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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Update: Intake of 200 Hungry and Sick Brown Pelicans Eating 1,000 Pounds of Fish; Bird Rescue Urgent Call For Donations

San Pedro, CA – As the number of hungry and sick California Brown Pelicans swells past 200, International Bird Rescue is making an urgent call for public donations to cover the extraordinary costs associated with this pelican crisis.

Donations can be made here: https://www.birdrescue.org/donate/

Since May 12, the nonprofit’s Los Angeles Wildlife Center has been inundated with these majestic birds. The cold and starving seabirds arrive sick and many have injuries associated with increasingly risky efforts to find food. All of them need Bird Rescue’s specialized rehabilitation skills to help them return to the wild.

Not only do these birds have voracious appetites, but many require extensive medical care to heal. The cost is $45 a day to cover food, medicine, and staff time, and Bird Rescue is spending $2,000 on fish each day.
This pelican crisis reminds us that birds in a changing world face new and challenging environmental obstacles. In this case, Bird Rescue is seeing symptoms of starvation which point to a food issue of some sort. Whatever the cause, the birds are failing to find enough to eat and taking extra risks when foraging for food. That, combined with a new crop of young pelicans having to learn to feed themselves, may explain the current influx.

As the pelicans regain enough health to be outdoors, they are housed in Bird Rescue’s 100-foot flight aviary. The public is encouraged to watch the recovering seabirds on the Live BirdCam where they are being fed fresh fish every hour: https://www.birdrescue.org/birdcams/live-los-angeles-center/

Brown Pelicans have been impacted by large-scale perils in the past and they were added to the endangered species list in 1970 due to exposure to DDT that caused their breeding numbers to plummet. It wasn’t until 2009 that they were removed from the list. A couple years later there were similar inundations of Brown Pelican patients at Bird Rescue’s wildlife centers. The influx lasted for months as hundreds of pelicans needed care: https://www.birdrescue.org/new-update-on-brown-pelican-numbers/

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Since 2009, Bird Rescue has attached special blue leg bands to all released Brown Pelicans to help track them back in the wild. One pelican released four years ago and spotted recently, shows that treated seabirds can thrive back in nature. Pelican “N89” was reported feeding its young on Santa Barbara Island. Read more about this Brown Pelican success story: https://www.birdrescue.org/blue-banded-brown-pelican-n89-spotted-with-baby/

What The Public Can Do

Pelicans in trouble appear weak, listless, and are often found in unusual places. The public can help by establishing a six-foot perimeter around the bird, while calling the local animal control. In Los Angeles and Orange Counties, many of the beach cities have animal control officers that will capture pelicans and deliver them to Bird Rescue in San Pedro. Lifeguards often also have resources to help. If in doubt, contact International Bird Rescue’s Bird HelpLine at 310-514-2573.

Until this flood of birds stops, please keep an eye out for pelicans along roads or even inland away from the coast. Bird Rescue have received reports of Brown Pelicans being seen 20 miles or more from the coast.

Other rescuers include Marine Animal Rescue and beach lifeguards. If the public finds pelicans in Malibu, please call California Wildlife Center at 310 458-WILD (9453). In Ventura/Santa Barbara County areas, contact the Santa Barbara Wildlife Care Network, 805-681-1080.
Brown Pelicans are expensive birds to care for and we depend on the public for help to respond to a crisis like this – donations for food and medical supplies can be made at https://www.birdrescue.org/donate/

Download photos and video from pelican crisis: https://birdrescue.app.box.com/folder/163191881298?s=it422ajkcsrqlzzzfwxmootwa3mcdzyf

About International Bird Rescue

International Bird Rescue is a global conservation organization for birds in a changing world. Since 1971, Bird Rescue has responded to over 250 oil spills and other wildlife emergencies, caring for more than 160,000 birds on six continents. With crisis response centers in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Anchorage, the organization specializes in emergency preparedness and response, day-to-day aquatic bird care, professional training, and scientific research. Innovations are shared worldwide to inspire the next generation of wildlife specialists. Bird Rescue aims to give a voice to waterbirds through conservation, advocacy, and wildlife literacy that builds empathy and encourages action.

For more information, please visit https://www.birdrescue.org

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