



LAS AVES



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The newsletter of
The Wildlife Center, Inc.

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Our 10th Birthday

By Laura Swartz

In 1996 The Wildlife Center will celebrate its tenth year as a hospital and rehabilitation center for sick, injured, and orphaned wildlife. The ongoing primary goal of the Center is to release rehabilitated animals back to the wild. An expanding secondary goal is public outreach through educational programs.

Many of you have been supporting members of the Center since 1986. For our many new friends here is a brief history of The Wildlife Center.

The Wildlife Center, Inc. "Las Aves"

The founder and president of the Center, Kathleen Ramsay, is a native New Mexican. She was born in Los Alamos, and grew up hiking, riding and birding in the nearby mountains. After graduating from the veterinary school at Colorado State University, Fort Collins in 1981 and spending a three year residency in Oregon, she returned to New Mexico to establish the Cottonwood Veterinary Clinic in Española. During her professional training she had concentrated on avian medicine, and she quickly became known for this specialty.

Soon people were bringing in injured and orphaned wild birds as well as pets. The size of the patients increased from songbirds to raptors. It became clear an organized effort was needed. The Northern New Mexico Raptor Rehabilitation and Educational Center or "Las Aves" (The Birds) was begun, to care for these birds. In its first year, 16 raptors were treated. In 1995, 854 animals (145 of them raptors) were received at the Center.

In 1991, the name was changed to The Wildlife Center, Inc., Las Aves to reflect the many native animals also being brought to the Center for treatment. Although there is a core of professionals, from the beginning The Wildlife Center has been manned by dedicated volunteers who work with animals in rehabilitation, as educators in the public educational programs, and in all aspects of the Center's operation.

Each spring many orphaned birds and animals are sent to the

Center. Because orphans are especially vulnerable to human "imprinting," the Center utilizes "foster parents" of the same species whenever possible. This approach greatly increases the release rate for raptors and mammals. Releases take place into known safe environments, often those already protected by law. Non-releasable birds and animals are designated for use as foster parents and in educational work, or are responsibly placed in nature centers, breeding programs or other facilities.

Most of the injuries to wild animals are caused by human intervention — gunshot, poison, pollution, high wire electrocution, collision with automobiles and glass windows. Because of this, The Wildlife Center began a public outreach program in 1987. It has grown tremendously. In the first year Las Aves gave 19 presentations to over 1,100 people. In 1995, 137 programs reached more than 43,000 people including 4,000 children attending our educational programs in their schools.

The use of non-releasable birds and animals at educational presentations provides remarkably close contact with each species for school children and the public.

The Wildlife Center is a federally-recognized, non-profit organization chartered by the State of New Mexico. The Center serves an area encompassing the Southwest and has treated animals sent from all parts of the United States.

This year The Wildlife Center will celebrate its tenth year caring for sick, injured, and orphaned New Mexico wildlife. Plans for the future include moving to a new home with an expanded rehabilitation center and a veterinarian facility with a potential for the care and breeding of endangered species. The Center also hopes to have an on-site educational Visitor's Center where children can learn more about our environment and our native wildlife.



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