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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Horrific Wildlife Scene at La Brea Tar Pits: 15 Canada Geese Land in Hot Oily Mess**

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**Los Angeles, CA** - A flock of Canada Geese, who mistakenly landed in the sticky goo at La Brea Tar Pits, suffered serious injuries and deaths on July 31<sup>st</sup>. The few who were able to survive are now in care at International Bird Rescue.



Out of a flock of 15 geese, seven birds with heavy oiling and burns were rescued from the scene and brought to Bird Rescue's Los Angeles Wildlife Center for urgent care. On arrival, the birds were listless and unable to stand, and so heavily covered in tar that they were barely recognizable.

According to the La Brea Tar Pit Museum website, the bubbling tar is actually "asphalt" the lowest grade of crude oil. Small

mammals, birds, and insects that inadvertently become stuck in it are immobilized as if trapped like flies on flypaper. Not only are animals at risk of suffocation from becoming trapped in the tar, but Tar Pit tar rapidly causes skin burns too. That was the case for the seven birds brought to us. They were too stuck to themselves to move, at risk of suffocation, and skin burns were already evident. Our skilled staff quickly acted to remove enough tar to allow the birds to eat, breathe and defecate, then medically stabilized them before a more thorough washing.

Sadly, five of the birds quickly died after arrival, but two lucky survivors are recovering from burn wounds and feather loss. When wild and domestic animals undergo severe stress, they can develop a serious condition called capture myopathy where muscle damage results from extreme exertion or struggling. All of the birds brought to us had capture myopathy from their exertions to free themselves from the tar; one of them had also broken a leg in the struggle. Both surviving geese are recovering from capture myopathy and are slowly regaining the strength to stand on their own.

“It's heartbreaking to see accidents like this occur,” said JD Bergeron, CEO of Bird Rescue. “Birds in a changing world face dwindling natural habitat and lack of habitat is a big problem for the wild animals that call Los Angeles home. It is natural for animals to become trapped in the tar, but in a huge city with little wildlife habitat, the lake can look very attractive to animals.”

“The Lake Pit was created by people mining for asphalt and still presents a great risk to wildlife,” Bergeron added.

The Lake Pit located in front of the museum is fenced off from the public, presumably to prevent animals and people from harm, however, nothing is currently in place to discourage birds from accessing it from above.

In the modern world there are many things that can go wrong for wild birds. Humans have built the environment around themselves leaving fewer natural spaces for birds. More than 1/3 of Los Angeles 's bird species have declined due to urbanization and climate change in the last 100 years, according to a new UC Berkeley study.

“Bird rescue consults with Wildlife Responsibility partners to deter wild birds from these types of hazards. The best-case scenario is to prevent these injuries from happening,” Bergeron said. “Until then, we rely on public support to pay for extensive medical care and costly treatments.”

The public can donate to help these birds here: <https://www.birdrescue.org/donate/>

**Download photos & video assets** (Please credit International Bird Rescue):  
<https://birdrescue.box.com/s/5nb74ijzycfe2dghc1b5nfjdo4nn8a2i>

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## **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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