



# THE CRITTER CHRONICLE

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## Education Vital to Nebraska's Wildlife

At Nebraska Wildlife Rehab, we take our responsibility to rescue and rehabilitate native wildlife for return to the wild very seriously. It is work that we are honored to do, and one that makes a profound impact on the lives of the animals we save and the people who cared enough to rescue them and bring them to us for care. We know however, that saving wildlife cannot be done through rehabilitation alone. We must inspire people to protect wildlife and to conserve and restore vital habitats if we want wildlife to thrive in Nebraska for generations to come. We must also educate people so they are equipped to advocate for wildlife and to take actions that will protect it.

Because of this, we consider **education** key to fulfilling our mission. We find that a misunderstanding of wildlife and the natural world is often what causes people to fear wild animals. At worst, it causes them to want to harm wildlife; at best, it prevents them from protecting it. Serious conflict between people and wildlife often arises from these misunderstandings.

If we are to protect wildlife, now and in the future, it's imperative that we educate people about the importance of our native wildlife and how to live in harmony with it. Education at NWRI takes many forms, including:

Individual inquiries - We receive more than 10,000 telephone calls, e-mails, and social media inquiries each year from people seeking assistance with wildlife in need or nuisance wildlife issues.

Community partnerships - We partner with many organizations each year, including Collective for Youth, the Omaha Public Schools, Film Streams, Joslyn Art Museum, UNO, the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission and many Girl Scout and Boy Scout Troops, as well as neighborhood associations to bring innovative offerings to our community.

We are also very proud of our educational programs for secondary and university students - our wildlife education programs through Collective for Youth and our own High School Science Academy and University Internship Program. You can learn more about all of these programs later in this newsletter!

Wildlife advocacy includes many important components - rehabilitation, wildlife and land conservation, habitat restoration, and research. NWRI is proud to engage in all of these facets that positively impact wildlife in Nebraska. Education links all of these important pieces together.

To learn more about NWRI's education initiatives, please turn to page six.



## Partners

Collective for Youth  
Film Streams  
International Wildlife Rehabilitation Council  
Joslyn Art Museum  
Nebraska Humane Society  
Nebraska Master Naturalists  
UNL  
UNO

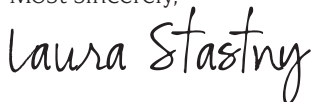
# A Letter From Our Director

In this issue, we are excited to share with you some of the educational initiatives of which we are so proud. Each year, more than 85% of the wildlife we rescue is orphaned or injured due to human action. This action, intentional or unintentional, causes further human intervention to be necessary to save the lives of the animals involved. It is right that we take on this responsibility to care for Nebraska's native wildlife, but we must couple our rehabilitation with education. It is through education that we can reduce human impact on wildlife, which will in turn, lead to fewer animals needing our care.

We are proud to take on the responsibility of educating people about Nebraska's wildlife and thrilled to partner with others in our community to provide resources and information to as many people as possible. We see our wildlife and native ecosystem as part of our valuable natural legacy in Nebraska, and are honored to do our part to help protect it.

As we wind down another successful year, we move ahead with big plans for NWRI and the protection of our wildlife. We are grateful for your support, and look forward to what comes next. We hope you will continue to partner with us as we work to improve the lives of wildlife and people alike in our community!

Most sincerely,



Laura Stastny, Executive Director

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### Supporting Foundations:

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Nelson Family Foundation  
Omaha Community  
Foundation  
Richard Shaw Fund  
Sherwood Foundation

### Supporting Organizations & Businesses:

The Auction Mill  
Ash Grove Cement Co.  
Backyard Birds  
Baldwin, Hackett, Meeks,  
Inc.  
Best Care Animal Hospital  
Blue Buffalo  
First National Bank  
Joslyn Art Museum  
Kiewit Co.  
Merck  
Nature's Variety  
Sideris, Inc.  
Slate Architecture  
VCA Animal Medical  
Center Dr. Keith Halsey  
and Staff  
VCA 80 Dodge  
Wildlife Lodge and Clinic

And the other numerous people who support us with general memberships and donations throughout the year!



# Migrating Pelicans Recovering at NWRI

In June, NWRI received a call for help from Bryson's Airboat Tours in Fremont. They had been watching an injured pelican on the Platte River that had remained behind when all of the other migrating pelicans departed a month earlier, and were hoping we could help it. Because the pelican was on a part of the river not easily accessible, they generously and expertly took our rescue team out on the river in an airboat and we were able to scoop up the pelican and bring him to safety. The pelican had a broken wing and a broken foot, both of which had already partially healed. Dr. Bosilevac at Best Care Animal Hospital first repaired the pelican's wing. Once that had healed correctly, he then straightened and pinned his foot. "Big Peli" is still recovering from his foot surgery, but should be done with surgeries and focusing on range of motion rehabilitation in the near future. We don't know yet if he will be able to fly well enough to migrate, but are dedicated to helping him make as full of a recovery as possible.



'Lil Peli'

And because one pelican isn't enough, we have two! In mid-August, we received a call from a Nebraska Game & Parks biologist who received this juvenile pelican in northern Nebraska. We drove up to rescue him the next day. Upon intake, we found that the pelican couldn't use either of his legs, likely due to spinal trauma or bruising from striking a building or other fixed object while in

flight. Although his prognosis was grim, we decided to give it a shot, and after a week of treatment, he began moving his legs a small amount. Now after several months, "Lil' Peli" has regained full use of one of his legs and is making progress with the other. Daily physical therapy (and head scratches) are showing incremental progress, and he is one of our favorite patients at the Wildlife Center. We have high hopes for his return to the wild!



◀ 'Big Peli'  
on rescue day



'Big Peli' after his first surgery ▶



## Coyote Struck by Train Returned to the Wild

This badly injured coyote came to NWRI last December after being found stuck in train tracks outside of Wahoo, NE. Her list of injuries was long (head and spinal trauma, broken pelvis, and ear and tail wounds), but after showing remarkable resilience in the first few weeks of rehabilitation, we knew that she had the courage and tenacity to make a full recovery. After six long months of medical treatment and rehabilitation, she made a full recovery and was released back into the wild in June.

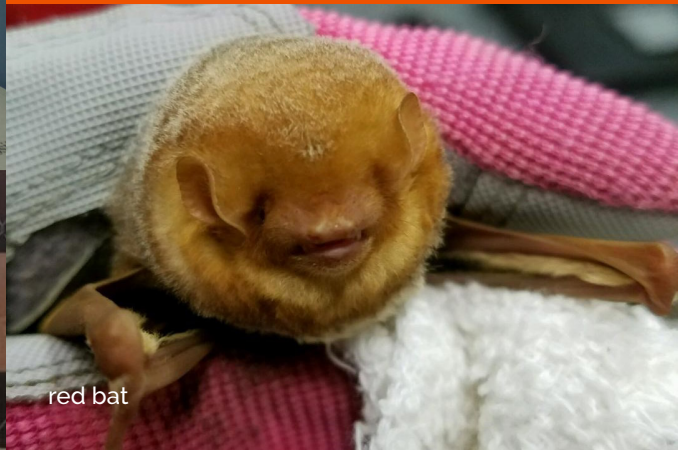




› This beautiful trumpeter swan was rescued in November from rural Nebraska. He was left behind with a wing injury when the rest of his group migrated south for the winter and is currently in care at NWRI.



◀ NWRI received two belted kingfishers on the same day this July, both with wing injuries. One will remain with us through the winter, and we hope that he will fly free in the spring!



red bat



› Each year NWRI receives several nightjars, most commonly nighthawks. This fall we received an abnormally high number of them at one time – 12! Five of these remain in care through the winter.  
 ^ We also received this beautiful whip-poor-will this spring, which is rare at NWRI.





evening bat



hoary bats

NWRI regularly receives about 8 different species of bats. Right now we have 5 of those species at the Wildlife Center. Here are some photos of two hoary bats, an eastern red bat, and a little evening bat!



^ All kinds of animals are brought to NWRI for help each year, including the occasional mole! This guy was rehabilitated at our Wildlife Center and then released back into the wild this summer.



^ This very unique red baby raccoon was received by NWRI this spring. Her coloration is rare, naturally occurring in less than every 50,000 raccoons in the wild. She was released with her normally-colored, adopted siblings back into the wild in August!

✓ This summer we received several geese that were injured after becoming entangled in fishing line. These two geese had different injuries – the first with fishing line wrapped around and lacerating its tongue; the second with fishing line deeply embedded in its leg. After medical treatment and care, both geese were able to fly free again!



# Collective for Youth

Over the past five years, NWRI has been a proud program partner of Collective for Youth. This year we are working in all seven participating OPS middle schools, providing innovative, science-based, wildlife and conservation education to more than 700 students throughout the school year and summer! Our educators teach weekly units on topics like "Winter Wildlife," "City Critters," "Creatures of the Night," and how "We're All In This Together" to students in 6th through 8th grades, and work to cultivate positive relationships, encouraging students' interest in wildlife and the sciences. We hope to continue this partnership for many years to come!



## NWRI's University Internship Program

NWRI began our internship program in 2012 in cooperation with UNL's School of Natural Resources. Since then, 24 university students from 5 different schools have completed the 12-week summer program. Students complete a week-long training before beginning their internships, covering topics from the basic natural history of Nebraska's native species to advanced medical triage and care. They then work in the Wildlife Center an average of 21 hours per week alongside our staff, caring for wildlife and fielding inquiries from the public. Read on for two interns' reflections of their time with NWRI, in their own words.

### High School Science Academy

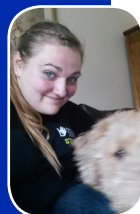
This year is NWRI's second year with our High School Science Academy. The aim of this program is to give Omaha high school students the opportunity to participate in college-level lectures and field/lab work, and nurture their interest in the biological sciences before leaving high school. Each month, students explore a different topic in the biological sciences. They participate in one full evening of lecture on a weeknight, followed by a half or full-day field or lab session on a weekend later in the month. All sessions are taught by university professors and are supervised by NWRI's education staff.

This year 40 students will explore topics in Prairie Management, Small Mammal Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health, Human Anatomy and Physiology, Science and Critical Thinking, Parasitology, Water Toxicology, Pollinators, and more. They will also travel to western Nebraska to study the annual crane migration and spend 5 days doing field work at UNL's Cedar Point Biological Station.



#### Sarah Stoltenberg - 2013

I interned with NWRI the summer of 2013 before entering my senior year studying Fisheries and Wildlife and Environmental Education. Throughout the summer, I learned everything I know about medical husbandry with the animals. I learned how to maintain a quick and efficient work ethic when dealing with such a fast-paced, multifaceted job. I was pushed to think quickly and creatively to help people with nuisance or injured wildlife. I had some hard days and some long nights, but I gained so many practical skills and boosted my work ethic like no other. All the critters were just part of what made me thankful to have interned at NWRI. It was definitely a rewarding internship and easy to see the difference I was helping create. I have now been working as a zookeeper at the Henry Doorly Zoo in Omaha for the past two and a half years in the Interactive Animal Programs department. Without the experience I gained at NWRI, my resume would not have been as competitive when I reached the real world. I am now combining the holistic animal care, trouble shooting, and education aspects of my internship and have a job I love!



#### Rachael Ptacek - 2015

I decided to take on the NWRI challenge the summer before graduating from UNO with a BSED. This internship gave me more hands-on experience with animals than I had ever had before. It helped strengthen the skills I had acquired through other experiences in respect to animal care, but it also provided me with new skills I would have never imagined would be so vital to my current career. The program provided the training needed to master the medical aspects that are necessary for the rehabilitation of animals. It challenged my previous interpersonal skills and taught me about self-discipline and dedication. This internship allowed me to learn the intricacies of wild animals and how people react to them. I have recently become an Animal Control Officer for the Nebraska Humane Society. Being able to use the skills and knowledge I learned while at NWRI has allowed me to work safely and educate members of the community effectively while I'm in the field. NWRI's internship program is an amazing opportunity and provides a space where the participant can grow, learn, ask questions, and perform actions that help save the lives of Nebraska's wildlife.

# How You Can Help

[nebraskawildliferehab.org/  
how-to-help/volunteer.html](http://nebraskawildliferehab.org/how-to-help/volunteer.html)

## Enrichment Items

If you want “enrich” the lives of our wildlife, please consider donating some of the items listed below:

Hollowed-out logs  
Landscaping rocks  
Hay or Straw  
Mulberries or other berries still on the branches  
Apples, pears, and other locally grown fruit  
Vegetables from your garden (particularly spinach kale, spring mix, corn and zucchini)  
Hand mirrors  
Fisher Price Toys (think old-style xylophone, piano, and other large, bright, toddler toys)  
Small tire swings  
Toilet paper/paper towel rolls  
Sisal rope  
Rubber mats  
Ice cube trays  
Tennis balls  
Bike reflectors  
Barrels & buckets  
Antlers  
Corn stalks  
Pine cones, moss, shells  
Duck weed and willow  
Incubators  
Electronic gram scales  
Towels & Blankets  
Newspaper  
Reptile lights

## Shop for Wildlife Proseeds

Join Proseeds to support Nebraska Wildlife Rehab, Inc. and every time you visit a participating company, the company will donate 5% of your purchase back to Nebraska Wildlife Rehab, Inc.

# Donate

NWRI depends on donations from people like you to rescue, rehabilitate and release thousands of wild animals and migratory songbirds each year, and to implement hands-on environmental learning programs for students in our schools. We do not receive any state or government funding. We appreciate your support!

## One-Time Donations

Please return the enclosed envelope with your gift or go to our website at [www.nebraskawildliferehab.org](http://www.nebraskawildliferehab.org) and click on the “Donate Now” link.

## Monthly Giving

**YOUR MONTHLY GIFT IS A FOUNDATION THE ANIMALS CAN COUNT ON**

Our monthly donors are a “species” of their own – our most dedicated and forward-thinking supporters. Your automatic monthly gift can help provide a foundation for the care of the thousands of wild animals we receive each year and is the easiest and most efficient way to support Nebraska Wildlife Rehab. You can easily start, change or stop your gift at any time, and most importantly, you can be proud of the fact that your ongoing support means that we can continue our important work in wildlife rehabilitation and education without interruption! Start your monthly gift today!

## Our Amazon Wishlist

We keep a running list of the items most in need at the Wildlife Center on Amazon. To view our list, and purchase a gift for wildlife, just search for our wish list under Nebraska Wildlife Rehab, or go to this link: <http://amzn.com/w/1HU9HHCG8IDSR>

## Amazon Smile

Designate Nebraska Wildlife Rehab, Inc. as your charity of choice at smile.amazon.com and then make your Amazon purchases through Amazon Smile whenever you shop. Amazon will then donate 0.5% of the price of your eligible Amazon Smile purchases to NWRI.

## Volunteer

Volunteers are the backbone of NWRI, and we are always looking for dedicated, responsible people to join the team. Our volunteers train for the following positions:

Wildlife Center Volunteer  
Rescue & Reunification Team  
Humane Society Transporter  
Animal Care Provider  
Cage Building & Repair  
Supply and Donation Pick-Up



## How it works...

- 1. JOIN PROSEEDS** Join and securely link one or more of your current credit or debit cards to your Proseeds account.
- 2. SPEND LOCAL** Use your linked cards whenever you eat, shop, and play at companies that give Proseeds. There are over 100 local merchant locations in our community to choose from.
- 3. EARN 5% FOR NEBRASKA WILDLIFE REHAB, INC.** The company returns 5% of your purchase back to the Nebraska Wildlife Rehab, Inc. And it never costs you an extra dime.

**Join Proseeds Today: visit [www.proseeds.com](http://www.proseeds.com) to get started!**



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