

# International Bird Rescue

# NEWSLETTER

A Quarterly Publication of the International Bird Rescue Research Center  
2701 Eighth Street, Berkeley, California 94710 Tel: (415) 841-9086

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18 April 1972

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## INTRODUCING THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Board of Directors of the International Bird Rescue Research Center is at present composed of twelve members. The terms of office of these members are staggered at one, two and three years. These were determined by the drawing of lots at our last formal board meeting. As each term of office expires, the re-elected or new board member shall serve a three year term.

The members of the Board are: Mr. Raymond Balter, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Ecology Center Foundation; Dr. Murray Fowler, Veterinarian, Professor, School of Veterinary Medicine at the University of California, Davis; Dr. Elton Goldfield, physician; Dr. James M. Harris, Veterinarian and Ecology Consultant; Ms. Lillian Lea, Certified Public Accountant; Mr. Joshua Lichterman, City Planner and Community Organizer; Mr. Norman MacIntosh, Director, Marin Audubon Society; Mr. William Scheffel, lifelong avianist; Mr. Richard Scheibel, licensed bird bander, staff Pt. Reyes Bird Observatory; Mr. John Smail, Executive Director, Pt. Reyes Bird Observatory; Mr. David Smith, Ecologist, Research Coordinator; Mr. Ralph Steiner, Educational Coordinator

In addition to our regular Board of Directors, we are fortunate in having an Advisory Board of attorneys, physicians, and naturalists who are called upon as needed.

--James M. Harris, D.V.M.



## BIRD COURSE

IBRRC is offering a course in the treatment of waterfowl in conjunction with the University of California Extension Program. Major course headings include anatomy, physiology, diseases, medication, handling, husbandry, effects of pollutants, various methods of cleaning oil from waterfowl, laws dealing with migratory waterfowl, and governmental institutions involved with these birds.

Dr. James M. Harris has been named head instructor and he will share teaching responsibilities with others from the academic community and also with the staff of IBRRC. Live birds will be used in the classroom and students will be expected to master the techniques of handling and medicating them.

To begin in September of this year, the course will consist of 14 weekly meetings to be held on the premises of Bird Rescue in Berkeley. These premises, by the way, have generously been made available to IBRRC without rent by the Berkeley Humane Society.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

HELP!

This is most worthwhile. I too love shore birds.

--Robert E. Herdman  
San Diego Zoological Soc.

Wise up you guys. If you want more money and want your newsletter to get around, keep it straight. I greatly appreciated pages 2, 3 & 4, but with Richmond Reminiscence on the front page, I can't pass your important message around. Keep up the good work.

--Cathy Church  
Gilroy, California

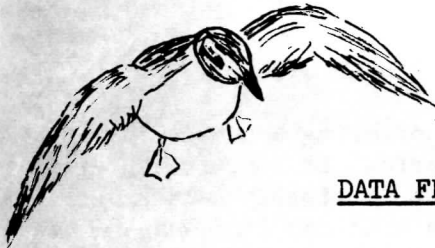
We enjoyed your informative and spirited Newsletter.

--Renee Evans, Coordinator  
Oil Spill Information Center  
Santa Barbara, California

IBRRC needs help. If you are interested in working with us on various projects, please call us (841-9086) and sign up. Many of the projects can be worked on at home or for short periods of time throughout the week.



Please tell others about us.  
Our membership rates are:  
Junior \$1/year  
Student \$2/year  
Regular \$5/year  
Family \$10/year  
Supporting \$100  
Sustaining \$250



DATA FROM THE RICHMOND BIRD CENTER

	Percent <u>Sexed</u>	<u>Males</u>	Percent <u>Male</u>	<u>Females</u>	Percent <u>Females</u>
Total	31.05	234	59%	165	41%
Western Grebe	8.09	25	50%	25	50%
Horned Grebe	4.75	1	100%	0	0
Common Scoter	57.14	8	67%	4	33%
Surf Scoter	86.55	77	75%	26	25%
White Wing Scoter	96.35	94	51%	91	49%
Canvasback	45.45	2	40%	3	60%
Red-Breasted Merganser	50.00	1	50%	1	50%
Lesser Scaup	100.00	4	80%	1	20%
Greater Scaup	100.00	5	100%	0	0
Mallard	100.00	0	0	1	100%
"Scoter"	27.91	15	62.5%	9	37.5%
"Scaup"	75.00	0	0	3	100%
All Scoters	78.37	194	60%	130	40%
All Ducks (Incl. Scoters)	74.46	207	60%	140	40%

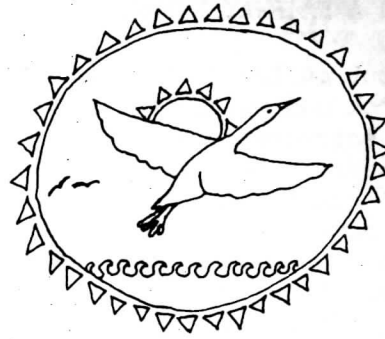
## CALIFORNIA'S CONTINGENCY PLAN

The California Department of Fish and Game has taken the lead among state agencies in establishing provisions for care of waterfowl in event of an oil spill. These provisions are contained in the Department of Fish and Game's Oil and Hazardous Materials Contingency Plan of December, 1971. The Plan establishes a Response Team of seven members charged with responsibility for advance preparation, and for coordination of emergency activities at the time of a spill. Their responsibilities include preparing stockpiles of cleaning materials and medical supplies, and in the event of a spill seeing that centers are established where birds can be taken for treatment and that those centers are equipped with the materials they need. The Plan sets out some alternative techniques for cleaning oiled birds, and guidelines for general care. Designated as consultants regarding treatment of oiled birds are the Wildlife Investigations Laboratory (Dept. of Fish and Game) and Dr. Murray Fowler, University of California, Davis, Veterinarian and member of the Board of Directors of IBRRC.

IBRRC finds one major point of contention. The Plan provides that birds (except for endangered species) which are over half covered with oil will be euthanized. Our observations at the Richmond Bird Care Center indicated little correlation between the amount of oil on a bird and its likelihood for recovery. The first two birds released from Richmond, two mergansers, were so covered with oil upon their arrival that they were completely unrecognizable.

There is much to be learned and much work to be done if we are to meet the challenge of caring for oiled birds. The Department of Fish and Game's Contingency Plan is an excellent start in what we hope will be a nationwide recognition of responsibility for caring for the innocent victims of man's pollution.

--April E. Fletcher



## IBRRC LIBRARY

The International Bird Rescue Research Center now boasts a functioning library which is unexcelled in information regarding rehabilitation of birds affected by pollutants. Unexcelled on this continent at any rate. The library of the Oiled Seabird Research Unit at Newcastle University in England consists of a better collection with respect to oil pollution as indicated by various partial bibliographies published by their director, Professor R.B. Clark. The IBRRC library, however, has assumed a wider scope with the inclusion of books and articles pertaining to all manner of pollutants: crude petroleum, refined petroleum products, biocides, heavy metals, products and wastes of plastics industries, urban effluents, and radioactive substances.

Also included are references concerning biological phenomena which can be detrimental to avian fauna. Among these are botulism, ecological toxins, duck plague, parasites, aspergillosis, habitat destruction, depletion of food sources, and interspecies interaction. Although seabirds and ducks are emphasized in the library's collection, many other types of birds are represented.

The library is organized into 15 categories: Periodicals, General Reference, Feathers, Behavior, Rehabilitation and Husbandry, Physiology, Pathology, Pollution Effects, Environmental Studies, Natural Resources, The Ocean, Oil Pollution, Oil Clean-Up, Political Ecology, Governmental Planning & Legislation. There is a rather extensively cross referenced subject-author index which greatly adds to the library's usefulness.

A number of references which were otherwise difficult to obtain were acquired through the services of the Oil Spill Information Center in Santa Barbara, California

Einra looked out on the fertile forest, shimmering brook and wildflowers and said, "Let there be entrepreneurs"; and there were entrepreneurs. And Einra saw that they were well qualified. And Einra said "Let there be contractors and subcontractors before them" and as fast as one can turn to the yellow pages there were men and machines assembled. And Einra saw that it was good. When all was ready he shrieked "Do it!" And vast strips of forest and wildflowers were raped and grass and asphalt planted in their stead. The brook was blocked to form water traps and a clubhouse rose where there had been none. Einra saw everything that had been made, and behold, it was very good, par 72 in fact.

And one day it came to pass that a Faithful Follower discovered a plague of coots walking on the fairway of the 11th hole. He played on through but sought counsel with the pro when he arrived at the clubhouse.

F.F: (Sobbing) They acted as though they paid club dues.

Pro: (Stern) Nonsense. We have policies protecting us from incursions of such undesirables.

F.F: (Reassured) Oh, thank goodness. But I have never seen Nicklaus or Littler or any of the great masters share the television screen with a...a...(sobs again).

Pro: I know how you must feel.

F.F: Do you? Just look at my Lee Trevino Golf Shoes. That stain is from Coot sh--.

Pro: Please sir! Mudhen mess, if you will.

In time the High Commission met to discuss the matter; item 23 on the agenda.

Commissioner: The problem is high population density, lack of respect for the rights of others, the disposal of wastes, and evidence of damage to an otherwise esthetically perfect environment.

Chairman: I'm sorry Commissioner, but we've finished discussion on the state of our urban areas. I've already appointed a committee to study the situation and

report back to us. Let's discuss the coots.

Commissioner: I was discussing the coots.

Chairman: What! They're guilty of all that? Shoot them!

Epilogue: The will of Einra is not thwarted except temporarily in those locales where heretics (non-golfers) abound. But have faith. Einra works in mysterious ways his miracles to perform.

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COOTS?

Save the California Condor. Save the Cougar. Save the Coot? How did Bird Rescue get involved in protecting the ubiquitous American Coot?

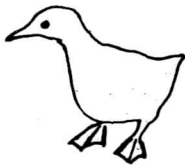
When I heard about the plans to shoot the coots at a public golf course in San Francisco, I called the California State Department of Fish and Game to educate myself about the much maligned mudhen. I learned that there are no discernible trends in the populations of coots (Fulica americana), ducks, or geese in California over the last 18 years. The present census of coots in California shows them to be about 20% below their average as determined over an 18 year period. This present low may in part be due to the recently rescinded general depredation order that was outstanding for several years.

With the encouragement of Virginia Handley of the Animal Switchboard and James Schroeder of Wildlife Alive, I attended two meetings in San Francisco concerned with the coots. As a not altogether inaccurate generalization, the old guard city fathers show next to no respect for wildlife. They have a long-standing record of exterminating wildlife whenever and wherever they pleased, which was often. Golden Gate Park used to have raccoon, rabbit, and quail before it was decided that they made introduction of new plants difficult. The present Superintendent of Parks was one of the gardeners who exterminated those animals and he is proud of it.

Regrettably, private golf courses shoot coots as normal procedure following minimal paperwork with the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife. The City Park Commission, however, should reflect the attitudes of the public, a public which is too sophisticated to execute wildlife merely because they have insulted the esthetics of a rich man's sport.

--David C. Smith





### JUNIOR BIRDGIRL

OK, here I am; 10 years old and writing a newsletter.

Well, from my experience, I've helped a pigeon guillemot, two ruddy ducks, two house finches, a murre, and what else? I don't know. I forget. Oh, a couple of pigeons, a seagull, a surf scoter, and two white-winged scoters. Oh, I guess that's all.

Poor John Murre. He passed away quite a while ago. Now Gertrude, our pigeon guillemot, was released. That was a beautiful release. She just swam away. I think my mother was crying. There's Francesca and Patricia. They were baby house finches. Francesca, the poor little thing, she died. Patricia was a little older and she was released.

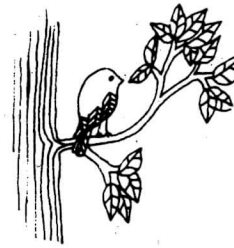
Now we go to the seagull. The seagull. We didn't know what was wrong. It was in the backyard pen and died. My mother, sickening as she is, took the bird for an autopsy and then left it in the cage to decay.

We had our ruddy ducks. They were so adorable. There were two of them. One that I have not named and the other named Patty Platterpuss Ruddy. The first one died. Patty we had a little longer but she died too. The ruddys, like a few other birds we had, were caught in an oil spill.

Now we come to the pigeons. We had a few but the one I remember the most was Shredded Tweet. Shredded was cut by a woodsman with a chain saw who was not told about the pigeons in the tree. This unfortunate bird was brought to Marilyn Raff who is very good with birds (and a member of International Bird Rescue). After awhile he got his feathers back and is beautiful and also a papa. The Ruffs have about twenty birds or so. I got to see the first child of Shredded Tweet born at their house.

The scoters; all of them died eventually. That's all I remember about the birds I helped and I guess that's the end of my column.

--Judy Berkner



### SUIT AGAINST STANDARD OIL

On January 18, 1972, the IBRRC filed suit against Standard Oil of California in San Francisco Superior Court and the Federal District Court for the Northern District of California. This suit which contains claims of \$175,000 for back wages and \$5,000,000 in punitive damages was filed by Attorneys Gary Near and Steven Kipperman of San Francisco. The suit was filed as a result of the rejection of an earlier class action suit filed almost a year ago by Mr. Near. Although the class action is being appealed, it was felt that clearly it would be safer to enter a claim suit based upon individual wage claims filed by the IBRRC.

The suit is based upon the legal term Quantum Neruit which means that Standard was unjustly enriched by the value of the services rendered by private citizens. It is our hope that through this action legal precedence will be established that would guarantee a reasonable wage (\$5/hr. in this case) for all workers involved in the clean-up operations of oil spills. This would guarantee that the incredible sacrifices of jobs and time would be prevented in future oil spills. In addition, it is hoped that the huge projected cost of labor for clean-up operations will force the major oil companies to be more careful with their transportation of oil over water.

We are asking all people who were involved in the clean-up of the San Francisco Oil Spill of January 18, 1971, whether cleaning birds or in other areas of concern, to please contact our office and request a claim form. Standard Oil has sought and received a series of continuances on this case, but they are at an end and a date should be set within 30 days for oral argument to begin.

--Josh Lichterman  
Director of Response

## VISITOR

Bill Clark of the Wildlife Investigations Laboratory, California Department of Fish and Game visited IBRRC on Friday, April 7. Topics of mutual interest discussed were cleaning techniques for oiled birds, treatment of avian botulism, mortality due to stress, and husbandry methods. Bill has worked extensively in research on avian botulism with the Disease Control Section, and is presently involved in preliminary research on toxicity levels of possible cleaning agents for oiled birds. We look forward to a mutual exchange of information and assistance in this area.

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### LAKE MERRITT BOTULISM EPIDEMIC

Botulism is a disease that has been responsible for the deaths of hundreds of thousands of waterfowl every year. It is a type of food poisoning caused by the release of toxin from the bacterium Clostridium botulinum. Symptoms are that of paralysis as the toxin prevents nerve transmission to muscle tissue. C. botulinum has six types designated A through F. Types A, B, E, and F affect humans, C affects waterfowl, and D is found in cattle.

The middle of August, 1971, brought type C botulism to Lake Merritt in Oakland, California. By the ninth of September the cases were increasing rapidly and IBRRC volunteered their services to help in the epidemic.

The sick birds were treated under the direction of James M. Harris, D.V.M. Anti-toxin was not available. It was necessary to flush out the intestinal tract with an epsom salt and water solution administered orally using feeding tube and syringe. Birds were tubed this solution every six hours until improvement was noted. Between treatments their natural diet was offered. Those not able to eat were tube fed liquid nourishment. Normal husbandry methods were used. Shade was provided and

the birds were wet down periodically.

At the same time, patrols around the lake collected sick birds and the carcasses of dead ones. Dead birds, mollusks, insects and vegetation along with maggots and organically rich mud are sources of the lethal toxin.

Birds were released after they demonstrated two days of normal behavior.

IBRRC was most pleased to have participated with the staff at Lake Merritt in the care and rehabilitation of the stricken waterbirds.

--Alice Berkner



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### ASPERGILLOSIS

In the last issue, I discussed oiled birds and a few of the problems associated with rehabilitating them: stress, oil ingestion, and feather condition. This time I'll limit the discussion to one of the major killers of captive wild waterfowl: Aspergillosis.

Aspergillus fumigatus is a common mold or fungus that is found in decaying vegetable matter. If you should accidentally scratch the surface of your eyeball, you can expect a slight infection of this fungus to follow unless preventative measures are taken. Infections of this fungus in humans, however, are rarely a serious health problem.

Investigations with birds suggest that spores of this fungus are found in nearly all healthy birds. A. fumigatus becomes a killer of birds when a bird's resistance is lowered or the incidence of airborne fungal spores becomes exceedingly high. Typically, inhaled spores then succeed in germinating on the surface of the bird's air sacs and in its lung tissue. The germinating spore forms a tiny stalk, or hypha, which gains its nourishment from the bird and in return produces a toxin. The one stalk vegetatively produces another and so on until the myriad hyphae form a fuzzy fungal plaque or mycelium. At this point the bird is

suffering from the disease of aspergillosis. Maturing hyphae develop a sporangium at their tip which produces spores that are released into the respiratory passages of the bird and may establish additional plaques in the same bird or be exhaled to present a danger to other birds. Death of the bird possibly results from a combination of factors: impaired function of the lungs, loss of air sac elasticity, and effects of the toxin.

Apparently a bird may be rendered susceptible to aspergillosis by almost any kind of stress: nutritional, thermal, psychological, hormonal, or chemical. There is some evidence that insufficient salt intake or a moult can stress captive penguins (which are already stressed simply due to their captivity) to the point where they contract aspergillosis.

The best way to prevent a bird from contracting aspergillosis is by allowing it to thrive in the wild. Should it be necessary to keep a bird in captivity, especially a seabird, I can at least list the measures that we and others have tried.

#### Prevention

Avoid exposing birds to straw or hay. Any material which might become moldy should be carefully and regularly inspected before being brought near birds. Spray pens with a 1% copper sulfate solution. English authors have suggested using aerosol disinfectants with the trade names "Polysan" and "Erasan 125".

Minimize and counteract stress. Dexamethasone is valuable in this regard. Various drugs have been used as preventatives yet there is too little data to indicate which may be best or what program of drug administration is most effective. It is possible that not all families of birds should be treated in the same way. Nystatin, Pimaricin, and aureothrycin (Aureosrycin) are all recommended by different authors for the prevention of aspergillosis. (Some of the drug names are trade names and I am totally ignorant of their composition.)



#### Cure

An infected bird may show one or more of the following symptoms: difficulty in breathing, lack of appetite, weight loss, coughing or sneezing, a rattling sound when breathing.

Amphotericin B administered as a mist (nebulized) for the bird to inhale is an effective treatment. Unfortunately a slight overdose kills the bird as well. Pimaridin, Nystatin, and nebulized Aureothrycin are also reported to be effective.

Although there is some room for optimism regarding drug therapy, every long-term rehabilitation effort is still plagued with heavy losses due to this disease. Obviously, further studies are needed.

--David C. Smith  
Director of Research

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