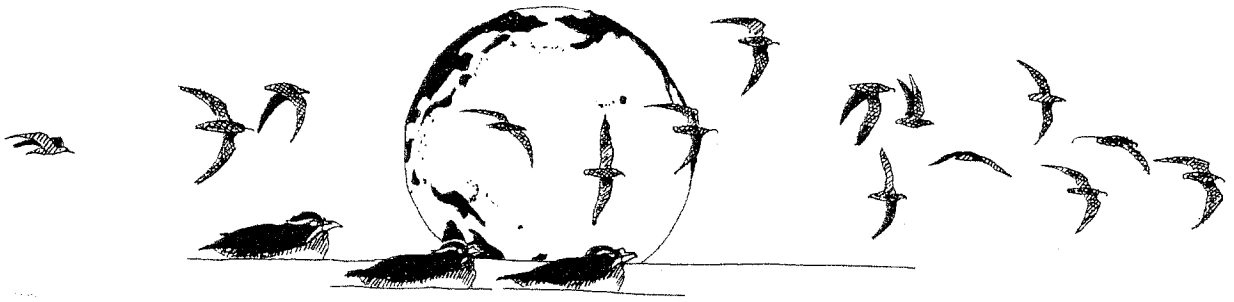
PACIFIC SEABIRD GROUP



BULLETIN

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All correspondence concerning the Bulletin should be sent to the Secretary.

THE INTERNATIONAL BIRD RESCUE RESEARCH CENTER

by

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Our Center studies methods of rehabilitating seabirds, be they oiled, injured, orphaned, or ill. The rehabilitation of these birds is often more romantic than it is beneficial to seabird populations. There are, however, three major ways in which our work is of definite benefit.

First, and most important, is the research made possible by our holding seabirds in captivity. Gaviiformes and Podicipediformes (loons and grebes) are two groups that are rarely held in captivity, yet our Center usually has several representatives of these orders at any one time. We usually have alcids as well. Our ability to maintain these birds in good health improves continually. We share this practical expertise with researchers who wish to build their own facilities and we invite researchers to use our facilities for well-defined studies.

We band more loons and grebes than anyone else on this continent; freely admitting, however, that birds banded by us are less likely to behave as normally as birds captured expressly for the purpose of banding. Some obviously have thrived. For example, a Western Grebe was shot by a hunter approximately 600 miles from banding location two years after we cleaned oil from its plumage and released it.

Secondly, it is conceivable that the information and experience we are gaining with respect to physiology and husbandry of seabirds as well as to rehabilitation of oiled seabirds may, someday, be crucial in saving a significant portion of a seabird colony. Essentially all of the thousands of seabirds affected by the Torrey Canyon Spill died because of the lack of knowledge and experience available at the time. A very large portion of them were from a single colony. With the current state of the art, we can rehabilitate up to 60 per cent of alcids, 75 percent of grebes, and 90 percent of gulls caught in an oil spill. Unfortunately, our ability to rehabilitate loons and tube-nosed birds lags far behind.

Thirdly, we are responsible in a small way for increasing the public's awareness of seabirds. Many of our failures have gone to museum collections to be stuffed and mounted for display. Some of our crippled seabirds have been put on

display at zoos so that the public may see an indigenous species. Most zoos (with a few notable exceptions) concentrate on exotic species resulting in the public's total ignorance of the existence, and hence the need for protecting, local species of seabirds.

Our work is not as important as protecting seabird habitats and perhaps never will be. Yet we are helping to fill gaps in the knowledge of seabird biology, learning how to ameliorate damage to seabird populations caused by oil pollution, and helping to promote public awareness of seabirds. With the augmented informational exchange made possible by the formation of the Pacific Seabird Group, our progress and effectiveness can only be enhanced.