



Wildlife Responsibility Bulletin

Summer Team Update: Responding on Multiple Fronts

Preparedness work doesn't pause during an emergency response. In early May, Michelle Bellizzi, Response & Training Manager, and Kelly Beffa, Wildlife Center Manager, led a one-day Oiled Wildlife First Response Training in Prudhoe Bay with longtime client Alaska Clean Seas.

Days later, the team led the Wildlife Branch for the Alaska Shipper's Drill in Valdez, directed by Barbara Callahan, Senior Director of Response and supported by Bellizzi and Danene Birtell, incoming

Preparedness Manager. Birtell and Bellizzi were then deployed to a tailing pond spill in Fort St. John, British Columbia, working alongside the Wildlife Rescue Association of British Columbia while simultaneously supporting client Eco-Web Ecological Consulting on future preparedness needs.

Before that response had fully wound down, Bird Rescue was activated alongside partners as part of the Oiled Wildlife Care Network (OWCN) to respond to an oil spill in —Continued on Page 2



Kelly Beffa, Wildlife Center Manager, uses carcasses in a demonstration for Oiled Wildlife First Response Training.



Oiled Wildlife First Response Training with Alaska Clean Seas in Prudhoe Bay, AK.

—Continued from Page 1

the Los Angeles River. It was a rapid return to the field for a team that had just proven itself in a drill and a live response.

Bellizzi managed activation, staffing, and logistics between OWCN and the spill site. Birtell moved into the wash room in Los Angeles.

At the same time, a previously scheduled two-day First Response Exercise and Workshop for the EPA in Hutchinson, Kansas, was nine days out, and one team member had a licensing requirement that could not be postponed. The team made a call: send Birtell to Los Angeles first, with a firm return date, then to Kansas as planned. All three responders made it to Hutchinson on time, where roughly 50 attendees, including EPA Federal On-Scene Commanders, got the benefit of a full team fresh off two live deployments.

This is responsible wildlife management in practice: constant recalibration and a bench of expertise deep enough to hold it.

The Return of One Tiny Tern & 5th Anniversary of the 2021 Seabird Crisis

Least Terns are the world’s smallest tern, weighing in at about 1.5 ounces. The California Least Tern subspecies is listed as endangered by both federal and state endangered species lists. A Least Tern recently came into our care and healed over a five week period, from a tail fracture. It was returned to the nesting site where it was found, at the Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve in Huntington Beach. Watch this tiny tern’s triumphant return back to the wild [here](#).

This patient reminded our team of the [2021 disturbance of an Elegant Tern colony](#) at Bolsa Chica, which led the birds to renest on barges in the Port of Long



A California Least Tern patient successfully recovered from a tail fracture before returning to the wild.

Beach. That summer, a colony of 10,000 birds renested to flat-sided barges that sent chicks tumbling into the harbor to drown and die of hypothermia, which brought more than 600 terns into care over a seven week period after the 4th of July. Floating platforms with ramps, built by Bird Rescue and partners, let chicks climb

out and dry off, cutting the need for medical intervention. Five years after this large-scale response saved an entire generation, our tiny tern patient served as a small reminder that rapid field innovation and scalability are essential to our response work and one good tern always deserves another.



Floating ramps were placed around the barges to give fallen Elegant Tern chicks a chance to climb out of the water and onto the ramps, where responders could safely retrieve them.

OWCN Activation for Los Angeles River Oil Spill Response

Across 51 miles, the Los Angeles River offers a surprising mix of conditions that attract a wide range of birds. Its value comes down to a few key elements: reliable access

to water, patches of vegetation that support insects and seeds, and in some stretches, enough cover and structure for birds to rest or even nest.

Even with these pockets of habitat, conditions on the river can change quickly. A [recent spill](#) of nearly 25,000 gallons of oil into the river highlighted how vulnerable these areas can be when water quality is impacted. Working alongside partners through the Oiled Wildlife Care Network, Bird Rescue was activated to respond. Staff helped mitigate impacts to wildlife, with teams deployed both in the field and at



Among over 130 birds rescued were oiled Black-necked Stilt chicks.

Partners Matter When Everything Happens at Once

This summer, the teams at International Bird Rescue’s two California wildlife centers have been responding to an extraordinary set of challenges: seabirds struggling during a prolonged starvation event, the annual influx of baby birds, and an active oil spill response in Los Angeles.

Each situation required its own specialized approach. Bird Rescue’s

staff are trained to respond across all of these areas, allowing teams to shift where they are needed most as conditions change. With more

“Crises do not wait for a convenient moment.”

— JD Bergeron, International Bird Rescue CEO

than 55 years of experience responding to complex wildlife emergencies, Bird Rescue has managed overlapping incidents be-

fore. [Read more](#) about these unique overlapping challenges.

“Crises do not wait for a convenient moment,” said JD Bergeron, Bird

Rescue CEO. “They often arrive at times when staff are already stretched and centers are full. Juggling multiple crises takes a



Jennifer Martinez, Senior Wildlife Rehabilitation Technician, rescues an oiled Canada Goose in the Los Angeles River.

the Los Angeles Oiled Bird Care and Education Center to care for animals affected by the spill.

Among over 130 birds rescued were oiled Mallards, Canada Geese, and Black-necked Stilt chicks. When oil coats a bird’s feathers, it compromis-

es the insulation birds rely on to stay warm and protected from the elements. Young chicks are especially vulnerable, as they are still developing and less able to cope with exposure and other stressors.

community of partners, volunteers, and fellow organizations who share overflow, resources, and stand ready to work alongside us.”

Bird rescue relies on trusted partners to navigate times when emergencies stretch staff, facilities, and resources across both centers. Learn more about becoming a wildlife responsibility partner [here](#).

Wildlife Responsibility Tip



Summer is here, and with the nice weather comes an opportunity to take action to protect wildlife while you enjoy 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.

1. Give wildlife space, at least six feet distance.

locations such as fishing piers.

2. Learn to recognize distress



4. Pay attention to what is around you



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

4. Pay attention to what is around you. Slow down and look around. Pick up litter.

3. Never feed wildlife. Feeding birds can cause harm while training them to seek food in unsafe

5. Be mindful of pets. Predators such as dogs can prevent or disrupt shorebird nesting. Choose designated dog-friendly beaches whenever possible.

A Special Invitation to Our Partners

This year, International Bird Rescue marks 55 years of protecting waterbirds with our [Emerald Jubilee](#), a celebration set high above San Francisco at Salesforce Tower on Friday, October 2. This

milestone caps a demanding year that reaffirmed the value of the partnerships that make our work possible. Please join us in raising a glass for all we've accomplished together.



The Wildlife Responsibility Bulletin is published by International Bird Rescue for its customers. **Editors:** Emily Dixon, Ariana Gastelum, JD Bergeron, and Daniel Flynn. **Contributors:** Michelle Bellizzi, Barbara Callahan, and Danene Birtell. **Photos:** Michelle Bellizzi, Ariana Gastelum, Russ Curtis, OWCN. **Design:** Ariana Gastelum