



**Important news from:**

4369 Cordelia Road, Cordelia, CA 94534

**Remembering Disasters, People and Birds**

Anniversary of the Cosco Busan November 7

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Fairfield, CA – November 6, 2012** -- The memory of waking up on November 7, 2007, the smell of diesel in the air and a disaster in our own backyard is one we will never forget. Our beautiful San Francisco Bay was blacked by 54,000 gallons of bunker fuel. In it floated thousands of birds, many who had just arrived from long migrations. Sleeping in the Bay and waking up needing to eat, they were instead mired in a deadly substance almost as heavy as tar. Thousands would die before they could even be rescued.

<http://blog.bird-rescue.org/index.php/2007/11/2007-cosco-busan-san-francisco/>

The San Francisco Bay Oiled Wildlife Care center in Cordelia managed by International Bird Rescue (IBR) [www.birdrescue.org](http://www.birdrescue.org) was ready to receive the victims. Being rescued before the oil took their lives and getting to that center was the only hope oiled wildlife had. “It’s very different when an oil spill happens where you live because now it’s personal,” says Jay Holcomb, whose non-profit headed up efforts as a member of the Oiled Wildlife Care Network (OWCN).

A veteran of hundreds of oil spills around the world, Holcomb didn’t have time to think about anything that fateful morning but readying his staff and preparing the 10,000 square foot center to do what it was built to do, clean oiled birds and save their lives.

Oil spills involve many agencies and require the coordination of hundreds of volunteers as cleaning a bird of toxic oil is a true labor of love, water and Dawn dishwashing liquid. Holcomb was used to this challenging mixture of birds, water and soap mixed with politics. “Getting through red tape to the victims is typically the first order in any oil spill, no matter where in the world it is.”

When a disaster is happening it is difficult to imagine any good coming out of it; however good things do happen when caring humans come together to help.

As the agencies recruited hundreds of volunteers, and HAZMAT trained them, people who had never seen some of the seabirds being rescued, much less touched one, were in the HOT

ZONE. After training they stood with oil spill professionals learning how to tube feed a bird, experience the magic of holding a live bird covered with oil and then seeing it clean. The feeling of saving a human life is something that stays with you forever, and for many, saving the innocent avian victim of an oil spill is just as gratifying.

Oil spills create their own world where friendships are formed and bonds are created. Sometimes lives even change. “We have people on our response team who came to a spill as a volunteer and decided this was their life work. They literally changed careers to dedicate their lives to saving birds. Holcomb recalls, “What was the most amazing thing for me about the Cosco Busan spill were the volunteers who had been at the Oregon Standard spill in 1971, the first spill I volunteered for and the one that International Bird Rescue Research Center was created because of.”

Children were also affected by the spill and the images they saw on television and in the newspapers. Motivated by the iconic photo of an oiled surf scoter on the front page of the San Francisco Chronicle, nine year old Hayley Gee of Berkeley grabbed a bucket and began asking everyone she saw for donations. “Mother nature is sick. We need to help her,” Hayley declared. She inspired others to do the same.

Since the spill five years ago, International Bird Rescue has continued to treat thousands of birds at its Bay Area wildlife care center — many who have been oiled by pervasive pollution, injured by discarded fishing equipment, displaced by habitat destruction, even subjected to animal cruelty.

“The anniversary of the Cosco Busan spill reminds us how grateful we are to manage a state of the art center capable of treating 1,000 birds at a time,” Holcomb said. “We are so fortunate in California to have two centers where we can provide the best achievable care for these birds. I don’t think most Californian’s know how unique this program is. Without specialized facilities, trained staff, volunteers and the support of the state, these birds would not stand a chance. In the past the lack of good facilities always meant the painful death of many oiled birds; it’s that simple. We are way ahead of the game in California and International Bird Rescue is grateful and proud to be a part of this program.”

Last year, federal, state and local agencies reached a \$44.4 million civil settlement with companies responsible for the spill, with the majority of funds allocated for restoration projects.

International Bird Rescue largely depends on support from private donations to carry out its continued mission to help birds in need. Find out more on how you can help at [www.birdrescue.org/donate](http://www.birdrescue.org/donate).

About us: International Bird Rescue (Bird Rescue) has been saving seabirds and other aquatic birds around the world since 1971. Our team of specialists operates two year-round aquatic bird rescue centers in California, which care for more than 5,000 birds every year and has led oiled wildlife rescue efforts in more than 200 oil spills in a dozen countries around the world. [www.birdrescue.org](http://www.birdrescue.org)

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