

October 2005

Edition



NEBRASKA WILDLIFE REHAB, INC.

# The Critter Chronicle

## Nebraska Wildlife Rehab, Inc.— Planning For the Future

Each year as development in the state of Nebraska increases, encounters with wildlife become more and more frequent for the residents here. As a result, the number of calls received by NWRI and the number of people and animals we assist increase as well. With the expanded need for help for the people and wildlife of Nebraska, it has become clear to us that it is time to move the organization from a strictly home-based endeavor to one that is organized from a central facility and run by a paid, professional staff. At this time, there is no permanent wildlife rehabilitation center in the state of Nebraska. In fact, Nebraska is only one of three states that do not have at least one permanent wildlife rehabilitation facility within its borders.

### **Who We Are**

Nebraska Wildlife Rehab, Inc. is a not-for-profit organization of professional wildlife rehabilitators working under permits from the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Wildlife rehabilitators provide medical management and compassionate care for injured, sick, and orphaned wild, native Nebraska species and migratory birds. Working closely with veterinarians and other wildlife and health professionals, our goal is to rehabilitate the wildlife in our temporary care for reintroduction to the appropriate wild habitat.

NWRI has a history of over 25 years of professional wildlife rehabilitation. Our team leaders and many team members take basic and advanced classes in wildlife rehabilitation procedures and protocols, attend national and regional conferences, publish in professional journals, and give presentations at professional meetings. NWRI holds

memberships in two national organizations, International Wildlife Rehabilitation Council (IWRC) and National Wildlife Rehabilitators Association (NWRA).

Our volunteers conduct dozens of presentations each year for school, scout and civic groups. We have partnered with the Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, Fontenelle Forest, the Nebraska Humane Society, local schools and others to bring knowledge to young and old alike. We have also sponsored summer camps at Dana College in Blair, NE to bring science and technology to children from across the United States.

### **Our Vision**

Within the next twelve months, NWRI will push to raise the funds to move our base of operations into a storefront facility in the Omaha metro area, and to run this facility for a minimum of two years. From this facility, a paid director will be able to coordinate volunteers to staff our hotline, transport and rehabilitate animals, and to raise funds for day-to-day operations and educational programs. Through this facility and its staff, the public will be able to experience wildlife rehabilitation first hand, and receive education regarding our state's natural resources. It is our intention that after a period of time in a storefront facility, we will be able to raise additional funding to build our own facility on a larger piece of land in the area.

We envision the storefront as a base of operations for the public and for our volunteers.

*(continued on page 4)*



Inside this issue:

## Meet Kaci and Travis Caldwell, NWRI Volunteers

Planning For the Future

1

Kaci and Travis Caldwell joined NWRI just this spring after attending a volunteer meeting at the humane society in Omaha. Kaci came with a strong love of and interest in animals, and a desire to make a difference. Travis' stated reason for attending the volunteer meeting was to "support my wife," but he soon proved that he was a willing and eager participant in the organization as well.



*Kaci admiring the dinner she's prepared for her bats—mealworms*

Meet Kaci and Travis Caldwell

2

Kaci quickly agreed to take over the responsibility of answering NWRI's raccoon hotline.

She immediately learned the protocol and displayed that her intelligence and efficiency could handle anything the public (and the animals!) had to offer. Kaci and Travis were soon not only handling public calls, but transporting raccoons and rehabilitating them as well.

Save the Date!

3



*Travis getting ready to take the beavers for a swim*

Their compassion became more and more evident with each passing day as they transported and cared for any animal that came their way. From raccoons to beavers, and squirrels to birds, they proved quick studies in the field of wildlife rehab. Kaci also showed a keen interest in bats, and pulled more than her weight on the NWRI bat team, nursing babies several times a day and helping them learn to fly.

Innovation in the Care of Baby Bats

3

Kaci's love of animals and skill in caring for them is complemented by Travis' innovation, ability to build things and willingness to help. Travis not only built the bat platform featured in this newsletter, but also single-handedly built a new 10' x 20' x 6' flight cage for the bats and birds NWRI takes in each year. He also proved very creative when trying to make the time-consuming process of feeding baby bats more efficient. He built several baby bat feeders, consisting of clothes pins fastened to a board to hold the eye shadow sponges from which the baby bats nurse. (See photo on page 7.)

A New Web site

4

Kaci says that although the continuous cleaning and early morning and late night feedings are sometimes difficult, watching the animals she cares for grow up, heal and develop the skills needed for survival make it all worthwhile. According to Kaci, her most memorable experience this year was taking care of a badly injured young raccoon that had fallen from a tree. The raccoon's injuries were such that her future success, and therefore release, were uncertain. Kaci spent countless hours nursing the baby and ensuring that she got the appropriate exercise necessary for her rehabilitation. The raccoon thrived and was soon able to join her peers in a wilding cage. She was released this fall.

One Volunteer's Experience— A Rescue Trip to Louisiana

5

In addition to all of their hard work, Kaci has agreed to sit on the NWRI board and serve as corporate secretary. NWRI is fantastically lucky that Kaci and Travis have joined and taken such an active role in our organization. Thanks to them, many animals not only survived this season, but thrived. They were able to educate the public and helped ease the weight of responsibility from other group members.



*Travis in construction on the new flight cage*

2005—A Year in Pictures

7

Thank you Kaci and Travis! You are a great asset to NWRI!

# Save the Date! Membership Meeting on October 29th Featuring Bats!

On Saturday, October 29, 2005, NWRI will be hosting a general membership meeting at Chalco Hills that is also open to the public. Featured will be Dr. Scott Pedersen, a bat biologist and associate professor at South Dakota State University in Brookings.



Scott is a native of Omaha, but moved to Colorado with his family as a child. He earned his B.A. and M.A. from the University of Colorado at Boulder and his Ph.D. from the University of Nebraska at Lincoln.

Pedersen currently teaches courses in gross anatomy and evolution at SDSU. He is also the curator of the mammals in the Natural History Collections at the university. He has been studying bats since 1986 and still spends his summers chasing bats throughout the Caribbean with his graduate students. These research efforts have led to the publication of one book, 26 scientific papers, and 46 abstracts/technical reports.

On October 29, Scott will give an hour-long presentation on the bats of the world, which will be followed by an opportunity to get up-close and personal with some native Nebraska bats currently being cared for by NWRI volunteers.

**Bring your family and friends for this fascinating and informative presentation, just in time for Halloween!**

**What: NWRI Bat Presentation**

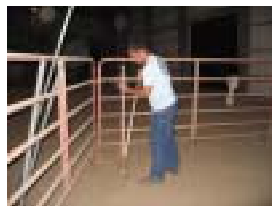
**When: Saturday, October 29  
1:00—3:00 PM**

**Where: Chalco Hills Recreation Area  
8901 S. 154th St, Omaha**



## Innovation in the Care of Baby Big Brown Bats

Last year, Laura Stastny of NWRI's bat team learned a valuable lesson. With the number of baby bats admitted into care increasing, she couldn't go it alone. With the generous assistance of Phyllis Futch, dozens of baby bats were admitted into care in 2004 and released later in the season. Many of these babies came from a single farm south of Papillion, where an extremely large colony of big brown bats is residing in an indoor riding arena. The babies admitted into care were the unfortunate ones who couldn't hold on tight enough as they clung to their flying mothers or to the walls of the arena as the other bats jostled about. With no way to safely return the babies to their mothers, over 50 were admitted into care in 2004 and rehabilitated by people.



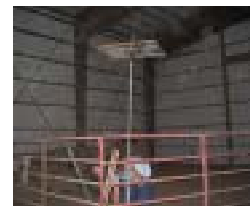
When the first call from June Pabst, the owner of the farm, came in the spring of 2005, we knew that we would once again be flooded with baby bats if we did not come up with a solution. Luckily for the bats, Kaci and Travis Caldwell came on board this spring. Knowing that we had to have an elevated area to leave the babies for return to their mothers, Travis came up with a ingenious invention. Starting with a purple martin platform on a pulley, Travis constructed a new platform with a see-through plexiglass bottom. This platform allowed June to place the babies she collected each night on the platform, and to raise it to a height from which the mothers could collect their

From Left to Right: T. Caldwell digging a post hole, baby bats on the platform, and the platform in the rescue position



babies and still take to the wing safely. Because of the see-through bottom, she could monitor the number of babies on the platform from underneath, without lowering the platform and disturbing the bats on it.

Success was realized the first night babies were placed on it! As soon as the mother bats became used to the new object in their flight path, they responded to the distress calls of their separated babies and landed on the platform to collect them. Some mothers even picked up more than one baby at a time and returned them to the colony. Over the course of the summer, it is estimated that over 100 baby bats were found on



the ground; however, less than half of these had to be admitted into rehabilitation. The few babies that were left behind, possibly because their mother was gone or unable to care for them, were admitted into care. Those babies that survived were returned to the riding arena late this summer, when they were able to fly and feed themselves.

The platform reunited dozens of baby bats with their mothers this year and saved many of them from having to enter rehabilitation. Thanks to the hard work and dedication of Travis and Kaci, many lives were saved this season!

# Nebraska Wildlife Rehab, Inc.—Planning For the Future

(continued from page 1)

The public will be able to bring wildlife in need to the facility, and find resources there to become more educated about our native wildlife and environment. Our volunteers will be able to pick up supplies and animals in this centralized location, and find help expediently if they have questions. Our hotline will be operated by volunteers from the facility, rather than being routed out to several different locations. At the permanent office, we will be able to conduct programs for school, scout and civic groups. Children will be able to learn first-hand about the wildlife of Nebraska and what can be done to preserve our natural resources. Expanding our educational programs is a major goal of this project. With a permanent facility, we will also be able to partner with local universities to conduct scientific monitoring of the animals we rehabilitate.

We expect the annual budget for this facility to be \$100,000 to \$150,000. We would like to ensure that we have a two-year operating budget on hand prior to leasing a facility. Budget estimations are available to donors upon request.

***We need your help! Please consider a generous donation to NWRI's capital campaign today! Your support will help us better care for the animals in need in our area, and allow us to expand our public education programs. Together we can work to ensure the preservation of our native ecosystems for years to come!***



## NWRI Capital Campaign

*Here is my donation to help achieve your goal!*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

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

Donation Amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please use my donation only for the capital campaign.

Please use my donation however it is most needed.

**Please make checks payable to:  
Nebraska Wildlife Rehab, Inc.**



## A New Home On The Internet—

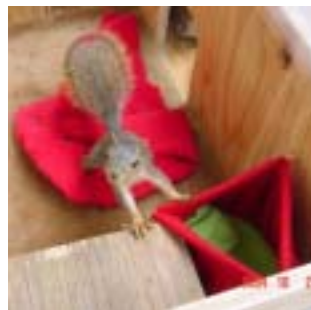
Our Thanks to the Baldwin Family and Baldwin, Hackett, Meeks, Inc.

When NWRI made an appeal this spring for a volunteer to build a new Web site and administer that Web site, Lynne and Jack Baldwin of Baldwin, Hackett, Meeks, Inc. answered our pleas. Already generous donors to NWRI, and the creators of, and administrators for, our Web-based animal tracking system, the people of BHMI selflessly donated their time, energy and Web servers for yet another project. The results are beyond what we could have ever hoped for.

Our new Web site includes information about NWRI, our volunteers, our schedule of events and about orphaned and injured wildlife. It also documents our annual statistics, and includes extensive photo galleries. It includes links to each of our newsletters, our public handouts, and to other useful sites. Visitors to the site can also e-mail us through an online form.

We will soon add PayPal to the site for online membership renewal and donations, and a section devoted to our educational programs.

We are tremendously excited to have such a professional site that accurately documents the work of our volunteers. Visit us online at:  
<http://www.nebraskawildliferehab.org>



Our heartfelt thanks to Jack and Lynne Baldwin, Robert Frank, the creator of our new site, and Scott Borders, the administrator for our animal tracking site. We could have never done it without you!

## In One Volunteer's Words— A Rescue Trip to Louisiana

Like many of the other rehabilitators with Nebraska Wildlife Rehab, my interest in the animal world does not stop with wildlife. In my life, I am interested and active in all things concerning animal welfare. I have worked as a veterinary assistant, receptionist and technician, have served on the board of directors of a humane society, and served as its executive director. I have been an animal cruelty investigator and volunteered at other humane societies as an obedience trainer. In the past, I have also dealt with animals in the wake of a natural disaster. When Grand Forks, ND and East Grand Forks, MN flooded in 1997, I volunteered to aide the animal rescue efforts coordinated by the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) and the American Humane Association (AHA).

When Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast in August, my thoughts not only turned to the incredible human suffering left in its wake, but also to the preparations I knew must be underway to rescue the animals left behind in homes, and those injured by the winds, flying debris, flooding and other dangers inherent to this type of natural disaster. I contacted the HSUS and offered my services, and left for Gonzales, LA soon after I received the call to come.

What I found when I arrived in Gonzales shook me to my core, but it also exceeded my hopes. Gonzales is a small town approximately fifty miles north of New Orleans, and the Lamar-Dixon Expo Center and Fair Grounds there is currently serving as the staging ground for animal rescue efforts in New Orleans. It is the temporary home not only of animal rescue groups such as the HSUS, AHA, the Louisiana SPCA, the Texas SPCA, PETA, IFAW, Alley Cat Allies and a vast multitude of others, but also of the National Guard, U.S. Postal Inspectors and legions of insurance adjusters. While there I met dozens of independent volunteers like myself, as well as professional animal handlers sent by cities like Pasedena, CA, Washington D.C., Indianapolis, IN and Montgomery County, MD.

By the time I arrived, animal rescuers had already taken in over 1,400 dogs, cats and other small ani-

mals, and hundreds of horses from the city of New Orleans. Many of the animals that remained in the city by that time had been without adequate care for almost three weeks. Most of the dogs that arrived each day in the rescue vans and trucks were emaciated and dehydrated. Many of them had chemical burns all over their bodies from swimming through floodwaters contaminated by gasoline, oil, sewage and worse. Hundreds of volunteers worked 24 hours a day to ensure that each animal was cleaned of the "toxic waste" floodwater, re-



*Deserted shop on the edge of the French Quarter*

ceived medical care, food and water, and of course, love and attention. I did not see a single animal get euthanized. Animals that were less than friendly were given the benefit of the doubt, and their care was handed to the most experienced of animal handlers. They had gone through extreme trauma, and no one could blame them for the terror or confusion that brought out the worst in them. The painfully sick and emaciated were rushed to the hospital barn to receive intravenous fluids, tube feeding and wound care by the professional veterinary staff. Not all of the pets made it, and many of them ripped my heart out with a single look, or a single whimper.

I worked each day for as many hours as I could in the hospital, administering treatments, food, water and attention. I met dozens of amazing people from all walks of life: veterinarians and technicians, animal control officers, lawyers, doctors and business people. They were all there with a common goal, to save as many animals as possible before time ran out, and to make the lives of the rescued as good as possible until they were reunited



*Dr. Sachs and another veterinarian treating an emaciated chow after its rescue*

with their owners or transferred to other shelters for foster care or adoption.

One day, I met a huge burly man in the small animal

area, along with his equally muscular friend. The man stopped to ask me where the bunnies were. The bunnies? I was incredulous, as he seemed like the big dog type. His bunny, Peter, had been rescued and brought to our shelter, and the joy and amazement on his face when he was reunited with his bunny brought me to tears.

Another night, as I worked the intake area, examining dogs as they came off of the rescue vehicles, a painfully skinny white pit bull was presented to me. Every bone in his body protruded and we immediately offered him food to keep his attention while he was examined. As he wagged his entire body with glee, he could not decide what was more exciting, the food or the people. He jumped joyfully from the food dish to any passing person, licking and wagging all the time. Despite his physical hunger, he was just as happy to be with people and to have been rescued, as he was to eat.

Late in the week I had the opportunity to ride along into the city to rescue animals with the Louisiana SPCA. What I saw in the city left a lasting impression on me,

## A Rescue Trip to Louisiana *(continued from page 5)*



*The white pitbull, happy to be rescued*

not because of the desolation, as we have all seen that on television, but because of the hope that obviously dwelled in the people there. Even as Hurricane Rita threatened, hundreds of workers continued to sweep the streets of New Orleans of mountains of garbage and debris, erect new street signs, and clear roads. Many of them were smiling, and almost all of them waved as we passed. The military presence in the city was pronounced, and I was amazed at the compassion and tenacity of military, police, fire and rescue personnel in the city. They not only went about the grim task of securing the city and recovering bodies without complaint, they also went out of their way to ensure that the animal rescuers knew right where the animals were. From spray painting notification on the outside of homes, "2 Live Dogs Inside", to writing down addresses to hand to rescuers, to physically picking up animals and bringing them in for help, they made sure that no animal would be left behind. They even went so far as to secure shelter and supplies for animal triage within the city limits, and to take animals with them when our rescuers were at capacity.



*Looking alert after IV fluids and emergency medical care*

When forced to evacuate the animal rescue facility several days early due to the threat of Hurricane Rita, it was with a heavy heart that I returned to Nebraska, wishing for a few more hours with the animals. But the work continues in Louisiana, Mississippi and now Texas, to rescue the animals harmed in the wake of the hurricanes. At last count, over 7,000 dogs, cats and other small animals had been rescued through the Gonzales facility alone.



*Camp Lucky II, an empty warehouse and day-time holding place for rescued animals, established and supplied by one of the military commanders in New Orleans*

The aftermath of Hurricane Katrina should teach us many things about the state of our society. It is a lesson in poverty, in preparedness, in grief, and in hope. If the people of New Orleans have half the spirit and tenacity of the animals left behind, the city will not only recover and be rebuilt, but it will flourish.



*Cleaning the "toxic sludge" off a dog*

*Laura Stastny is a team leader and board member for NWRI and has been with the organization for five years. She recently spent a week working with animal rescue groups in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.*

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

## 2005—A Year of Rehabilitation In Pictures

*At Right: Two-week old baby raccoon*

*Below near: Juvenile raccoons in a wilding cage*

*Below middle: Baby beaver drinking from a bottle*



*Below near: Baby big brown bats, all less than one-week old, nursing off of eyeshadow sponges*

*Below middle: Jodi Vey-lupek showing off the baby beavers*



*Above left: Juvenile big brown bats in a bat house on release night*

*Above Right: Building a new flight cage*

NEBRASKA WILDLIFE REHAB, INC.

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*Tiny lives leaving paw prints on our hearts.*

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Check out our new Web site at  
[www.nebraskawildliferehab.org](http://www.nebraskawildliferehab.org)

**SAVE THE DATE!!**

**NWRI Membership Meeting  
on Saturday, October 29  
from 1:00 to 3:00 PM  
at Chalco Hills  
8901 S. 104th Street  
Omaha**

**\*\*Refreshments Provided\*\***

**\*\*Open to the public\*\***

*After the presentation on bats by Dr. Scott Pedersen, you will have the opportunity to ask questions about bats, NWRI, our new building campaign or any other topic of our team leaders and board members. Join us, and bring you friends!*

**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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