house our theatre. Finally, we found a space. We have torn up floors, torn down ceilings and walls, painted, fixed plumbing, etc. We are currently building platforms, building walls, adding bathrooms, adding entrances, hanging lights, wiring the space for lights and sound, and countless other projects to make this labor of love possible. Simultaneously, we are planning our Christmas show.

On November 28, Baby D Theatre Inc. will open its first show in our new space at 7053 Maple St. "Christmas at the Purple Peacock" is a salute to the golden age of Hollywood nightclub reviews. Christmas standards and other favorites will be performed



by some of Hollywood's most memorable characters, such as Dean Martin, Rosemary Clooney, Ethyl Merman, Judy Garland, Marilyn Monroe, and more. Proceeds from this show and from every show for the rest of this season will support NWRI. We are very excited about a partnership with NWRI, and we are proud to have NWRI as the first animal welfare organization we will support. While theatre doesn't typically generate a lot of money, we hope to raise awareness for NWRI and to increase support for this very worthy cause. "Christmas at the Purple Peacock" runs November 28-December 21. Show times are 8:00 P.M. Thursday-Saturday and 6:00 Sunday. Prices are \$18 for adults, \$16 for students, seniors, and active military, \$15 for groups of ten or more with advance reservations. Note there is no performance on Sunday, December 22. For reservations call 402-991-9155.

Ed. Note: Due to the lateness of this newsletter, if you miss the winter show, please check our Web site for information on future productions. Thank you!



NWRI TEAMING WITH DONORS TO PROVIDE BAT BOOKS FOR OMAHA AREA SCHOOLS



[Omaha, NE December 15, 2008] Bats seem to have always been shrouded in mystery and superstition - and what

most people think they know about bats is often incorrect. There are over 4,200 known mammal species in the world today, and more than 25% of those are bats. In Nebraska, we have approximately 12 species of bats in the wild, and all of them eat insects (including mosquitoes that carry West-Nile virus); therefore, they are of great importance to the ecosystem. Indeed, one bat will eat several hundred to several thousand insects each night, and tens of thousands of night-flying pests each summer, that might otherwise have bitten us or damaged our crops. Bats are very clean animals, are not blind, and have a sense of hearing so refined that they have no trouble hunting tiny insects in total darkness.

Nebraska Wildlife Rehab, Inc. (NWRI) (www.nebraskawildlifererehab.org) is working in conjunction with the South Dakota Bat Working Group (SDBWG) on a new project with a goal to provide elementary school libraries across the Omaha metro area with a 12-volume set of books about these fascinating creatures that live in our state and around the world. By providing factually-based, age-appropriate information about bats to children, it is hoped that this book program will serve to foster an interest in these amazing animals and their important contributions to a healthy environment.

These books are provided at no cost to the schools. This program is made possible via private and corporate donations and a special arrangement with the publisher who offered the SDBWG book program a generous 50% discount off their regular list price. All donations to NWRI for the book project are tax-deductible and all of the donated money is spent on the purchase of books and a minimal shipping charge. There are no administrative costs, as NWRI volunteers are handling the distribution of books to area schools. Donations to the project are welcome in any amount, but those wishing to sponsor a complete set of the books can specify the recipient library if they choose. The cost of a complete 12-volume set plus shipping is \$105.00.

Donations to this program can be made to Nebraska Wildlife Rehab, Inc. by check and mailed to PO Box 24122, Omaha, NE 68124-0122. They can also be made by PayPal on the NWRI Web site at: www.nebraskawildlifererehab.org

Please write "Bat book program" in the memo line of your check, or as a memo on your PayPal payment. If you are buying a complete set and would like to indicate the recipient school, please do this at the time of donation as well.

For more information about the program, the books, and sponsorship, please contact Laura Stastny with NWRI at 402-960-4366.

Meet Mathilda— A Special Woodchuck



Mathilda the woodchuck in her outdoor enclosure

In April of 2008, Gini Magnuson came across a woodchuck in the center of 60th Street at dusk. The female woodchuck had been struck by a car and was suffering from head trauma and a broken pelvis. She seemed a lost cause, but Gini called Laura Stastny and together they rescued the 'chuck and began the rehabilitation process. After about 6 weeks, the woodchuck, now named Mathilda, was able to sit up and eat on her own, and was able to take short jaunts in the yard to build-up her muscles. Now, 6 months later, Mathilda is able to do almost everything a normal woodchuck can, including climbing trees, but she still shows little interest in digging, which is essential for her survival in the wild. She is quite a character, displaying normal woodchuck feistiness, and spent the fall enjoying her large outdoor enclosure.

NWRI volunteers fattened her up for winter hibernation, and she is now sleeping peacefully in her (above-ground) winter den. In the spring when she wakes up, her skills and condition will be reassessed for release into the wild.

Memories of Betty Tatum



Betty, waiting for her woodies to depart

“I was deeply saddened to hear about the loss of Betty, even though I only met her once. She was able to make such an impression from just one short meeting! Her wildlife expertise was invaluable and she lives on through the contributions she made to nature.” - *Schylar Hopkins*

“Although my time with Betty was limited, I did have a few opportunities to interface with her and her team on several different issues related to her precious "woodies" and other water birds. My impressions were always that of being fiercely protective of waterfowl, her willingness to go the extra mile to help them in any and all ways necessary, and in particular the care with which she selected members of her team and then the extraordinary lengths to which she went to ensure team members were trained to the highest standards of care for waterfowl. I assisted her with media contacts when geese were found covered in oil and on occasion when she was rescuing waterfowl that had been injured. Betty always wanted to represent the stories and plight of waterfowl accurately and clearly. It speaks to her love of these beautiful birds that she was always concerned that her passion and sometimes anger over their condition might alienate the public that she occasionally thought it best to let someone else help tell the story. Like her geese,

Betty could sometimes become pretty tough and mean when her "flock" was threatened or harmed... The professional staff at the Nebraska Humane Society always spoke of Betty with respect and admiration. They trusted her on all matters related to waterfowl and seldom if ever questioned her judgement and recommendations. Her commitment, compassion and love for all of the "voiceless" ones who share our space was an example to all of us.” - *Maggie Lehning*

“In addition to the loving sister, wife, mother and grandmother roles expressed and shared by her family at her memorial service, Betty was a great spirit; an exacting teacher; a friend to animals (especially waterfowl and in particular her woodies!!); and a loyal friend. She made a difference in the lives of thousands of birds during her years of service to wildlife. We will all miss her greatly!” - *Phyllis Futch*

“I really enjoyed spending time with Betty. I didn't get to work with her very often, but when I did, she was always bursting with knowledge, opinions, helpful wildlife tips and humor. Her expertise and kind heart will be greatly missed.” - *Gini Magnuson*

“This has to do with a lot of us...I was calling her 'meals on wheels' - anybody that was sick, had surgery, needed food, or just because she felt like it, she would make a three-course meal, meat, potatoes, bread, the whole works, and dessert along with it, and Kathy and I have both been recipients, so has her friend Patti, her neighbors...” - *Lana Halstead on Betty's generosity*



“When I first joined NWRI, I have to admit—I was a little afraid of Betty. She knew so much, and was so protective of her animals, that there was no way I wanted to get it wrong. My fear soon turned to great respect and amazement—Her energy seemed endless and her expertise was astounding. She loved to share her knowledge, and her advice, and she was always right. I can honestly say that my greatest disappointments in rehabilitation have been the times that I disappointed Betty, and my greatest triumphs were her pride and glee when I got it just right. To me, she will always be a role model and mentor—not just for rehab, but also for how to live life. She was a great friend and I cannot imagine that I will ever stop missing her.” - *Laura Stastny*

2008 Success Stories—Storm Casualties and More

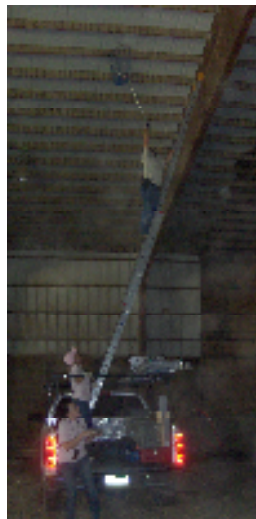
When we look back over the photos we have of this year's success stories, it seems to have been the year of the bird. Although it is true that we have handled just as many, if not more, mammals than ever, the storms of late June brought a number of injured and orphaned birds to NWRI. Included in these were dozens of young that were blown from nests or whose nests were obliterated in the storms. We had dozens of barn swallows come from the wall of a car wash that was badly damaged in a storm that produced tornadoes in the area. Because their nests were gone and they could not be returned, we sought foster nests for these birds.



Fostered barn swallows in their new nest



Brian Hall of Critter Gitter using his ladder to help foster baby swallows in nests



Brian rescuing a swallow hanging from a nest in a riding arena



Above: Blue Heron injured in June storms on release day.

Below: Baby ducks taken from the Creighton University campus after falling in storm drain find a new foster mom after attempts to return them to their own mother failed.



Left: A rare visitor This fledgeling female rose-breasted grosbeak was raised from a nestling and released in the late summer. She is only the second of this species we have had in care in the past 10 years.

Celebrate the Holidays With NWRI

As the end of the year approaches, and the holiday season engulfs you, we hope that you will continue to remember Nebraska Wildlife Rehab and the valuable work its volunteers do to help wildlife and educate the community. There are several exciting ways you can entertain friends and find amazing gifts for everyone on your list, and still help NWRI.

Adopt an Animal

If you can't find that perfect gift, consider making a donation to Adopt A Wild Animal through NWRI in the name of a loved one. We will send information on NWRI, your species and a photo to you or the gift recipient. Please have these orders to us no later than December 20th to ensure delivery before the holiday, or for any other occasion, please give us a minimum of 2 weeks. You can submit an Adopt-An-Animal gift by mail, or by PayPal on our Web site at:

www.nebraskawildliferehab.org

Please leave notes on the payment, or send an e-mail to nebraskawildlife@yahoo.com regarding the details of your gift.

The current animals available for adoption are:

Big brown bat	\$25
Fox squirrel or eastern cottontail rabbit	\$30
Canada Goose or Wood duck	\$30
Raccoon	\$50
Fox or coyote	\$75
Bobcat	\$100

iGive



NWRI is a member of the iGive shopping community. When you shop online at over 700 stores, a portion of your purchase will be directly donated to NWRI. There are some fantastic retailers, including eBay, The Gap, Land's End, Best Buy, Office Depot, and Barnes and Noble on iGive, and right now, they are donating an additional \$5 for every new person who signs up and begins purchasing through the iGive site. To get started, please go to:

<http://www.igive.com/welcome/>

On this page, enter Nebraska Wildlife in the keyword search to get started.



Staff at the Animal Medical Center examining a juvenile double-crested cormorant. Your donations help provide medical care for animals such as this one!

PayPal

Please note that we have added PayPal to our Web site so that you can make your year-end, tax-deductible donations to NWRI with ease! You can find the PayPal link on our site at

www.nebraskawildliferehab.org. You can also submit donations by mail to:

NWRI

PO Box 24122

Omaha, NE 68124-0122

As always, NWRI would not be able to do its work without the support of our volunteers, members, and donors. We wish you all happy holidays, joy and peace!

