



Number of Wildlife Patients
Treated since 2009: > 38,100

"...responsible stewardship of wildlife and habitat."

"OFFERING A HAND TO WILDLIFE"

By **Vanessa Zimmer**

Some retired folks serve Salisbury steak at the local nursing home. Others help elementary-age kids sharpen their reading skills or mentor students who don't have role models.

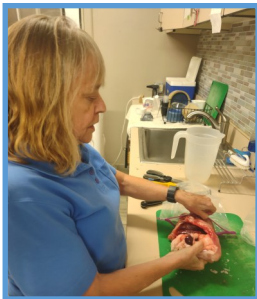
Those are wonderful endeavors, and ones that are absolutely beneficial to society.

But, me, I walk a different path. I happily waive any liability for a fuzzy gray baby bird to flog my cheek or land on my nose.

Or for a young magpie inadvertently etching tiny toe marks on my forearm.

After all, they are just doing what comes naturally, which is hungrily embracing a morning feeding — one that's obviously not coming from mama. I admire their spunk and resilience.

If I'm lucky like our executive director, DaLyn Marthaler, maybe someday I'll have a bobcat kitten chomp down on my thumb. That just might be my dream. **(See related story on page 3.)**



DO YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES TO VOLUNTEER?

Volunteer applications will not open until the 2027 season, but check out page 5 for information about becoming a volunteer board member. Also visit the volunteer tab at wrcnu.org for more information.



The past couple of years, I've volunteered a half-day a week at the Wildlife Rehabilitation Center of Northern Utah, in Ogden.

The nonprofit WRCNU takes in sick and injured wildlife, with the intent of restoring the animals to good health and returning them to the wild. This time of year, that often means caring for young birds that have been hurt and/or orphaned.

Let me say two things: 1) This is not something you do for lighthearted fun. It is serious work. 2) I do believe in a circle of life. Some of us die before our time through no fault of our own. The same with animals, wild or domestic.

But I volunteer at wildlife rehab for the same reason that I only adopt rescue pets, rather than shopping the classifieds or breeders' ads. I try to be a good, thoughtful steward.

If a wild animal can be saved from circumstances like cat attacks and unthinking humans, why shouldn't they? I want my wild neighbors to have some rights in the pursuit of a natural life in our human-dominated world.

WRCNU's simple measurement of success is through the numbers of human-impacted wildlife treated during its more than 17 years.

Over 38,100!



Continued, next page

OFFERING A HAND TO WILDLIFE (cont.)

My main job at the rehab center is feeding the babies a slurry mixture that replicates the food their parents would bring them. You use a syringe to release droplets far back in the throat. The work gobbles up the time of several staffers and volunteers, and it is a veritable sprint, since the babies, numbering 461 at mid-June, must be fed every 45 or 60 minutes (depending upon the species) during daytime hours.

Volunteers also prep plates of carefully weighed food like mealworms, mice, and rats, and peas and carrots for the older permanent residents and temporary patients. And we replace soiled bedding with clean paper or cloth towels.

Frankly, those tasks may involve chores you've never imagined doing. Like snipping a dead mouse's belly to remove the intestines. (Circle of life, you know?) Or using a scraper to remove disgusting globs of waste from towels used as bedding in the enclosures.

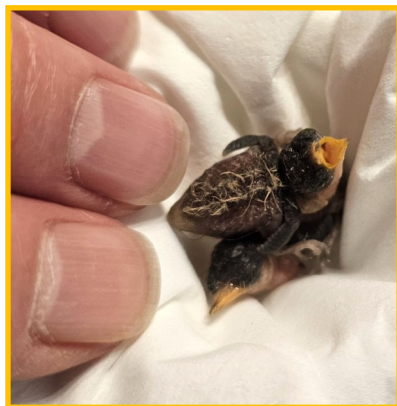
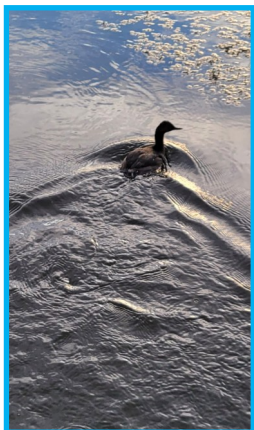
The side benefit is learning to recognize the various species and discovering their differing behaviors. (And determining which permanent resident is whistling the "Star Wars" theme or imitating a human sneeze without moving their beak/lips. True story.)

But please, please put this on repeat: Volunteer work at the WRCNU is *not* entertaining. It is serious and exhausting (and dirty) work.

And so very important. If you stray toward the off-the-beaten path, you may never find anything quite as fulfilling.



CW starting top left corner: nestling Barn Owl; Chipmunk pups; pre-fledge American Kestrel; Cottontail kitten; nestling Western Kingbird; nestling hummingbird siblings, smaller than a fingernail; Eared Grebe released after short stay.



THE STORY OF THISTLE THE BOBCAT KITTEN

By Vanessa Zimmer

The boss was on the other end of the phone connection, calling from the office, and, boy, was she mad.

"It's all your fault," she spat. "You're in big trouble. You need to come down here right now."

Well, Jen Runsvold is nothing if not a dedicated wildlife rehabber, so that's exactly what she did. Plus, she was beginning to suspect what was up, that this was a prank born of kindness and friendship, not anger. She went to the office, the Washington Boulevard building in Ogden that serves as the temporary headquarters of the Wildlife Rehabilitation Center of Northern Utah.

There, she was assigned to do the intake paperwork on a two-week-old bobcat.

The kitten had been removed from the window well of a Draper home after the mother bobcat gave birth to three babies and later moved two of the young ones to a safer spot. For reasons unknown, she left this third kitten behind. Mom had been gone at least 24 hours, and the kitten was listless and covered in flies.

The aforementioned boss, WRCNU's executive director DaLyn Marthaler, tells her staff that, if they mention something often enough, it will happen. Runsvold had been talking all last winter about how someday she'd like to work with big cats. Her co-workers even joked that she should get a T-shirt with "Bobcat, Bobcat, Bobcat," written across it — based on the theory that if you repeat something three times, it will come true.

Well, it came true. And Marthaler was in no way outraged; she wanted Runsvold to experience, at least in a small way, her dream.

Turns out, the kitten was fairly healthy. She had been victimized by a fly strike, meaning flies had laid eggs in her fur, and she had a minor wound of indeterminate origin on her neck. The WRCNU put her on fluids to rehydrate her, and she bounced back fairly quickly.

The kitten was gray with exotic black markings and bright blue eyes.

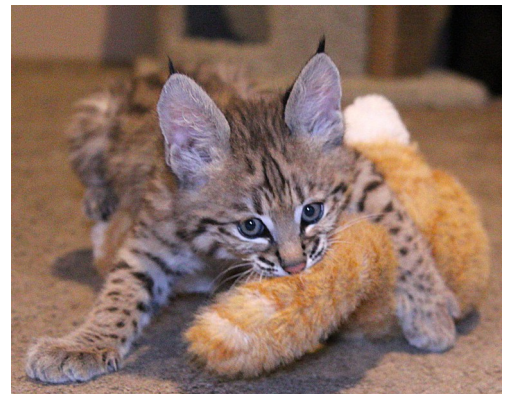
Runsvold called her Thistle, explaining, "She's poky, sharp, and beautiful." Not pokey as in slow, but with the big claws, equipped with multiple tiny hooks, of a future hunter.

Continued, next page

BOBCATS IN UTAH

The bobcat, the smallest species of lynx, is found throughout Utah. Coloring varies from gray to shades of brown.

Sightings have become more frequent in populated areas as humans encroach upon their habitat, says DaLyn Marthaler, executive director of the Wildlife Rehabilitation Center of Northern Utah. The same has happened with other wild animals like foxes and badgers, she says.



THISTLE THE BOBCAT KITTEN (cont.)

(Cont.) Runsvold became her main caretaker during the kitten's five-week stay at the rehab center. She bottle-fed her a milk replacement formula for bobcats. Thistle grew, from just over a pound at intake to 3.748 pounds at seven weeks. She also became more active and feistier — from cuddling and kneading her stuffed toy with its battery-operated heartbeat that mimics a mother's, to wrestling it as if it had transformed into a sibling. She might hiss or spit if she felt her territory threatened, or maybe bark/chirp when playing. She loved having her paw pads stroked, Runsvold says; the kitten would fall asleep.

Abandoned at such a young age and without sibling companions, Thistle wasn't a candidate for release back into the wild. She left Ogden on June 16 for Hogle Zoo in Salt Lake City, where she is expected to be put on display. WRCNU staffers gathered around to say goodbye.

Thistle's bright blue eyes had already started to change. They will eventually turn a golden yellow. Her ears had transitioned to the more pointed, tufted ears of an adult. At full growth, she will weigh 18 to 20 pounds.

As for the human eyes in the rehab center, there likely wasn't a dry one in the place.

"She stole everybody's heart," says Marthaler.



Left: Thistle's first "taste of bird"; Center: Stalking her prey; Right: "Curiosity" and the cat. All Thistle photos by Jennifer Runsvold



Red Tree Squirrel pups: WRCNU receives pups at various stages of development. Typically they begin with their eyes closed and require being nursed with a special milk replacement formula specifically for squirrels, before being weaned to appropriate transitional foods and finally to seeds, nuts and greens. Once they are fully weaned, they then transition to outdoor enclosures to become ready for release into suitable habitat.



WRCNU is seeking motivated individuals who want to make a direct impact on our future and our Northern Utah Community by joining our Board of Directors!

We know that the upcoming months can be a very busy time of year for folks, with school, and the holidays, and so we are not asking for anyone to have to choose between a busy schedule & prior commitments and a new Board of Directors position.

All new Board positions will start during the first meeting, January 2027.

Mission Statement:

Empowering the community to engage in conservation and responsible stewardship of wildlife and habitat.

Our Vision:

To become a world-class wildlife rehabilitation and education facility ensuring that the care of native Utah wildlife and the stewardship of our environment is embraced for generations to come.

What We Do:

WRCNU is entering an exciting new chapter, and our Board of Directors will play an important role in helping shape what comes next.

Our board isn't just behind the scenes. We're out in the community building relationships, creating partnerships, raising awareness, and securing the support needed to provide life-saving care for Northern Utah's wildlife. Now, we're also working toward our biggest goal yet: building a permanent Wildlife Hospital and Education Center that will allow WRCNU to serve wildlife and our community for generations to come.

As a board member, you'll have an opportunity to be part of that future. You'll participate in regular meetings, support fundraising and community outreach, help develop meaningful partnerships, and bring your own experience, ideas, and connections to the table. One of the most important tasks ahead will be helping us secure the funding needed to turn our new facility from a vision into a reality.

We're looking for passionate, thoughtful people who want to make a meaningful difference. Your strengths might be in business, finance, fundraising, marketing, technology, education, construction, legal, community leadership, writing--or simply bringing people together and opening doors. You don't need to be a wildlife expert. You need to care about our mission and be willing to help us move it forward.

This is an opportunity to do more than join a board. It's an opportunity to help build the next chapter of WRCNU.

Together, we will create something that will outlast all of us; a legacy for wildlife.

Interested in being part of it? Use the QR code to the right to view the Board Position Description and access our application. The application portal will remain open through November 30, 2026.



WRCNU Position Description

LOOKING FOR NEW MONTHLY SUSTAINERS!



WRCNU Monthly Sustainers



Are the Wind Beneath Our Wings!

They keep the “certainty” in uncertain times.

Can we add YOU to our growing list of Monthly Sustainers?

OR ... are you already a Sustainer who could add a dollar or two to your current donation?

An additional \$5/month will provide food and care for another nest of songbirds or a day's food for a baby raptor.

Email info@wrcnu.org for information on our new process that will give you full control over changes to your recurring donations, including increases, decreases, or even canceling if you need to ...

... without having to go through us.



Bald Eagles:

\$834/Month or Higher



Golden Eagles:

\$417 - \$833/Month



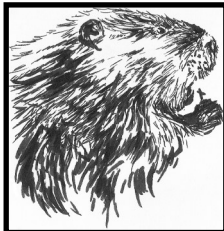
Ospreys:

\$100 - \$416/Month



Great Horned Owls:

\$50 - \$99/Month



Beavers:

\$35 - \$49/Month



Ravens:

\$20 - \$34/Month



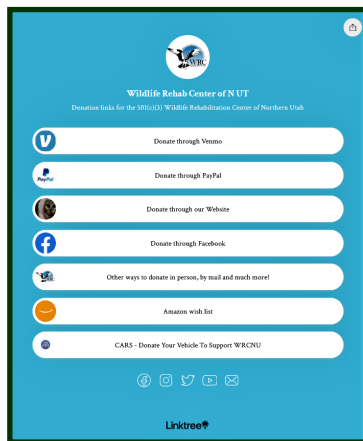
Flying Squirrels:

\$15 - \$19/Month



Chickadees:

\$8 - \$14/Month



One link to the many
ways to support us!
Use the QR code (right).
Linktr.ee/wrcnu



BIG or small, your donation makes a HUGE IMPACT!

- 1) **Monthly Sustainers:** Consider joining our growing "WRCNU Monthly Sustainer Team". Our current monthly sustainers pay for almost 98% of our Animal food and veterinary costs, which are a large part of our annual operating budget.
- 2) **Donate your old vehicles:** at zero cost to you, let our CARS nonprofit partner handle everything from removal, donation receipt, and more. All you need is a clean title and CARS will do the heavy lifting, then deliver a check to WRCNU!
- 3) **Mailed Donations:** Checks & money orders--same as cash--no fees. Mail to our mail only address:
3127 N Pelican Dr, Farr West, UT 84404
- 4) **Smith's Inspiring Donations Program:** Smith's Rewards Card? They will donate 0.5% of eligible purchases to WRCNU. You get all your rewards & fuel points and we receive a nice check every quarter. **Currently 439 households support WRCNU this way and it makes a huge difference.**

In 2016 WRCNU had 61 households and earned \$306

In 2025 WRCNU had 431 households and earned \$6,614 (your support REALLY matters!)

Go to [WRCNU.ORG/Donate](https://wrcnu.org/donate) and click on the Smith's logo for more info.

- 5) **Employer Matching:** Ask your employer if they have a Matching gift Program and **DOUBLE** your gift!

6) **PayPal:**



7) **Venmo:**



UTAH STATE EMPLOYEES'
CHARITABLE FUND
Lend a helping hand

Gold
Transparency
2026

Candid.

The Life of a Foster Dad



In this photo: "Daddy Robin" is on the left, almost dwarfed by the baby in front of him. He has a typical number of 4 fledgling babies. **Cool Fact:** most birds when they leave the nest are the same size as their parents, yes, even hummingbirds and eagles. 😊

There is no better parent for a wildlife patient than one of their own species. Over the years, we've been very lucky to find injured adult American Robins, that are in our care, to be very willing foster parents to our many, many nestling and fledgling Robin babies. So far, they have all been Dads. In the wild the male Robin actually provides the biggest helping of "aftercare" to the kids. Once they are out of the nest, Dad feeds & protects them while he shows them the ropes of life on their own. Mom is usually back on the nest, with her next clutch of eggs, leaving only to grab a bite, before returning to protect and warm them. Rehabbers lucky enough to have fosters will place a dish of various robin foods in the cage, close it up and give them privacy, and

Dad goes to work selecting the food and placing it into the eager wide-open mouths of his foster kids. Fostering prevents the youngsters from getting used to human hands and influence while they are getting ready to transition to the great out-of-doors. It also frees the rehabber up for those babies who don't have fosters and need special human attention.

"Thistle", WRCNU's first feline patient.
Read about her story inside.



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WWW.WRCNU.ORG

Wildlife Rehabilitation Center
of Northern Utah
3127 N Pelican Drive
Farr West, UT 84404



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