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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Seabirds in Distress: Penguin Look-alikes Showing Up On Northern California Beaches; 200 Common Murres Have Come Into Care At International Bird Rescue In Fairfield

Fairfield, CA – A surge of seabirds beaching themselves along Northern California is overwhelming International Bird Rescue’s wildlife center. This summer over 200 sick Common Murres have been rescued and come into care. The birds – which resemble penguins but are more closely related to puffins – need a tremendous amount of care and Bird Rescue is asking the public for support.

While seabird strandings are not unheard of, what is most concerning for the Bird Rescue team, is that mass murre beaching events are occurring more often in recent years. Back in 2015, there was a very troubling crisis with more than 460 murres being brought into care. Thus far, the season’s trend seems foreboding – as dozens of distressed murres are being brought into care almost daily this month at its San Francisco Bay-Delta Wildlife Center in Fairfield.

In fact, one of the birds from the 2015 murre crisis was back in care again this summer. This time, within a few days, he was restored to full strength as a breeding age male, helped to babysit some young birds in our pools, and was released healthy once again to the wild. The staff dubbed this murre “Bill Murray” for his Groundhog Day like return to our center at the same point in the year.



This is the time of year when Common Murres fledge from their offshore breeding sites and typically wait out in the cold turbulent water for their parents to bring them food. However, when they're starving, cold, or in distress, murres of any age will beach themselves on wide open shorelines. For a murre, sandy beaches are a refuge to rest and warm themselves after prolonged exposure in cold water.



Just as human Californians are flocking to beaches in droves to cool themselves at the ocean's edge – they are discovering penguin-like, black-and-white pelagic birds waddling and laying on the beach! The majority of the incoming murres seem to be beaching themselves on the Santa Cruz County coastline, but struggling murres have also been spotted at Ocean Beach in San Francisco, and as far north as Humboldt County.

With its long-standing motto "Every Bird Matters", International Bird Rescue cares for all waterbirds in distress. Their team is endeavoring to save and restore as many of those stranded individual animals to good health as they possibly can. During August, dozens of these birds have been arriving almost daily in need of Bird Rescue's expertise.

At this time, avian and ocean scientists cannot be certain of the cause of this round of the murres' struggles.



What IS certain is that large numbers of live native penguin-lookalike seabirds are in need of help right now. Bird Rescue appeals to the compassion in everyone who values California's wildlife and complex coastal ecosystems to contribute to the intense care for so many of these struggling seabirds. Murres require a lot of specialized care, including quality fish and deep recovery pools for rehabilitation, which is an expense burden for the non-profit agency.

One other thing that's pretty heartwarming is that adult murrens who are in care at Bird Rescue tend to behave like foster parents to any fledgling murrens sharing their recovery pools at the specialized avian facilities at Bird Rescue. Their voices are very endearing as they call out to each other. People can watch adults and young swimming together on the [webcam](#) at Bird Rescue.

The public can support Bird Rescue's work with a donation:
<https://www.bird-rescue.org/get-involved/donate>

Live webcam with Common Murrens in pool:
<https://www.bird-rescue.org/birdcams/live-san-francisco-bay-center.aspx>

Photo captions:

- 1: Very young Common Murre
- 2: "Bill Murray" murre rebound patient from 2015.
- 3: Two Common Murrens: Adult and young seabirds.

Media Resources

Downloadable photos & video:
<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1LT2VOKGXRhcZwmJ0-HvUkqOAbsix1U5a>

About International Bird Rescue: 2020 is Bird Rescue's 49th Anniversary. In 1971 after 800,000 gallons of crude oil spilled into the bay, concerned individuals led by a registered nurse named Alice Berkner jumped into action, bringing International Bird Rescue to life. We have always had to pave a road where there is none. Staff and volunteers work with tenacity alongside clients, partners, and the public to find solutions. Today, we research best practices at our crisis response hospitals in California and Alaska and share them worldwide. Our mission is to inspire people to act toward balance with the natural world by rescuing waterbirds in crisis. We dream of a world in which every person, every day, takes action to protect the natural home of wildlife and ourselves.

Learn more at <https://www.bird-rescue.org/>

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