

Wisconsin HOUSE RABBIT NEWS



Spring 2018 | Volume XXV | Issue 1



Rabbit photograph by Casandra Parshall | Designed by Kanae Hoshino

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WHRS Chapter News

What's happening at Wisconsin House Rabbit Society?

Twitch Fund Drive

A special fundraiser for Wisconsin House Rabbit Society will begin on March 1st. During the month of March, Timid Bunny, a Twitch online content creator, will promote WHRS during her streams. The purpose is to make people aware of all WHRS does to help rabbits. Both WHRS members and the event organizers, Romy and Mike, have taken lots of video footage behind the scenes and at our public events. So, please tune in to see us at work. The program will also promote our Easter message that rabbits are not seasonal novelties, and it will attempt to raise donations for us as well as showcase our adoptable rabbits. The fund drive will culminate in one big 8-hour event on April 1st from 10am to 6pm. In March, you can watch Timid Bunny three times a week, every Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday from 11am to 2pm at <https://www.twitch.tv/timidbunny>. Every cent donated during March and during the April 1st event will be given to Wisconsin House Rabbit Society to help pay medical costs for its rescued rabbits. For more

information email timidbunny@gmail.com.

Bunny Day at HAWS, April 15th, 12-4pm

The program for this year's HAWS Bunny Day is now set. Dr. April Wittenburg from Brook Falls Veterinary Hospital will speak on "Senior Citizen Rabbits: How to Keep Your Bunny Hopping in Old Age." Dave Stevenson, PhD, will speak about "How Rabbits Became Pets: New Evidence from DNA." As always, we will have hay for sale, great items in the Bunny Boutique, and free educational materials. This year we will invite you take quizzes on rabbit diet, basic environment, toys, and wellness and grooming.

Hoppy Hour at HAWS June 24th

We now have a date for our next Hoppy Hour. It will be at HAWS this time, and registration will soon open. We will send out an announcement to members by email when the registration form is available on our website. Then two

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Wisconsin House Rabbit Society
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WHRS Chapter News

weeks later, we will open registration to the public.

Bunny Day at DCHS October 7th

We are making plans for a great Bunny Day in Madison at the Dane County Humane Society this fall. Meryl Schimek will expand on her article in this issue about letting bunnies play outdoors. This is an important decision for all bunny guardians, and we will have a chance to hear more from Meryl and to ask her questions. We are also planning a speaker on alternative, holistic therapies that might supplement (but never replace) traditional medical approaches to bunny illnesses, such as acupuncture, massage, herbal therapies.

New WHRS Volunteer Coordinator

Kristi Heid has generously agreed to serve in the new position of Volunteer Coordinator. She will keep a master list of all people who have told us they would like to volunteer. She will send everyone on the list an email when we have a volunteer need. They can respond to Kristi if they are available to help. She will also keep specialized lists of volunteers who regularly assist with specific programs, such as cleaning at our main foster home and exercising/socializing the bunnies at various humane societies. Please consider filling out a volunteer application and getting on Kristi's lists!

Easter Outreach at Mounds

Please help! Our schedule for Mounds tabling is almost complete but not quite. **We need one more volunteer for Mounds East on March the 24th, 10am-2pm.** Please consider helping us spread the word that bunnies are not Easter novelties nor children's gifts.

WHRS to Speak at U.W. Oshkosh

Wisconsin House Rabbit Society has been invited to present a talk on rabbits at the University Staff Professional Development Day at the University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh. All U.W. Oshkosh staff are eligible to attend. Our talk will focus on common beliefs about rabbits and the alternative or supplemental views promoted by WHRS. The presentation will be on May 31.

More WHRS Events to Come

We have been contacted by some great members with interesting fundraising ideas. One is "Yoga with Rabbits," and the other is a "Wine and Paint" night, where people can come and do an easy step-by-step bunny (or another pet) portrait that they can take home with them. We're excited to see if we can get these organized and test the interest among our members. If you have an opinion about either, please let us know.

Las Vegas Rabbits

Many of you are probably following the story of the fate of the rabbits at dumping sites in Las Vegas, including the clandestine poisoning of many of them while local rescuers attempted

to beat the clock. Rescuers have been trying desperately to trap and rehome the hundreds of rabbits at these dumping grounds because the State of Nevada has decided to move in, trap and most likely euthanize them. A transport of bunnies rescued from Las Vegas will be coming to Wisconsin. As of this writing, we know of four organizations here who will be taking Las Vegas rabbits: Wisconsin House Rabbit Society will be taking four to six rabbits; the Humane Society of Jefferson County has agreed to take four; HAWS in Waukesha will take two; and Oshkosh Area Humane Society will take two.

The transport is expected to arrive in Wisconsin the weekend of March 17th-18th. Rodney McCoy and Jodie Williams are doing the transports for this effort. They live in Illinois near O'Hare and do not belong to any rescue group. They did their first transport for Georgia HRS, and were asked last November to do the Las Vegas ones. Jodie says they are committed to giving a week of their time per month to help. Besides the car transports, Jodie flies animals with her in the cabin to their destinations. Please support the groups who are stepping up to assist with this massive rescue problem. 🐰

GOT HAY?

Full-Bale \$16.00 | Half-Bale \$8.00

Fresh, locally-grown grass hay is available for pickup every **Sunday from 4 - 4:30PM**. Call **608.509.4774** or email **hay@wisconsinhrs.org** if you have any questions. Please bring your own container; a 19-gallon tote, or larger, works well. All proceeds support WHRS foster care.



Photograph by Michelle Blink

TWITCH CHARITY EVENT

Hosted By

Timid Bunny

[TWITCH.TV/TIMIDBUNNY](https://www.twitch.tv/timidbunny)



April 1st, 2018
10am to 6pm



BUNNY DAY!

Sunday, April 15th

Noon - 4:00pm

At HAWS, 701 Northview Road, Waukesha



At 12:30pm:

Senior Citizen Rabbits:
Keep Your Bunny
Hopping in Old Age!

*Dr. April Wittenburg,
Brook-Falls Veterinary
Hospital & Exotic Care*

At 1:45pm

How Rabbits Became Pets:
New Evidence from DNA

Dave Stevenson, WHRS

\$7/person;

Children under 12 FREE when accompanied by an adult.

This is a fundraising/educational event for humans only.

Please leave your bunny friends comfortably at home.

Proudly presented by HAWS and the Wisconsin House Rabbit Society .

HAWS 

Humane Animal Welfare Society



HOUSE RABBIT SOCIETY
WISCONSIN CHAPTER

February 11th Hoppy Hour Retrospective

by Liz Allen

On February 11th, love was in the air out at Dane County Humane Society for the first Hoppy Hour of 2018.

Tying in Valentine's Day with Adopt-A-Rabbit Month, WHRS partnered with DCHS to bring in as many adoptable rabbits as possible to promote bunny matchmaking, made even sweeter with waived adoption fees for any bunny adopted as a result of finding a bunny partner at the event.

Attendees were greeted with sweet treats, lovely decorations, and lots of smiling faces as we said hello to acquaintances from prior events and met new friends who were joining us for the first time. Our volunteer photographer, Jake Garvey, was set up

with Shutterbun Studios for romantic photoshoots of both single buns and happily bonded pairs.

Joining us for the first time was a familiar face to DCHS staff—volunteer videographer Benjamin Bartow, who took video of the event: <https://1drv.ms/v/s!AhofOwnQusz9gYRQTKrLx-WZcbwZ2A>. This video will be featured on the Timid Bunny Livestream on April 1st and will be a wonderful resource for WHRS to use in the future.

After Hoppy Hour was over, volunteers set up large pens, and the bunny dating began! Speed dates were overseen by trained matchmakers Joan Johnson, Renee Stodola and Liz Allen. As of the writing of this article, we have two

confirmed adoptions and three possible matches that need a second look.

Because this was our first time doing bunny dating after Hoppy Hour, there were some delays. Future bunny dating opportunities after Hoppy Hour will be revamped to streamline the process. A huge thank you to everyone for their patience and understanding while we tried out a new way to do bunny introductions.

In total we had approximately 40 rabbits out on the playground, 12 of which were adoptable. I am forever grateful to all the amazing volunteers who pulled together to get the event set up and got it off without a hitch. Our next Hoppy Hour will be at HAWS early this summer. 🐰



Springtime Parasite Risks: Keeping the 'Bugs' off of your Bunny

by Meryl Schimek

Spring is (hopefully) right around the corner, which has many of us looking forward to spending time outside again. But should our rabbit companions join us on these adventures? While we *never* recommend that domestic rabbits be housed exclusively outdoors, they can safely be given some outdoor enrichment with their caretakers. Screened and covered enclosures can let our rabbits enjoy some fresh air and frolicking with protection from predators and other dangers.

However, many parasitic disease states can still threaten our bunnies even with the most secure outdoor exercise set-ups. Here are some risks to consider prior to letting your rabbit play outside.

Mites

Ear mites: Rabbits can become infected with a species-specific ear mite (*Psoroptes cuniculi*). It has a three-week life cycle and can survive off of a bunny host for up to 21 days. While it is usually transmitted from contact with other infected rabbits, this ability to survive in the environment means that a rabbit spending time outside can still contract an infection from other infected mammals in the area. Clinical signs include redness and inflammation of the ear canals, red-brown discharge from the ears, shaking of the head, droopy ears and excessive itching of the ears. These infections can lead to deeper ear infections, causing perforation of a rabbit's ear drum and a head tilt.

Fur mites: A fur mite infection can be transmitted from other mammals passing through your yard (wild animals, dogs or cats). But the *Cheylitiella parasitovorax* species most commonly diagnosed can also infect you and your family members! This burrowing mite

lives in the keratin layer of the skin and can look like dandruff flakes that are moving on your rabbit's fur and skin. It causes scaly and dry skin infections that can be very itchy, or you can see patches of hair loss along your rabbit's neck, body and hind end.



Patches of hair loss due to fur mites. Photography courtesy of U.W. Veterinary School.

Fleas

Rabbits who are most commonly infected with fleas tend to be those who share a home with dogs and cats, but they can easily contract an infestation while outside where dogs, cats, wild cottontail rabbits, squirrels and raccoons traffic through your yard. Fleas caught by your rabbit outside can also conversely infect other pets in your home. While dogs and cats can be treated with flea preventive medications that last a month or longer, there is currently no labeled medication that is both safe for your rabbit and that protects them in the same way. Revolution (selamectin) can eliminate a rabbit's flea infestations, but has not been demonstrated to have the same long-lasting residual effects that we expect when we treat our other furred friends. Therefore, treating flea infestations can only be reactive instead of proactive with our rabbit companions. Frontline (fipronil) is commonly used in dogs and cats, but the active chemical in the medication is fatal to rabbits and is not

recommended.

Flies

Warm weather can also predispose your rabbit to colonization by Botfly larvae (*Cuterebra* species). The larvae of these flies mature in the subcutaneous space beneath your rabbit's skin, which creates firm swellings of inflamed tissue with a "breathing hole" in the center for the larva as they grow. The swellings are most commonly noted along your rabbit's neck and back or in their armpit region. These larvae should be removed by your rabbit-savvy veterinarian and can cause pain and discomfort if they are left in place. The larvae can also migrate through other tissues such as the nasal passages, ear canals and into the central nervous system, causing more dangerous clinical signs.



The inflamed tissue and "breathing hole" of a Botfly larvae. This picture was taken last summer, after WHRS rescued nine "meat rabbits." The bunny was treated, survived and is now doing well.

Another threat that flies pose to your rabbit is the laying of eggs in moist or matted fur in warm months. The maggots that hatch can feed on flesh even without a pre-existing wound. Long-haired rabbits with urine or feces present on their fur, overweight rabbits or rabbits with dental disease who struggle to groom themselves normally are all at risk for the skin damage that maggots can cause and the secondary bacterial infections that can set in as a result.

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Springtime Parasite Risks: Keeping the ‘Bugs’ off of your Bunny

Ticks

Ticks (such as the deer tick, commonly seen in Wisconsin) can bite and feed on rabbits at any stage of the insect's life cycle. These ticks can be deposited in your yard by deer, raccoons, wild cottontail rabbits, dogs, cats and other wild mammals. Their bites can transmit bacterial and viral diseases. Severe tick infestation can cause blood loss anemia as well. Ticks surprisingly can pose a threat even in colder months too! They can survive off of a host for extended periods of time and enter a torpor (similar to hibernation) in cooler temperatures. Any increase in the environmental temperature of 15 degrees can awaken the ticks from their torpor and set them searching for their next meal, which could be your rabbit! There is no preventive medication that can be administered to rabbits to prevent ticks from biting them.

Tapeworms

Your rabbit can also serve as a host for intestinal parasites such as tapeworms that also affect other mammals. Pet rabbits who graze in garden or yard areas inhabited by pet dogs, cottontail rabbits, or wild foxes can become infected. Rabbits ingest eggs of the parasites deposited in the soil by other mammalian hosts, which move through their gastrointestinal system causing intestinal blockages or liver damage. Some species of tapeworms can also migrate from within your rabbit's gastrointestinal tract through other tissues and cause space-occupying and damaging cysts. Clinical signs can include abdominal pain and distention, decreased appetite and weight loss.

With the warmer months on their way, there is a lot of pent up demand to get back outside. Please consider the risks to your rabbit if they are allowed to spend time outside. If they are

allowed some outdoor play time, be sure to inspect your rabbit's skin and coat when they come in from outside. Always supervise your rabbit when they are spending time outdoors. Domestic rabbits should never be housed permanently outdoors. Please consult your rabbit-savvy veterinarian if you have medical concerns or questions about your rabbit's health or would like more information about parasite risks and medications to treat parasite infestations.

Meryl Schimek is currently a 4th year veterinary medical student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She will graduate in May of 2018 and will be working at Brook-Falls Veterinary Hospital and Exotic Care in Menomonee Falls, WI, with a focus on exotic companion mammal medicine and surgery. She and her husband are owned by a 3-year-old New Zealand White rabbit, who definitely is head of the household. She looks forward to continuing to support rabbit rescue efforts as a veterinarian and bunny lover! 🐰

Creating a Safe Outdoor Play Area

Inspired by the “Caticos” seen on the internet, this outdoor play area is at the WHRS sanctuary in Edgerton. It has heavy wire fencing on the outside and is screened on the inside. It also has buried wire mesh under the dirt floor to keep

the bunnies from burrowing out. The rabbits have no trouble accessing the play yard through a series of two tables and three ramps, and the climbing is great exercise. Although most Caticos are not screened, we feel that outdoor

play yards for bunnies should be. The screening also lets one keep the window open, so that the rabbits can go in and out as they please. 🐰



Ruby-Eyed Rabbits (REWs)

by Renee Stodola

Have you ever heard some of the heart-breaking things people say about REWs?

"They look evil."

"I'm not a fan. I do think that they are less attractive than bunnies with dark eyes."

"The red really brings out the pink in the ear and makes it look really veiny. They don't seem to look as soft to me."

"The red eyes freak me out."

"They seem fleshier. I can't explain it."

No wonder REWs take so long to be adopted at shelters and rescues! Imagine if these things were said about the way you looked! In fact, REWs were bred to be albinos so that humans could use their all-white fur to dye whatever color they wanted. The result was eyes that lacked pigmentation. Talk about unfair!

But we are so happy that many of our members feel differently. Here are some great comments about REWs from our own Wisconsin House Rabbit Society Members.

Rubi

from Kristi Heid (Lodi)

My first rabbit (Roo) is the reason I fell in love with rabbits and the reason I learned everything that I know about them. When she passed away, I wanted to find a way to honor her, so I decided to foster my first rabbit. This rabbit, a REW whom I named Rubi (creative I know), was found stray in Milwaukee and came to me covered in oil and terrified of the slightest noise, but none the less was the sweetest rabbit I have ever gotten to know. I quickly realized that I would not be able to let go of Rubi, and she became a foster fail. To this day she is the most unique and personality-filled bunny that I have ever had the pleasure to know. She can scale a 48" x-pen, dig through 6 layers of cardboard

in record time, and move faster than any animal I have met. However, at the end of the night when all her energy has been burned, she will lay next to you for endless amounts of time accepting all the pets you are willing to give. She truly is one of a kind, and despite the numerous hours I have spent trying to outsmart her (I've yet to win), I wouldn't trade her for the world. Her silly antics and wonderful personality have ensured that my house will forever include a REW bunny.

Harry & William

from Jenn & Joe Springhetti
(Oconomowoc)

Why were our bonded REWs special? Harry and William were rescued from the Adams County confiscation by WHRS, fostered by Marilyn and Don for over a year, then adopted by us in 2011 after our beloved Kiki passed. Never once did we think white bunnies with red eyes were anything BUT special! They were so beautiful! They always were right by each other's side, double the cuteness! We went from 3 lbs of gray spunk to 15 lbs of white mellow! White always reminded me of how pure and gentle their souls were! We were blessed with 3 years of the bonded REW brothers before Harry passed unexpectedly, then 3 more amazing years with Willy! In March we'll celebrate one year of loving Angelo's moxie (rescued from Georgia by WHRS, fostered by Mary and Kevin)!

Gracie

from Lyn Cushman and her REW soul mate, Gracie (Greenfield)

When the time came to adopt another bunny soul mate and companion from WHRS, I had several choices. A couple of them were REWs, which I saved to meet until the end of my search. I was totally unaware of the beauty and expressiveness of a white

rabbit. Low and behold, at the end of my search, I did wind up with a female, red eyed, white Flemish Giant. She has opened my eyes and heart to the world of REW rabbits in so many ways. Her 3-foot-in-the-air binkies bring laughter to me, as she almost looks animated, like the Pillsbury dough boy or Casper the friendly ghost. She is a fluffy white bundle of cuddles who always manages to stay bright white. Her eye lashes and eye brows are absolutely gorgeous and would be the envy of any high fashion model! Her beautiful eyes glow blue and pink with amazing depth. She has the most perfect pink trim on her ears, eyes and lips, and her fur always shines bright like a diamond and looks so pure. My REW has the elegance of a swan and looks beautiful in all seasons for all the right reasons! Yes, my REW has taken me down the rabbit hole like Alice into the land of REWs!

So, open up your heart and your eyes, and allow a REW to captivate you in every way and color your world white like a crayon! My REW is my angel.

All of these replies are so wonderful that we couldn't choose a contest winner. So, we drew a name out of a hat, and the winner was Kristi Heid. Congratulations, Kristi. Thank you all for submitting such beautiful descriptions and helping to change minds and hearts.

WHRS Adoptable REWs

The next page includes pictures and biographies of our own REWs now up for adoption. Please consider opening your home to a rabbit so often exploited and left behind when others find their forever homes.

If you have a rabbit and would like to find him or her a friend, we are glad to assist in this process.

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Ruby-Eyed Rabbits (REWs) for Adoption at Wisconsin House Rabbit Society

Basil & Dill



This mother and son pair were rescued from a neglect case where Basil was being raised for meat and housed in horrible conditions. Shortly after she arrived at the local humane society Basil gave birth to nine kits. Unfortunately, only three survived. Dill is one of the three survivors and has been with Basil since birth. Basil was a very good mother despite her poor condition, but was terrified of people and hands coming into her cage while raising her babies. Dill sensed her fear and became wary of people. He is still on the shy side, but has turned into a curious teenager who loves to run, explore and leap into the air when he's happy. He will also sit still for a few pets while he's eating his dinner. Basil is still shy, but Dill is now showing her that humans aren't as scary as she once thought.

This dynamic duo desperately needs to find a quiet home with someone who will give them the time they need to learn to trust. Once they do, they will reward you with binkies of thanks!

Boca



Boca is one of several rabbits rescued

by police from a neglect case. He was being raised for meat and was living in horrible conditions. When he arrived at WHRS he was thin and covered in urine stains. He is now a healthy weight and has beautiful snow white fur.

While Boca was at our main foster facility, we noticed that while he seemed to hop around normally most of the time, his hindquarters seemed weak and he would slip when making a fast turn or trying to jump up on something. We took him to the vet and had radiographs of his back and hips taken. Everything appeared normal. We're not sure why Boca's hindquarters are weak, but the vet said he could have been born this way or have an old injury. The good thing is that it doesn't seem to bother him at all. He's not in pain, and it doesn't stop him from exploring.

Boca is a bit shy, but his personality is sure to blossom once he feels comfortable in his new home.

Chicory & Parsley



These two sisters have had a tough start in life. Their mom, Basil, was one of several rabbits rescued by police from a neglect situation. Shortly after arriving at the local humane society, she gave birth to nine kits. Unfortunately, all but three died. Chicory & Parsley are two of the three who survived and have been together since birth. Although Basil was a very good mom, she was in poor health and terrified of people while raising these two girls. They sensed her fear and therefore grew up being wary of people. They are very shy, but are slowly getting used to a few pets while

they're eating their pellets. When let out of their cage to run around, they are curious and perform sprints and leaps into the air to show their joy.

What these two sisters desperately need is a quiet home with a patient person who is willing to sit with them while they learn to trust. Once they do, you'll be rewarded with binkies of thanks!

Poppy



Poppy is a curious and very active young New Zealand White rabbit. She came to WHRS with several other rabbits who had been rescued by the police from a neglect case. She likes to dig in her blanket box, does crazy binkies, and loves to explore. Poppy is spayed and has excellent litterbox habits. She can even be a little protective of her litterbox. Since she wasn't handled much prior to coming to WHRS, she's still frightened of being picked up. She'll only allow the briefest of pets at first, but once she trusts you, she'll come and lay against you and nudge you with her nose.

Salsa



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Ruby-Eyed Rabbits (REWs) for Adoption at Wisconsin House Rabbit Society

Salsa is one of nine rabbits WHRS helped rescue from a neglect case. All the rabbits were being raised for meat and were living in horrible conditions. When they arrived at WHRS they were terrified of people and hands coming into their cage. Most of the rabbits ran to the back of their cage and hid when approached, but Salsa got her name because she was bold and had a “spicy”

personality. She didn’t run away when approached. She stood her ground and defended herself. We quickly realized that Salsa needed a foster home where she could get some much needed TLC and socialization.

Salsa now loves life! She knows she is safe and has learned that people can be good. She is still a little head shy, but

is getting better every day. She can be territorial in her cage, so she would do best in a home without young children. Salsa has been very good while running in her foster home. She has amazing litter box habits and is good about chewing her toys and not the house. She is appropriately 1 year old and waiting for her forever home! 🐰

U.W. Vet School Rabbit-handling Lab

by Renee Stodola

Every year, the Special Species department at the UW vet school asks the Wisconsin House Rabbit Society for assistance in teaching vet students how to properly handle and care for rabbits. And every year WHRS volunteers are happy to help out. This year Joan Johnson, Liz Allen and Renee Stodola volunteered for the two hands-on labs held on January 12th and 19th . These labs are very unique and important because they are one of only a few educational opportunities focused on rabbits and other exotic pets which all vet students are required to attend. Nearly all other educational

opportunities involving rabbits are optional.

WHRs brought approximately ten adoptable foster rabbits (plus two of Renee’s personal rabbits) to the vet school at 8:30 a.m. on each of these dates. Approximately half of the rabbits stayed at our station, where we educated students on proper handling and rabbit care. All the students were required to pick up a rabbit, and our volunteers were right there to coach them. Many of the students admitted that it was their first time picking up a rabbit!

The other rabbits we brought were at the next station over, where there were two veterinarians teaching the students how to perform a health exam on a rabbit and what to look for while doing so. The students were able to examine the rabbits themselves after being shown.

This is just one of the many educational events WHRS is involved with throughout the year. But it is one of the most important ones. After all, who better to teach future veterinarians on the proper care and handling of rabbits than WHRS? 🐰



Spring Flowers: Early-Season Foraging for Flopper

by Julie Smith

For humans, flowers in food are beautiful and startling because they don't belong there. They add novelty and interest to human cuisine. But why forage for flowers for rabbits? Bunny will not be taken aback by a red splash of nasturtium in her parsley (she doesn't see red anyway) nor give much thought to whether Johnny Jump-ups or blue Chicory add the prettiest final touch to the Romaine.

I have foraged for spring (and summer) flowers for my rabbits for many years. By late March, I am sick of the bland, industrially-grown lettuces and parsley from places like California and other points south. Until recently, when development took over my neighborhood in Edgerton, I had access to acres of vacant, unsprayed land where many species of wild plants grew. My yard has been chemical free since 1998 when I first moved in, and it produces lots of great weeds. So, I do it because they are there in abundance and because all of the flowers I gather also have leaves that rabbits eat. Thus, I get my fresh food for the ten sanctuary rabbits without having to go to the grocery store all of the time. And it's free and close by. But more than the savings or convenience, walking around natural places looking for bunny treats, aka foraging for Flopper, is fun and satisfying. I believe that wild flowers and greens add something to rabbits' taste experience that they do not get from cultivated food—complexity, variety, earthiness, and perhaps ancestral memories of scores of different kinds of bitter greens. Rabbits are, after all, one of nature's great foragers. They have many, many more taste buds than we do, so I want to make their domestic world more attuned to a larger idea of who they might still be.

My recommendation for starting is to choose one plant with which you already have visual familiarity. Then do

your research to make sure you have gotten the identification right and that it is OK for rabbits. Dandelions are an obvious choice. If you have access to chemical-free dandelions and are not giving them to your rabbit, well, that's just animal abuse.

Dandelions



I have given all parts of the dandelion—root, leaves, flower stems, and flowers—at all stages of growth. I have a dandelion extractor, so I often include the roots (and wave it high to lawn chemical companies on their way to befouling my neighbors' yards). If I take the root, the dandies will be dirty, so I hose them down outside and let them drain in a large mesh strainer until I wash them properly for the evening salads. Once washed, greens should be served soon. I always give wild plants two separate baths in two dishpans of clean water, shaking them out lightly each time. However, when I took a beginners' foraging class this summer, I noted that teacher and students picked and ate plants along the trail with never so much as a "shouldn't we wash this first?". In any case, the additional water is great for the rabbits.

If I just pull off the dandelion leaves, stems, flowers, I put them in a plastic bag in the refrigerator with other edible plants, washing a portion just before serving. Unwashed, they will keep for about a week. The stems of the flowers go limp, so you might want to give a fresh one to Bunny just to watch the

"look no hands" dandelion suck up, as captured here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mgL9Xj1n8Nk>.

If you're lucky to find a young dandelion with a tight crown of emerging buds in the center, well then you have a problem. You'll have to decide whether to give it to Bunny or eat it yourself. This is the best stage for human eating, the time the dandelion is least bitter and richly filled with vitamins, minerals, and anti-oxidants that will keep you strong as a bunny guardian. At least that is a good excuse for grabbing the salad dressing for yourself. All of the plants mentioned here are from field guides for human eating.

Common Violets



Photo credit <https://auntiedogmasgardenspot.wordpress.com/2013/04/01/wild-violets-care-how-to-grow-wild-violet-plants/>

Common purple violets signal that spring is here to stay. They can grow as single plants or can blanket the ground among the grass. You're likely to find them in your chemical-free lawn. So, to adapt a comment by the well-known Wisconsin foraging expert, Sam Thayer, "Perhaps you should stop seeing violets as a weed in your lawn and begin to see your lawn as a weed in the violets" (*Incredible Wild Edibles*, p.380). From the rabbit point of view, the two go perfectly together. I have always just ripped up handfuls of violet leaves, flowers, and grass and put them in my bag, as it is pretty tedious to gather one plant at a time. Skip the roots. If you get a little

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Spring Flowers: Early Season Foraging for Flopper

Creeping Charlie with it, not to worry. That's in the mint family and edible too.



Photo credit <http://vetivresse.blogspot.com/2008/12/vio-lets-smell-funny.html>

White Clover



Photo credit <https://www.minnesotawildflowers.info/flower/white-clover>

As most of us know, white clover also grows in lawns. Again, you'll be ripping up grass and clover together—another great combination. Rabbits just love it. As I get older, bending down for long periods becomes harder, so I tend to wait for the red clover to come up later, in the summer, because it has tall stalks.

While we're told that rabbits shouldn't have clover because of its high calcium levels, that precaution applies to giving rabbits dried clover regularly as part of their daily hay. As with most things, moderation is a good guide. Like Red Clover, Alfalfa "volunteers" can escape cultivated fields, and I often find them growing with red clover, flowering at about the same time. A modest once a week serving of each adds zip to a rabbit's world. Imagine yourself having just discovered chocolate.

Although a Cottontail rather than one of

our domestic rabbits, the wild bunny in this Youtube video gives a pretty good idea of how rabbits feel about White Clover: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bdfRI1EB_Eg.

Purslane



I have noticed Purslane for the forty years I've been in Wisconsin. I've seen it growing between the bricks of our patio, in the cracks of sidewalks, in flower beds. It's so obvious because it has succulent, fleshy leaves and stems, which are reddish and branch across the ground. For years, I eradicated Purslane from my rock garden. But now I want to try it in my salads and in the rabbits' medley of fresh greens. It is hyped as a superfood for heart and general health, a real miracle plant. And because I know exactly what it is without a lot of research, it's on my list. Admittedly, I have never seen a picture of a rabbit eating Purslane, although it is included in all rabbit-safe food guides. Maybe we'll publish the first one ever in the WHRS summer newsletter.

Chickweed



Chickweed is one of those wild edibles touted in every foraging handbook for

humans. Apparently, the tips of each little branch, 4-8 inches down, are mild and sweet. I believe I have seen it, and this spring I will attempt to find and gather some. While the tips are best for humans before the flowers emerge, I'll wait for the little flowers so that I can securely identify the plant. They have five petals, but those are cleft so deeply that they look like ten. Its flowers most obviously distinguish chickweed from any undesirable lookalikes based on leaves. Check a foraging guide for other differences, but the flowers are a reliable key. Apparently, chickens are crazy for chickweed; thus the name. I'll soon see about rabbits.



Photo credit <http://onf.coop/an-all-purpose-herb-chickweed/>

Pineapple Weed or Wild Chamomile



Photo credit www.thedancingherbalist.com

Here's another small plant one can pull out of the cracks in sidewalks—Pineapple Weed, which grows in sunny, poor, compacted, even rocky soil. It only gets about 6-8 inches high, and you can easily identify it by the yellow-green cones that are the flower heads, which have no petals. It tastes good, and it is

(continued)

Spring Flowers: Early Season Foraging for Flopper

extremely easy to identify because it smells like pineapple when you crush the little cone heads. Every part of the plant is safe for Bunny, although there's not much of it.

Cautions About Foraging

All literature on wild edibles includes cautions. Most are just common sense:

1. Make sure you know the area where a plant comes from. Has it been sprayed or does it get salted in winter, as roadsides do? If so, look for a more secluded spot or go back further off the road. Stick with areas with which you are familiar.
2. Make sure you have properly identified a plant and know which parts are safe. If you need to wait for the flower in order to absolutely identify it, then wait. That's what I do with Queen Anne's Lace in mid-summer. Bunnies don't have to have the most delicate stage of the plant, as humans often do. So you can wait until you see the flower.

Really, the easiest way to forage for bunnies is to find a plant on a bunny-safe list that you already know you can recognize, and then read up on it a bit more. Once you're sure about a plant, you will have it on your safe list for many future years.

Human foraging guides are good sources of information on plant identification and toxicity. But once you have identified a plant, you also need to check lists of bunny-safe edibles. Here are some good resources for both tasks:

<https://bunnyapproved.com/edible-flowers-and-petals-for-rabbits/>

<http://www.rabbitsonline.net/showthread.php?t=52762>

<http://www.therabbithouse.com/blog/2012/02/29/rabbit-safe-flowers-annuals/>

http://www.medirabbit.com/EN/GI_diseases/Food/Toxic_plants_en.pdf

http://www.medirabbit.com/EN/GI_diseases/Food/feeding_en.pdf

<http://homecomers.org/janesville/foraging.html>

<https://www.wildmanstevebrill.com/plants.html>

3. Wash the plant well. As Meryl Schimek's great article in this issue tells us, wild animals can spread parasites to domestic bunnies who go outdoors. But bringing the outdoors indoors by collecting safe wild plants, and then washing them very well, seems an excellent compromise.
4. Always feed very small portions at first and gradually increase amounts. It's always fun to see what new plants rabbits will consider treat food, and that's a good way to start—little treat bits at a time.
5. And remember: you can always buy seeds for these wild plants and grow them in pots on your deck or apartment balcony.

Dried Flowers

Dried flowers are happy options when fresh ones are not available. They let you serve flowers in winter and flowers (like rose petals) that rabbits love but are difficult to grow in our area without chemicals. I tried growing chemical-free wood roses, and I might as well have put out a sign out that read, "Calling all Japanese Beetles." I dug up the roses and planted the inedible dwarf lilacs.

Dried flowers are good for foraging toys like boxes and bags that the rabbit must destroy to find the flower treat. A small brown bag to which you have added a half teaspoon of dried flowers and tied with natural twine can make a good boredom buster. Flowers are also good for logic toys that require a bunny to pull off a cover of some kind to discover a treat. And they are less fattening than

dried fruit for this purpose. However, you first really need to determine which dried flowers he likes best and will put in some effort to find.

The brands Flopper's Garden and Rosewood Naturals sell dried plants, including flowers, to the rabbit-devoted public. Reading their labels has taught me to identify some rabbit-safe wild plants that I would otherwise have missed and that I can now look for in my area. Sold on the Binky Bunny website, Flopper's Garden describes medicinal properties for its dried plants and plant combos. Small Pet Select also has a line of dried plants to which it attributes medicinal properties. One can find much less expensive organic dried flowers in many other places—Amazon, smaller internet botanical shops, and local co-ops. I have purchased dried plant combos and picked out individual flowers to try them out on bunnies one at a time. Since rabbits seem to have strong individual preferences (big surprise), I will now buy packages that have just one kind each, so that I won't waste money on dried plants they don't like. At the Humane Society of Jefferson County this morning, Lunar and Clipsey showed a strong preference for sunflower petals over marigolds, hibiscus and even rose petals. I may try growing some sun flowers this summer and drying the petals myself.

Much thanks to Steve Drake for helping me with this article. 🐰

Update on Chloe & J.W.

Thank you to the wonderful people who donated to Chloe and J.W.'s medical fund. Both have had their expensive surgeries successfully completed. And both have gotten adopted! Here are the updates from the wonderful people who adopted them.

A Forever Home for Chloe from Darlene Mackett



Back in February, I decided to try my hand at fostering a bunny for the Wisconsin House Rabbit Society. I really thought I could succeed at this foster thing, and I wanted to have the experience of finding a special little soul a forever home.

Along came a little Dutch girl named Chloe. I was told that this bunny was very cage aggressive and that she had a very big personality. Well, I found out quickly, she was all that! I also saw a sweet, smart girl who was very scared and was fighting back the only way that she could. As I started to interact with her, I quickly saw that she was an exceptionally smart rabbit. I started working with her to hop into her carrier, and she immediately picked up on this! Actually, I was stunned at how quickly she learned to do this! She is very motivated by food, and after the third session, she was more than happy to hop right into and out of her carrier as if she had been doing it her entire life. Once she figured out she would get a small treat for hopping in, and another treat for coming out, she became a true professional! I have yet to have a bunny

that so quickly picked up on training like this. At that point, I knew Chloe was something really special. She also loved cheek rubs and head pets and would tooth purr with total enjoyment when she felt safe and when the attention was on her terms.

After Chloe's extensive dental work, I received a message from Sharon that her Petfinder ad was updated and that she was officially up for adoption again. As I read through her profile, it literally broke my heart to learn how and why she was surrendered. This sweet, smart little girl who I found to be so excited and curious about life was pushed to such extremes.

Chloe seems quite comfortable with us, and in the short time she has been here she has made amazing progress. I couldn't help but fall in love with Chloe! I hope that I can give her a hoppy life—she deserves it!

J.W., New Friends from Stephanie Grosz



Being partial to lops, I have wanted J.W. ever since I saw him enter our main foster home while I was helping with cleaning there. He is such a kind, good bunny who is always looking for head pets. Once I had heard that he bonded with his mate, Lucy, I knew I couldn't adopt him because I was unable to adopt a pair. But I was happy for him as I knew he was happy with her. When I heard she had passed away, my heart broke. Poor J.W., all alone again, and with his upcoming eye removal surgery,

I knew that he may be a hard bunny to adopt out, especially as he was also a possible E.c. case.



I did lots of research on E.c., although there is little to go off of on the Internet. I found that it was not as contagious as I thought it would be and can be well contained. I had to try J.W. with my bonded male pair, as it was the only way that I could adopt him. We did our first date, and it was love at first sight; all three bunnies seemed very happy and content with one another. We even had grooming on the first date! I decided then that I would take him home. After he was healed from his eye surgery, I picked him up and adopted him. He gets along so well with my bunnies! I am very happy that I got to adopt such a sweet bunny! Even with his surgery behind him, he never gets depressed or down about losing an eye. He is as perky as ever—loving to explore new areas and greeting all sorts of people! 🐰

Pictures, Posts & Letters

We love hearing from you!

RECENT ADOPTIONS

PICKLES

ARTHUR & MARC CHIU

CHLOE

DARLENE MACKETT

IVY

DEB PEITZ

MOCHA

AMANDA GRONEMEYER

HEMLOCK

MADELINE BOGGS

JASPER

KATE PISCHKE

BABE

MICHELLE BLINK

TESSA

KATHLEEN DAILY

J.W.

STEPHANIE GROSZ

Congratulations and thank you for providing such wonderful forever homes.



BINKIES OF THANKS TO RECENT DONORS

- ♥ Noreen & Wayne Ratzlaff
- ♥ David Schmid
- ♥ Rosanna Dell
- ♥ John Bach
- ♥ Jake Stroup & Amanda Grady
- ♥ Jean Cookle
Donation in honor of my friend Amy Lautenbach who is a bunny lover!
- ♥ Ryan & Carrie Karas
Donation for Bella & Kramer
- ♥ Kristi & Lucas Heid

WHRS Alum Update

from Jane & John McWilliams (Rosie & Alfie)



Hi Liz and Renee—Here is a photo of Rosie (formerly Glinda, who was fostered by Liz Allen) with her husbun, Alfie. They both love Kale. It's been difficult to get a photo of them together, as when you approach they usually move, whether to get their heads scratched or look for treats. So we have lots of blurred photos of bunnies moving! Anyway, they are happy together, and it didn't take Rosie long to settle in. Thank you!

The Benefits of Bunny Couplodom

from Mary Anne Strachota

Hi Julie . . . The donation was intentional, and not because I'm under the influence [of pain medication from a hip replacement surgery] ;). I keep a list of places for donations, and WHRS is on my list of places to donate for this quarter. We try to rotate between a few rescues and do what we can. Joelle is a daily reminder of the good work you all do. She has brought so much love into our lives—especially Tater's—they are a true love match. I used to feel so guilty anytime we went on vacation and had to leave Tater behind. Even though our neighbor who took care of him would spend a couple hours each day keeping him company and taking care of him, I felt bad that he was home alone. Now that he has Joey and she has him, I know they are never lonely. Were it not for WHRS, Joey wouldn't even exist now. A sad truth. What you all do, does matter.

Thank You

from Todd Cleary

Hi Julie—I'm obviously glad my donations helped, but you and your group are the ones

doing the hard work with the bunnies. As a result, you are truly deserving of all of the "thanks" here.

Please keep me apprised of J.W.'s and Chloe's progress and thanks very much to all of you!

Loved the Newsletter

from Jane Vandre

Hi Julie—I LOVED the newsletter . . . very impressive, informative, and fun. I . . . especially enjoyed the pioneer story. I plan to share it with my girls at church because it has such a sweet and poignant message.

Joining WHRS

from Herb Zautke

Hello Julie—I have only now figured out what happened. I joined the wrong House Rabbit Society. I sent my membership contribution to the International House Rabbit Society, and you must think I'm some kind of Scrooge for not joining the Wisconsin House Rabbit Society. I certainly apologize and hope to be able to contribute retroactively for 2017 at the same time we pay for 2018. Perhaps you can furnish me the correct link so my contribution goes to the right place.

When properly joined up, will it be possible to get a paper copy of the winter issue for my archives? I would love to frame it. Perhaps Mary Anne could even be persuaded to sell one of the frames or render a facsimile. We would love some of Mary's original work and would be glad to compensate her or WHRS for it.

Peggy forced me to read "Cornmeal" at Christmas to the family, and there wasn't a dry eye in the house at the end. I was pleased that everyone liked it because I didn't think it was that great. I think it was the wonderful art that went with the that story really made it. The immigrant rabbit with the *babushka* captured my grandmother so well it could have been drawn from life, and on the whole, the art wonderfully embellished the story. . . .

(continued)

MORE BINKIES OF THANKS

- ♥ Jennifer Fiske
in memory of Ruby, Felix and Lenny Wilson
- ♥ Christine Lieber
in memory of Sunshine and to help with the care of Attila and Pickles
- ♥ Anonymous Holiday Donation
- ♥ Shari Piehl
- ♥ Stephanie Kleine
- ♥ Alliant Energy Foundation matching Grant, requested by Stephanie Kleine
- ♥ Sally Best
- ♥ Diana Wilson
in honor of Lenny, Ruby and Felix
- ♥ Anonymous
in memory of Flora--your sweetness, tooth crunches, and curiosity will never be forgotten. Thank you for all of the love that you gave, and for all that you taught us.
- ♥ Mary Jo & Dave Bobholz
- ♥ Mary Anne Strachota
Donation from the proceeds of CafePress sales of original artwork and donation in thanks for Joelle.
- ♥ Deb Peitz
In memory of Sashi
- ♥ Stephanie Grosz
Donation toward J.W.'s eye removal surgery
- ♥ Emilee Richter
Donation toward J.W.'s eye removal surgery
- ♥ Todd Cleary
Donation toward J.W.'s eye removal surgery and Chloe's dental surgery
- ♥ Kotoyo Hoshina
Donation toward Chloe's dental surgery
- ♥ Rebekah Pflueger
- ♥ Kourtney Franck
In memory of Peanut
- ♥ Jenn & Joe Springhetti
Donation to help WHRS Foster Bunnies
- ♥ Kara Henn
- ♥ Gail Banovez

Pictures, Posts & Letters

Officially Bonded

from Amanda Gronemeyer



Hi Renee—I'm not sure if you have seen the House Rabbits' Facebook page or my Facebook page but Mocha and Nabisco are officially bonded as of February 13. They gave me no trouble at all, no biting, boxing or other aggressive behaviors, just lots of initial mounting on Nabisco's end, which rarely has happened since the bond, and a few stray poops and pees on Mocha's end. At first Nabisco would only groom Mocha, but now she occasionally grooms him as well. I wish I could email you some videos (I have a couple on my Facebook page), but my email will not allow. I have attached the photo where they first voluntarily laid side by side. Also, Nabisco still gives me kisses when he isn't kissing Mocha, and when I lay down by them both Mocha and Nabisco give kisses to me. Mocha has really started coming out of her shell. She is still difficult to pick up, but once I have her

she has laid in my lap with petting for over an hour! They have been together since Tuesday, and they have been great together! Thank you for helping with the bonding and adoption experience; I hope all the other buns find loving furrever homes!

Report on Babe

from Michelle Blink



Hi Renee—The car ride home went great! They snuggled most of the time (when Babe wasn't trying to explore). They were both exhausted when they got home, so they took some naps. They're having dinner now. It was wonderful to meet you! I'll keep you updated.

Send your pictures, posts and letters our way! We would love to hear from you on any topic. Was your bunny adopted from WHRS or a Wisconsin humane society? We want to know how they are doing! Send pictures to editor@wisconsinhrs.org. For extra fun, add a caption to your picture. 🐰

Milwaukee Pet Expo

by Sharon Mueller



We had a wonderful time again at this year's Expo. We had many visitors who had questions to ask and stories to share of their beloved rabbits.

It was especially nice to have adopters of our WHRS bunnies come to the booth and update us. A number of people stopped by for information on rabbits because they were considering adding one to their family. Thanks again to AWARE—Alliance of Wisconsin Animal Rehoming Efforts—for hosting this great event showcasing animal rescues!

Thanks also to Mary Jane (Krueger), who chauffeured our foster bunnies Harriet and Hayward to the Expo, and to Darlene (Mackett) and Terry (Marach) for helping to staff the booth! Special thanks to Susan Boehme for stopping by, hanging around for the last couple of hours and helping to take down and pack up all our stuff! 🐰

EVEN MORE BINKIES OF THANKS

- ♥ Diane Murphy
Donation for the bunnies-in-need...to whoever needs it the most urgently!
- ♥ Mollie Nelson
- ♥ Sarah Muench
Donation to help WHRS Foster Bunnies
- ♥ Susan Boehme
- ♥ Herb Zautke
- ♥ Michelle Blink

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

- ♥ James Stacho
- ♥ Romy Ilich
- ♥ Stacey Garbarski
- ♥ Deb Peitz
- ♥ Rebekah Pflueger
- ♥ Heidi Schlehlein
- ♥ Kazuki Anderson
- ♥ Lindsey Anderson
- ♥ Kristen Niendorf
- ♥ Melissa Phinney
- ♥ Herb Zautke

And to the many of you who have recently renewed your membership, thanks for being part of the warren!

Wisconsin House Rabbit Society

Who's Who in Wisconsin HRS

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Sharon Mueller
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VOLUNTEER FOR WISCONSIN HRS

Can you foster a bunny or help out at one of the socialization/exercise programs at our main foster home in Deerfield, at our sanctuary in Edgerton, or at a Wisconsin shelter? Are you willing to clean pens, cages and bunny play areas? Do you like creating posters, flyers, and other marketing materials? Would you enjoy writing for the newsletter (we can suggest topics, if needed)? Have you organized a fundraiser or membership drive? Would you like to help at events like Bunny Day or Hoppy Hour?

If any of these appeal to you, or if you can do something else and would like to get more involved with WHRS, please see and submit the [volunteer application](#) on our website.

Wisconsin House Rabbit Society Mission

1 Rabbit Rescue.

Our goal is to assist humane societies with rabbit rescue, care, adoption, and education of the public about rabbits.

2 Education & Outreach.

Through our newsletter, web page and community activities, we inform others about nurturing the physical and mental health of rabbits as well as understanding their behaviors. We also seek to educate the public about the causes of rabbit overpopulation and abuse.

3 Adoption.

The desired outcome in a rabbit rescue is placement in a permanent, loving home. Every rabbit placed means another can be rescued from a shelter.

4 Sanctuary.

Some rescued rabbits have special needs that require long-term care in a sanctuary setting. This activity is the most demanding on all of our resources, and extra public support is always needed.