

# International Bird Rescue

## NEWSLETTER

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

Non-Profit  
Tax Exempt  
Tel: (415) 841-9086

Volume 3

Number 1

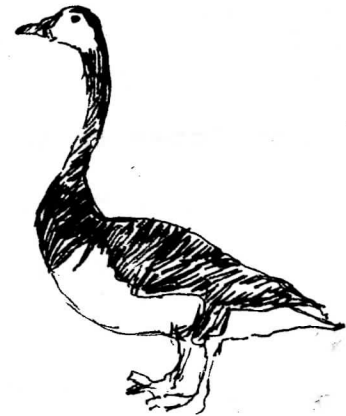
\* \* \* \* \*

### FORCED TO MOVE ! !

This issue of the Newsletter may be the last sent out from 2701 Eighth Street in Berkeley. The building we have occupied for the last three years is being sold and we have been asked to leave.

Attempts to find a new home have so far been to no avail but the search continues. It's not easy to find a free building and the Center's budget cannot afford rent.

At present we are trying to obtain use of inactive Navy property. This is a slow process and time is flying. Another idea is to find some building that is drawing taxes but vacant. Occupancy by Bird Rescue, a tax-exempt organization, would allow a tax break to the owner of such a building. The Berkeley Humane Society has offered to sell us the building we now occupy for \$75,000. Needless to say this is far beyond our financial capabilities. We have faith that something will turn up and will keep you all informed. Meanwhile wish us luck.



### BANDING PERMIT

Many people are under the misconception that once a bird has been in captivity for the treatment of some problem it's chances for survival in the wild are nil. Bird banding has proven otherwise. Banding is a vital part of any rehabilitation effort.

Banding in the United States is under the general direction of the Fish and Wildlife Service. About 20 million birds have been banded and a million or more are added each year. Records show that around one and a half million of these have been recovered.

Bird Rescue has recently been issued a Master-Station Bird Banding Permit. Until now we have depended on the Point Reyes Bird Observatory, the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife and the Alexander Lindsay Junior Museum to band our birds.

Bird Rescue is indebted to John Smail, Jack Downs and Gary Bogue for their help and constant encouragement.

Please tell others about us.  
Our subscription rates are:

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Student	\$2/year
Regular	\$5/year
Family	\$10/year
Contributing	\$25/year
Supporting	\$100
Sustaining	\$250
Corporate	\$500/year

Dear People,

Check inclosed for contributing subscription. Think your Newsletter is great and am letting some friends read it (more subscriptions, hopefully!)

My back yard has been full of birds all winter - they enjoy my smorgasbord. Bless their hearts, they bring such beauty to an otherwise dreary scene. Also a dividend - very few insects all summer.

Best wishes to you in your splendid work! Hope I may be able to send more later in the year.

Sincerely,

Martha McManis  
Keokuk, Iowa

My best Regards for the fabulous work.

Ethel Rene

Dear Bird Rescue

Thank you for my copy of Newsletter. Keep up the good work, beautiful people -

Sincerely

J. Hamilton

Dear Friends:

Membership check enclosed.

I enjoy the Newsletter. Happy to know of your good work. The 40.8% survival rate seems good.

Word of your activities is spreading. I was on the phone with my very-active-in-conservation-work brother in New York State and delighted to learn he knew about IBRRC. He banded 22 birds last Saturday.

Best wishes-

Anna C. Richardson



GOOD EGG AWARD

The first "Good Egg Award" of 1974 goes to the Peninsula Humane Society and their outstanding and dedicated staff for the incredible amount of work they contributed toward the rehabilitation of oiled murres in the most recent spill.

WE NEED:

A new home.

File folders (triple cut).

A telephone answering machine.

Volunteers.

A sea water pump and filter system.

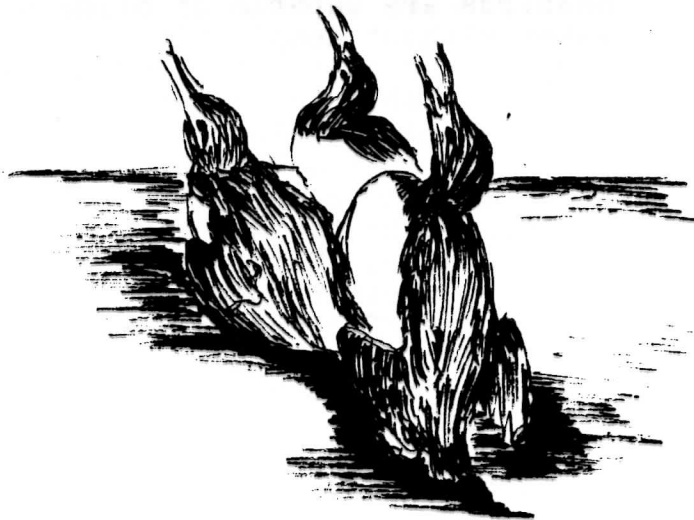
## OILED MURRES CLEANED

December was a very busy month. We treated over 100 oiled California Murres. Ninety percent of the birds were found along the San Mateo coast. The oil was identified as Bunker C by gas chromatography done by Chevron Research Company and also by the U.S. Coast Guard. The source of the oil was not found but it is suspected that a ship dumping ballast was the cause.

The Peninsula Humane Society cooperated with Bird Rescue to an outstanding degree. All the birds received by them were given emergency treatment and delivered directly to Bird Rescue. Often the staff of P.H.S. would stay far into the night helping clean, feed and water our many "patients".

Unfortunately the survival rate was low; 25% of the birds were released. The answer to this low rate is not yet known but I suspect that one reason could be low temperatures. This building is not heated and the weather at that time was far from hospitable. What is badly needed is a warm building and inside pools. Maybe next year.

Alice B. Berkner



## NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY WESTERN CONFERENCE

The 1974 Western Regional Audubon Conference was held April 6-9 at the Asilomar Conference Grounds on the Monterey peninsula. The conference was hosted by the Monterey Peninsula Audubon Society. Bird Rescue was invited to attend and bring along a display and information about our work. David Smith and Alice Berkner put together a display on a portable board kindly lent by Lindsay Junior Museum.

We were graciously received by Lincoln E. Gould, President of the Monterey Peninsula Audubon Society who directed us to the person in charge of displays. That person turned out to be none other than Norman MacIntosh, manager of the Starr Ranch Audubon Sanctuary.

Before going to Starr Ranch Norm had been at the Richardsons Bay Audubon Sanctuary and we were fortunate to have him on our Board of Directors. Another Board member attending the Conference was John Small, Director of the Point Reyes Bird Observatory. Directly and indirectly Bird Rescue was well represented.

The keynote address was given by Dr. Elvis J. Stahr, President of the National Audubon Society. Dr. Stahr emphasized the dire plight of the great whales and asked that the membership concern themselves with this vital conservation effort. He also discussed power source alternatives and urged that solar power be more fully investigated.

We felt the whole experience to be most worthwhile and look forward to the next Western Regional Conference.



## SALT METABOLISM FAILURE IN CAPTIVE MURRES

### TO THE RESCUE!

Bird Rescue has received many strange requests but one of the funnier ones came recently from the San Francisco Zoo. One of the animal keepers called to find out if we still cleaned birds with mineral oil. I informed him that we use solvent now. But on occasion mineral oil is the cleaner of choice. He wanted to know if we could spare any mineral oil. Jumping to conclusions, I told him that cleaning and rehabilitating oiled birds was no easy task and that it was best left to experts. Could the oiled bird be brought to Bird Rescue? There was no oiled bird. To my chagrin and delight the man wanted the oil for the pygmy hippopotamus and a rhinoceros. A rub down with oil prevents dry skin, a problem these animals have in captivity.

Bird Rescue was happy to donate the required amount of oil. However, one question remains: what do we call ourselves now?

Alice B. Berkner



**ABSTRACT:** Several Common Murres (*Uria aalge*) that had been in captivity for more than 6 weeks with access only to fresh water became ataxic and began convulsing within hours after changing the water to salt water equal in salinity to ocean water. One died before treatment could be started and the remainder recovered within minutes following oral administration of fresh water. During the next 6 days, the water in the pool was changed from fresh water to salt water equal in salinity to ocean water by gradual steps with no deleterious effects on the murres. A captive female Western Grebe (*Aechmophorus occidentalis clarkii*) shared the same facility yet at no time exhibited any discomfort even though it had been maintained on fresh water for over four months. Reaction to transition from fresh to salt water may be related to recent history of individual birds and to life histories of the species.

During the course of a year, our Center treats numerous Common Murres that are oiled, ill, or too young to fend for themselves. It occurred to us that we had never ascertained whether these birds could survive their return to the ocean after weeks or months of living in enclosures with access only to fresh water. Seabirds are capable of drinking sea water without dehydrating only so long as the salt gland, or nasal gland, is able to excrete sufficient salt (Schmidt-Nielsen 1958). Cooch (1964) indicated that activity of the salt gland in some species might be diminished by the drinking of less saline water. Nothing indicated, however, whether such a diminishment could be sufficient to compromise the survival of murres being returned to a sea water environment.

We wish to thank the Leslie Salt Company for the tons of salt they supplied to us. We also thank the

many people that have gone to the trouble of delivering sea birds to us that they have found on the beaches of central California.

**METHODS AND MATERIALS:** The birds were kept in an outdoor enclosure with a pool of water measuring 2 m wide, 3 m long, and 0.5 m deep. The balance of the enclosure was a ramp and deck.

The salt used to change the salinity of the pool was coarse sea salt supplied by the Leslie Salt Company of Newark, California. The salt was added to the fresh water pool while stirring until the desired salinity was achieved. Salinity was measured by hydrometer with a specific gravity of 1.025 used as the standard for ocean water equivalency. Specific gravity measurements were taken hourly during the day and adjustments made as required to maintain the desired values. The salinity was allowed to decrease during the night as there was a continual flow of fresh water into the pool in order to constantly drain off the surface layer of water.

**OBSERVATIONS:** Four murrens had been in this enclosure from 6 to 9 weeks and the grebe for 4 months while the pool contained only fresh water. On Day #1 of the test, the salinity was quickly raised to ocean water equivalency at 9 a.m. By 2 p.m. on the same day all four murrens had ceased eating and appeared very lethargic. The ambient temperature was about 30° C (85° F). At 2:30 p.m. two of the murrens had difficulty standing and started convulsing about five minutes later. One of the two died immediately. The other three murrens were removed from the enclosure and given fresh water by stomach tube at that time. Within 10 minutes, all three murrens were active, alert, and eating smelt. The grebe exhibited normal behavior and appetite the entire period. The pool was flushed with fresh water and the surviving murrens returned to

the enclosure.

On Day #2 salt was added to the pool to bring the specific gravity to 1.005. On each successive day the salinity was increased until ocean water equivalency was reached on Day #6. No abnormal behavior was observed in the murrens or grebe during this period.

**DISCUSSION:** It would appear that the murrens became severely dehydrated probably owing to diminished capability of the salt gland to remove excess salt from the body. The conclusion of severe dehydration was in part supported by the drier-than-normal appearance of the muscles and viscera of the murre that died. Evidence was found by Cooch (1964) that functional capabilities of salt glands may depend on the salinity of water in which the birds were recently living. Cooch observed that ducks captured from a more highly saline habitat "possessed glands that were 40 per cent more active than those" from ducks found in a less saline habitat. Cooch also cites a study by Heinroth and Heinroth (1926-1928) in which it was found that increased salinity of drinking water produced increased activity and size of the salt gland of Common Eiders (*Somateria mollissima*).

A comparison of the life histories of Western Grebes and Common Murrens suggests why they reacted differently in this study. Western Grebes live on fresh water during the summer and then migrate to salt water bays and coastline for the remainder of the year. It is, therefore, necessary for these birds to make the transition from fresh water to ocean water with a minimum of physiological distress. Such is not the case for the Common Murre. Murrens normally live an entirely pelagic existence with their salt glands presumably functioning more or less at a constant rate. Maintaining murrens on fresh water probably causes the salt gland to diminish in size and functional capability to the extent

that a rapid transition to ocean water is not possible without severe dehydration.

This study was preliminary at best. In order to arrive at any firm conclusions a further investigation is necessary wherein gland size, weight, and activity are measured as well as blood sodium levels.

David C. Smith

LITERATURE CITED:

Cooch, F. G. 1964. A preliminary study of the survival value of a functional salt gland in prairie anatidae. Auk 81(3): 380-393.

(Heinroth, O. and M. Heinroth. 1926-1928. Die Vögel Mitteleuropas in allen ... Vols. 1-3. Berlin, H. Bermühler.) Cited in Cooch (1964).

Schmidt-Nielsen, K. and R. Fänge. 1958. The function of the salt gland in the brown pelican. Auk 81 (3): 282-289.



CHRISTMAS CARDS

Last December, Bird Rescue implemented a "GIVE A BIRD FOR THE HOLIDAYS" fund raising project. "Season's Greetings" cards were designed and the format was as follows:

A \_\_\_\_\_ can be cared for by the Bird Rescue Center thanks to a donation made in your name by \_\_\_\_\_.

The back of the card listed the average rehabilitation costs of:

Gulls	\$2.00
Shorebirds	5.00
Auks, seaducks	10.00
Cormorants, herons	25.00
Pelicans, loons	50.00

People could choose from a large number of bird species that fit into one of the above categories.

April Fletcher took on the job of coordinating the project and did splendid work. We are indebted to KTVU, Oakland's Channel 2, for 'pushing' our product, Peggy Datz for the beautiful lettering and to Jeannie Dillon, the artist responsible for the Western Grebe that has almost become our trademark.

Perhaps this year we will plan far enough ahead so that our Newsletter readers will have an opportunity to send some of these cards to friends.



## GWENDOLYN GREBE



On April 15, 1973 a Western Grebe was brought to the Bird Center. She was found on the mud flats in Berkeley, a fishing line wrapped tightly around her right leg. The leg was very swollen and the line had cut through the skin severing the nerve and completely cutting off the blood supply. The grebe was medicated for stress and as her temperature was normal she was placed in our outside pool for observation. After several days it became apparent that the foot was dead and in order to prevent the spread of infection it was decided to amputate. The bird withstood the procedure well and the day after surgery was again in the outside pool. She was watched very carefully for signs of bleeding and her temperature was checked frequently. Also records were kept of how many fish she ate every day. During this time we were most interested in any signs of adaptation to her one-legged state. It was our hope that she would adapt enough for release into a sheltered environment. The first time the grebe was seen diving was an occasion to celebrate and although the dive was not perfect our hopes were high. As time went by it became painfully obvious that "Gwen", as she was now called, was doomed to permanent residency at the Center. She simply could not get up the underwater speed required to catch fish.

One might think that Gwen is useless but that is far from true. She has assisted in the recovery of many Western Grebes. When a new bird comes in they normally spend a few days inside in a pen. Gwen is removed from her pool and placed with the newcomer. As she "knows the ropes" she shows the new bird where the food is. That plus natural competition has 'New Grebe' eating on it's own in no time. I have also observed her picking up fish from the bottom of the outside pool and tossing them to new grebes. I doubt that this action is done with any thought of help on her part but it does show new grebes where to find food in the outside pool.

Gwen has been with us almost a year now. We are learning from her constantly and if she could think and feel it is my belief that her opinion of us would be a favorable one.

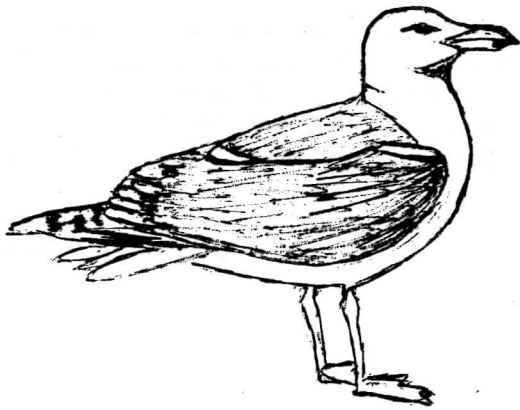
Alice B. Berkner



## WHO'S WHO AT BIRD RESCUE

MARTHA WILLIAMS is a new volunteer at the Bird Center. She became involved with birds at Bolinas during the 1971 San Francisco Oil Spill. She's a student at U.C. Berkeley studying wildlife preservation. As well as 'bird working' she has drawn over 50 illustrations for an audio-visual program of ours and helps with our never-ending paper shuffling (but she grumbles about it quite regularly just to let us know she's normal).

She's lived all over the U.S. and enjoys some "birdy" things - singing, and some non-"birdy" things - writing and organic agriculture.



## MAY WE DIGRESS?

Bird Rescue is just that: an organization dedicated to the rehabilitation of oiled, injured and ill birds. However anyone involved in the care of wildlife cannot help but be aware of the plight of many species threatened with extinction due to man's exploitation. I am speaking specifically of whales. Their situation is desperate. If whaling by Japan and Russia continues the greatest of all living creatures will vanish from the earth. Once gone there will never be another.

For information on what you can do to help write to:

### 1905 'BIG BIRD'

As I was browsing through the January 30, 1905 issue of the New York Times, I stumbled upon this interesting little article. Seabird rehabilitation is nothing new, so it seems.

#### SEAGULL COATED WITH ICE.

Bird Falls Exhausted Into a Yard at Danbury, Conn.

(Special to The New York Times)  
Danbury, Conn., Jan. 29. - A seagull measuring six feet from wing tip to wing tip fell last night into the yard of Moses A. Wheeler, who lives on Thorpe Street. The bird was exhausted from an evident long flight and covered with ice. Its beak was frozen shut and icicles hung from its breast.

It is supposed that the gull was blown in from the coast during the recent storm and became exhausted in an effort to fly back to the ocean. The capturer of the bird will set it free as soon as more favorable weather comes.

I rather doubt that gulls back in 1905 enjoyed such prodigious proportions so presumably either the dimensions or the species identification was somewhat in error.

David C. Smith

Animal Welfare Institute  
P.O. Box 3650  
Washington, D.C.  
20007

or

Project Jonah  
Box 476  
Bolin, CA  
94924



### IN THE NEXT ISSUE:

Bird Rescue goes to Monterey.  
Bird Rescue goes to Flagstaff.  
Bird Rescue goes to Washington.  
Bird Rescue 