



July 30, 2021

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media contacts:

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

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

Thousands Of Seabirds Saved In Long Beach Harbor With Innovation And Hard Work

San Pedro, CA – More than 2,000 baby seabirds from a nesting colony in Long Beach Harbor are alive because of the heroic efforts of International Bird Rescue staff and its partners.

The seabird crisis in Southern California that started in early July is evolving from an immediate rescue into a long-term response. The Elegant Tern chicks on the barges are beginning to fledge, testing their flight muscles, and stretching their wings. This new burst of youthful activity is adding a new flavor - and new urgency - to rescue efforts in the water.

Thanks to innovative thinking by the rescue team, young birds that have fallen from the barge now have a place to dry off, preen, and get fed by adults. Bird Rescue has deployed more than 10 floating platform "haul-outs" alongside the barges for the Elegant Terns to get out of the water safely. The haul-outs are low enough to the water's surface for small terns to climb onto and get warm.



Teams are returning stabilized healthy chicks as quickly as possible to the 180-foot-long barges. Baby seabirds will have the best chance of surviving in the wild if they are raised in the wild by their parents. As the young are returned to their colony they call out for their parents, creating a chorus of joyful reunion sounds that move rescue staff to continue this arduous work day after day.

Bird Rescue staff is leading a multi-agency team to tirelessly patrol and monitor the two barges that have been the focal point of this unusual wildlife rescue. Any sick and emaciated chicks are admitted into care at our Los Angeles wildlife center where they are stabilized and treated.

“Thank you to our supporters and partners for their high level of support,” said JD Bergeron, CEO of International Bird Rescue. “We believe our efforts will help protect a generation of this vulnerable species of seabird which has been classified as near-threatened.”

Since the July 4th weekend, as young seabirds were reported dead and dying along the Long Beach shoreline, Bird Rescue’s team leapt into action – along with volunteer boat captains – to scoop up helpless baby seabirds. These seabirds were not able to make the high jump back up to the barge and were drowning in large numbers. More than 580 birds have been admitted during this response.

Bird Released & Monitored

Starting last week, Bird Rescue began the important task of releasing rescued Elegant Terns back to one of the two barges. Before they are released, [each bird is painted with reddish-pink markings on head and chest feathers](#). In addition, the terns have a small red or orange band attached to one leg.



These visual tools will aid in the monitoring of these chicks from a distance. These markings are approved by the [USGS Bird Banding Laboratory](#). The ink will wear off within a month. We have already observed painted chicks interacting with adults normally after being replaced on the barges.

And our work is not quite done yet. As fledgling activity increases, other not-quite-ready-to-fly chicks become even more likely to fall off the barge, and are still being rescued from the water. Our rescue teams are monitoring the colony and are on the water each day to assist terns off the haul-outs until a longer term solution can be put into place.

Please Leave Seabird Rescue Effort to Trained Professionals

Bird Rescue and our partners at the [California Department of Fish and Wildlife](#) urge all non-sanctioned persons and boats to keep away from the Elegant Tern breeding colony in Long Beach Harbor. Any additional disturbance could disrupt the delicate rescue efforts.

It Takes More Than a Village

Bird Rescue would like to thank all the generous people who have stepped up to help meet the extra demands this seabird emergency requires. This is an expensive response, including additional costs to increase staffing to handle the increased patient load, supplies for building haul-outs, large quantities of fish to feed the affected birds in care, and medicines to prevent pneumonia in chicks that have inhaled sea water. [Donate to the Long Beach Seabird Rescue](#)

Again a huge thanks to all our partners in the field: Lenny Arkinstall of [Los Cerritos Wetlands Stewards \(LCWS\)](#), [California Department of Fish and Wildlife \(CDFW\)](#), [Oiled Wildlife Care Network \(OWCN\)](#), [Aquarium of the Pacific](#), [California Science Center](#), [Heal the Bay](#), [Marine Spill Response Corporation \(MSRC\)](#), and Ocean Animal Response and Research Alliance (OARR).

Media Resources

Images: <https://bird-rescue.box.com/s/lqemjaro6naknoysba5pkmpz7lwcerbq>



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, please visit: www.birdrescue.org

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

###