



July 20, 2021

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media contacts:

[Russ Curtis](#), Mobile: 415-533-1357

[JD Bergeron](#), Mobile: 415-608-3764

Southern California Seabird Rescue Continues to Evolve; 500 Elegant Tern Chicks Admitted

San Pedro, CA – Terns are still in trouble.

Nearly 500 live seabirds, called Elegant Terns, have been rescued by International Bird Rescue and partners from Long Beach Harbor since July 7. As the sinking chicks are still being scooped out of the water, Bird Rescue continues to focus on three key priorities: ongoing rescues, expert patient care, and working to remedy this crisis in partnership with federal, state, and local authorities

“Our work isn’t done yet,” said JD Bergeron, CEO of Bird Rescue. “This seabird crisis requires quick minds and strong hearts to do the best for these impacted birds.”

This extraordinary seabird rescue event started after a colony of nesting terns on barges were disturbed over the long Fourth of July weekend.

The baby seabirds dropped off the barges into the water and were found floating helpless, separated from their parents and unable to return to the colony. Without quick rescue and resuscitation, most of these vulnerable chicks would perish, and many did.

Bird Rescue’s three key priorities for this evolving rescue include:

- **Ongoing rescue efforts in the field**

Bird Rescue’s immediate priority is saving the chicks in the water. Working closely with our valued partner agencies, we have had Bird Rescue experts in the harbor



every day since the first reports surfaced from the public about drowning birds. All affected birds were transported to our Los Angeles wildlife center located in San Pedro.

One of the Good Samaritans aiding in these rescues is Lenny Arkinstall, Executive Director of Los Cerritos Wetlands Stewards. Lenny has volunteered his boat and rescue skills tirelessly since the start of this crisis.

- **Expert care for the birds in trouble**

We have admitted **around 500 chicks**, this is above and beyond our normal caseload of patients! The chicks are regularly examined and evaluated, are hand fed two to four times a day, and receive daily medicines and dietary supplements. As the number of birds has ballooned, many of the birds in our facility before this crisis are now in outdoor aviaries to open up more indoor space to care for more younger patients.

- **Planning for long-term solutions**

Guided by Bird Rescue's tradition of innovation, and deep expertise in seabird care, our team is creating and testing solutions in the field. A multi-layered approach will be required to support the nesting colony until the chicks are fully fledged. [Read more about our efforts in this Los Angeles Times article.](#)

Part of the plan includes marking birds with a temporary color identifier so we can track them. Bird Rescue experts deployed haul-outs, small custom-designed platforms for the baby birds to safely get out of the water until we can rescue them.



We hope to utilize the terns' natural "creche" nesting behavior – adults helping raise young birds, collectively – as we begin to return the oldest, most fit chicks to the colony. As we move forward through the nesting season, we will continue to work to find the best possible way to help this colony thrive.

The importance of this seabird rescue effort goes well beyond the individual birds. According to [Bird Watching Daily](#), this species only has five known nesting sites in the world, so if one nesting colony fails it could be devastating for the entire population.

In a colony such as this, adult Elegant Terns stay with their young for up to six months, teaching them to forage. Bird Rescue knows that the best outcome for the young birds will be to return them to the colony as soon as possible so the adults can resume that critical role.

“The work Bird Rescue is doing is very important and will help the species,” said Enriqueta Velarde, Ph.D. and researcher from Universidad Veracruzana, who studies Elegant Tern populations, especially in the Gulf of California.

"The population is in trouble in the Gulf of California nesting colonies and this is due to increased ocean temperatures. These changes have caused food shortages for these terns. And overfishing of forage fish has exacerbated the problem," she explained.

In the meantime, the public is asked to stay clear of this delicate rescue operation.

Donate now: www.birdrescue.org/donate

Learn more: <https://www.birdrescue.org/blog/>

Media Resources

Photos & videos: <https://bird-rescue.app.box.com/s/w0d52n0cailpccx38pjl0g4dgbzgc6g3>



About International Bird Rescue

Over the last fifty years Bird Rescue has rescued over 125,000 wild birds, responded to over 225 oil spill events including saving wildlife at the 1989 Exxon Valdez Oil Spill, helping manage the rehabilitation of 20,000 oiled penguins in South Africa, and rescuing oiled wildlife in the Gulf of Mexico during the 2010 Deepwater Horizon well blowout.

For more information about International Bird Rescue, please visit: www.BirdRescue.org

International Bird Rescue, 3601 South Gaffey Street, San Pedro, CA 90731

###