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EPIDEMIC NUMBER OF AILING BROWN PELICANS RAISING CONCERNS

EMERGENCY FUNDS SOUGHT TO HELP CARE FOR BIRDS

Within the last number of days, aquatic bird specialists at International Bird Rescue Research Center (IBRRC) in San Pedro have received over 40 **California Brown Pelicans**, ten just yesterday. The influx in these ailing birds is causing concern for these wildlife experts.

“As wildlife rehabilitators, we’re often the first group of people to see a trend developing. We’re the first to notice unusual behavior or illnesses in a population because we’re on the front lines, receiving calls from the public. So, with these pelicans, we know something is going on, we’re just not sure what it is,” remarked Jay Holcomb, IBRRC’s Executive Director.

What is unusual is that many of the pelicans being admitted to the facility are adult birds that have been found on roads. One bird was reported to have struck a vehicle.

“This type of disorientation in adult pelicans is something we’d see during a domoic acid outbreak, but we have yet to see them exhibiting the other common symptoms,” added Holcomb.

Another concern for the nonprofit is the expense of caring for these enormous birds. Last year’s figure is staggering. It cost the San Pedro center over \$30,000.00 to feed the large number of pelicans it saw through rehabilitation in 2008.

With the only pelican flight aviaries on the West Coast of the U.S., International Bird Rescue receives pelicans from other centers throughout the region, as far away as San Luis Obispo. Starting the year off with 40 pelicans under treatment, and more being admitted daily, the organization has worries as to their ability to treat them all.

“We will not be able to care for all of these birds unless we receive the financial support to do so,” says Holcomb. “We’re relying on contributions from the public to help see these birds through recovery.”

Becoming a Pelican Partner is a unique way for someone to help while also becoming personally involved in a pelican’s care and release. The organization hopes to encourage schools to become involved by offering their new Classroom Partners adoption program. For \$300.00 an entire class of students can participate in their bird’s release back into the wild. To find out more go to http://www.ibrrc.org/adopt_pelican.html.

Those interested in contributing towards the cost of caring for the pelicans during this crisis are asked to send checks to IBRRC PO Box 2816, San Pedro, CA 90731 or donate online:

http://www.ibrrc.org/donate_online.html. To volunteer, please phone the center at 310-514-2573.

To report dead pelicans, please use the toll-free California Wildlife Hotline 866-WILD-911 option 2.