



Wildlife Responsibility Bulletin



Hundreds of emaciated Brown Pelicans filled Bird Rescue's aviaries.

From Starving to Soaring: the 2024 California Brown Pelican Crisis

In mid-April 2024, Bird Rescue's Bird Helpline received reports of Brown Pelicans that appeared unwell and were behaving strangely. Pelicans began flooding Bird Rescue's Northern California Wildlife Center, and soon after Southern California received an influx. The pelicans were starving, many of them also presenting with secondary injuries predominantly due to fishing gear entanglement and risks taken to find food.

As of early August, over 400 pelicans had been admitted between both centers. Bird Rescue staff, volunteers, and donors rose to the challenge to provide the birds with hundreds of pounds of fish and medical care needed to return them to the wild. 80 surgeries have been performed and more than 240 healthy recovered pelicans have been released for a second chance at life.

This crisis is reminiscent of the May 2022 event that saw at least 350 starving Brown Pelicans come into care. Prior to that, Bird Rescue responded to mass stranding of pelicans in 2009, 2010, and 2012. While experts have not yet been able to determine the cause of this ongoing crisis, Bird Rescue remains committed to helping these birds survive in a changing world.

#RallyPelican at San Francisco Giants Game Shines Light

During a mass stranding event, starving wildlife will often wander into unusual places in search of food. One pelican, nicknamed #RallyPelican, captured hearts everywhere [when it accidentally flew into a San Francisco Giants baseball game at Oracle Park](#) in mid-May. Wildlife experts at Bird Rescue quickly recognized the underlying cause: the disoriented bird was in desperate search for food.

This bird was just another example of the increasing reports of pelicans venturing into high-populated areas. If you find wildlife out of place, maintain a safe distance and call your local animal control or Bird Rescue's Bird Helpline.



Left field: Brown Pelican

Never an Off Season for the Wildlife Responsibility Team

There is no summer slowdown when it comes to preparedness, an essential aspect of crisis response. It was another busy quarter for the professional services team!

- In May, Bird Rescue attended the International Oil Spill Conference (IOSC) in New Orleans. The week before IOSC, the Global Oiled Wildlife Response System (GOWRS) held their annual, in-person meeting which Bird Rescue's CEO **JD Bergeron** and Response & Training Manager **Michelle Bellizzi** both attended.



Spill drill with client Alyeska Pipeline Service Company.

Training the next generation

In June, Bird Rescue's Senior Director of Response Services, **Barbara Callahan** toured the oil fields in North Dakota to research developing an Oiled Wildlife Response Plan there. Later this year, Bird Rescue plans to host First Response Training in the area to safeguard wildlife.



- For our clients: Alaska Clean Seas, **Bellizzi** and **Callahan** traveled to Prudhoe Bay to present the annual Oiled Wildlife First Response Training. These efforts ensure Spill Response Techs (SRTs) on the Slope are prepared to help impacted wildlife in case of an oil spill.
- In July, Bird Rescue was activated to respond to a mystery spill near the Arctic Ocean. The spill site was 20 miles outside of the nearest village, and the team relied on a helicopter to get to and from the spill site. Of special concern were endangered species such as Stellar's and Spectacled Eiders. **Callahan** was

the Wildlife Branch Director for the spill and **Bellizzi** was the Field Team Lead.

- At the end of July, **Callahan**, **Bellizzi**, and Bird Rescue Veterinarian Dr. Rebecca Duerr were in Valdez, AK, participating in a large-scale oil spill exercise for our longtime client, Alyeska Pipeline Service Company (APSC), who debuted their new oiled wildlife stabilization mobile unit and used decoys to simulate a real response. In mid-August, Bird Rescue will be participating in another APSC exercise in the middle of Alaska, where the Trans-Alaska Pipeline crosses the Yukon River.
- Also in July, Bird Rescue's Director of Operations **Julie Skoglund** participated in an oil spill exercise in Vancouver, WA, for client Phillips 66.
- In mid-August, **Skoglund** will also be participating in an oil spill exercise in Portland, OR for our longtime client, Clean Rivers Cooperative, who are hosting a Worst-Case Disaster, Table Top Exercise for Columbia Pacific Bio-Refinery.

Patient Highlight: Surprising Albatross Stowaway

A stowaway Laysan Albatross was found aboard a container ship en route to the Port of Long Beach. Sometimes, these birds will stow away on cargo ships and come into our care once they reach port.

Crew member Nick Padouan found the albatross on the weather deck and it eventually ended up on the mooring lines. Once he recognized that it could not fly away, he safely captured the bird and brought it to Bird Rescue's Los Angeles Wildlife Center where it received expert clinical care.

After three and a half weeks in care, the [albatross](#) made a triumphant return to the open ocean on July 2nd thanks to the [Los Angeles City Lifeguard Association](#) who hosted this boat release.

A Laysan Albatross can live 60 years or more.



Laysan Albatross

With their impressive wingspans and powerful flight, albatrosses can cover a thousand miles while roaming the seas, without rest. Like Bird Rescue, they thrive in turbulence.

Wildlife Responsibility Tip: Signs That Birds Need Help

To find food, starving wild birds will leave their natural habitat and risk their lives in human-populated areas. In the recent crisis, Brown Pelicans were found in odd places, including one trying to enter a bar in Santa Cruz and another on the tarmac at Los Angeles International Airport (LAX). Perhaps the most notable pelican landed in left field during the middle of San Francisco Giants-Cincinnati Reds baseball game.

Finding wild birds in unusual and unsafe locations and situations is a clear sign they may need help. Follow these tips:

1. **Pay attention to what is around you.** Slow down and look around.

Wildlife Responsibility Tip

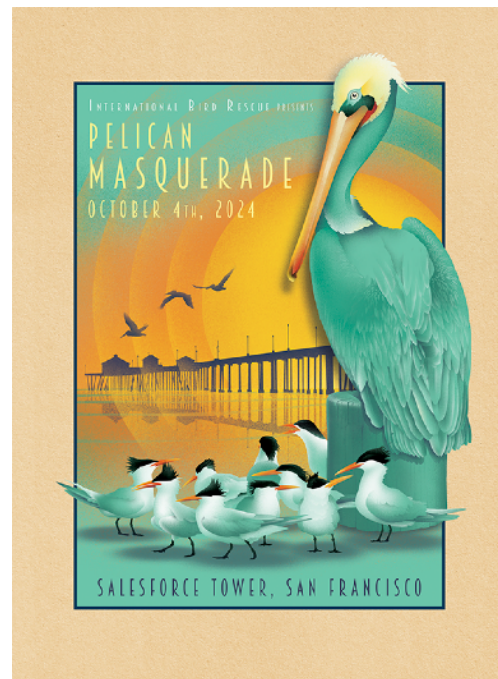
2. **Give wildlife space.** Always keep at least six feet distance.
3. **Learn to recognize distress.** If a wild animal does not run away that does not mean it is friendly—it is likely in distress. Do not touch it or take a selfie, call your local wildlife rehabilitator for help.
4. **Never feed wildlife.** Human food can be quite harmful to wildlife.
5. **Report struggling wildlife** to local animal control or call the Bird HelpLine at 866-SOS-BIRD (866-767-2473)

Party for the Birds: Pelican Masquerade at Salesforce Tower in San Francisco Oct 4th

Come celebrate on Friday, October 4, 2024 at the Pelican Masquerade on the Ohana Floor of the Salesforce Tower in downtown San Francisco. The 5:30 PM to 8 PM event will feature delicious bites, drinks, live music, and a silent auction!

The fundraising party is located on the 61st floor of the spectacular Salesforce Tower. It is the highest floor west of the Mississippi and offers dazzling 360-degree views of San Francisco and beyond. The venue is easily accessible by public transportation, including BART and MUNI.

Early-bird tickets cost \$140 and can be purchased online through [TicketSpice](https://www.ticketspice.com).



Sponsorship opportunities are available. Please email events@birdrescue.org for more information.

Open House Engages Attendees at Los Angeles Wildlife Center

The Los Angeles Wildlife Center's 2024 Open House was a soaring success! Bird Rescue was thrilled to engage with nearly 400 registered attendees who came to learn about saving and protecting waterbirds.

Through multiple staff-led presentations on August 3rd, the public learned more about this year's pelican crisis response and about the many current and future research projects being undertaken.

Thank you again to our sponsors, Marathon Petroleum Corporation and Port of Long Beach, whose contributions made this event possible.

We would also like to thank Algalita Marine Research and Education and Madrona Marsh Preserve and Nature Center for hosting tables at the event, enriching the experience for all our attendees.



Dave Weeshoff (above), a Bird Rescue outreach volunteer, highlights Brown Pelican care. (Right) Attendees learn about research projects from Dr Rebecca Duerr

Pragmatic Partnerships: Research Confirms the Safety of Sedation

Bird Rescue's Director of Research and Veterinary Science Dr. Rebecca Duerr DVM MPVM PhD, in collaboration with Tri-State Bird Rescue and Research, recently published [a study in the Journal of Avian Medicine and Surgery](#) which proves that sedation can be safely used during the wash process without adverse effects.

The study found that all contaminated birds, sedated or not, are at serious risk of hypothermia after receiving a wash, which can reduce their likelihood of



and life-threatening event, clinical supervision is crucial.

survival. Historically, oiled birds have been washed fully awake due to the assumption that giving them sedatives could potentially cause more harm than good. Contaminated birds were randomly selected to be either sedated or not sedated using a single sedative protocol. No statistical differences were found between sedated and non-sedated birds for any of the data points collected, including survival. Because cleaning a bird is a stressful

Yes We Pelican-CAN! – Time to Get Moving for the Birds

There is still time to sign up for the Yes We Peli-CAN! Virtual 5K Run/Walk as an individual or a corporate team. The race takes place the week of Sept 2nd-8th. You can go for a jog, walk, row, bike, or skateboard. Join the movement and spread awareness for International Bird Rescue and the bird species we care for.

Funds raised are critical to supporting our ongoing work caring for [hundreds of starving and injured pelicans](#) and other waterbird patients.



Getting started is easy: [Redpodium page to sign up](#).



The Wildlife Responsibility Bulletin is published by International Bird Rescue for its customers. **Editors:** Emily Dixon, JD Bergeron, Russ Curtis, Ariana Gastelum Angie Trumbo. **Photos:** Ariana Gastelum, Michelle Bellizzi, Kelly Nesbitt. **Design:** Russ Curtis