

Welcome to

# INSTINCTS



FEB 2026

Vol 15:1

*"The newsletter helping you follow your Wild Instincts."*

## **CELLCOM GREEN GIFT**

In recent years, Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) has affected wildlife rehabilitation across the nation.

In Wisconsin, many rehabilitation facilities have stopped taking ducks, swans and other waterbirds. We did not. Instead, we have absorbed even more admissions from across all of Wisconsin while enforcing enhanced, even tighter biosecurity, stretching the financial and emotional limits of our facility.

Because we continue to receive otters from WI, MI and MN and are increasing the number of swans we admit each year, our current aquatic filtration systems were being pushed past their designed capacity. We needed to upgrade the filtration systems in our otter and two of our waterfowl enclosures. This upgrade will cut cleaning time for staff, allowing them to spend more time on critical care for patients, and keep the quality of the ponds at a higher standard, ensuring better health for our patients.

In addition, less time spent in enclosures with animals while cleaning their ponds also reduces potential HPAI exposure of staff, ensuring better health for our staff as well. Wild Instincts is thrilled to announce we are a recipient of a 2025 CellCom Green Gift to fulfill this need! They have generously granted us a \$1200 gift to update aquatic enclosure filter systems.

Through Green Gifts, Cellcom donates proceeds from its cell phone recycling program to local organizations, programs

and projects that are dedicated to or support environmental sustainability. The program was launched to protect the environment and support conservation in Northeast Wisconsin and Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

Customers can bring in their old, unwanted or broken phones to be reused and recycled. Cellcom sends the phones to recyclers who in return send money to Cellcom for the materials that were saved from the phones. Consumers can contribute to the program by donating their old cell phones for recycling at any Cellcom retail location.

This year, Cellcom distributed a total of \$30,425 in Green Gifts!

Thank you to everyone who participates in Cellcom's cell phone recycling program -- your contributions make Green Gifts possible and help create a more sustainable future.

Thank you, CellCom, for helping us help them.

*Congrats to McKenna for passing her Advanced Rehabber Exam and to Hannah for passing her Basic Rehabber Exam. Well done!*

## WILDLIFE BOWL 2026

The Wildlife Bowl 2026 was a great success thanks to our fabulous organizers and amazing volunteers. We had a record 96 bowlers participating, and many more cheering them on. Doors opened early allowing people to get settled onto their lanes and check out our 21 fantastic raffle baskets. In addition, a cash raffle was also held once the bowling was underway. New this year was the chance to sponsor a lane. Twenty-three wonderful donors had their logos displayed on the lanes in support of our cause.

It was a 9-pin tournament, meaning you could score a strike by knocking down only 9 of the 10 pins. Despite this, no one had a perfect set of all 3 games. Good efforts were put in on all lanes though!

Many bowlers participating are active in bowling leagues, but a lot of bowlers were just there for fun. All did a great job of supporting Wild Instincts! Congratulations to Dawn Greenman, Vicki Larson, and Joneil Tess for being the top 3 scorers for women, and congratulations to Trevor Madura, Jesse Hageny, and Don Tess for being the top 3 scorers for men! And congratulations to everyone involved for helping Wild Instincts generate over \$6600 to help us care for all our wild neighbors.

We look forward to seeing everyone again next year for Wildlife Bowl 2027 on February 7, 2027, at Nick's Hodag Lanes.

## Thank You Raffle Donors!

AmericInn 🍷 Auto Zone 🍷 Bob's Power Center 🍷  
 Bucketheads Sports Bar & Grill 🍷 Childs Frame Company  
 🍷 Comfort Inn 🍷 Cross Country Bar & Grill 🍷 Dairy  
 Queen 🍷 Debbie Lehne 🍷 Domino's Pizza 🍷 Forth  
 Floral 🍷 Friendship House Family Restaurant 🍷 Fun  
 Factory 🍷 Furniture & Appliance Mart 🍷 Hanson's  
 Garden Village 🍷 Healthquest Chiropractic &  
 Rehabilitation 🍷 Imaginuity 🍷 Vicki & Rick Larson 🍷  
 Laura Aldridge 🍷 Magic Man Games 🍷 Nancy Nebgen  
 🍷 Nick's Hodag Lanes 🍷 Papa Murphy's Pizza 🍷  
 Papillon's Cafe 🍷 Pawz n' Clawz 🍷 Pukall Lumber Co. 🍷  
 Rhinelander Family Restaurant 🍷 Ripco Credit Union 🍷  
 R&T's Not So Dinky Diner 🍷 Slumberland Furniture 🍷  
 Sue Otis 🍷 The Hiker Box 🍷 Tractor Supply Co. 🍷  
 WXPB 🍷 YMCA of the Northwoods

Say thank you to our Lane Sponsors and Raffle Donor by supporting their business!



Smiles and fun for everyone!



## Thank you Lane Sponsors!





Waving flags to indicate bowler may have a chance to win something extra. Teaching them to support Wild Instincts when they are young!



Some successful raffle basket winners!

## MILESTONES OF WILDLIFE REHAB

By Hanna Felsner

From a young age, I have dreamed of working with wildlife. One of the most exciting moments I can remember was when I was offered an internship at Wild Instincts. At the time, I never dared to dream of working alongside this amazing team as a full-time employee. Yet here I am, three months into my new role as a Wildlife Rehabilitator Assistant. Despite receiving this position, I know my journey is just beginning. A wildlife rehabilitator never stops learning—whether it be about medications, treatments, diseases, handling techniques, life history,

and so much more. In addition to education, hands-on experience is also a crucial part of becoming a successful wildlife rehabilitator, as it helps develop the skills needed to provide effective and ethical care.

In Wisconsin, the Department of Natural Resources works to ensure that all rehabilitators are properly trained to care for their wildlife patients. One way this is achieved is by requiring all rehabilitators to be licensed. There are two types of wildlife rehabilitation licenses in Wisconsin: the basic license and the advanced license. The type of license determines the species you are legally qualified to care for, as well as the level of care you are permitted to administer. An advanced licensee can work with a wider range of species than a basic licensee and be eligible to apply for special concerns species such as deer or bobcat. To obtain a license, several requirements must be met. For instance, an applicant must have a sponsoring advanced licensee mentor, a consulting veterinarian, and must successfully pass the Wisconsin Wildlife Rehabilitation Basic Exam. The advanced license is the highest level a rehabilitator can achieve; however, it cannot be earned until the basic license has been held for a minimum of two years. This system is designed to ensure that rehabilitators seek mentorship, gain experience, and continue expanding their education to provide the utmost possible care.

To pass the basic exam, a score of 80% or higher is required. As my test date approached, I found myself becoming increasingly nervous. Fortunately, I joined an incredibly knowledgeable and skilled team who were willing to teach and help me prepare. In addition to the ongoing training I receive from my supervisors, I also studied outside of work using supplemental materials, including the Wisconsin State Legislature resources, the IWRC *Basic Wildlife Rehabilitation* textbook,

and the Wisconsin DNR Wildlife Rehabilitation Study Guide. Fortunately, my studying paid off, and I passed the Wisconsin Wildlife Rehabilitation Basic Exam.

This milestone represents an important step in my journey, but it is only the beginning. With my basic license, I am excited to continue building my skills, learning from experienced mentors, and gaining hands-on experience with a wide variety of species. I will continue my education with the goal of earning my advanced license and dedicating my career to providing ethical, compassionate care to wildlife in need. I am excited to continue this journey and make a lasting difference in the field of wildlife rehabilitation.

### **PIZZA RANCH**

On January 19<sup>th</sup>, Pizza Ranch in Rhinelander hosted a Community Impact Fundraising Event for Wild Instincts.

Pizza Ranch donates 20% of sales from 4:00-8:00 to Wild Instincts.

We were able to raise over \$670.00. Thanks to all who came to dine and support us.

And a special shout-out to our volunteers, Dale, Bruce, Sue, Yvonne, Nancy & Cheryl who helped with the event.

We can't do any of this without you.

Thank you all for helping us help them.

If you missed this chance to eat chicken & pizza to help wildlife, there is another scheduled for October.



Dale, Bruce & Sue



Yvonne, Nancy, Cheryl & McKenna

### **APPLES TO ORANGES**

Statistics is the subsistence of math that concerns the collection, organization, analysis, interpretation, and presentation of data to find patterns, understand the world, and make better decisions.

Statistics are used in everyday life to make informed decisions by interpreting data.

One great example is weather forecasting.

Hearing there is a 90% chance of snow helps you prepare for your day.

Statistics help people budget, manage their health and evaluate personal finance. They enable people to analyze trends and aid in professional tasks like quality control and medical research.

In wildlife rehabilitation, we analyze statistics within our organization to help us determine how our methods and procedures are working to do the best for the animals in our care.

In many professions, statistics are also used outside organizations to compare similar facilities to see how organizations are doing among their peers.

This is where statistics can get tricky.

Since Mark & Sharon started rehabbing professionally in 1996, the standard they use is Release Rate. This formula measures the percentage of animals released out of the number of animals deemed potentially releasable. It takes out the number of patients that arrive already deceased or that have injuries too severe to attempt to heal.

It doesn't make one a bad rehabber if an animal arrives missing an entire limb from a car accident. Federal & State regulations determine some injuries to be non-life sustaining and *require* euthanasia. Following regulations should not count against your ability to be successful. We use the 24-hour Rule. Animals needing to be euthanized or that pass away within 24 hours of admission do not get counted. Again, we feel the severity of injuries beyond help should not be held against our statistical success, especially since we were willing to try for at least 24 hours. This formula was the standard for decades. As the years have gone by, however, some have stretched the 24-hour Rule into a 48-hour Rule. They do not count those that are euthanized or pass away within 48 hours. And then there are others that count every animal, regardless of if they lose their life within 24 or 48 hours. This has made comparing statistics across facilities more challenging as there is no universal metric used to determine success rates. It's like comparing apples to oranges. They're both fruits, but not the same fruit. Making it even more difficult recently is the popularity of some online database software programs wildlife rehabbers can use to organize and analyze their patient information. This saves an incredible amount of valuable time for rehabbers and is a welcome addition to the profession. However, when looking at some of the analytical features of one of these programs, questions and confusion arose. Posted in this program is a First 24-hour percentage number and an After 24-hour percentage. At first glance, you may think these numbers fall into the Count-Every-Animal vs the 24-hour-Rule categories. However, looking closely, these are totally different categories called SURVIVAL Rates, not RELEASE Rates. It simply calculates the percentage of animals that survive the first 24 hours and those that survive more than

24 hours. It has nothing to do with RELEASE rates.

That's like comparing Apples to Oranges to Eggs. They're all statistics, but that's where the similarity ends.

Apples and oranges are similar in that they are both round fruit but have many differences.

Eggs are not fruit at all and have little similarities to apples and oranges other than they are all food items.

Comparing different release rates are one thing; trying to compare release rates to survival rates are something else altogether.



Snowy Owl with shoulder injury after being hit by a car.

This Snowy Owl is a perfect example. If he is unable to be released, he will likely be placed with a facility looking for a snowy owl. Even though we will have provided care for him for over six weeks, he would not be counted in our success rate because he was not released. However, if using the survival statistics, he would be counted as having survived more than 48 hours. Just some information to keep in mind if you are reading about a wildlife rehabber's statistics.

To keep our historical data consistent, we will continue to use our 24-hour formula to compute our RELEASE rate. We also often refer to this as our Success Rate because our goal is to release the wildlife in our care back to the wild.

That is the ultimate success in our minds.



## IN HONOR OR MEMORY OF

- ~ In Honor of Mark Naniot's birthday
- ~ In Memory of Shirley Frisque
- ~ In Memory of Cynthia Hostert
- ~ In Memory of Dave Peterson
- ~ In Memory of Dr. Kelly Furda, a passionate animal lover, dog rescuer and caring Physician
- ~ In honor of the staff at Oneida County Land & Water Conservation Department
- ~ In Memory of "Spike"
- ~ In Memory of Frederick Schultz
- ~ In Honor of Erin Brogen
- ~ In Memory of Pete Lewis, husband, best friend and wildlife enthusiast
- ~ In Honor of Karry Bowles Mahr
- ~ In Memory of Jim Ashbrenner

## SPECIES SPOTLIGHT: NORTHERN SHORT-TAILED SHREW

By McKenna Brocco

Recently we admitted a species that we don't get in very often, one of which we have not admitted since 2022. A Northern Short-tailed Shrew had been found and played with by a dog. Thankfully, the owner of the dog cared enough about this shrew to drive two hours one way to get it to us. Initially, the shrew was showing some signs of head trauma, but after a few days of rest and medication it has been recovering well. As I have learned more about this species and have had the privilege to briefly observe their behavior, I have become very impressed with this voracious little animal. Northern Short-tailed Shrews are the largest species of shrew found in North America with a body length of about 4 - 5.5 inches.

[www.wildinstinctsrehab.com](http://www.wildinstinctsrehab.com)

715-362-9453 (362-WILD)  
4621 Apperson Dr., Rhinelander, WI 54501

These shrews can be found all throughout Wisconsin, with their range covering the northeastern United States and reaching up into Canada. They are one of the most common mammals found in the eastern United States and can be found in a variety of habitats such as forests, fields, and even your own backyard.

Although Northern Short-tailed Shrews are very common mammals, they are not as commonly observed as many other mammals. Northern Short-tailed Shrews are more elusive than other backyard animals because they spend most of their time underground or burrowing under leaf litter. Their small bodies are adapted for a life tunneling through dirt, snow, and other ground cover. These shrews have many attributes that allow them to thrive living predominantly underground. They have tiny eyes, a pointed nose, strong claws, a short stalky tail, and no outward ear flaps, all to help them move through the dirt efficiently without getting it in their eyes and ears.



Northern Short-tailed Shrew after being sprinkled with flea powder. Note the tiny ears and eyes and the papillae on its rear feet.

715-490-2727(cell)

Northern Short-tailed Shrews tunnel through the dirt at a rate of 2.5 centimeters per minute, which proportionally translates into me being able to dig about 1 foot per minute. They create a complex burrow system underground with designated areas for different purposes, including a den, a latrine area for waste, and sites for food storage.

Northern Short-tailed Shrews have a poor sense of smell and poor eyesight, with only the ability to differentiate light from dark. They navigate their surroundings using a technique much like a bat's echolocation, although not nearly as precise. They make twittering vocalizations of different pitches and analyze the returning vibrations in order to examine their surroundings. This can help give these shrews an idea of what environment they are experiencing and how to navigate it, whether it's a patch of thick grass or a collapsed underground tunnel. Northern Short-tailed Shrews have very fast metabolisms to keep their small bodies warm. A fast metabolism means a big appetite and these shrews are no exception, they tend to eat up to three times their body weight every single day. These shrews may not be very big, but they are efficient and well adapted hunters. They are carnivores with a set of 32 sharp teeth that enable them to bite into insects and small animals. As the only venomous mammal in the US, they transmit a neurotoxin from their saliva into their prey. This neurotoxin can be fatal to prey as large as frogs and small rodents, but it can also paralyze their prey. In times of abundant food Northern Short-tailed Shrews have been known to "live hoard" their prey, stashing away live paralyzed prey as an emergency meal. Some of these prey items, such as grubs, can stay alive, paralyzed, and fresh for up to 15 days.

The Northern Short-tailed Shrew is an incredibly unique species with amazing adaptations, and they are an important part of the ecosystems they are in. They are a

key prey item for birds of prey, such as hawks and owls, and larger mammals, like foxes and bobcats. They consume a large amount of insects and insect larvae, and in turn control the populations of bugs that can transmit diseases and are just a general nuisance.

We are grateful we get to work with this species and are happy to report we were able to get him healthy again and successfully return him back into the wild.

### **SPECIES ADMITTED 2025**

Total Admitted 1/1-12/31/25

American Beaver	1
American Black Bear	8
American Crow	15
American Goldfinch	18
American Mink	2
American Robin	79
American Toad	1
American Tree Sparrow	1
American Woodcock	10
Bald Eagle	20
Baltimore Oriole	2
Barred Owl	11
Belted Kingfisher	7
Big Brown Bat	23
Black-and-white Warbler	1
Black-capped Chickadee	8
Blue Jay	13
Bobcat	4
Broad-winged Hawk	17
Brown Thrasher	1
Brown-headed Cowbird	1
Canada Goose	19
Cedar Waxwing	4
Chimney Swift	1
Chipping Sparrow	14
Cliff Swallow	1
Common Garter Snake	3
Common Grackle	10
Common Loon	4

Common Nighthawk	2	Northern Flicker	2
Common Raven	6	Northern Harrier	1
Common Snapping Turtle	7	Northern Leopard Frog	1
Common Yellowthroat	2	Northern Raccoon	14
Cooper's Hawk	4	Northern Saw-whet Owl	1
Coyote	4	Osprey	1
Dark-eyed Junco	5	Ovenbird	1
Deer Mouse	71	Pileated Woodpecker	7
Downy Woodpecker	4	Pine Grosbeak	3
Eastern Chipmunk	27	Pine Siskin	5
Eastern Cottontail	316	Pine Warbler	1
Eastern Fox Snake	4	Purple Finch	4
Eastern Gray Squirrel	85	Red Fox	12
Eastern Phoebe	7	Red Squirrel	14
Eastern Red Bat	1	Red-bellied Woodpecker	2
Eastern Wood Pewee	1	Red-breasted Nuthatch	2
European Starling	8	Red-eyed Vireo	5
Evening Grosbeak	1	Red-headed Woodpecker	3
Fisher	2	Red-tailed Hawk	4
Gray Fox	1	Red-winged Blackbird	1
Gray Treefrog	3	Ring-billed Gull	2
Great Blue Heron	3	Rock Dove	14
Great Horned Owl	5	Rose-breasted Grosbeak	3
Green Frog	42	Rough-winged Swallow	3
Hairy Woodpecker	4	Ruby-throated Hummingbird	22
Hoary Bat	1	Ruffed Grouse	3
Hooded Merganser	6	Sandhill Crane	3
House Finch	3	Screech Owl	1
House Sparrow	4	Sharp-shinned Hawk	1
House Wren	1	Short-tailed Weasel	2
Killdeer	1	Snowy Owl	1
Least Chipmunk	1	Song Sparrow	2
Little Brown Bat	6	Southern Flying Squirrel	13
Long-tailed Weasel	5	Southern Red-backed Vole	3
Mallard	31	Star-nosed Mole	1
Meadow Vole	5	Swainson's Thrush	2
Merlin	2	Thirteen-lined Ground Squirrel	5
Midland Painted Turtle	4	Tree Swallow	1
Mourning Dove	24	Trumpeter Swan	8
Muskrat	2	Unidentified Baby Bird	1
North American Porcupine	5	Virginia Opossum	70
North American River Otter	2	Western Meadowlark	1
Northern Cardinal	1	Western Painted Turtle	17

White-breasted Nuthatch	3
White-tailed Deer	35
White-winged Crossbill	1
Wild Turkey	6
Wood Duck	30
Wood Thrush	1
Wood Turtle	2
Woodchuck	1
Woodland Jumping Mouse	1
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	6
Yellow-rumped Warbler	3
Total	1370

### **WE'RE LOOKING FOR INTERNS!**

Do you know a college student wondering what they should do for summer employment/experience?

We have a couple summer internship vacancies left.

Click [HERE](#) for more info.



Katie, 2025 Intern, holds her first eagle.

### **UPCOMING EVENTS**

#### **CULVER'S SHARE DAY**

Sunday, March 8<sup>th</sup> 11:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

Culver's in Rhinelander

620 W. Kemp St

Culver's will donate 10% of the guest checks from 11:00 a.m.- 3:00 p.m. to Wild Instincts.

Have great food and support a great cause!



#### **WILD ScaVenture 2026**

Friday, July 24<sup>th</sup>- Sunday July 26<sup>th</sup>

Played with your smartphone from wherever you are!

Do you love wildlife?  
Do you love puzzles?  
Do you love challenges?  
Do you love winning prizes?

If you answered yes to even one of those questions, then Wild ScaVenture is for you!  
Mark your calendars now!