

A wake up call



Tiny victim: An Eared Grebe is washed of oil at IBRRC's bird center during the November 2007 spill that hit San Francisco Bay. A container ship spilled more than 50,000 gallons of oil. Photo: Russ Curtis – IBRRC

Cosco Busan oil spill shakes up San Francisco Bay

By Jay Holcomb
IBRRC Executive Director

The Cosco Busan spill of November 7, 2007 is now a part of San Francisco Bay oil spill history. Granted, its impact does not come close to that of the Oregon Standard oil spill in 1971 or the disastrous effects that the Apex Houston oil spill had on birds in 1986. Both of those spills left legacies that included the loss of tens of thousands of aquatic birds that relied on the San Francisco Bay Area for refuge. The Cosco Busan oil spill is the first significant oil spill in San Francisco Bay since the Cape Mohegan spill in 1997. It acted as a wake up call for the public, government and response agencies as it renewed dormant concerns about the environmental vulnerability of the San Francisco Bay Area.

Oil spills are just plain horrible but in their

wake they leave opportunities for growth, improvement and reflection. In this case the opportunities included the promotion of better protection of the San Francisco Bay Area and an interest in improving all aspects of oil spill response in California.



Busy: Mark Russell of IBRRC collects oiled birds in Berkeley.

These are the gifts, if you will, of this spill. An oil spill being called “a gift” may sound unusual or even ridiculous but we at IBRRC have learned to look for the opportunities that spills provide, the silver lining around them, and we have gained a broader perspective on oil spills. Let us be clear that we wish they did not exist, but they do and will continue to occur as long as we transport petroleum products. So, oil spills and their impacts are nothing new to us. Some of them have been so disastrous and horrific that they are still difficult for us to talk about. We work the front lines of oil spills,

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Volunteers lend a big hand in spill

By Ann Yasuda
IBRRC Volunteer Coordinator

“I want to help. What can I do?” These words were voiced daily from San Francisco Bay Area residents, and from other concerned Northern California residents watching in horror as local news agencies covered the oil spill that resulted from the Cosco Busan striking the Bay Bridge. Images of blackened beaches and helpless sea birds dripping with oil touched a nerve in local residents and emotions ran high as citizens wanted to know more about the spill and where they could go to help. When news spread about the Cosco Busan oil spill, our network volunteers and past oil spill volunteers immediately called offering their assistance. The news quickly spread to the general public that IBRRC needed help and from that moment on the phone lines rang non-stop for the next few weeks.

The tremendous number of convergent volunteers and phone inquiries was staggering at times but necessary to keep all the zones properly staffed and birds moving throughout the system. It was a humbling sight to see 150 to 180 convergent and network volunteers working the different areas during the peak of the oil spill and seeing our facility challenged by the sheer number of birds and humans in close quarters. As always, we were impressed by all the stories of individuals willing to sacrifice their weekends,

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When it rains, it pours

By Jay Holcomb

IBRRC Executive Director

It has been a year since the Cosco Busan spill oiled birds and beaches in the San Francisco Bay area and began a series of

responses. As most of you know, IBRRC

Director's message

is no stranger to oil spills. Responding to oil spills and rehabilitating birds and other animals impacted by spills is our unique legacy.

In fact, we have now responded to over 200 oil spills in the US and in 14 different countries, which probably fits somewhere in the world book of records.

I wish this were not so, because every spill is really an environmental disaster with consequences that are just plain horrible and not always known for decades. To be associated with them just keeps us reminded of their deadly impact and that they exist and probably will continue to exist due to our use of petroleum products.

The Cosco Busan spill was devastating to wildlife in our precious Bay Area. IBRRC worked as part of the Oiled Wildlife Care Network (OWCN) to care for as many oiled birds as we could capture. Right smack in the middle of that spill we began receiving slimed but clearly not crude oiled birds from what turned out to be a mystery event around the Santa Cruz area. We more or less threw them in the mix and worked to rehabilitate them.

In early January we got wind of another large mystery oil spill off the coast of Southern Argentina and a request for our assistance

soon followed. IBRRC works with The International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), to provide response services for oil spills that impact wildlife around the world. Although we have an awesome team of oil spill responders in South America, I went down specifically to help work with the large numbers of grebes and steamer ducks that had been impacted along with over 200 Magellanic Penguins.

As this was commencing we experienced another “natural seep” oil spill in Southern California that kept our already busy staff at the San Pedro Center busier and exhausted. These types of spills tend to show up after large storms that stir up natural seep oil.

That is how we ended 2007 and brought in 2008. Oiled birds everywhere for three months, one event after another and many demands on our clinics and staff. This is the reality of our type of work.

We entered into the early months of 2008, leaving the spills behind only to be hit with hundreds of sick ducks and grebes that were not oiled but showing up along our coastline. Then spring hit and our clinics were filled with baby animals and the usual pelicans with fishing tackle injuries.

Because time has moved so quickly this year we decided to fill you in on what we have been up to. We hope this will inspire you and inform you. Most importantly, we want you to know that it is because of your support and kindness we have been able to do this important work. For this, we are very grateful.



Great Grebe, Argentina

New IBRRC blog: A source for more bird rescue news

Just two days following the Cosco Busan spill on November 9, 2007 IBRRC launched its first blog in an effort to communicate more with its online supporters and the general internet community.

The site allows IBRRC to quickly post photos, videos and stories about its bird rescue efforts. It also gives readers an opportunity to leave feedback and ask questions.

“Our hope from the start was to connect more deeply with readers on the importance of our work,” said Russ Curtis, IBRRC’s Technology Manager and the blog’s creator and editor. “It also gave us a place to vent our frustrations *and* the public’s anger over the bureaucratic snafus following the spill.”

See the blog: <http://intbirdrescue.blogspot.com/>



A place for the pelicans

Community support helps build new aviary

Each year 150 to 300 sick, injured, or oiled endangered Brown Pelicans are collectively admitted to our California centers for treatment. Common pelican afflictions that we see are botulism, domoic acid poisoning, entanglement in fishing line, hook and other injuries and various illnesses. Our success with this species is very good as over 80% of the pelicans that we care for are released back into the wild.

In 2002 we built a pelican flight aviary approximately 95 feet long, 15 feet high and 30 feet wide at our Southern California center. This aviary was unique as it was the only aviary in California that can house over 50 pelicans at a time. In seven years it has served as a rehabilitative aviary for over 1,000 Brown and White Pelicans and many other seabird species including Cormorants, Terns, Gulls, Frigatebirds, Albatross and Boobies. Our Northern California rehabilitation center had not been able to similarly meet the need for appropriately housing pelicans. This center services all of the San Francisco Bay area and surrounding coastal regions.



Ouch: A Brown Pelican caught with fish hook in its eye. It was treated and released. Photo: Jay Holcomb/IBRRC

In 2007, thanks to a generous grant from the Green Foundation and funding from the California Department of Fish and Game, IBRRC and the Oiled Wildlife Care Network (OWCN) designed and built a new 100-foot long aviary at the San Francisco Bay Oiled Wildlife Care & Education Center in Fairfield, CA.

The aviary includes pools providing adequate water surface for the pelicans to swim and exercise. It can house up to 75 pelicans at a time. In addition to adequate flight space and pools, extra structural support is provided to withstand the strong wind of the Suisun marsh during certain times of the year. The pelican aviary is also fitted with galvanized steel cross-beams and twenty-foot by eight-inch poles for a strong foundation and support.

The new flight aviary was completed – just in time – in May 2008, as an overwhelming number of pelicans competed this summer with fishermen for large quantities of schooling fish in Santa Cruz/Monterey Bay areas. We began receiving an extraordinary influx of pelicans with entanglement, fish hook and tackle injuries. We were receiving 10-12 birds a day until California Fish and Game stepped in to close the local piers to fishing.

Location	Fishing line injuries	Intakes as of 10/15/08
San Pedro	75	230
Cordelia	89	210
Totals	164	440



New: A 100-foot flight aviary at the Fairfield center allows us to care for more pelicans.

The influx of pelicans was taxing our centers, as the San Pedro facility was also receiving unusually large numbers of pelicans in their clinic. Our fish bill alone climbed to nearly \$40,000. When we continued to see injured birds, an urgent appeal was sent to our membership, who graciously responded by helping us with much needed funds.

This year, many individuals elected to become a Pelican Partner, a unique IBRRC program that includes a personal tour of the facility, watching the federal banding of your pelican and attending and experiencing the magic of its release back to the wild. For more information on pelican adoption or the Pelican Partner program go to: <http://tinyurl.com/4vfgd6>



Winged memorial: Donna Baker

Donna Baker loved pelicans her entire life. Her sister-in-law, Kimberlee, arranged a tour for the Baker family at our San Pedro center. The experience, which was described by the family as “awe inspiring” culminated in watching two pelicans receive their federal bands and participating in their release as they flew back to the Pacific Ocean.



Donna and sons

The Baker’s saw how the 100-foot pelican aviary at the San Pedro facility was instrumental in the pelican’s recovery. When they learned that the Cordelia center did not have a similar aviary, it was through Donna’s inspiration that a matching grant was created to build a new pelican aviary in Northern California.

Donna passed away from cancer at the age of 47 on February 16, 2008 leaving two young sons and a husband, but her memory lives on at our Fairfield pelican aviary.

Bald Eagles stuck in gooey fish oil rescued in Alaska

By Karen Benzel
IBRRC reporter

When 50 Bald Eagles eyed a free meal at a fish processing plant in Kodiak, Alaska on January 12, 2008, what followed was tragic and deadly. A dump truck full of oily fish guts that was supposed to be covered became a death trap when the hungry birds landed on it. Twenty-two became mired in the quicksand-like goo and suffocated while thirty others became covered in oil as they gorged themselves. Workers at the Ocean Beauty Seafood plant had to dump the load on the floor of the plant in order to get to the victims.

Bald Eagles, our nation's symbol, are protected by federal law. When US Fish and Wildlife was summoned, they arrived to find the surviving birds helpless and in critical condition from being wet with oil and hypothermic from being in below freezing temperatures. USFWS personnel attempted to wash some of the birds but they clearly needed expert help. Fish oil is one of the hardest oils to remove from bird's feathers and if any oil or soap residue remained on the eagles, their waterproofing would be compromised; they would die if released.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) contacted IBRRC's Director of Response Services, Barbara Callahan, and asked for assistance and guidance to try to save these birds. Their best hope of survival was to get them to IBRRC's center in her hometown, Anchorage, AK. The Alaska Wildlife Response Center (AWRC), created in 1991, was specifically set up to wash and rehabilitate oiled birds. During the Exxon Valdez, IBRRC staff successfully washed and rehabilitated 32 eagles. Although dedicated to waterfowl and aquatic birds, IBRRC has washed many different species, including raptors and mammals. Online, AWRC: <http://tinyurl.com/3kmkwk>

When the AWRC is not being used for oil spills, it is utilized by Bird TLC a non-profit organization dedicated to helping sick and injured birds in need. Bird TLC's staff and volunteers also sprang into action, readying the center for the arrival of such important patients, turning up the heat to 80 degrees so the birds would be warm and arranging for the



Eagles on the mend: Bald eagles rests at Anchorage, Alaska bird center. Photo: Dave Dorsey/BTLC
salmon, one hundred pounds a day, that the eagles would need while in care.

The arrival of the first 18 eagles (one un-oiled eagle was sent in with these) went smoothly but 13 got stuck in Kodiak when the weather turned bad. Luckily a window of opportunity allowed them to fly out and they arrived at AWRC the evening of January 14.

Upon intake the eagles were examined, weighed, had blood work done and their temperatures taken. The washing process takes about an hour, lots of warm water, unscented Dawn dish detergent and three or four handlers. It is a very stressful process for the birds, who normally would avoid humans at all costs. Due to the stress involved in washing, birds must be medically stabilized before they are sent to wash, which usually takes at least a couple of days and are then monitored closely during the washing process. IBRRC's Barbara Callahan worked with

Bird TLC to oversee the washing process and train BTLC staff to wash and rinse the birds effectively. It went well except for one bird who was in critical condition on arrival with a low body temperature and suffering from exhaustion. That bird died Monday evening.

After washing and rinsing, the eagles went into cages and were dried with commercial dryers blowing warm air on them. When dry, their feathers were thoroughly checked, particularly under the wings and legs to see if any oil was still present. Living in a cold and wet climate, waterproofing is critical to survival. If necessary they undergo spot cleaning to become, well, spotless.

After the wash and dry process, birds usually require at least a couple of weeks of reconditioning time to become waterproof and medically fit. During this time, BTLC staff misted the birds with water several times per day, which encouraged the birds to preen and realign their feathers.

Each bird received a permanent federal band which will identify them for life, should they ever come into care again. Of the remaining 29 birds, all but one was able to be transported back to Kodiak Island and released. The last remaining eagle is still in care at Bird TLC.

Ocean Beauty Seafood is being investigated by the USFWS who will determine if charges will be filed.

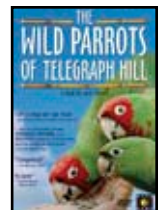
IBRRC thanks the following groups:

Bird TLC: <http://www.birdtlc.net/>

USFWS: <http://www.fws.gov/>

"Gigi" the rescued pelican in new film production

Judy Irving, producer/director of *The Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill*, has started a new documentary tentatively entitled *Pelican Dreams*. The film will feature "Gigi" (aka "P-193"), the young brown pelican who recently landed on the roadway of the Golden Gate Bridge. After being brought to WildCare in San Rafael, Gigi was transferred to IBRRC's new pelican aviary in Cordelia, where she recuperated for one month. At first she was underweight and exhausted, but with rest and lots of fish she regained her strength and energy, and was released back to the wild on September 12th. *Pelican Dreams* could become a feature documentary if funding can be secured to film at the Channel Islands and additional locations. A two-disc "Collector's Edition" of the *Wild Parrots* film is available: <http://www.pelicanmedia.org/store.htm>



International spill response team's presence continues to grow

For more than a decade, International Bird Rescue Research Center (IBRRC) and the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) have been teaming up to respond to large-scale oiled wildlife events, provide training and consultation to industry and governments and are now recognized around the world as a premier wildlife rescue team.

IBRRC and IFAW have both brought technical expertise and experience around the world through this partnership and have been effective in helping tens of thousands of animals.

In November of last year, while most of the IBRRC team was busy with the Cosco Busan spill in San Francisco, IBRRC Director of Response Services, Barbara Callahan, along with IFAW Emergency Response (ER) Veterinarian, Valeria Ruoppolo, flew to the Black Sea in Russia to help assess the oiled wildlife situation that occurred when several ships sank during a violent storm. The Russian Ministry of the Environment made a special request to the IFAW Russia office for our team to come and assist. Unfortunately, by the time the request came, there was little we could do on the ground for that spill. We have since been working with the Russian Ministry to provide training in oiled wildlife response. In January 2008, IBRRC hosted a week long training in oiled wildlife response and management for a group of 10 from Russia and the Ukraine. This information sharing is a cornerstone of the work that IBRRC and IFAW do together as it continually increases capacity in places that have little or no oil spill response experience.

In late December 2007, there was a mystery spill in the south of Argentina and it didn't take long for the team to decide it had to respond to the oiled wildlife in the pristine waters of Patagonia. By the first of the year, over 400 birds including Magellanic penguins and Great grebes were being cared for by the Fundación Patagonia Natural and they needed assistance. The first wave of IFAW/IBRRC team members to arrive in Patagonia were the Latin American contingent, followed closely by IBRRC Director, Jay Holcomb and Rehabilitation Manager, Michelle Bellizzi. In the days ahead, team members arrived from IFAW headquarters in Massachusetts, as well as from Mexico and Germany. This very unique team, one that has managed the largest oiled wildlife responses in the world included Jay Holcomb who managed the team caring for nearly 20,000 oiled African penguins during the Treasure spill. This direct experience and training positions us well for responding to disasters such as this mystery spill in Patagonia.

Over the course of the following two months, team members and staff from Fundación Patagonia Natural set up a rehabilitation center and cared for over 600 oiled birds. The total number of birds that were brought into care in Patagonia was 642 and of those, more than 312 were released. A large number of the birds treated were Great grebes who are very difficult to handle in captivity and most died or had to be euthanized due to severe keel lesions.



Before release: Sergio A. Rodriguez Heredia grades a penguin to see if it's fully waterproof. Valeria Ruoppolo (above) examines a juvenile penguin before release.

The government has located the responsible party for the spill and that party is required to help with clean up costs and some of the wildlife costs.

Shortly after the spill in Patagonia, IBRRC and IFAW staff were back in Argentina, attending the First Latin American Congress on the Rehabilitation of Marine Fauna, which IFAW helped sponsor. Team members from both organizations were asked to share their experience and training by providing keynote addresses or present talks on oiled wildlife response and aquatic bird rehabilitation. Over 300 people from 8 Latin American countries attended this first Congress.

In June of 2008, the team responded to Uruguay to assist with penguins oiled from a tanker spill, this one right near Montevideo. Last year, the team worked with the SOCOBIOMA group who already was caring for the oiled birds. When the team arrived, there were over 100 penguins in care. The Municipality of Punta del Estes provided a water park for the response. On-scene Coordinator was IFAW's Valeria Ruoppolo and strategic planning and logistical support were provided by IBRRC's Jay Holcomb and Barbara Callahan.

In addition to the 139 oiled penguins and grebes, there was a giant petrel admitted that was released after care. In total, 128 birds were successfully rehabilitated and released.

In October 2008, the ER Team, along with colleagues from the Center for the Recovery of Marine Animals (CRAM), Institute for Aquatic Mammals (IMA) and the environmental authority in Brazil, IBAMA, successfully rehabilitated and released young Magellanic Penguins that had been stranded in Brazil hundreds of miles from their usual feeding grounds. According to penguin researcher, Dr. Dee Boersma, the flow of warmer water (1° C higher than normal) caused the juvenile penguins to keep heading north where they were unable to find adequate food.

Later the team made history by releasing 372 penguins together after being flown south on a military C-130 transport plane.

"We are overjoyed to see these penguins waddle back to the ocean and have a second chance at life," said veterinarian Dr. Valeria Ruoppolo of the ER Team.

Read more on the IBRRC blog: <http://tinyurl.com/53tjb2>

With appreciation

It is through the generous support of all our contributors that we are able to help as many birds as we do. With this issue of "On the Wing" we recognize the supporters of IBRRC. We endeavor to continue to evolve and grow our organization in our service to wildlife and to the public, and we are very grateful for all the generous gifts received.

This list is current from January 1, 2008. We apologize if we have missed anyone. Please bring errors to the attention of the Development office: (707) 207-0380 Ext. 105 or Laurie@ibrcc.org.

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New bird vans: DAWN to the rescue

Thanks to a generous grant from our friends at DAWN and Procter & Gamble, IBRRC now has a rescue and transport van at each of our centers in California. These "Wings on Wheels" vans allow us to safely move birds during oil spills and in our daily rehabilitation efforts.

Thank you!

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 Maria L. Gutierrez
 Joanne M De Lucia
 Jane Dang
 Laura Klein
 Jonathan Tan
 Joyce A Reeder
 Molly J. Rannells
 Ekaterina Bassett
 Linda M Morgan
 Christine Cohen
 Ellen E. Wulf
 E.W. Jewell
 J.B. White
 Susan Peters
 TerraSano
 Meggie Rufo
 Carolyn Gill
 Birgit Kalvelage
 Terry T. Schaeffer
 David R McClintock
 Anthony C. Gilbert
 Ellen Coster

Jean Steffensen
 Mary Beauchamp
 Diane M. Turruff
 Anita Marlin
 Mary S. Duffey
 Michael R Dziejcie
 Benton & Smith
 Diane Uthe
 Joan Bishop
 A.B. Bruck
 Sandi Perlman
 Joshua Kaplan
 Frances M. Mazzeo
 Pamela E Williams
 Veronica Bowers
 Marion Krause
 Della Dash
 Richard Eyheralde
 Tracy Benton
 Diane Mulholland
 Blowfish Corp
 Barbara Orr
 Tobin I Neer
 Warren P Newmark
 Rainwater
 Elizabeth J. Rider
 Marianne Daft
 Margaret Eckert Wills
 Joyce T. Todd
 Kimberly Mosler
 Lorraine Saia
 Martha Ryder Hulse
 Gordon Louttit
 Michael A Yagjian
 Sharon Kantanen
 Mary Ann Harr
 Harold Eidsath
 Nora Coyne
 John Miller
 Lloyd And Christine Wright
 Lynn Mitchell
 Joan M Turner
 Erica Katz
 Kat Schroeder
 Starlyn C. Howard
 Stephen M Dyke
 Jean Palmeter
 Tina Kroot

Connie Lee Harper
 Stefanie Marie Trutanic
 Ann Barnett
 Ruthie Marks
 Gerald Jostes
 Diana Leon
 Daphne F. Plane
 Themis Americas
 Susan Rudnicki
 Dorothy Y. Laird
 William A Morton
 Brian Dunne
 Kathleen P. Koehler
 Lance Hedrick
 Jane Lee Daffner
 Kathryn A Roark

Haley comes to the rescue

Motivated by seeing an oiled bird from the Cosco Busan spill, animal lover Haley Gee, got a bucket and started asking everyone she met for donations. The 9-year-old from Berkeley, CA decided to help our bird rescue efforts. She and her fellow bird club members at the Berkeley Montessori School raised about \$400.



Kid support: Gee

“I saw a picture in the newspaper a few days after the spill. The picture was of a bird that was covered in oil. I felt really sorry for the birds...” said Haley.

Thanks to Haley and her classmates, the Haley Gee Bird Rescue Fund has picked up another \$1,500 in public funds.

Read more online: <http://tinyurl.com/2g5ajh>

Gretchen L. Thompson
 Robert Baillie
 Bruce A Choate
 Bryan E Stanek
 Mireille Boyd
 Patricia Mc Gann
 Catherine Obrien
 Steven Wheeler
 Algis P. Basiulis
 Robin P. McDonald
 Linda Roth
 Walter H Hensolt
 Brian C Trekell
 Deahn Kincaid
 Louise Chiatovich
 Britt Leach
 Cherlyn Ingram
 David Wimpfheimer
 Margaret Pantan
 Carol Faith Hughes
 Linda M Bayless
 Loren L. Carlington
 Jan H Kosco
 Joan Hyra
 Judith Ann Kordich
 Brad M. Colby
 Henriette Krug
 Mr. & Mrs. Williams

Eric Skolnick
 Oriana Lewallen
 Jane M. Korbett
 Birder's Lounge
 David G Youmans
 Lisa L. Parlier
 Janet R. Workman
 Odyssey Power
 Marguerita A. Scannell
 Barbara Orr
 Dave Weeshoff
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 Cynthia C Warren
 Monica Duclaud
 Loren L. Carlington
 Charlotte F. Logemann
 Karen M. Sloan
 Leanda Shrimpton
 Theresa JO Marion
 Harriet Guberman
 Kristen Hopper
 Jennifer Chau
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 Susan Luong
 Teresa Goad
 Randal Potts
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 Diana Goldstein
 J R Starnes
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 Karen Benzel
 Karen Traina
 Sarah Utsler
 Jean Steffensen
 Helen M Kelso
 John Zadikian
 Ginny Devasto
 Pauline White
 Carol Lopilato
 Barbara Landkammer
 Chet Mehta
 Anita Marlin
 Janet C. Barry
 Donna R Callison
 Ringler
 Carl E Jensen
 Kimberly Fernandez
 Ernie Vizuet
 Peter Castro
 Kieran Clifford
 Robert B. Simeone
 Joan Bloom
 Kara Heinrich
 Renee Snyder
 Shirley Despal
 Karen Glenn
 William Parnel
 Liz Craig
 Maril Myers
 Lorraine Pickus

Giving spotlight: Acts of generosity

- San Pedro volunteer **Andrew Harmon** celebrated his special day by holding a birthday fundraising party. He requested donations be made to IBRRC instead of gifts. IBRRC received over \$1,500 in donations from his guests.
- **Duane Titus**, an IBRRC Oil Spill Response Team member, donated his electrical expertise to help us re-wire a new phone/communications system at the San Pedro Bird Center. It saved IBRRC thousands of dollars and improved our ability to effectively help birds.
- **Aaron Crasnick's** right of passage in the Jewish tradition became an extraordinary gift to six wildlife organizations. Instead of Bar Mitzvah presents, the 13-year-old asked for cash contributions that he would then donate to his select group of wildlife organizations. IBRRC benefited from Aaron's generosity by receiving a \$500 gift basket filled with useful items for the bird hospital. **Thanks to all!**

Birds leave their mark

Unusual species and banded bird reports

Frigatebird

As January arrived, heavy rains and powerful winds battered the coast of Northern California. IBRRC received its usual winter patients; weak and grounded grebes and loons, many species of waterfowl and always some surprises. On January 5th, 2008 Sonoma County residents, Dana and John Naber, found a strange bird perched in a tree near the ocean that seemed distressed and out of place. After consulting their bird ID books, they came to the conclusion it was a Frigatebird, usually only found in warm, tropical areas. Recognizing that the bird was in trouble, they called their local wildlife rescue center where they initially encountered disbelief.

After two days, with help from several agencies and a window washer with a 40 foot ladder, the bird was captured and taken to the Bird Rescue Center in Santa Rosa where it was hydrated before being rushed to IBRRC for specialized care. Upon intake at IBRRC the bird was determined to be in critical condition with a temperature and body weight far below normal. Many times birds so close to starvation don't make it. "We honestly did not expect this bird to survive" said IBRRC Director, Jay Holcomb. "We always ask the questions, why and how did this bird become so sick and emaciated and will those reasons determine its outcome? We had no way of knowing what we were dealing with so we provided the best supportive care that we could. It was only because of the expert care that our rehabilitation staff provided to the bird that brought it through those touchy days and eventually to release."



The bird caused a sensation among Northern California birders and while it was being rehabilitated some of California's most famous bird identification experts came and eventually identified the bird as a young Magnificent Frigatebird (*Fregata magnificens*) that is considered rare in Northern California.

Once the bird was approved for release our responsibility was to give it the best opportunity to get back into its intended environment without the immediate challenge of fighting a storm or strong winds. The warmer climate of Southern California and less risk of bad weather played heavily in our decision to release the bird in that area. We know from records of sightings that frigatebirds are seen in the southern regions of the state more regularly than the north. Four years prior we had released another frigatebird near Tijuana. It was determined that this bird would be released from the cliffs on the windward side of Catalina Island where it could catch the breezes and take off.

The bird was banded and successfully released on Catalina Island on Monday, February 4, by Marie Travers, Assistant



Rehabilitation Manager, who said, "The release could not have gone better. The bird jumped from the carrier, spreading his seven-foot wingspan and catching the wind, took off. He soared above us a long time, living up to his name Magnificent Frigatebird, and it was an amazing sight to behold."

Why was the release so secretive? This was somewhat intentional for the sole reason that with true pelagic birds such as Frigatebirds, Albatrosses and Boobies we are always cautious about how they will react when released. We have had birds crash, get confused, sit on small rocks to incubate them and so on and we have had to bring birds back to the center until they could get their bearings. The last thing we wanted was a lot of media filming this.

We really did not feel we could schedule a press event with the logistical challenges we had in getting the bird to Southern California, out on a boat – 26 miles off the coast – and to a spot where the winds would help it take off, in between storms and so on. We also felt that it was important to give the bird the best opportunity to get back into its intended environment (the open ocean but from land in case there was a problem) without the immediate challenge of fighting a storm or strong winds.

Banded Birds Report

IBRRC federally bands all the birds that we release. Band returns or sightings are one of the ways that we have of assessing our work. Not all band recoveries come to us from sightings of live birds but none-the-less each report gives us valuable information. Bands are sometimes found on dead birds or reported by hunters, our most common source of band returns.

Typically only one percent of those bands are ever reported back. Through these reports we are able to evaluate treatment regimes and know if a bird survived.

The following are discoveries of a few birds who were sighted or found far from the release site and long after they were released indicating that they experienced other problems that led to their demise. **Read about Munch:** <http://tinyurl.com/4dxozq>

Great Blue Heron

On July 23, 1996 a Great Blue Heron, tangled in fishing line with fishing hooks embedded in its wing was captured and brought to the Alexander Lindsay Museum in Walnut Creek, CA. The young hatchling year bird was stabilized and treated for puncture wounds from hooks and abrasions from entanglement in fishing line.

The following day the bird was brought to the International Bird Rescue Research Center's old aquatic bird rehabilitation facility in Berkeley, CA. The bird was put on a regimen of antibiotics and



Mystery no more: Moss Landing spill part of red tide phenomenon

About two weeks into the Cosco Busan oil spill we began receiving reports of many birds showing up on the beaches from Santa Cruz to Monterey and a large number of birds showing up at Moss Landing. Initial reports were that they were oiled and we feared that the oil from the Cosco Busan had drifted south to those areas. After the first group of 50 or so birds were captured it became evident that these birds were not oiled by anything that looked or smelled remotely like petroleum products. In fact, they seemed to be covered in a yellow sticky foam, much like the foam you see on the beach or in the sea at certain times. This foam, however, not only covered them with a thick yellow slime, it made them wet and therefore they had to get out of the water as they became cold and waterlogged.

Within a week over 400 of these “slimed” birds were captured and that number rose to 650 in the following weeks. Many were initially brought to the Marine Wildlife Veterinary Care and Research Center (MWVRC) for stabilization and initial care but all ended up coming to our already full oiled bird center in Fairfield.

In order to manage these large numbers of birds we sent the first 100 or so to our San Pedro center to help reduce the patient load at Fairfield. The most numerous species impacted were western and Clarke’s grebes, surf scoters, northern fulmars, red throated and pacific loons.

After a series of tests done through the OSPR laboratories it was discovered that the product that fouled the birds feathers is a protein-like wetting agent and was part of the foam that formed in large amounts where heavy red tides were agitated by moderate to high surf. Red tide is a catchall phrase describing seawater with microscopic organisms that blooms causing it to change colors. It is transient and unstable in water, breaking down in a day or two, although relatively stable when dried.

No evidence was found to suggest that it was a petroleum product, fish or vegetable oil, or related to the “Checkmate” product used to spray for light brown apple moths. It’s cause is still uncertain: It could be weather pattern changes, fertilizer runoff



The tide turns: The majority of birds treated included Clark’s and Western-Grebes. They recuperate in IBRRC pools at Cordelia center. Photo: IBRRC

after a hard rain, or a higher exposure to sunlight.

From a rehabilitation perspective the birds in this spill were much easier to care for as the product washed off easily and the birds did not seem to have any internal impacts from ingesting the product. This resulted in a much higher release rate than typical oil spills where petroleum oils can cause other toxic effects. It should be noted that this is the first time that IBRRC or the OWCN has ever rehabilitated a large amount of birds that were slimed by an unknown substance (but had to go through the rehabilitation procedure much like petroleum oiled birds.) We have never seen anything like this before and hope we do not again as its impacts are far reaching.

The costs of events like this are not covered by any state or federal laws such as Senate Bill 2040 that ensured that the “best achievable care” will be provided for oiled wildlife in California. However, we want to thank and acknowledge OSPR for generously underwriting much of this response and assisting us in the management of this effort. Because of this, IBRRC was able to release 369 birds back to the wild.

Unusual birds

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treated for its wounds. It’s recovered quickly and was released in the Suisun Marsh on July 29, 1996. The birds federal band number was 0977-04747.

Twelve years later on May 28, 2008, the same Great Blue Heron, now an adult but still wearing band number 0977-04747, was again found entangled in fishing line and fish hooks and was captured at a marina in Oakley, near Concord, CA. The bird was again brought to the Lindsay Museum who did an excellent job of removing the fish hooks and line that were

tangled around its wing and leg.

The bird was then transferred to our facility in Fairfield, and as before was treated for its wounds, held a week and on June 5, 2008 it was released fully recovered back into the Suisun Marsh.

Band Recoveries and Sightings

Brown Pelican band number 0998-86040 was an oiled bird that we rehabilitated in the Coatzacoalcoz, Mexico oil spill in January of 2005 in partnership with IFAW. It was released January 17, 2005. The bird was found dead Matagorda Island, Texas on April 12, 2008. Again, there was not indication of why the bird died.

Brown Pelican band number 0938-30252 was brought to our San Pedro Center on February of 2005. It was treated for fishing tackle injuries and released in San Pedro on March 5, 2005. The bird was found dead at Port Canaveral, Florida on April 5, 2007 indicating that Brown Pelicans in the Pacific region do mix travel to the gulf region. There was not indication of why the bird died.

Brown Pelican band number 0938-20896 was brought to our San Pedro center suffering from fishing tackle injuries. The bird was treated and released on August 4, 2006. The bird was sighted alive and healthy in Elota Sinoloa Mexico on May 14, 2008.

Dark day on San Francisco Bay: Cosco Busan oil spill response

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witnessing the casualties they leave in their wake and, I am sad to say, we often carry that weight within us. But, we do, in our way, attempt to put oil spills in perspective and look for what good they offer us after they have left their mark on the natural environment. It's a survival technique developed over the years that ultimately serves to help us improve our capabilities. It's also inherent in an emergency wildlife rehabilitation and oil spill response organization that has to cope with these types of crisis situations on a fairly regular basis. Something good has to come out of them so we have a keen eye out for those little specks of goodness that come in the form of opportunities. The fresh and more current spill responses are used as a system of measurement to evaluate how far IBRRC, our state and our field of work has come. In California, that is a significant distance from the good old days.

For our newer members and supporters who maybe don't know the history of oiled wildlife response as a field of work and how, in many ways, it is firmly rooted into the San Francisco Bay area, here is a brief overview. In 1971, the Oregon Standard collided with another ship under the Golden Gate Bridge. This resulted in a massive spill of crude oil that left over 7,000 live oil covered birds in the hands of well meaning but unqualified volunteers that worked out of any building they could find that had a roof on it. All but a few of those birds died and IBRRC became part of that spill's "silver lining". IBRRC, in fact, set in motion the initial research



Room for birds: Extra pools were filled with cleaned birds after being washed of oil.

programs to see if oiled birds could be cleaned, would survive the process and if it was realistic to even attempt these types of endeavors. Our founder, Alice Berkner, knew that the public and eventually the law-makers would expect that oiled wildlife be given a chance. She was one step ahead of the crowd and was determined to do this as scientifically and humanely as possible and with volunteer management systems in place to achieve these goals. It has been an upward learning curve since then with incredible results, frustrations and lots of experience under our collective belts.

In 1989 the Exxon Valdez occurred in Alaska, soon to be followed in 1990 by the American Trader oil spill in Southern California where we cared for over 500 oiled birds, 150 of which were endangered Brown Pelicans. The lawmakers went into action quickly and as a result of these two historical spills, California became the first state with comprehensive programs to deal with oil spill response planning, cleanup and specific to IBRRC's interests,

oiled wildlife response and rehabilitation. The Oiled Wildlife Care Network, OWCN, was derived from an earlier concept that IBRRC came up with that would provide resources and various levels of support to rehabilitation organizations along the coast of California who were always expected to take in oiled wildlife but did not have the resources to do even the most basic job. Our idea was presented to the California Department of Fish and Game in the 80's and shelved due to lack of funding. The new state Senate Bill, (SB 2040), allowed for funding of some kind of network between these animal caretakers and stated that "oiled wildlife in California will receive best achievable care". This idea of a network resurfaced and eventually evolved to become the OWCN and IBRRC became one of its first members and a valuable resource for this program. In so many ways it was a dream come true, especially for wildlife rehabilitators and veterinarians who have seen many birds die that could have likely been saved if we had only had specialized facilities, trained staff and volunteers and other resources.

Since the development of the OWCN and this historic legislation, California no longer has oil spills or oiled wildlife that are ignored, trivialized or imposed on unsuspecting wildlife rehabilitation organizations that are already overwhelmed with wild animal patients. That is the way it was in the past! Instead, an organized system of specially designed facilities, response capabilities and rehabilitation and training programs for its members have been put into place to meet the legislative mandate of "best achievable care."

The Cosco Busan kicked the OWCN, IBRRC and its other members into action. For active oil spill responders like us it was business as usual, in a sense. We always attempt to maintain a calm but urgent approach to these types of emergencies so that we stay in good mental and emotional health for the long haul. With this spill occurring in our backyard, an increasingly concerned public growing volatile began injecting themselves into all aspects of the response. This was due to poor communication from the top level of the command structure. Limited informa-



Oiled bird boxes: Working in the "Hot Zone" an oil spill response worker checks in birds caught in the aftermath of the Cosco Busan spill. The November 7, 2007 spill brought more than 1,000 birds into the San Francisco Bay Oiled Wildlife Care and Education Center in Fairfield, CA. More than 421 birds were released back to the wild. Photo: Marie Travers/IBRRC

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Seeing the light: SF Bay spill

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tion was being disseminated on how the spill was being handled from beach clean up to animal capture and rehabilitation.

For example, members of the public watching and evaluating our field responders and the program at every level, felt compelled to point out the birds we missed as our teams covered miles of shoreline on a daily basis. Additionally, overzealous news crews followed our field crews, scaring birds away in an attempt to film our work and were pressing our staff to make statements about the communication and other problems that were occurring during the spill. The media has been a great friend to IBRRC but in a crisis intent cameramen and reporters can get in our way and in the Cosco Busan spill, some of them did. These became a few of the added stresses and factors that took up our valuable response time and impacted our ability to do our job.

Oiled birds don't ask to be captured. In fact, we are usually seen as predators to them. An oiled bird is a bird in distress and instinctively avoids beaches, people and anything that is unusual to it. It is in a heightened state of fear and survival and therein is our biggest challenge. How do we get them in time to help them? Not an easy job and inevitably our response staff would leave a beach well searched only to have one or more birds immediately beach

themselves once they realized they were safe from the capturers.

These and other frustrations that we face when responding to oil spills include organizing the way we move the birds through the process of rehabilitation in a timely and safe manner before they succumb to the oil, stress and all that those factors imply. It's always a challenge but what is important here is that in the past most of these birds never even made it to the funky old makeshift centers where they had little or no chance of survival. Now they have a much better chance thanks to our state's system of dealing with oil spills and capturing and rehabilitating the birds in the best way we know how.

Oil spills throw us curve balls by the minute. It is inevitable that there will always be a bird that beaches itself in front of a concerned and highly alert individual the moment our teams leave the beach which can imply that no one cares or the job was not completed. There will always be commuter traffic that prevents birds from being transported as quickly as we all want them to be. There will be politics, gaps in communication, critics, bad phone connections, supporters, failures, fabulous volunteers and successes. Bringing it back into perspective, in California we have a head start. We have state-of-the-art facilities to take the birds where they will receive the best and always improving care available in the world for oiled birds.

“...We have learned to look for the opportunities that spills provide...”

We have teams that are motivated and highly experienced that strive to capture every oiled animal they can and we have volunteers that show up out of nowhere to help trained staff make it all work.

The Cosco Busan spill has given us an opportunity to evaluate our work, improve and correct where we were lacking and identify where we need to improve. We saw the successes. Looking back over the last 37 years we see that without these state mandated programs and the individuals involved in them at all levels, these birds would not have a chance in the world. The rehabilitation groups that once had the birds imposed on them would again be dumped on and experience the same sense of failure and hopelessness that we did in the past. We have come light years from the 1971 oil spill in our ability to help oiled birds in California and in our ability to change and increase programs to provide “best achievable care”. Next time we will be even better.

Cosco Busan Oil Spill numbers

- Birds arrived live: 1,084
- Died/euthanized: 653
- Released: 421
- Found dead: 1,858

Spill volunteers big help

◀ Continued from Page 1

vacation days, and their time with family to come help the oiled birds. These people were no longer individuals, organizations or businesses, but a community that came together and responded to a crisis when the plea for help went out.

Looking at past spill statistics since the 1970's, the average volunteer turn out was approximately 300 to 500 individuals that roughly gave about 7,500 to 9,600 service hours per spill. On the other hand, the volunteer response from the Cosco Busan oil spill stands apart because 1,500 individuals registered to help out during this event and contributed about 13,019 service hours. This was a phenomenal response from everyone.

If we look at who responded during the spill, 450 of these indi-



Wash room help: Volunteers worked with cleaning oiled birds, such as this pelican. Photo: Marie Travers/IBRRC

viduals were pre-trained OWCN participants, while 500 were convergent (walk-in) volunteers. What makes these figures impressive is that personnel from 23 out of 25 OWCN participant organizations responded to this spill, and 450 network volunteers came when the call went out for assistance. What amazed us all was the number of businesses that gathered supplies and sent employees to help out, the school children writing letters of encouragement and

fundraising to help save the birds, and neighbors delivering towels and other needed supplies. We even had other non-profits divert their volunteers to help us out.

In the wake of this spill, response agencies realized that Californians are willing to rise to the occasion and respond when a crisis occurs. For us, it was a welcome validation that the work we do is important. **Thank you for your support!**

New IBRRC hats: Show your support

Show your care for the birds and IBRRC’s rescue efforts by buying a hat now on our website: <http://tinyurl.com/68nqrr>

The light green khaki hats with greyish/light blue bills are \$15. The adjustable band hats are one size fits all. You can also purchase the new hats at both bird centers.



Heron Dance brings art & birds together

We’d like to make you aware of the work of Heron Dance, a non-profit publisher that explores the beauty and mystery of the natural world through art and words.



Heron Dance publishes a free e-newsletter that features a new painting each week and a short letter on the human connection to the natural world and on the gentle arts of a well-lived life. They also publish a nature art journal, and supports the work of over 100 non-profits with the donation of art. Learn more: <http://www.herondance.org/>

Week of caring: Volunteers to the rescue

The Volunteer Centers of the Bay Area and the United Way of the Bay Area created a Week of Caring to connect volunteers from local businesses to hundreds of projects organized by local non-profits. We would like to thank the Solano Foundation, the United Way, and the Volunteer Centers of the Bay Area for their active recruitment for this opportunity, and connecting our organization with the Valero refinery in Benicia.

Our heart felt gratitude goes out to the 25 plus volunteers from Valero’s team 3 and Process Engineering who came out to deconstruct an old aviary, paint and repair our wheelchair access ramp, and help clear brush from our property. Their teamwork and enthusiasm put us ahead of schedule for raising a new waterfowl enclosure in Fairfield.

A big thanks to Karen Webster of Process Engineering for coordinating and relaying all of our requests to the Valero team members. Kudos go to Debra Stebbins and Matt Oldehoeft for scheduling teams to come out and spend a day with us. Thanks also to Clean Harbors Environmental Services for removing debris generated by the deconstruction.



“Dewie Duck” captures life with a duck

“Little Miss Dewie,” a movie from award-winning animal welfare journalist, Mira Tweti, is seeking funds to complete her “Duckumentary” about the duck that moved in with her. Tweti found the orphaned duckling at a lagoon in Los Angeles, CA, and took her home. Through a series of unexpected situations, Dewie lived in Tweti’s apartment for more than two months while she searched for a perfect duck home. More information available online: <http://www.dewieduck.com/>



In fond remembrance: Eric Sticht

Eric Sticht, the former part-time facilities manager at IBRRC’s San Pedro bird center, died on October 19, 2007 of natural causes. He was 47.

Eric had a great love of nature and animals, and worked many tireless hours at IBRRC as both a volunteer and employee. He will be sorely missed by all that crossed his path.



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