**Directors’ Message**

**Dear Wildlife Supporters:**

I think we can all agree that 2020 has been overwhelming. As we start a new year, I think about the difficulties we’ve encountered, but mostly about the positives that have come out of this time. The resilience we’ve shown and seen, and the dedication to creating a positive out of a negative has been awe-inspiring. Most of all, I’ve seen the resilience in both the WCSV staff and our community, which is incredibly touching.

We have been open every day since the beginning of the shutdown in March, which coincided with the start of our busiest time of year. Put together the massive operational changes, suspension of our volunteer program, and the unprecedented increase of animals we’ve taken in this year, and we’ve had a lot to deal with. But deal with it we have, through humor, compassion and a lot of coffee!

However, one of the main reasons we’re able to do this, is because of you, our donors. One huge positive of the pandemic is the number of people that found us and expressed their appreciation of the work we do.

I’ve been saying for months that “everybody needs a win” right now — the residents that bring us animals, our staff that rehabilitates and releases our wild patients, and most of all the animals that get a second chance at a wild life.

All these things are why we chose to focus on “resilience” in this issue of **Tracks** and why we chose the Golden Eagle to represent this. This beautiful bird made a full recovery to fly free once again. And that, it seems to me, is the ultimate “win” we all need now.

Thank you for your ongoing support and appreciation of our mission to treat local sick, injured and orphaned wildlife. We could not provide the services and quality of care we do without your generosity. As a small non-profit, it is crucial for us to raise funds to continue our work with the wildlife of Santa Clara County. We are grateful for each and every contribution, and no amount is too small.

There are also other ways to help WCSV beyond making a cash donation. Here are some suggestions:

**Monthly Giving Schedule:** Set up a monthly giving schedule through PayPal. Once you set it up, you don’t have to think about it again, and the Center will benefit from your contribution year-round.

**Employer Matching Program:** This is a great way to see your gift doubled. See if your employer has a matching gift program.

**Bequests or Living Trust:** A bequest or a gift through a living trust is another great way to contribute to WCSV.

**Amazon Smile:** You can donate to the Center when you shop on amazon.com. The AmazonSmile Foundation donates 0.5% of the sale price from your eligible purchases to WCSV. To register, go to smile.amazon.com, and select us as the benefitting charity.

**Amazon Wish List:** If you wish to buy a specific item that we need, try our wish list. To find it, go to wcsv.org/wishlist and you will be automatically redirected to Amazon.

**Vehicle Donations:** Consider donating that old vehicle to V-DAC. (Vehicle Donation to Any Charity) as a way to help our local wildlife. Their programs turn any car, truck, boat or RV into cash and deliver a high percent of net proceeds to non-profits like WCSV. Visit their website to learn more about how to donate a vehicle to help WCSV at https://www.v-dac.com/.

We are humbled by your generosity always, but especially in these trying times. Thank you for your support and for your devotion to our mission to rehabilitate and release wildlife in need. We truly appreciate you being a member of the WCSV team and an invaluable part of the work that we do.

With gratitude,

Laura Hawkins, Executive Director

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**Tracks**

The Wildlife Center of Silicon Valley is dedicated to providing sick, injured, and orphaned wildlife with exceptional free care, rehabilitation, and the opportunity for release. We also aim to educate the public about coexisting peacefully with local wildlife.

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Tracks…across the backyard, along a wooded trail, meandering by a creek. Whose tracks are they? Are they coming or going? Perhaps they are the tracks of things past, or of visions to be revealed, and stories yet untold. Come join us as we explore the different dimensions of wildlife rehabilitation and the special wild neighbors with whom we share our communities. It is the intention of this publication to investigate our dynamic relationship with wildlife within the greater context of our relationship with the earth and each other. The issues are many, as are the myths, feelings, and beliefs surrounding each one. Let’s follow the tracks, wherever we may find them, and leave our own for those who may follow.
The arrival of the pandemic in March was followed by the start of our busy season. Initially, our volunteer program was completely suspended, leaving us without over 200 volunteers. As the summer progressed, we slowly and carefully reopened our volunteer program, allowing a maximum of three animal care volunteers on-site per shift.

With such limited on-site opportunities, many of volunteers stepped up to take on expanded roles. Volunteers who previously only worked in the hospital once a week added extra days, and a number of them joined our homecare program.

Lauren Tauman has been an animal care team volunteer since 2016. Right before the pandemic hit, Lauren joined our homecare program and spent the past summer experiencing her first busy season as a member of the team, caring for 64 Virginia opossums. Here’s what Lauren had to say:

“[The biggest difference] is actually going through the transitions with the animals [as they develop]. I’m used to caring for [opossums] four hours once a week where the diet and care is predetermined by staff. The hard part is getting them from the soft food to weaning onto solid food. I had to develop the intuition to properly care for them and be able to sense when they were ready for the next stage.”

Jackie Turner has been volunteering with the Center for 15 years and is a long time veteran of the homecare program. Having looked after squirrels, raccoons, turtles, and currently specializing in opossums, Jackie has her routine down pat and felt that the animal care aspect this season was the same as any other. What she did notice, however, was the transportation volunteers stepping up to offer additional assistance regularly transporting of animals and supplies to the homes of homecare volunteers. “For them to be bringing the animals, the specialized foods and medicines to those who needed it… was so special.”

Our transportation volunteers rose to the occasion this past summer, spending many more hours than usual on the road, ferrying patients and supplies to where they needed to be, and releasing healthy animals once they were ready to return to the wild. During previous years, volunteer Claire Xue would often help with releases after her shift, but this year she has spent a lot more time transporting animals and supplies for WCSV. “It’s really important to get healthy animals out the door as soon as possible, so I’ve been coming in to help release animals on my days off. This year I drove about 5,300 miles, compared to a typical year where I only make one or two extra trips and drive about 200 miles for the Center.”
**PANDEMIC POSITIVES**

*By Laura Hawkins*

There can be silver linings in any situation. No matter how hard it gets, we at WCSV can always find things to be grateful for, even during this difficult time.

One of the best things has been meeting all the new people that have brought animals to us and welcoming back those that have been here before. The pandemic has shown us just how compassionate people are in relation to the wildlife in our area. So many times, we have heard “We are so glad we found you!” and “I’m so glad you’re here!” Most of us lead very busy lives, but it seems the pandemic has slowed us down enough to take in more of the world around us. Because of this, we’ve seen more animals than ever (over 6,100 so far as compared to 5,700 for all of last year), and it’s gratifying to be the place that can help both the animals and their finders.

Here’s what one of our finders had to say:

“So grateful for WCSV. Having brought either injured or orphaned baby squirrels to this facility twice is as much as a gift to me as it is for the animals. A kind, caring, thorough and professional staff who clearly focuses on the best interest of each animal for their immediate and ultimate well-being. How fortunate we are to have this resource located in such a beautiful setting run by such dedicated people.”

Another positive is we learned we can drastically retool our whole way of operating, and still be able to provide the highest quality of care for our wild patients, no matter what the situation. From the pandemic to being under multiple fire evacuation orders in the midst of it, we’ve persisted and remain grateful.

By Laura Hawkins

Here are some of the ways we’ve adapted:

- We moved animal intake outside as we have closed our lobby to the public for safety reasons. When we receive animals, social distancing is followed to a T with six feet apart indicators, all items sanitized, and masks and gloves changed with each public interaction. We also provide gloves and hand sanitizer to the public.

- After we suspended our on-site volunteer program during our busiest time of the year, our great group of experienced homecare volunteers rallied to help with animal care. Their assistance allowed us to drastically reduce the number of patients at the Center, which allowed each animal to get the superior care we have always given.

- We have staggered our staffing to aid in lowering the possibility of COVID-19 transmission. Employees split their schedules between work and home, and take on multiple roles to help get things done. This way we can work knowing we provide our wild patients everything they need for a second chance at a wild life while keeping ourselves safe.

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**DEVELOPMENT UPDATE**

*By Holly Cormier and Jenny Liu*

This year has been a unique one for WCSV’s Development Department. Each fall, we look forward to our annual fundraiser, *Wingin’ It at the Winery*. It’s a wonderful opportunity to get together with our fellow wildlife enthusiasts for an evening of wine, food, and fun. The most special part of the night, though, is the live release of a predatory bird we have rehabilitated during the season. It is simply a magical experience. But this year, due to COVID-19, we had to figure out how to pull off *Wingin’ It* in a way that was safe for us and our supporters: by going virtual!

We really didn’t know what to expect from our event this year. How could we transition from a bustling live event to a socially distant online one? Would anyone want to participate?

Could we raise the funds necessary to continue helping the thousands of wild animals we rehabilitate each year?

Thankfully, we were surprised and thrilled with the results! Our avid wildlife supporters stunned us with their generosity by tuning in to our online event, *Wingin’ It for Wildlife on the Web*, and we raised over $50,000 for our center! Despite all the obstacles and uncertainty we faced for our first-ever virtual fundraiser, we sold all of our silent and live auction items and raised several thousand dollars in our virtual Fund a Need.

*Continued on page 4*
Development Update, continued from page 4

Though we couldn’t have a live release, we brought the magic to viewers on screen with never-before-seen footage of releases made possible by all of you.

WCSV cannot express enough gratitude for everyone who has supported us this year. Our annual fundraiser is critical to enable us to continue our mission of rehabilitating and releasing sick, injured and orphaned wildlife. Our dedicated staff and a handful of volunteers have worked tirelessly this busy season to stay open every day as an essential business. This pandemic has been a challenge for everyone, but we are happy to report WCSV is still persevering, thanks to your help.

Release Highlights

Juvenile Skunk

This juvenile striped skunk was found caught in two snap traps in late June. One trap was attached to the left side of its neck and the other trap was stuck around the head. Staff removed the traps from the skunk and gave fluids and medication to treat pain and inflammation. Luckily, the bruising on the skunk’s neck went away after a couple days and there was only minimal tissue damage from the traps. After two weeks in care the skunk received a clean bill of health and was returned to the wild near East San Jose.

Pocket Gopher

This pocket gopher was found in San Jose after its fur became contaminated with an unknown substance. On arrival the gopher was alert and began cleaning itself during the initial examination. Staff administered preventative antibiotics and medication for possible toxin ingestion. After medicating, the gopher was set up in suitable housing containing dirt for burrowing and a proper diet of root vegetables. After several days of supportive care, the gopher was deemed healthy and released in San Jose.

Fox Follow-up

You may remember these orphaned gray foxes from our Spring/Summer 2020 issue of Tracks. They spent their summer here at the Center in our large mammal enclosure, gaining strength and learning important skills such as climbing, denning, running, and foraging. After approximately six months in care, where we helped them grow from little formula-fed kits to healthy, lively juveniles, these foxes were finally ready to return to their home range. They were released in Prunedale in October to naturally disperse and establish their own territories.

Ring-necked Pheasant

A concerned couple found this ring-necked pheasant sitting on their patio in late October, not moving or standing. Upon initial examination, staff discovered a patch of missing feathers and some frayed tail feathers with no further injuries. The pheasant was given pain medication, fluids, and was set up in an incubator to stabilize. By the end of the day, the bird had begun standing, eating and drinking. After several days it was moved to an outdoor enclosure to test its flight abilities. After about five days, it was returned to where it had been found in San Jose, and it quickly flew away.
Golden Eagle

By Ashley Kinney

Golden eagles are one of the largest predatory birds in North America. These eagles mainly hunt rabbits and squirrels, but have been known to prey upon larger animals such as fawns, seals, and coyotes. This beautiful eagle will grow to three feet tall and have a wingspan of six to seven-and-a-half feet.

WCSV rarely admits eagles. In our 27 years of existence, we have only admitted five, four of whom were found so debilitated and injured that they unfortunately did not survive.

On July 5, 2020, our eagle luck changed after Bay Raptor Rescue received a call regarding a downed male Golden eagle in Portola Valley, CA. The eagle was reported as not flying and weak. Once the rescue group contained it, they transported the two-year-old raptor to our rehabilitation hospital.

When the eagle arrived at our center, animal care staff members safely examined it and found the animal to be dehydrated and thin, and noted a right wing drop, which was later determined to be a soft-tissue injury. Staff members provided the raptor with fluids, vitamins, anti-inflammatory medication, and appropriate nutrition.

Within seven days, the eagle’s wing drop was showing signs of improvement. He was moved to one of our outdoor enclosures so staff could easily evaluate his range of motion and ability to use both wings normally. Twenty days later, staff members were comfortable with the bird’s progress, and felt he was ready for his next phase of rehabilitation—conditioning in a large outdoor flight enclosure!

After 26 days in care at WCSV, we sent the eagle to our friends at the Wildlife Education and Rehabilitation Center (WERC) in Morgan Hill. WERC has a 100-foot flight enclosure, which is the ideal flight space for this species. The bird spent 18 days at WERC, where they closely observed the eagle’s flight to make sure he was strong enough to fly free once again.

On August 14, 2020, this strong and very feisty eagle was released back into his territory in Portola Valley. He immediately bolted out of his transport kennel and took flight, circling in the sky a few times before disappearing out of sight.

This was such a special moment for all of us at WCSV. Not only was he our first eagle release, but he was a great example on how teamwork truly benefits our animals. Thank you to our friends at WERC and Bay Raptor Rescue for helping to make his rescue and release possible.

By Ashley Kinney
Many birds migrate as the seasons change, traveling great distances from one region to another, following abundant food sources, preferred nesting locations, and favorable weather. Here is a look at the ranges of five birds found in the Bay Areas during the winter.

**Golden-crowned Sparrow**
- Known for its melancholy song
- Spends more time in California during the winter than most other migratory birds
- Eats seeds, fruit, buds, flowers and vegetables

**Bufflehead**
- Dives below the water’s surface to feed
- Eats insects, snails, crustaceans, and aquatic plants
- Nests in cavities such as old woodpecker holes in trees

**Cedar Waxwing**
- One of the few birds whose diet primarily consists of fruit
- Can become intoxicated from eating fermented, overripe fruit
- Tail tips are usually yellow but can turn orange upon consumption of honeysuckles containing red pigments

**Yellow-rumped Warbler**
- Travels in large flocks
- Eats insects from ground and in-flight
- Eats berries in the winter

**Northern Shoveler**
- Large bill contains comb-like structures called lamellae, used to filter food from the water and sediment
- Eats tiny insects, crustaceans, algae, and seeds
- Also overwinters in Europe, Africa, and India
A Special Thanks to Our Invaluable Partners in Service

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