



Wildlife Responsibility Bulletin

Wildlife Response Team Update: Building the Future of Rescue and Recovery

In spring 2025, International Bird Rescue experts Barbara Callahan and Michelle Bellizzi led and participated in two high-level oiled wildlife response trainings, demonstrating the organization's commitment to prepare for environmental emergencies and mentor the next generation of responders.

In April, they delivered a two-day "Advanced Oiled Wildlife Response" training in Port Angeles, Washington, hosted and

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Participants practiced real-time techniques for shore-line response.



Staff examine the eyes of a Brown Pelican admitted into care with domoic acid poisoning.

Domoic Acid Response: Advancing Avian Care Through Expertise and Research

From March through June, [more than 90 seabirds](#), including 57 adult California Brown Pelicans, have been treated at International Bird Rescue for domoic acid poisoning, a neurotoxin caused by Harmful Algal Blooms off the Southern California coast. In addition to domoic acid, another neurotoxin, saxitoxin, has also been found and is undergoing further research by Bird Rescue's Dr. Rebecca Duerr, leader

in avian veterinary care.

These pelicans arrived in distress: seizing, disoriented, or injured from neurological episodes. Bird Rescue staff administered anti-seizure medications and sedatives through IV catheters, keeping patients sedated for several days while their bodies cleared the toxin with the support of fluids and medications. Some birds suffered serious injuries such as pressure wounds or fractures

during seizures and required surgeries or extended recovery.

Once stable and off medications, pelicans moved from indoor recovery to outdoor aviaries where they can bathe, rebuild strength, and prepare for release. Many have since been returned to the wild. Watching a once-ill bird regain mobility and begin to fly again underscores the power of expert care, ongoing research, and rehabilitation.

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funded by the Clallam County Marine Resources Committee. The training included a hands-on field exercise with the Washington Department of Ecology, where participants deployed locally stored wildlife response equipment and practiced real-time techniques for shoreline response.

In May, Callahan and Bellizzi took on leadership roles in the Alaska Shipper’s Drill for ConocoPhillips in Valdez. Held every three years, this worst-case scenario exercise tested multi-agency coordination and response to a large-scale oil spill. Callahan served as Wild-



Barbara Callahan, Senior Director of Response Services, leads an Advanced Oiled Wildlife Response training with the Washington Department of Ecology.

life Branch Director, and Bellizzi as Deputy Director. Together, they helped refine strategies for documenting wildlife impacts, requesting critical resources and managing

communications during a crisis. These exercises exemplify Bird Rescue’s commitment to preparing and deploying skilled responders when real-world disasters strike.

In June, that readiness was put into action with two Bird Rescue responders supporting a Tri-State Bird Rescue Research-led oil spill response in Illinois.

Pelicans Crisis and Ocean Health

Brown Pelicans can be powerful bioindicators whose health reflects the state of the ocean and, by extension, our own health. This spring, 273 pelicans were admitted to care, many starving, injured, or poisoned from a Harmful Algal Bloom. Their struggle signals that the ecosystems we all depend on are under stress. As top predators, pelicans rely on abundant forage fish like anchovies and sardines. When these fish vanish due to pollution, overfishing, or cli-

mate change, pelicans are among the first to suffer. Their visibility and long lifespans make them ideal for tracking these shifts over time. International Bird Rescue has responded to over five major pelican crises since they were taken off the endangered list in 2009. Through Bird Rescue’s Blue-Banded Program, the public helps monitor released birds and gather vital data about their survival after they are rehabilitated and released.

Pelicans were endan-



A pod of Brown Pelicans soar down the coastline.

gered due to DDT in the 1970s. Their recovery reminds us that human action can drive both harm and healing. By listening

to what these birds are telling us, we not only protect wildlife, we help safeguard the future of our oceans and ourselves.

From Local to Global: Urban Wildlife Care

Jennifer Martines, Senior Wildlife Rehabilitation Technician at International Bird Rescue, [was recently featured on The Kelly Clarkson Show](#), on Earth Day, where her dedication to helping injured and orphaned birds was celebrated nationally. Growing up in Los Angeles, she was drawn to wildlife from a young age. “She really wanted me to be educated,” Jennifer said of her mother, who nurtured this passion with library visits and trips to local parks.

After earning her degree in Wildlife Biology

and Zoology from California State Polytechnic University, Humboldt, Jennifer joined Bird Rescue as an intern in 2018. Her commitment led to international work, including caring for thousands of flamingo chicks in South Africa.

Now a vital team member, she responds to major wildlife emergencies and provides expert care for seabirds. She believes the wonder of wildlife is often closer to home than we think and encourages others to explore nature in their own neighborhoods.



Jennifer Martines, Senior Wildlife Rehabilitation Technician, shares her experience on “The Kelly Clarkson Show”.



Best Beach Behavior

Summer is here, and with the nice weather comes an opportunity to take action to protect wildlife while enjoying the great outdoors. We humans have built the world around ourselves, leaving little space for wildlife. Consequently, wildlife populations have declined by more than 60 percent in the last 50 years.

Species survival requires a collective commitment. This summer, we hope you’ll keep in mind a few simple guidelines to protect vulnerable wildlife and be on your best beach behavior.

Give wildlife space. At least six feet distance

Learn to recognize distress. If a wild animal doesn’t run away, it may be in distress. Call your local wildlife rehabilitator for help.

Never feed wildlife. Feeding birds can influ-



A Western Snowy Plover camouflages itself in the sand.

ence them to seek food in unsafe locations such as fishing piers.

Pay attention to what is around you. Slow down and look around. Pick up litter even if it isn’t yours.

Be mindful of pets.

The presence of predators such as dogs can prevent or disrupt the nesting of shorebirds on the beaches. There are dog-friendly beaches in most communities which are clearly labeled for this purpose.

25 Years Later: Innovation Born from Urgency at the MV Treasure Spill



More than 1,000 volunteers a day help care for thousands of oiled African Penguins during the Treasure Spill in South Africa.

The last week of June marked 25 years since the Merchant Vessel (MV) Treasure sank off the coast of South Africa, triggering the largest and most successful wildlife emergency response in history.

More than 20,000 African Penguins, already listed as vulnerable at the time, were oiled and in urgent need of care. In collaboration with SANCCOB and with vital support from IFAW, International Bird Rescue helped tackle a response that would set a new



The Treasure Spill is considered the largest and most successful wildlife emergency response in history, where more than 20,000 oiled African Penguins were successfully rescued, washed, and released back to the wild.

global standard.

Through rapid innovation, large-scale coordination, and tireless dedication, the team achieved a 90% release

rate, a benchmark in wildlife rescue.

To honor this milestone, we've launched a special video series featuring first-hand ac-

counts from Bird Rescue responders who were on the ground in the year 2000. Several of these responders will also speak at the upcoming Effects of Oil on Wildlife (EOW) Conference this October in Cape Town, whose theme this year will honor the Treasure anniversary. [Watch Part I and Part II of the series.](#)

Stay tuned for the final installment in this series and EOW details in the next quarterly edition of this newsletter...



The Wildlife Responsibility Bulletin is published by International Bird Rescue for its customers. **Editors:** Emily Dixon, Ariana Gastelum, JD Bergeron, and Daniel Flynn. **Photos:** Ariana Gastelum, Barbara Callahan, Jon Hrusa/IFAW, Leslie McCollum, and Sushanta Bhandarkar. **Design:** Ariana Gastelum