



# Tucson Wildlife Center, Inc.

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October 5, 2022**

**This statement is from Lisa Bates, Executive Director, Tucson Wildlife Center, Inc.**

Tucson Wildlife Center for more than 20 years has provided the most humane care possible to the animals that we rescue. Any concerns and allegations are taken very seriously.

I'm not going to debate, point by point, all that you've shared with us in your email. Too many of the accusations are vague, based on misinformation or lack context. But I want to correct some misperceptions, point to independent corroboration of the quality of our work and support the tireless efforts of our staffers and volunteers.

First and foremost, the safety and well-being of approximately 5,000 animals we take in every year will always be our priority and our mission. We do not let animals go hungry. We never want an animal to be in an unsafe or unhealthy condition and we take rigorous steps to ensure all animals are properly cared for at the Center.

Our work is regulated and monitored by outside experts – and we welcome that scrutiny.

Dr. Ann Pearson supervises our work and a half-dozen other veterinarians are on-call and are frequently at the Center providing their medical expertise. The Arizona Game and Fish Department regulates our Center, including providing my license as a wildlife rehabilitator. We contacted AZ Game and Fish and they did not corroborate that an investigation is occurring. AZ Game and Fish has not informed the Center of any allegations and has not asked the Center to provide any information. We value our relationship with AZ Game and Fish. If they identify any concerns, we will respond promptly and transparently and provide any information requested.

Our Center also is accredited by the Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries, the world's leading organization for the accreditation of sanctuaries, rescue centers and rehabilitation centers. Independent observers from the Washington Post to PETA have cited the value of this accreditation, with PETA noting that GFAS "requires member sanctuaries to observe a strict code of ethics and meet animal welfare standards that far exceed the minimal ones outlined in the federal Animal Welfare Act." That accreditation took years to earn and involved on-site visits and reviews of our policies, procedures, finances, board of directors and more.

Tucson Wildlife Center is fiscally healthy, with annual grants and donations that total about \$1 million, with expenses about \$900,000. Audits conducted by an outside firm have resulted in no findings against the Center. As a 501c3 nonprofit organization, our financial results are

available for anyone to review.

To be sure, this is difficult and challenging work and disagreements arise. In 2015, we had a turnover of some of our board members – not the entire board, as you indicate – after it became apparent that our financial stability was in question and some disagreements arose regarding the future direction of the Center. Those financial stability issues were promptly rectified by the remaining board members and the support of our valued donors and the vision and mission of the Center was re-affirmed. That was a painful time, but we weathered it and years later, continue our work. More recently, last December, we had several employees leave. That was a particular concern to us because, like many organizations, we have struggled with staffing through the COVID-19 pandemic. We have now rebuilt our paid staff to 17 employees, still down from our peak of 25 but at a level where, with the help of an army of dedicated volunteers, we can provide the care to the animals that has been our hallmark.

While I'm going to limit myself to this written statement, I appreciate the opportunity to respond.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lisa Bates", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Lisa Bates, Executive Director

Our Mission: Tucson Wildlife Center is dedicated to the rescue, emergency medical care and rehabilitation of sick, injured, and orphaned wildlife before return to the wild, while promoting education, habitat protection and peaceful coexistence with wildlife.

*Tucson Wildlife Center, Inc., is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization. Our tax ID is 86-1001344. As no goods or services were provided in exchange, this donation is tax-deductible to the full extent of the law. Please retain this acknowledgment letter for your records.*