



Wildlife Responsibility Bulletin

Exxon Valdez to Now: Advancing Oiled Wildlife Response



Eagle washed of oil, left, after 1989 spill hit Alaska's coastal areas.

More than three decades after [the Exxon Valdez oil spill](#) on March 24, 1989, oiled wildlife response has advanced dramatically—thanks in part to International Bird Rescue. With over 50 years of expertise and more than 260 spill responses worldwide, Bird Rescue has pioneered innovative techniques that have significantly improved survival rates.

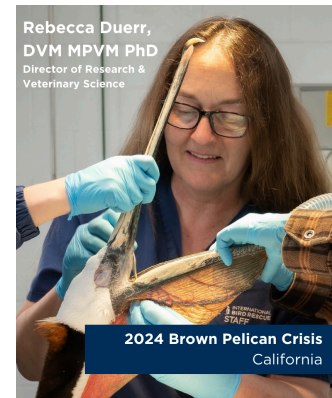
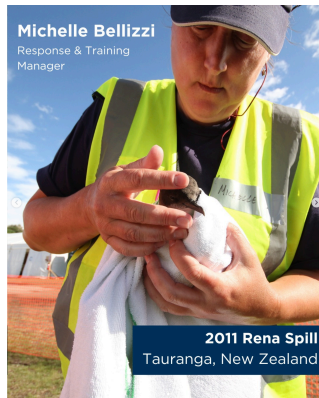
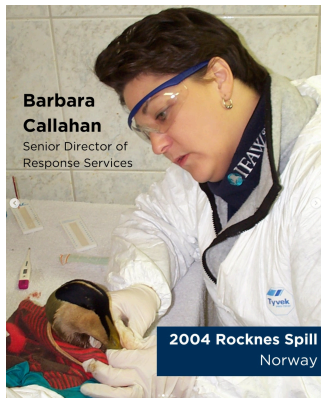
Early responses were ad-hoc, but today, trained professionals, advanced protocols, and purpose-built facilities ensure a more effective approach. Preemptive capture techniques like noose and funnel traps rescue birds before deterioration, improving survival. Medical stabilization—including thermoregulation, fluid therapy, disease screening, and sedation—now occurs before washing, reducing stress and

improving outcomes. Research confirms that seabirds can recover, thrive, and even surpass expected lifespans, proving the long-term viability of modern rehabilitation techniques.

Barbara Callahan, Bird Rescue's Senior Director of Response, has led teams in some of the world's worst spills, including the Erika spill in France and Deepwater Horizon. Under her leadership, wildlife rescue is integrated into disaster planning, training, and drills, ensuring science-based preparedness and rapid response.

From cutting-edge medical care to embedding trained wildlife teams in Incident Command, Bird Rescue continues to lead—training the next generation of responders and proving that expertise and dedication have a lasting impact on wildlife in a changing world.

Women Shape the Future of Wildlife Rehabilitation



Expertise in Action

During Women's History Month, we celebrate the incredible women at the heart of International Bird Rescue. At a time when few women led organizations in science, Alice Berkner founded Bird Rescue in 1971, making it a rare female-founded force in wildlife response—paving the way for future generations.

Today, four powerhouse women—**Barbara Callahan, Michelle Bellizzi, Julie Skoglund, and Dr. Rebecca Duerr**—carry that legacy forward, leading efforts to rescue and rehabilitate wild birds.

- Barbara, a globally recognized emergency response leader, has managed major spills like the Treasure spill and Deepwater Horizon.

- Michelle, Response & Training Manager, oversaw the San Francisco Bay Rehabilitation Program for 20 years and has led 30+ wildlife responses.

- Julie, Senior Director of Operations, specializes in large-scale animal care and emergency response, playing a key role in oil spills, the Mystery Goo Spill, and habitat crises affecting pelicans and terns.

- Dr. Rebecca Duerr, DVM, MPVM, PhD, is a leading seabird specialist, researcher, and Bird Rescue's clinical veterinarian. A global authority on avian medicine, she leads Bird Flu response protocols and advances wild bird rehabilitation practices worldwide.

As leaders in their fields, these women shape the future of response, saving wildlife in a changing world—one bird at a time.

Marathon Partners Help Raise Funds at Texas Golf Event

Marathon is long-time community partner of Bird Rescue and has helped the organization with support of both locations – the San Francisco Bay-Delta and Los Angeles Wildlife Centers.

Thanks to more than 200 very generous golfers that showed up at Marathon



Petroleum Corporation's recent MPCgives 2024 Invitational golf event in San Antonio, Texas, International Bird Rescue scored big!

"At MPC, our community investment strategy is centered around strengthening communities and helping make people's lives better," said Tim Aydt, Executive Vice President Refining of Marathon Petroleum Corp.

Patient Highlight: Persistence Pays off for Oiled Murre

When Justin Cannon encountered a stranded Common Murre on the shore, he knew he had to act. With his Aunt Barbara, he recognized the bird was in distress—shaking, struggling to preen, and vulnerable to predatory gulls. Seeking expert guidance, they contacted International Bird Rescue, who confirmed the murre was likely oiled and hypothermic.

With no immediate help available, Justin and Barbara worked to protect the bird while coordinating a rescue. After multiple failed attempts, a ranger arrived with a net, securing the murre just in time. Rushed to Bird Rescue, the murre became case #10 in care—ultimately rehabilitated and released on January 30.

For Justin, a pastor and founder of Holy Hikes, this experience deepened his commitment to wildlife. Inspired by Bird Rescue's work, he now volunteers, ensuring more birds get a second chance.



Good deed: Justin Cannon with his Aunt Barbara helped save an oiled Common Murre from certain death.

[Read more](#) about his rescue experience that ultimately led to a successful, life-saving outcome.

Wildlife Field Update: Building Readiness for Future Challenges

From training new responders to sharing expertise worldwide, our team remains committed to advancing preparedness and response efforts for responsible wildlife management.

2025 is off to an active start for the Wildlife Responsibility team. In February, Barbara Callahan and Michelle Bellizzi led a 24-hour HAZWOPER course, certifying 14 new responders, and conducted an Advanced Oiled Wildlife Response training in Anchorage. That same month, they presented *Oiled Wildlife First*



Michelle Bellizzi helps train folks at Bird Rescue's Anchorage center.

Response to the Inland Oil Spill Association in Friday Harbor, WA. Expanding the pool of trained responders strengthens crisis response. In March, Callahan spoke on Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza at the *Annual Oiled Otter Symposium* in Anchorage, then led a 4-

hour HAZCOM training at the Seattle Aquarium. On March 25-26, Callahan and Dr. Randall Davis co-led a two-day Oiled Wildlife Response Training at the Alaska Raptor Center in Sitka, covering sea otter and bird response.

By expanding expertise and preparedness, the Wildlife Responsibility team is equipping the next generation of responders to safeguard wildlife when disasters strike.

Bird Flu H5N1 Update: Our Ongoing Wildlife Response

A new strain of bird flu, known in the scientific community as Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza H5N1 (HPAI), is infecting both commercial and backyard poultry, wild birds, and mammals all over the world. It is a contagious and sometimes fatal disease to susceptible birds and mammals. The virus can be spread through saliva, nasal secretions, and feces, and others can become infected by having direct contact with these substances or surfaces contaminated with the virus.



Intake screening of a White Pelican for potential Avian Influenza.

How is Bird Rescue handling Bird Flu?

We are taking precautions to protect our staff, volunteers, rescuers, visitors, patients, and our pets at home. Our clinic technicians are trained to screen birds on admission for signs of bird flu, and we are working with Public Health to test symptomatic birds. New patients are quarantined for 24 hours to monitor for bird flu symptoms, and staff wear personal protective equipment to reduce the risk of spreading the virus when handling birds.

Should I be worried about Bird Flu?

Though rare, humans and other mammals can be infected by bird flu. Monitor your own health for any flu or cold-like symptoms. If any issues arise, contact your health provider or

veterinarian. Bird flu is being closely monitored by our local health departments as well as state and governmental agencies. You might be contacted for health screenings by Veterinary Public Health if the bird you rescued tests positive for bird flu.

Wildlife Responsibility Tip

Ask wildlife professionals for help:

If you find a bird in need, please call our Bird HelpLine for assistance, or consult with a wildlife rehabilitation center in your area for the ways to best help wildlife in need.

Bird HelpLine: 866.SOS.BIRD (866-767-2473)



The Wildlife Responsibility Bulletin is published by International Bird Rescue for its customers. **Editors:** Emily Dixon, Russ Curtis, Ariana Gastelum. **Photos:** Ariana Gastelum. **Design:** Russ Curtis