

Summer  
2025



Number of Wildlife Patients  
Treated since 2009: > 35,700

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

## "A Day in the Life of a Wildlife Rehab Center"

By Vanessa Zimmer

**The day at the Wildlife Rehabilitation Center of Northern Utah begins at 10 a.m.** The lid of a shoebox-size plastic container is slid off, revealing a line of what might at first resemble an alien choir — yellow-rimmed mouths aimed skyward, emitting a chirping cacophony of sound.

In the earthling avian world, however, this is the international sign for: Feed me! Baby birds the world over thrust their beaks into the air and beg their parents to bring them food.

And it is happening every 20 minutes for the hummingbirds, every 45 minutes for the songbirds, and every 60 minutes for the magpies and crows — each time accompanied by the urgent shriek of a timer — at the Ogden wildlife rehab facility.

The nonprofit rehab center is bustling nonstop during these warmest months of the year, when baby birds are coming into the world and encountering humans — and not in a good way.

WRCNU was caring for 269 birds at the season's midway point, up from 47 at the beginning of May and rising significantly each day.

With four full-time staffers and 15 volunteers at the center, which is open seven days a week, it's all hands on deck to keep the residents fortified and medicated. The very definition of multitasking, you might say, since staff members are also fielding the average of 30 phone calls from the public each day.

The last Monday of June finds longtime wildlife specialists DaLyn Marthaler and Erin Adams leading the charge. Adams injects wax worms with a vitamin solution, inserting the needle at one end and puffing them up with the liquid, preparing to feed them one at a time via giant tweezers to the baby swallows.

Marthaler cups paper towels inside shallow bowls so the robins have makeshift nests. "Without that proper nest," she says, "their legs will grow splayed out."

Volunteer Alison Schenk emerges from another baby-bird room at the sound of an alarm. "What was that one?" she asks. "Magpies," says Marthaler. Schenk moves to a tower of cages occupied by young magpies.

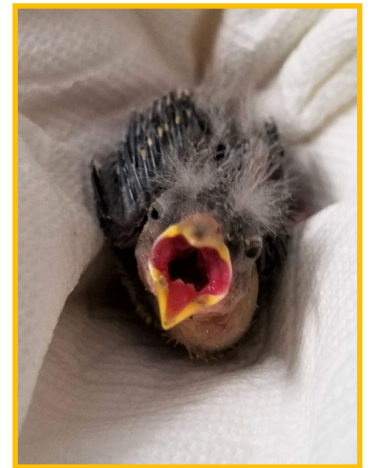
*("A Day in the Life", Cont. on Pg 2)*



Above: A nest of 4 Say's Phoebes



Center: 3 Hungry Black-billed Magpies



Above: A Lesser Goldfinch nestling, "Feed ME!"

\* Photo used with permission, White-lined Sphinx Moth credit, Todd Lounds. *While the white-lined sphinx moth has a larval stage that can be a minor pest, their overall contribution to the ecosystem as pollinators and a food source for other wildlife outweighs the potential damage.*

## “A Day in the Life...” (continued)

**Each bird gets a plan customized for its needs.** The insect-eaters, like the swallows, are hand-fed insect larvae (here, they come in the form of mealworms and waxworms). The songbirds get a slurry of specialized kibble, baby food, water and vitamins, mixed up in a large food processor and fed to each with a gentle pump of a syringe down the right side of their throats to the crop. (Simply inserting it in the mouth could send the mixture down the windpipe, causing aspiration.) Most of the babies open their mouths wide to receive the solution.

If the babies duck away from the syringe or are crowded out by their companions, Marthaler will pick up the loner in one hand, remove the baby from the plastic terrarium, and, holding it against her chest, coax the beak open and loose the slurry. “Buddy, you’re not allowed to starve on my watch,” she says softly and returns the baby to the enclosure.

As the babies grow older, they are offered a customized plate of soaked solid cat food (or a soft food called softbill), blueberries, mixed veggies (green beans, carrots, corn, and peas, just like at home!), and mealworms. Or pieces of mice. Or some combination of the above.

\* \* \*

The phone calls come rapid-fire. Marthaler, who is the WRCNU executive director, keeps her cell phone on speaker to leave her hands free. Adams expertly cradles her phone between shoulder and ear while feeding babies.



Four Black-billed Magpie nestlings

- *Sorry, state law does not allow us to accept raccoons.*
- *If the nest has been down for a week, the babies are likely already dead.*
- *Sorry, we are not currently equipped to accept ducks. That mother duck purposely laid her eggs well away from the water and is now leading her babies to the water. The caller fears they will be hit by a car. “It is scary,” acknowledges Marthaler when the call ends. But it’s better than not allowing the duck’s instincts to play out.*
- *To a caller checking on a bird she brought in a couple of weeks ago: “This little guy has been released,” reports Marthaler.*
- *To another caller checking on a bird: The raven’s eyes were severely infected, and he didn’t survive. Frustratingly, the rescuer kept the bird for two weeks before bringing it in.*

Some 90 percent of the WRCNU’s patients are brought in because of human impact, Adams says. “We’re just trying to fix our own mistakes,” she says, trying to repair the damage caused by our interference.

Like the humans who pulled down a nest containing three baby swallows and nine eggs; only two babies survive at this point. Adams refers to it as kidnapping. Or the workers who power-washed pigeons out of a parking garage. Or the families that allow their cats to run free — cat attacks are a common cause of injury.

“Cats and glue traps are big problems here,” says Marthaler. Residents place sticky traps on their property in an attempt to eliminate an insect or mouse problem. “I absolutely despise (glue traps)” adds Marthaler. “And they aren’t going to solve the problem.” The few pests they entrap are not worth the damage done. A bird spots a yummy insect or a hungry owl sees a mouse easy for the picking. And the birds become entangled in the mess and damage their feathers.

Yet another caller worries about a baby robin on the ground in her yard. Marthaler advises simply moving it beneath some nearby bushes to provide some cover. “Robins are the best parents out there,” she assures. “They’ll find it. ... Robins really don’t give up on their babies.”

So often, it seems, the WRCNU’s message is to leave uninjured baby birds alone. Don’t “kidnap” them.

American Kestrels and Western Screech-Owls are often brought in, Adams says, “because they are common in urban areas,” encountering those aforementioned cats and humans.

In late afternoon, a woman parked outside the center calls that she has a downy woodpecker that slammed into a window.

Adams pulls the bird from a small cardboard box and runs her fingers over its body. “Oh, man,” she says sadly. One wing is broken at the shoulder, and there are multiple other breaks. The wing hangs limply.

The bird is clearly suffering. There’s no coming back from this. Adams gravely prepares the woodpecker for humane euthanasia.

The sad, unfortunate truth: This end of life is a daily occurrence.

(cont. on next page)

***Fortunately, there are bright spots in the day as well.***

During one of the songbird feedings, a Cliff Swallow slips out of an opening as Marthaler unzips the soft-sided enclosure to offer a mealworm. The swallow flies around the ward and then does laps around the ceiling of the kitchen/food preparation area.

Marthaler is delighted. She hunts down a net for capture, but allows the bird to fly several rounds before catching it. "You are ready to go, my friend," she says proudly. Soon, he will be released back to the neighborhood in which he was found.

That will be one for the success column.

Earlier in the day, Marthaler accepted an American Kestrel brought in by the Division of Wildlife Resources; the two organizations work together closely. Someone found the male kestrel on the ground. Though the rescuer kept the bird for two days before calling DWR, the bird appears fairly healthy, though extremely fearful.

Later, Adams examines him once more. She finds no injuries, but judging by the wrinkles on the belly, the taut skin on the legs, and the sunken eyes, she pronounces him "just a little dehydrated." She gives him a sodium chloride injection just under the skin. "OK, little lad," she says, "it's for your own good."

The kestrel is in a pre-fledging stage and likely would have been just fine left where he was found. Still, his outlook is optimistic.

There's also the pure joy of feeding the baby birds. Adams pulls the drape off a plastic tub on the raptor side of the center, exposing two bowling-ball-size fuzzballs with big eyes appearing to sit on their butts. Each bird displays a pair of three toes endearingly flopped forward.

They gape for their pieces of mice. "Aren't they cute?" she gushes. Indeed. The faces of these young Red-tailed Hawks (*later identified as Swainson's Hawks, a very similar species*) are infinitely expressive, sort of like a human baby's face.

Plus, the Cooper's Hawks graduated today from being hand-fed to feeding themselves from plates. "You are doing so good," Adams tells them. "You are getting so big!"

Another gain.

***("A Day in the Life", cont. pg-4)***

Below, one of three hawk nestlings, initially thought to be Red-tails. At this age, Red-tails and Swainson's are very similar and without a parent it can be a "guessing game" until they finally grow in their true feathers.



Above and Right: Two of three Swainson's Hawk nestlings, now "fledglings", but due to being raised in captivity, they must now figure out how to hunt without the help of their parents. They should be ready just in time for their fall migration south.

\* \* \*

**Please continue to support our incredible organization and keep WRCNU FLYING!**

**Mailing Address: 3127 N Pelican Dr / Farr West, UT 84404 / [www.WRCNU.org](http://www.WRCNU.org)**



(Continued from Pg 3)

**These days of spring and summer are long and exhausting,** with the never-ending feeding rounds, the persistent shriek of the alarms.

Marthaler eats her breakfast, a concoction of oats, yogurt and blueberries, at 3:30 p.m., standing in the kitchen where the food prep for the birds takes place. During these four months, days off for staff are not a given.

How do they do it? “Become a zombie,” jokes Marthaler. “It’s Ground Hog Day every day. Seriously: “You do this because you love it,” she says. “Otherwise, you’re not going to make it.”

Maybe it has something to do with passion for the WRCNU cause: saving, healing and returning wildlife home to the wild.

A final cleanup ends the day. A couple more special cases, and they’ll be done.

Adams grabs one particular Great Horned Owl with an injured foot that it won’t leave alone and a distaste for eating its medicated food. Adams grasps the feet, folds its wings to its body and holds the bird against her chest, so that Marthaler can rewrap the foot, thrust an antibiotic down its throat, and force-feed it bits of mice as well. The majestic owl rolls its head back and its golden eyes peer at Adams.

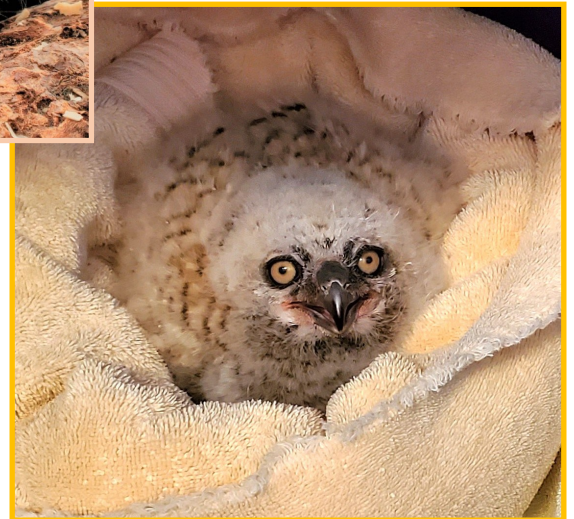
A troubled adult Red-tailed Hawk also gets some attention. It is losing weight daily because it won’t eat on its own. Adams pulls it, panting and tongue sticking out, from its enclosure, and assumes the same posture as before. The hawk, its feathers damaged from getting entangled in tall, stiff grass, receives the force-feeding treatment and returns to its cage.

Adams and Marthaler are clearly tired. It has been a busy 10-hour day. They make a quick final sweep of the area.

Lights out, someone says, and the switch is flipped.

**It is 8:08 p.m.**

**Tomorrow, they will do it all again.**



Left: Barn Owl nestlings

Center: Cottontail Kit ready for release

Right: Great Horned Owl nestling

### Interested in WRCNU’s Financials?

**Our latest Financial Audit and our last three IRS 990 Tax Returns are always available on-line for your inspection.**

Gold  
Transparency  
2025

Candid.

Go to our website’s “ABOUT US” page under “Documents”.

[WWW.WRCNU.ORG](http://WWW.WRCNU.ORG)

Or go to [WWW.GUIDESTAR.ORG](http://WWW.GUIDESTAR.ORG)





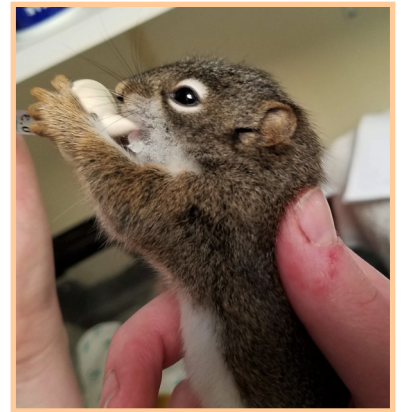
This "Screech Owl Burrito"  
Requires quality whole  
foods --preferably mice



House Finches eat mostly  
seeds, supplemented by  
seasonal fruits and new buds  
on plants.

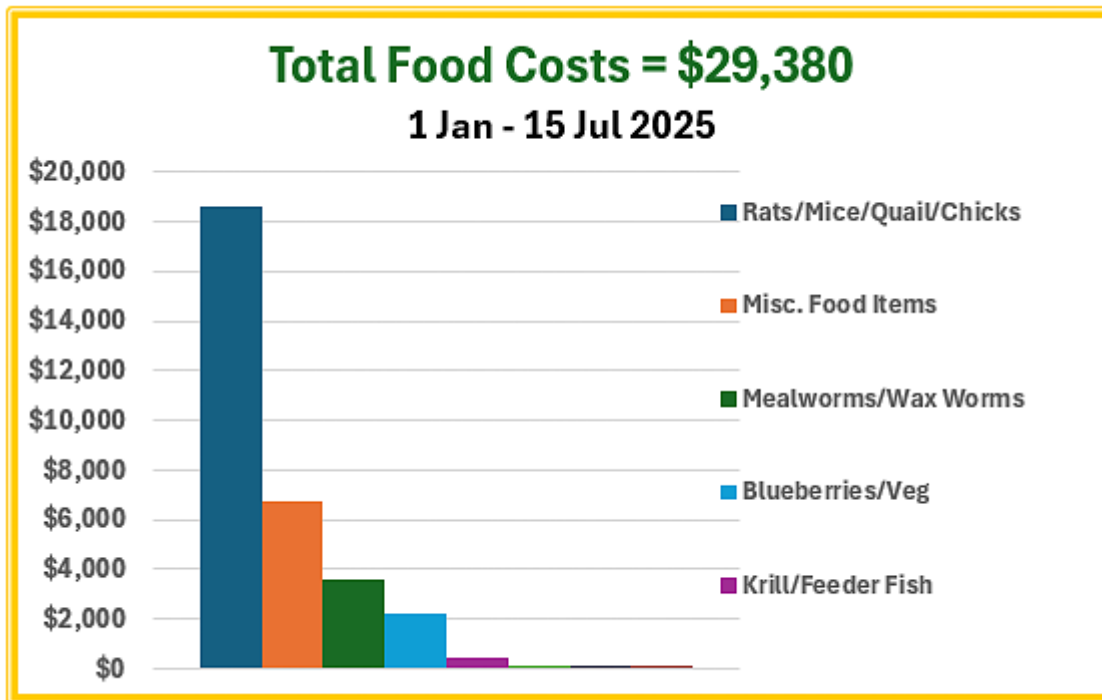


Woodhouse's Scrub Jays eat a  
varied diet of insects, fruit,  
seeds, and on occasion, even  
birds' eggs and young.



American Red (tree) Squirrels  
require specialized milk  
replacement formulas when  
nursing. Then move to a diet  
consisting of seeds, nuts, & fruits.

## What Is the Cost to Feed These Injured Animals?



Years ago, WRCNU stopped requesting food donations because we were receiving items that were either inappropriate for the animals we treat and care for or the quality was not acceptable: low quality, long expired, spoiled, infested, etc.

When you or a loved one are in the hospital, you would not expect to be fed spoiled food and our patients are no different. While you might see an animal eating "roadkill" on occasion, our patients are not in the best of health and it is our task to get them healthy and back out as quickly as we can. We must feed "whole foods" to our raptors (mice, rats, quail, etc.) like they would find in the wild. Our songbirds (depending on the species) need live insect larvae, and/or quality seed (not cheap "filler seed" like stores will sell for backyard feeding). Babies (avian and mammalian) must have high quality food items (meat, seed, insect, milk replacements, etc.) to ensure strong healthy bodies before they go out on their own--they grow extremely fast, so high nutrition is extremely important.



venmo



CFC Code: 74219



UTAH STATE EMPLOYEES'  
**CHARITABLE FUND**  
*Lend a helping hand*

USECF Code: 1228



# “Wild Spirit”

**DATE:** Friday September 26, 2025

**SAVE THE DATE!**

**TIME:** 6:30, film starts at 7:30

**WHERE:** Tracy Aviary Nature Center at Pia Okwai

3310 S 1000 W, South Salt Lake, UT 84119

**Duration:** Film length is approximately 25 minutes

Come watch and support the Wildlife Rehabilitation Center of Northern Utah with the premiere of this inspiring documentary film, which follows their incredible story of fighting all odds to stay open and continue healing Utah's wildlife.

Bring friends, and a blanket (*low-rise camping/ beach chairs are fine*) to sit under the stars.

Come see the premiere of **Wild Spirit** and show your support!

**FREE WILDLIFE MOVIE NIGHT**

SEP 26, 2025 @ 6:30pm  
film starts at 7:30

**TRACY AVIARY NATURE CENTER**  
at PIA OKWAI

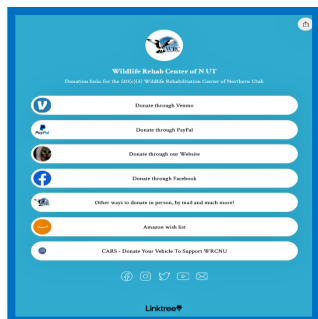
Join the WRCNU's fight to save Utah's wildlife - come watch the premier of the inspiring film of their story, bring friends, a blanket, and support a great cause under the stars!

Scan for more info!

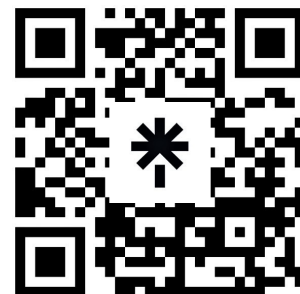
TRACY AVIARY NATURE CENTER at Pia Okwai

WILDLIFE REHABILITATION CENTER OF NORTHERN UTAH WRC

# Your Donation Support is Extremely Important to Us




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**Linktr.ee/wrcnu**



**No matter how big or small, your donation makes a HUGE IMPACT!**

**There are many ways to support Wildlife Rehabilitation Center of Northern Utah and all are greatly appreciated.**

- 1) **Monthly Sustainers:** The “WRCNU Monthly Sustainer Team” continues to grow—WELCOME to our new members!. These members understand that they really don’t miss the automatic monthly donations coming out of their credit/debit cards OR from their checking/savings account through their monthly “Bill Pay”. Visit our Donate tab’s “Become a Sustainer” page for more information on becoming a **“WRCNU Monthly Sustainer”**. [www.wrcnu.org](http://www.wrcnu.org)
- 2) **Donate your old vehicles** (cars/trucks/scooters/motorcycles/boats/RVs/etc.) through our partner CARS nonprofit. No cost to you, CARS schedules and does all the “heavy lifting” and provides a Tax Deductible receipt for your donation and sends WRCNU a nice check. See our link to the CARS donation form on our website’s “Donate” tab (*scroll towards the bottom of the page*).
- 3) **Employer Matching**—many Businesses will double your gifts by matching your donations; Ask your employer if they have a Matching Gift Program. If WRCNU does not already have a program with your employer, it’s still pretty easy. They will contact us by email and we will gladly enroll for the opportunity to double your gifts.
- 4) **Mailed Donations:** Checks should be mailed to our mail only address at **3127 N Pelican Dr., Farr West, UT 84404**
- 5) **Facebook Fundraisers:** If you have a Facebook (FB) account, why not start a small celebratory fundraiser for a birthday, anniversary, or “Just Because”? Go to our FB page and click on the “Fundraisers” tab, then click on the “Create a Fundraiser” button. Whether you earn \$5 or \$500, every dollar adds up and is just another way to support WRCNU without spending a dime of your own.
- 6) **Smith’s Inspiring Donations Program:**  **Do you have a Smith’s Rewards Card?** Smith’s donates 0.5% of all eligible purchases you make to your favorite (WRCNU) nonprofit. It’s free to you and you still get all of your rewards and gas points while they send us a nice check every quarter. Go to our website’s “Donate” page and click on the Smith’s logo for more info.
- 7) **Venmo:**      8) **PayPal:**

**For the latest information on the showing of the WRCNU documentary, “Wild Spirit”.**

Our September e-newsletter will have the latest on this presentation. Sign up for this once a month mailing to stay in touch with what’s going on at WRCNU in-between our three seasonal hardcopy newsletters.

You will also find the latest on this event on our Facebook and website’s “Events page”.

To receive our **e-Newsletter**, please send your name and email address to:

**[newsletter@wrcnu.org](mailto:newsletter@wrcnu.org)**



### One of These is NOT Like the Others!

This is a nest of “Dark-eyed Juncos”, well ... sort of. Do you see the nestling with its mouth WIDE OPEN?

That is the chick of a Brown-headed Cowbird. Momma Cowbird lays her eggs in other species’ nests. Those that are not aware, will incubate, hatch, and feed the chick as if it was their own.

WRCNU has received nestlings with Cowbird “siblings” before, and because they too are a protected native species, we raise them up together and will release them when they are ready.

The Cowbird here will quickly outgrow its siblings--in the wild, being more food aggressive they will usually be fed more than the others. This has given them a bad name, but as long as there is enough room in the nest, no one will be “thrown out” as some myths suggest. Babies being “kicked out” of nests is actually common among some cavity nesters, like starlings, when the parents build a nest inside a cavity that is too small. They often lose a chick or two as they outgrow the nest and before they are ready to fledge.

A nestling Western Kingbird, found on the ground. Kingbirds are grouped with other Flycatchers, eating mostly insects caught out of the air as well as some fruit.



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