Welcome to

INSTINCTS

Nov 2026 Vol 15:4

"The newsletter helping you follow your Wild Instincts."

AGAINST ALL ODDS

On May 17th, three generations of caring men, happened to drive by a scene they'll not soon forget.
Nor will we.
They came across the site where an adult porcupine had been struck and killed by a vehicle. In the carnage, their eyes happened to catch sight of this young porcupette. So young, she was still attached to her placenta!
They immediately called and brought her to us.



An hours-old porcupette immediately after we cut her umbilical cord.

Our hearts sunk as we were cutting the umbilical cord because we know she wouldn't have gotten proper colostrum, the first mother's milk that contains high concentrations of protein, vitamins, minerals, growth factors, and antibodies to develop immune systems.
All staff and volunteers were told not to get attached because animals that don't get proper colostrum frequently don't survive because a simple cold can overwhelm their incomplete immune system. Colostrum is species-specific so using cow or goat colostrum does not work for other species.
When she appeared to be doing well, we cautiously posted about her publicly so you may remember seeing some adorable photos. But then we stopped posting about her.



Her first feeding.



One of her many weigh-ins to make sure she was gaining weight and growing properly.

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Porcupettes nurse for a long time compared to other smallish-sized wildlife, taking about 90-100 days before they wean. They can, however, eat solid vegetation at just a couple weeks old. She had lots of difficulty weaning and transitioning to the diet she would eat in the wild, possibly due to her lack of colostrum.

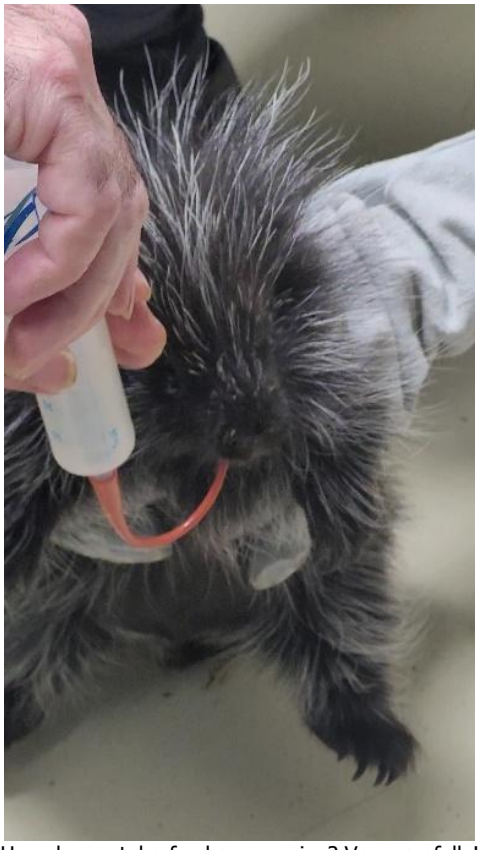


Growing and doing well.



Moved outside and eating proper leaves.

Her care became a rollercoaster of moving out to a pre-release enclosure and being pulled back into intensive care. Intensive care is often as hard on the caregivers as it is on the patient. Wildlife rehab is definitely not for the weak of heart. There were many days we didn't think she'd live until the next morning.
She had to be tube-fed even though she protested.

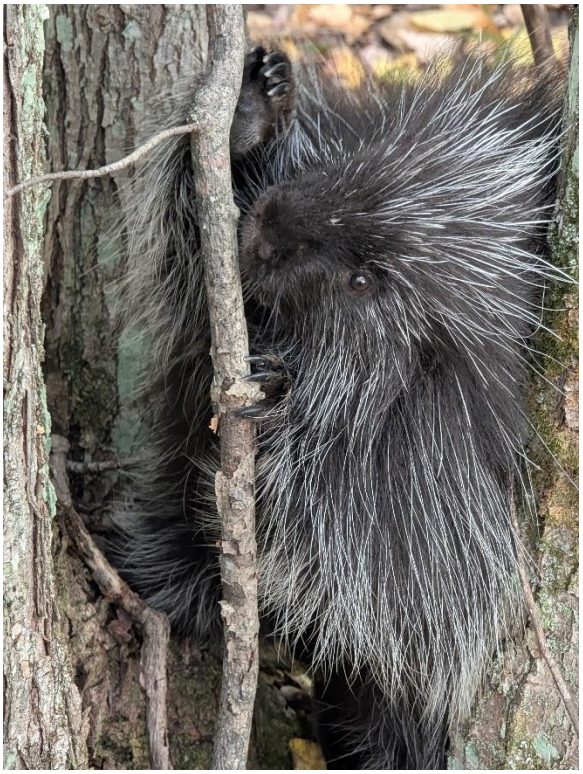


How do you tube-feed a porcupine? Very carefully!

It took longer than usual, with many more ups and downs than most porcupette raising, but we're happy now to update you on her recent RELEASE!



This is what Wild and Free smells like.



Hmmm. What does my new home taste like?



She appears to approve of her new, wild home.

She was definitely on the roly-poly side from her long transition to adult food but that means she should be ready for whatever this winter brings.

OPOSSUM ENCLOSURE RHINELANDER WOMAN'S CLUB GRANT

Virginia Opossum are more of a southern species, not found often north of Hwy 64 in Wisconsin. This is because they don't hibernate and aren't built for the cold. Winters in Northern Wisconsin limit their range. Due to climate changes, they are slowly expanding their range north. Those adventurous individuals on the outskirts of the North/South line frequently have frostbite injuries.

Despite this, our admissions of Virginia Opossums are skyrocketing. People have started to drive them long distances to get them to help. It's a pattern that we see increasing in the future, so we needed to

build a new enclosure to handle the influx of 'Possum Patients.
The Rhinelander Woman's Club generously granted us $3500.00 to help with this project.
Thanks to their quick response and cooperating fall weather, we were able to get an enclosure completed and ready for next year's plethora of Possums.



Framework for the new enclosure up. Mark installing framework for doors.





Enclosure finished and ready for next year!

FOR THE WILD 5K/10K+ 2026

A shout-out to all who participated in our third For the Wild 5K/10K+ fundraiser. Whether you participated on the course or donated behind the scenes, you made this event a success!
It was another perfect September Day for the event.
A special thank you to all the sponsors who chose to support this event. Make sure to show these businesses their support matters to you!
In no particular order: Sportsman's Chalet, Hiker Box, Cre-ate, Schneiders Pub n Grub, Hair by Alyssa, Forest Lake Café, Farmer's Feed Store, Northland CPAs, Crate & Barrell, Eagle River Pet Company, TKM Kennels, Waldmann Construction, and Mel's Trading Post.
Extra thanks to Erin Wallis Marvin for her hard work and dedication in organizing the event!
Because of all these special people, we are happy to announce this event raised over $5000.00 to help us help them.



Thanks to ALL who participated! You make a difference in the lives of wild animals in need!!



Thank you for helping us help them!



A family fun event!


Love to see supporters starting young.

PIZZA RANCH COMMUNITY IMPACT

Thanks to all who volunteered and came to eat to support Wild Instincts at the Pizza Ranch Community Impact night on October 26th. Thanks to the generosity of you all and Pizza Ranch, we raised almost $800!


L-R McKenna, with volunteers Yvonne, Cheryl and Bruce.



Pizza Ranch presents McKenna with a check.

THANK YOU AND FAREWELL

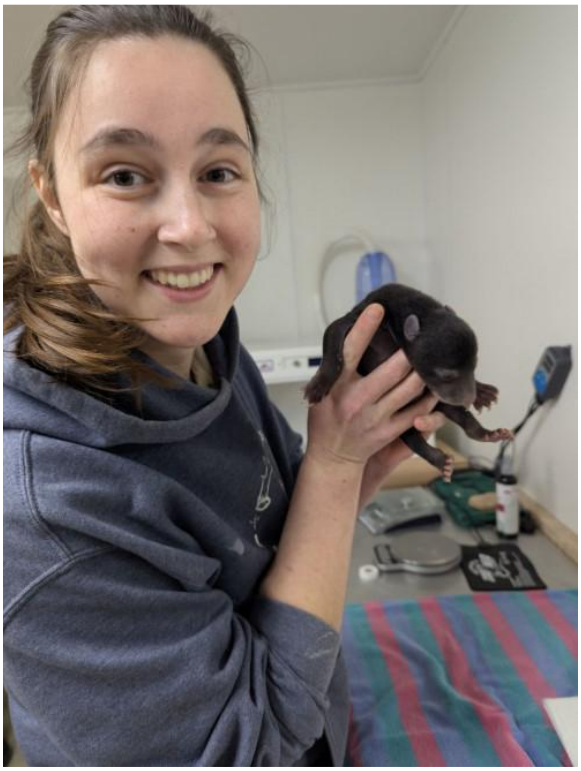
By McKenna Brocco

After three years of working at Wild Instincts, I have decided to depart from a career in wildlife rehabilitation. This was a very difficult decision for me and not one I arrived at lightly. I have known I wanted to work with animals since I was a small child. I loved to observe and learn about the birds and the snakes I would find in my yard. When I was twelve years old, I learned what zoology was and decided that's what I wanted to study in college. During my first year attending university, I was introduced to wildlife rehabilitation. I immediately knew that was something I would be interested in doing, so I started researching and learning what I could. After graduating from college, I greatly enjoyed a six-month internship here at Wild Instincts. A few months after my internship ended, I was missing working in wildlife rehabilitation, so I inquired about an opening at Wild Instincts. After chatting with Mark and Sharon, they put their belief in me and gave me a chance to work with them.

Even after doing research and participating in the internship at Wild Instincts, there were aspects of working in wildlife rehab that I was not prepared for. Wildlife rehabilitation takes a huge toll on a person physically, mentally, and emotionally, and it takes a very special person to be able to make this their career. Although this career is not the path for me, I am glad I have had the opportunity to work at Wild Instincts with their wonderful staff and volunteers.

I moved to Rhinelander from my home in the Utah valley, where I had lived my entire life. Coming from a tight knit family of my parents, five siblings, and many nieces and nephews, moving across the country to live on my own was definitely intimidating. Although it was challenging, I am so grateful for all that I have gained throughout my three years here. I have had the privilege of working with many animals that some people never even have the chance to interact with. One patient that stands out for me was a 4-day old black bear cub. I felt incredibly fortunate that I was able to play a role in the survival and growth of this bear.

Watching him go from a little baby that fit in my hand to a big fat bear is something I will never forget.


McKenna with a tiny black, bear cub.

Along with all the animal experience I gained working at Wild Instincts, I also

gained a wonderful group of people who have become my Wisconsin family. The staff at Wild Instincts definitely helped with more than the job called for. Whether it was helping me when I locked myself out of my house or coming with me to the car dealership to guide me through the process of buying a car, they were always willing to help. The volunteers at Wild Instincts have also been so kind and generous to me throughout my time here. I have been invited to holiday dinners, received birthday cakes and even learned how to fish because of the volunteers at Wild Instincts. The people I have met throughout my time here have treated me like family and taught me important skills that I will carry throughout my career and the rest of my life.

The time I have spent working here has shaped the way I live my life. I am more conscientious of the plants, animals, and people around me because of the experiences I've had working at Wild Instincts.

I know I will miss this work, this area, and the relationships I have built, and it's hard to leave, but I know the wildlife of Wisconsin will be well taken care of by the Wild Instincts team and all of you who care. Thank you to all of you I have had the pleasure of meeting, you have made me a better person.



McKenna with Hobbes at his first education program in September.

MEET MADDIE

Hi everyone! My name is Maddie and I am so excited to share that I will be joining the team at Wild Instincts as their newest Wildlife Rehabilitator Assistant! I am a recent graduate from the University of Minnesota Duluth where I studied Biology and Environmental Science with the goal of one day becoming a wildlife rehabilitator. Little did I know that my opportunity would come right next door in Wisconsin with the wildlife I have loved since being young. I started my internship at Wild Instincts this year at the beginning of baby season, and it has been the most rewarding experience of my life. I have gained invaluable knowledge and hands-on experience caring for injured and orphaned wildlife from some of the most amazing and dedicated professionals in the field.



Maddie and Hobbes, the two newest members of the Wild Instincts Team.

Ever since I was a child, I loved animals and I loved to be outside. I spent most of my days catching frogs, salamanders, and turtles (don't worry, I was not allowed to keep them as pets). I was always so curious about our world and those that lived in it. As I got older that curiosity only grew and I took every chance I could to learn as much as possible. I realized early on that I

wanted to work with wildlife and look out for them in a world that is changing too quickly for them to keep up.
Every day working here has been unique, it's impossible for me to pick a favorite animal as it changes daily and with each new admission we get! Now I have had the chance to watch animals that we've cared for since the spring be released back into the wild and see the positive impact that Wild Instincts has on our wildlife. I know I have just begun, but my passion for wildlife rehabilitation has only grown and I can't wait to dive in further.

SWAN ENCLOSURE

If you read the story about the increase of Virginia Opossums, this one may sound similar.
Wildlife rehab in Wisconsin is changing. Many veteran rehabbers are aging out. Others are cutting back species and/or number of patients for a variety of reasons, including HPAI biosecurity concerns.
We have been picking up the slack resulting from that combo. We have more patients than ever and are needing to accommodate species that would have generally gone to other rehabbers "specializing" in those species, such as Trumpeter Swans, especially cygnets.
We used to transfer cygnets to another facility that had foster swans. We are no longer able to do that, and with increase of duckling and gosling admissions, we need to address building a better enclosure for young swans.
Enter the **Green Bay Packer Foundation**. The Green Bay Packer Foundation granted us $3500 towards this endeavor.
The entire project, however, will be much more than that. Especially with the volatile state of construction materials.
We were able to obtain another grant from **Partners for Wildlife**, a grant-funded initiative housed in The Raptor Center at the University of Minnesota.
We have taken advantage of the warmer fall to get the site prepped for construction in the spring.

RELEASE SEASON

Fall is the time of year when we get to see what all our hard work over the summer is for.
We release animals when they are ready to return to their wild lives, when they can be successful. That is different times for different animals. Smaller releases happen throughout the year. Songbirds, rabbits, etc. mature quicker and are released sooner. For some of the larger animals, release means waiting until fall
The fawns get released generally in September; the bears return to the wild in October after bear season is over. The hatch year eagles get driven down to Prairie du Sac for their release shortly after that. Sometimes, it depends on the calendar. For instance, we have several bobcat kittens that are too young to release now. They will mature to release age during the winter; however, we will overwinter them until spring to make sure they can be successful when they start their lives in the wild.



Some of the 11 fawns we released walking off to return to their Wild Lives.



Black bear release.



Black bear release.



Maddie about to release a juvenile bald eagle in Prairie du Sac.

IN HONOR OR MEMORY OF

~In Honor of Sharon Larson's birthday
~In Memory of Don Berndt
~In Honor of Geri Ziebert's birthday
~In Honor of JoAnne Lund's birthday
~In Memory of "Sammy"
~In Memory of Ann Wahlers
~In Honor of Sara Bradley & Michael Schacht

THE WILDLIFE BOWL CONTINUES!

We are very happy to announce that Wild Instincts will be holding the Wildlife Bowl bowling tournament on Sunday February 7th, 2027! This will be a 9-pin fundraising tournament open to league bowlers and anyone wanting to come out to bowl and support us. We have many fabulous prizes lined up for our raffle baskets and pin prizes!

The tournament will be held at Nick's Hodag Lanes in Rhinelander. Doors will open at 12pm for sign-in and a meet & greet with some of Wild Instincts' resident raptors. The raptors will be leaving at 12:45pm because bowling will start at 1pm, so get there early to see our feathered friends! Bowling starts at 1pm and all teams will play 3 games. Registration is required and closes at noon on Friday, February 5th. Space is limited and fills up quickly so register early! Registration is open on our website (https://www.wildinstinctsrehab.com/events). Tickets are $20 per bowler, and includes shoes, ball, 3 games of bowling, and a ticket for our door prize.

So if you can *spare* some time, grab your friends and come join us for a *strikingly* fun afternoon of bowling and prizes!

If you are interested in becoming a lane sponsor or have any raffle basket items you wish to donate, please reach out to kaitlin@wildinstinctsrehab.com for more information.

BIG PAWS TO FILL

Though baby season has wrapped up, not everyone got the message! On August 31st, we welcomed an approximately six-week-old bobcat kitten who had unfortunately found itself orphaned under unknown circumstances. Upon intake, the young bobcat was very thin and dehydrated, but otherwise active and alert. Within three days, a littermate was also successfully contained and brought in. This kitten was in a similar condition, suffering from malnourishment and dehydration but otherwise uninjured. After three days of treatment to stabilize them separately, the siblings were reunited. Both kittens perked up and showed improvement with consistent nutrition and care.

At about 10 weeks of age, the kittens had grown enough to transition from our large mammal room to a spacious outdoor mammal enclosure. As part of their continued preventative care, both received their initial vaccination which helps protect against several feline viral diseases. On October 21st, we received a third bobcat kitten of similar age as our first two. This bobcat was also found orphaned and was transferred to our facility from Dane County Humane Society. After a brief isolation period, we were able to safely introduce it to the other bobcats in the outdoor enclosure. Today, all three bobcats are healthy and growing rapidly. Bobcats typically remain with their mothers for approximately nine to twelve months, so these kittens will need to be overwintered with us until they are ready for release in the spring.

In the wild, bobcats can live up to fifteen years. They are one of four living species in the genus Lynx, alongside the Canada, Eurasian, and Iberian lynx. All four species share characteristic features including facial ruffs, ear tufts, and short tails. Bobcats are the smallest of the four species and inhabit warmer climates at lower latitudes.



Young bobcat kit being admitted.

Unlike their northern relatives, bobcats have bare footpads and shorter legs making them less adapted for traveling through deep snow. Bobcats can be found throughout much of North America, ranging from Mexico to southern Canada. Their adaptability allows them to inhabit a wide variety of environments, including boreal coniferous and mixed forests in the north, coastal swamps in the southeast, and deserts and scrublands in the southwest. Their spotted brown coats provide excellent camouflage, allowing them to blend into rocks, brush, and vegetation throughout their habitats. Bobcats typically den in sheltered areas such as hollow trees, logs, caves, dense shrubs, and rocky shelters. Common sources of food include rabbits, rodents, deer, and more. They are excellent hunters with the ability to run up to 30 miles per hour. Their powerful hind legs allow them to jump vertically up to 10 to 12 feet, and their sharp retractable claws allow them to climb rocky and steep surfaces.

As adults, bobcats are relatively solitary animals. Adult males and females live alone in separate territories, only coming together for courtship and mating rituals. They do not form bonds and males play no role in raising the kittens.

In Wisconsin, breeding season peaks in February and March, however breeding can occur year-round. Which means we can, and actually have, admitted bobcat kittens at any time, even January! The gestation

period is 60-70 days with typically two-four kittens per litter. Once kittens are born, they nurse for two months and stay with their mother approximately 8 months before separating to live on their own. Although the kittens in our care did not have the opportunity to continue to be cared for by their mother, our goal is to provide them with the resources and environment needed to develop the skills necessary to survive on their own. As they grow and develop over the next several months, we look forward to seeing all three return to the wild in the spring.

SPECIES ADMITTED 2026

Admitted 1/1-10/31/26	
American Beaver	1
American Black Bear	12
American Crow	3
American Goldfinch	4
American Robin	42
American Toad	1
American Tree Sparrow	1
American Woodcock	2
Bald Eagle	24
Baltimore Oriole	2
Barn Swallow	4
Barred Owl	17
Belted Kingfisher	16
Big Brown Bat	8
Black-and-white Warbler	1
Black-capped Chickadee	4
Blue Jay	5
Blue-winged Teal	1
Bobcat	5
Broad-winged Hawk	14
Brown-headed Cowbird	2
Canada Goose	20
Cedar Waxwing	13
Chipping Sparrow	5
Cliff Swallow	24
Common Garter Snake	3
Common Grackle	13
Common Loon	1
Common Merganser	1
Common Nighthawk	1
Common Raven	10
Common Redpoll	1
Common Snapping Turtle	33
Common Yellowthroat	1
Cooper's Hawk	2
Coyote	2
Dark-eyed Junco	2
Deer Mouse	56
Downy Woodpecker	3
Eastern Chipmunk	20
Eastern Cottontail	324
Eastern Fox Snake	1
Eastern Fox Squirrel	2
Eastern Gray Squirrel	121
Eastern Phoebe	20
European Starling	7
Evening Grosbeak	2
Gray Fox	1
Gray Treefrog	1
Gray Wolf	1
Great Blue Heron	2
Great Horned Owl	3
Green Heron	1
Hairy Woodpecker	3
Hermit Thrush	1
Hooded Merganser	22
House Sparrow	5
Indigo Bunting	2
Least Flycatcher	1
Little Brown Bat	2
Long-tailed Weasel	8
Mallard	58
Meadow Jumping Mouse	1
Meadow Vole	17
Merlin	5
Midland Painted Turtle	1
Mourning Dove	29
Mudpuppy	1
Muskrat	1

North American Porcupine	6
North American River Otter	1
North American Ruddy Duck	1
Northern Cardinal	1
Northern Flicker	2
Northern Long-eared Bat	1
Northern Raccoon	16
Northern Saw-whet Owl	3
Northern Short-tailed Shrew	1
Norway Rat	1
Osprey	2
Ovenbird	1
Pileated Woodpecker	2
Pine Grosbeak	1
Purple Finch	3
Red Fox	11
Red Poll	1
Red Squirrel	50
Red-bellied Woodpecker	4
Red-breasted Nuthatch	1
Red-eyed Vireo	7
Red-headed Woodpecker	2
Red-tailed Hawk	6
Red-winged Blackbird	2
Ring-billed Gull	6
Rock Dove	11
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	6
Rough-legged Hawk	1
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	21
Ruffed Grouse	2
Sandhill Crane	3
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1
Silver-haired Bat	1
Snowy Owl	1
Southern Flying Squirrel	14
Southern Red-backed Vole	5
Striped Skunk	1
Swainson's Thrush	2
Thirteen-lined Ground Squirrel	13
Trumpeter Swan	2
Virginia Opossum	57
Western Painted Turtle	23
White-breasted Nuthatch	1
White-tailed Deer	27
White-throated Sparrow	2
Wild Turkey	7
Wood Duck	18
Wood Thrush	2
Wood Turtle	1
Woodchuck	8
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	6
Total	1391

UPCOMING EVENTS

