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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Mystery Illness Affecting Gulls Along Southern California Coast

International Bird Rescue is treating affected birds while state and county agencies investigate potential environmental toxins.

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San Pedro, CA – International Bird Rescue is treating an unusual surge of sick and dying Western Gulls found along the Southern California coast, from Venice and Malibu to Redondo Beach and the South Bay.

Affected gulls are arriving with symptoms that include dehydration, difficulty standing, partial or complete paralysis, confusion, difficulty blinking, and, in the most severe cases, respiratory distress. Some birds have been found dead on beaches. Since July 25, Bird Rescue has received 17 gulls exhibiting symptoms. Initial tests for Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza, or simply “bird flu”, were negative; results from more recent cases are pending.

“We don’t yet know what is causing this sickness, but we are committed to giving these birds the care they need to survive,” said JD Bergeron, CEO of Bird Rescue.

Bird Rescue is often called to save seabirds before the cause of a crisis is known with a commitment to provide essential care regardless of the cause. This work is only possible with

thanks to the nonprofit's donors and volunteers. While Bird Rescue may contribute data for research, they look to partners at California Dept of Fish and Wildlife and LA County Dept of Veterinary Public Health, who are actively investigating the underlying cause bringing these birds into care.

Care and Recovery

In care, affected gulls are receiving heat support, aggressive fluid therapy to flush toxins, supervised pool time, and general supportive care. No anti-seizure medications have been required thus far. Birds that survive the initial critical period are showing encouraging signs of recovery.

"This condition looks more like a toxicity than a contagious disease," said Dr. Rebecca Duerr, Director of Research and Veterinary Science. "The sooner they get help, the better their chances of survival."

Possible Connection to Venice Canal Dog Deaths

When asked if this illness could be linked to reports of sick and dying dogs near the Venice Canals, Bird Rescue notes it is possible both species are being affected by the same cause but that, until the cause or agents are identified, no connection can be confirmed.

How the Public Can Help

Members of the public who see a gull or other seabird in distress should look for signs such as difficulty walking or standing, or allowing people to approach. Finding birds in unusual and unsafe locations and situations is a clear sign they need help. The public can play a crucial role in reporting these birds to their local animal control. They can also get assistance through the organization's Bird HelpLine at 866-SOS-BIRD (866-767-2473).

To help pay the cost of care, medication, and food for these gulls, the public is encouraged to donate: https://www.birdrescue.org/donate/

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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.

The Los Angeles Wildlife Center is located at 3601 S. Gaffey Street, San Pedro, CA 90731

For more information, please visit www.birdrescue.org.