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California-based oiled bird rescue organization turns 40, reflects on Gulf Spill

Long Beach, CA (April 26, 2011) - The marking of an anniversary could not have been more poignant for California-based oil spill experts, International Bird Rescue, whose team played a key role in the response to last year's Gulf oil spill. The 40th anniversary of the wildlife group, formed in response to a San Francisco Bay oil spill in 1971, fell on the same day as the one-year anniversary of the Gulf oil spill. Bird Rescue has responded to aquatic bird emergencies in all corners of the globe, from oiled Common Murres and Bald Eagles in Alaska following the Exxon Valdez to 20,000 penguins caught in an oil spill in South Africa. 40 years in, and over 200 oil spills later, rescue staff know it's not just catastrophic oil spills that keep the birds coming.

While high profile events like the Gulf spill grab all the headlines, small spills, natural oil seeps, algal blooms, and even extreme weather can impact birds, keeping International Bird Rescue (Bird Rescue) staff and volunteers at the two state-of-the-art wildlife care centers it manages in Los Angeles and the San Francisco Bay Area busy 365 days a year. Over the past four decades, both the scope and the sophistication of International Bird Rescue's clinical work and research have evolved, dramatically increasing survival rates.

"We have always approached our work from a belief that 'every bird matters,' says International Bird Rescue's veteran oil spill responder and Director Emeritus, Jay Holcomb, who was recently featured in HBO's Gulf spill documentary *Saving Pelican 895*. "Our clinics care for birds every day of the year. Not only does this work save individual lives but it also means our team has the very best chance of saving lives when the stakes are much higher, such as in a major oil spill or when an endangered species is threatened."

International Bird Rescue recently launched a new website (www.Bird-Rescue.org) and is hoping that increased awareness of its work can help lay the foundation for future rescue efforts. In the case of naturally occurring events like algal blooms and oil seep, there is no responsible party to cover the costs of caring for wildlife, and International Bird Rescue and other rehabilitation organizations rely heavily on the public's help.

Approximately 200 oiled birds have been brought in to International Bird Rescue for care since the start of the year after being coated with oil from natural seep along the Southern California coast. Compounding the strain, is a severe domoic acid producing algal bloom, causing severe seizures, and ultimately death, in birds and other marine wildlife in Los Angeles and Orange County. International Bird Rescue has found moments of triumph, but is fighting for the lives of a number of afflicted seabirds. "40 years is a huge achievement," says Holcomb, "but for our rescue centers it feels very much like business as usual."

About International Bird Rescue

International Bird Rescue (Bird Rescue) has been saving seabirds and other aquatic birds around the world since 1971. As well as operating two year-round aquatic bird rescue centers in California, which care for over 5,000 birds every year, Bird Rescue's team of specialists has led oiled bird rescue efforts in over 200 oil spills in more than 12 countries. Please visit www.Bird-Rescue.org for more information.

In the case of natural events like oil seeps, there is no responsible party to cover the costs of caring for wildlife, and International Bird Rescue and other rehabilitation organizations rely heavily on the public's help. Some of Bird Rescue's costs for the natural seep event have been covered by generous support from California's Oiled Wildlife Care Network (OWCN) through funding by the California Department of Fish and Game - Office of

Spill Prevention and Response (DFG-OSPR), but the nonprofit is asking for donations to cover additional expenses at www.Bird-Rescue.org. Information on how the public can report oiled or stranded aquatic bird sightings is available on Bird Rescue's website www.Bird-Rescue.org.