

# International Bird Rescue

## NEWSLETTER

A Quarterly Publication of the  
INTERNATIONAL BIRD RESCUE RESEARCH CENTER  
2701 Eighth Street, Berkeley, CA 94710

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### COURSE OFFERED AGAIN

On September 28, the first class in "Problems of Wildlife and Wildfowl: Crisis and Rehabilitation" was held at the University of California. Twelve people had registered but unfortunately the University requires 15 people to continue.

Although the quota was not met, it was decided to continue on at the Research Center in Berkeley. The small number of students might be partially attributable to the erroneous description of the course as published in the Extension Catalog.

The course is being offered again, however, through the Extension Program of the University of California and the corrected course description reads as follows:

#### Problems of Wildlife and Wildfowl:

Crisis and Rehabilitation

X405 (4 units)

(Forestry and Conservation)

Basic sciences and specialized disciplines needed to handle wildlife successfully in environmental emergencies. Ample opportunities to handle live fowl and to train in some of the aspects of avian husbandry.

Thurs 7-10pm, Feb. 8 to May 10  
225 Dwinelle Hall \$65

Please direct questions regarding individual or agency participation to IBRRC or University Extension in Berkeley.



### THE BERKELEY HUMANE SOCIETY

During the last 12 months, IBRRC has cared for over 600 birds representing an impressive number of species. Fortunately for us, the Berkeley Humane Society has contributed in numerous ways to make all of this possible.

A portion of the medical paraphernalia that we use on a daily basis comes from the Berkeley Humane Society. For example, many of the syringes that we use come from there and are later returned for autoclaving and re-use. We have used their X-ray equipment on many occasions in order to examine broken bones and locate lead shot.

Recently we have been utilizing their laboratory facilities for avian blood analyses. There is very little known about the normal parameters of blood constituents in many of the species that we treat and we are trying to fill this void of knowledge as rapidly as possible. When norms are established for a species then blood analysis can be used as a diagnostic tool.

We are deeply indebted to the entire staff of the Berkeley Humane Society for their freely given and generous assistance.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Bird Rescuers,

We love your ducks. The birds are pretty. We would like to come back.

--Ronique Marshalle Thompson  
Washington School  
Oakland

I read with great interest the article in the (Berkeley) Gazette, July 19. As Vice President of the Berkeley Humane Society I am glad that we have had a small share in helping with your work.

--Miriam McCurdy  
Vice President  
Berkeley Humane Society

You are doing a good job and hope you can continue until there is no need for you good folks.

--Richard Cohen



EXEMPT STATUS

On September 26, 1972, IBRRC received Federal tax exempt status as a non-profit organization. Donors may deduct contributions, bequest, and gifts.

ARTISTS

Drawings in the first volume of the Newsletter were done by:  
Jean Dillon (pp. 1, 5, 13, 17 left, 19, 21, 22, 27 bottom, 28)  
Alice Berkner (pp. 6, 9, 10, 17 right, 27 top)  
Charlotte Adamson (pp. 7, 9, 14, 16, 20)  
Leslie Johnson (page 25)

THANKS

We wish to thank Connie Illsley for her donation of a paper cutter, photographic film, and a check to cover the cost of flooring for bird pens.

We still need: chairs, floor lamp, shower stall, copy equipment, a good electric typewriter, and a postage scale.

We depend on your tax-deductible donations for our continued existence. In return we will send you our Newsletter.

|            |               |
|------------|---------------|
| Junior     | \$1 per year  |
| Student    | \$2 per year  |
| Regular    | \$5 per year  |
| Family     | \$10 per year |
| Supporting | \$100         |
| Sustaining | \$250         |

## A GUILLEMOT IN THE TUB

On the afternoon of July 18, a veterinarian friend appeared at the front door holding a paper bag and a bottle of pills. The bag contained one very sick immature Pigeon Guillemot. Tom had been working on his boat berthed on the Richmond channel when he saw the bird swimming in very tight circles, in obvious distress. The only means of retrieval available to him was a dog, Mac, a Labrador. Mac was sent out and performed magnificently delivering his charge without ruffling a feather. The vet noted symptoms of an intestinal infection, gave the bird an antibiotic injection and brought it to me. The following are excerpts from notes I kept during her stay with us.

- 18 July 4pm No external injuries noted. Bird is very thin and weak. Very thirsty, took a lot of water by dropper. Placed in covered box.  
8pm Force fed 2 whitebait (salt water fish about 5 inches long). Kept one down.  
10pm Very weak. I have no hope. The bird is lying down, can't hold up it's head. Fluid is draining from it's beak and it seems to have trouble breathing.
- 19 July 8am Surprise! One guillemot found standing in it's box. Force fed 2 fish, antibiotic and vitamins. Put in tub where she swam and drank. Back in box.  
10pm Given 2 fish every four hours. Swims and drinks after each feeding. The bird is much stronger. Tonight it made the high pitched whistle of its species.
- 20 July Much better. The bird is defensive now. It hops around in the box all the time. Must find some other place.  
6pm Problem solved. We have fixed up a ramp in the bathtub. The bird can get out of the water quite nicely. Today is the last day on antibiotics although I will continue with the vitamins.
- 21 July Bought some gold fish. Force feeding is such a strain on Gertrude (she HAD to have a name). She ignores them. Big day. Intensive preening noted for first time. Quite strong now.
- 22 July Much preening. Fish swim right along under the bird. Whistles on and off. Will leave whitebait in dish on ramp. Please start eating on your own!
- 23 July Joy!! Left four fish in dish last night. This morning they were all gone!! A good day. Ate eight fish by herself. Gertrude the Self Feeding Guillemot!
- 24 July Until today I have had to put her in the water. Things have changes. A great splashing about tonight. Bird discovers water. A lot of washing and preening.
- 25 July Gertrude is trying to tell me something. Tonight she was found walking down the hall into the living room. Put her back in the tub and she got out three more times. Telephone calls to Bird People. We all agree: Out she goes tomorrow!
- 26 July John Smail of Point Reyes Bird Observatory suggested Cronkhite Beach in Marin for release. Off we go, Gertrude hopping mad in her box. The waves look awfully strong. She walks into the water diving neatly under each wave. When last seen she was swimming strongly in the direction of the Farallones.

--Alice Berkner

## BIRD DROPPINGS

by  
Mal Raff

Just as a refresher to my last column, here are some additional figures from F.M. Chapman's "Handbook of Birds of Eastern North America".

|                 |           |      |              |
|-----------------|-----------|------|--------------|
| a Cedar Waxwing | contained | 100  | canker worms |
| a Cuckoo        | "         | 250  | caterpillars |
| e Chickadee     | "         | 454  | plant lice   |
| a Night Hawk    | "         | 60   | grasshoppers |
| a Flicker       | "         | 1000 | cinch bugs   |

a Scarlet Tanager devoured 650 Gypsy Moth caterpillars in 18 minutes!  
(that's a rate of 2100 per hour)

a (Maryland) Yellow Throat ate 3500 plant lice in 40 minutes!!  
(that's a rate of 5270 per hour!!!)

The value of our feathered insecticides, herbicides and rodenticides is generally badly underestimated and understated. Nevertheless it is obvious that some expense is incurred to care for them when they need aid. Although economic losses from bird prey (insects, weed-seeds, rodents, etc.) is measured in billions of dollars annually, funds for learning and research to help birds are not easily found.

I have estimated the cost of food in rehabilitating various species. These figures are based on experience and are given per individual for the 6-8 week period of captivity that we have found to be average. It is unfortunate that this society measures its values in terms of money. For this reason the cost of rehabilitation becomes an all-too-realistic number.

| Species   | Approximate Food Cost<br>(6-8 weeks) |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| Hummingbirds  | \$ .50                               |
| Rock Doves, Mourning Doves, etc.                    | 1.00                                 |
| Sparrows, Juncos, Finches (small)                   | 2.00                                 |
| Sparrows, Finches (large), Towhees, Grosbeaks, etc. | 6.00                                 |
| Tanagers, Orioles, Blackbirds, Mockingbirds, etc.   | 12.00                                |
| Thrushes (including Robins)                         | 16.00                                |
| Jays, Woodpeckers, etc.                             | 24.00                                |
| Water birds (average)                               | 18.00                                |
| Shorebirds, Coots, dabbling ducks                   | 8.00                                 |
| Diving ducks  | 16.00                                |
| Small Gulls   | 16.00                                |
| Large Gulls   | 24.00                                |
| Pelicans, Cormorants                                | 40.00                                |

The above costs do not reflect any other expenses such as medicines, supplies, utilities, rent, cages, upkeep, etc.

The birds are generally brought to us by people who have demonstrated the responsibility and intelligence to find immediate care for an injured wild animal. Like other humane agencies we cannot require these people to bear the cost of rehabilitation. The cost and effort can (perhaps must) be shared by all of us.

'Til next time..... what kind of container does the best insecticide come in?

MY WIFE MUST GREBE A-LOON\*

--a poem by Leslie Johnson

With my kids dearly longed-for, my darling wife missed,  
I wander the world adding to my Life List.  
Just six hundred more! I can rest in my urn  
Knowing I wasn't short, not by one Common Tern.  
Double-striped Thick-knee, Guanacaste Pewee,  
Equatorial Toothbill, Ocellated Poorwill,  
Paltry Tyrannulet, Olivaceous Piculet,  
A pair of Barrot's Fairy, and Hermits (Hairy),  
Flammulated Screech-owls and Uniform Rail--  
Glimpse of a Pit-sweat (only the tail).

Foliagegleaner, Leafscraper, Sapsucker, Seedeater,  
Woodpecker, Woodhewer, Worm-eating Warbler,  
Bushtit, Bananaquit, Godwit and Grasquit,  
Avocet, Barbet, Rhinoceros Auklet,  
Widgeon, Pigeon, Pintail and Puffleg,  
Pileated Chlorospingus sitting on an egg.  
Synallaxis, Grackle, Grand Potoo and Teal,  
Tick 'em off, kiss 'em off--that's how I feel.  
Goatsucker, Booby--you may say I'm a Loon,  
But when my Life List is done, you'll sing a new tune!

\* Leslie Johnson is presently doing research in Costa Rica.  
The birds mentioned are found in Mexico and Central America.



## BUMBLEFOOT

Inflamed, swollen leg joints and lameness has been an all too common problem with water birds that are being kept in captivity. This condition, bumblefoot, is particularly prevalent in diving birds undergoing rehabilitation following an oil spill. (Everything else that I have to say about bumblefoot is conjecture based on ignorance.)

Loss of function of a joint is the common outcome of bumblefoot but it is sometimes fatal especially for birds that are not in the best of health. For a diving bird, a lame foot is a double handicap and it cannot be expected to survive. Diving birds other than auks and penguins rely on feet for propulsion to procure food underwater. Diving birds generally need either a lengthy run across water or a fall off a cliff to become airborne. Once they are in the water a lame foot will prevent them from regaining the air.

Bumblefoot begins as a swelling in a leg joint involving the soft tissues of that joint (membranes, bursa, ligaments, tendons). This condition is called rheumatic arthritis. As the bumblefoot progresses it involves the harder tissues (cartilage and bone) and earns the name osteoarthritis. The result is often immobility of the joint and, of course, there is a medical term for this: ankylosis.

When symptoms similar to bumblefoot appear in wing joints, we have been calling it septic arthritis. This merely classifies the problem as an arthritis attributable to an infection. It may indeed be identical in every respect to bumblefoot but in order to establish that possibility we must first identify the causative organisms and microscopically examine affected tissues.

What organisms are responsible for bumblefoot? That question has never been answered to our satisfaction. Bacteriological cultures from bumblefoot lesions have shown the presence of the following organisms (singly or in combination):

*Staphylococcus aureus*, *Staphylococcus albus*, *Pasteurella multocida*, *Mycobacterium avium*, and *Escherichia coli*. Treatment with antibiotics, however, rarely seems to be at all effective in treating bumblefoot.

This suggests four possibilities:

- (1) Inappropriate antibiotics are being used.
- (2) The site of the lesion is sufficiently isolated from the bird's circulatory system to render standard antibiotic therapy ineffective.
- (3) The condition is able to persist even after the causative organisms are killed.
- (4) Bacterial infection is only a secondary circumstance of bumblefoot.

These four possibilities are not mutually exclusive and may all be true to some degree. I would like to venture the following comments on these possibilities.

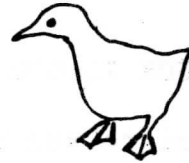
(1) In order to find an appropriate antibiotic, cultures should be made of the invading organisms and their sensitivity to various antibiotics determined.

(2) As there is little vascularization in joint capsules, it is best to administer antibiotics directly at the site of infection by means of injection.

(3) Irritation in a joint sets up a whole series of interrelated problems which can continue or even worsen following removal of the original irritant.

(4) It is possible that a virus may be responsible for the primary deterioration of joint tissues and that only then can bacteria invade these damaged tissues causing secondary infection. It is also possible that mechanical trauma such as blows or pressure may be responsible for the primary deterioration that clears the way for secondary bacterial infection. For birds that spend nearly all of their time in the water (e.g.: *Gaviidae* and *Podicipedidae*) merely resting on a hard surface may be sufficiently damaging to the hocks to cause bumblefoot.

The present literature lists cuts and abrasions on the feet as the causes of bumblefoot. Undoubtedly these would facilitate entry of



## JUNIOR BIRDGIRL

pathogenic organisms. In addition to cuts and abrasions must be added skin cracks caused by drying the feet of birds that normally have their feet in water a significant portion of the day.

One treatment that we have been investigating with some promising results is the use of salicylates (aspirin). Salicylates appear to reduce the swelling of the joint which of itself can be very destructive to joint tissues. Until we have had the opportunity of studying many more cases of bumblefoot in detail we will not be able to properly evaluate this or any other treatment.

--David C. Smith

## A CHURCH IN NEWARK

"Hello. I'm calling from a church in Newark (California) and we've got woodpeckers putting holes in the church building. Is there any way of stopping them other than killing them?"

"Killing them is not an alternative. Aside from any moral questions, it's illegal."

"I've been advised of that. But I don't want to replace the wood every year."

"Frankly, I don't know of any way to stop them. Are they likely to cause any structural damage that might endanger people?"

"No, but they fly around over people's heads and their droppings make a mess."

"Most folk enjoy seeing birds fly. I attract them to where I live with a bird feeder. I can't be upset because they don't use a restroom."

"So you're a humane organization that can't give any advice that might save these birds from getting killed?"

Amen?

You should all know about the Palace of Fine Arts catastrophe about the birds and the ducklings. Well I turned out to be a duckling girl too.

I worked about a month of my summer vacation time working with the birds.

Let me tell you about some of my jobs. (1) was to try to do all the jobs I could on the duty sheet (on different days it was different duties). (2) was to make sure all the ducklings had food and water. (3) was to clean out the duckling pens. (4) to feed the big ducks and geese, and so on.

It may seem to you I was always quite busy but not really. There were other people to help me do the jobs. In my spare time I played with some extra ducklings named Tina and Socortesse and Runt that I fell in love with. But soon it was all over and all the ducklings were put in one big pen and soon I liked another duckling more than Socortesse and named him Socortesse. After it all was all over I got to take them home.

Judy Berkner



## DUTCH DUCK PLAGUE

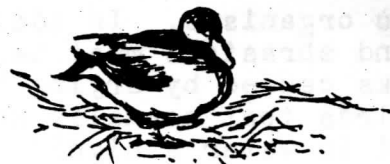
We are pleased to announce the release of the birds held in quarantine as reported in the last Newsletter. Not one was found to be carrying Duck Virus Enteritis.

We were given permission for the release by Dr. Merten Rosen of California Fish And Game. The great day was August 7. With much fanfare, television and press coverage, the birds were returned to the Palace of Fine Arts Lagoon.

We are deeply indebted to Sheryl Philpott, the J.K. Anderson family, Don Asami, John Hudak, and many others. Without their help we could not have done it.

## SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

IBRRC submitted a report on the Duck Plague outbreak to the Smithsonian Institution Center for Short Lived Phenomena. As a result, the Institution printed the report on post cards and sent them to agencies and individuals around the world who subscribe to this particular service. For those who are interested, the Duck Plague Outbreak in San Francisco is catalogued as "Event 41-72".



## SAVING THE BIRDS

"Saving the Birds" is the title of a weekly column written by Es Anderson for IBRRC and published in the Berkeley Gazette. It appears every Wednesday and features a different bird each time. The column consists of a photograph of the featured bird as well as text that:

- (1) explains why that bird became a patient of IBRRC,
- (2) describes the manner in which we are caring for the bird, and
- (3) gives a little background information on the species in general.

In time we may compile the more interesting installments into a book format and offer it in return for a predetermined donation. Selecting the installments may prove to be difficult since all are superbly written and all of our feathered patients are of great interest to us.

