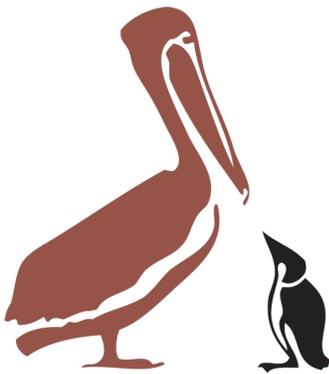


FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 17, 2008

Aptos, Santa Cruz
Monterey Bay
Bay Area, California



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HERON FOUND SHOT IN QUIET APTOS NEIGHBORHOOD

FEDERALLY PROTECTED BIRD SURVIVES 3-HOUR SURGERY

Investigation underway. Public is asked for help.

An adult great blue heron was found Friday morning, suffering from gunshot wounds. The bird was rescued by Native Animal Rescue, a nonprofit based in Santa Cruz, and quickly transferred to aquatic bird specialists International Bird Rescue Research Center in Fairfield, 40 minutes north of San Francisco. While the large bird survived a three-hour surgery, its condition, according to the rehabilitation team, is stable but guarded.

Meanwhile, an investigation is underway to find the person who shot the heron. It is a state and federal crime to chase, capture, possess, injure, or kill a native wild bird. They are protected under what is called the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. When birds become a nuisance to businesses or homeowners, the USFWS may issue permits to remedy certain problems, but shooting a great blue heron would never be authorized.

Great blue herons are magnificent birds that can stand close to four-feet tall. While they are typically waders, eating fish from shallow waterways, they also consume vermin. Great blues are often found in fields stalking pocket gopher, vole, and ground squirrel, helping to keep these populations in check.

While gunshot wounds in migratory birds are not common, they are not rare. In fact, this is the second great blue heron from Santa Cruz County in one year that IBRRC has admitted for treatment.

The public is being asked for help. If anyone has information that could help authorities solve this crime they are being asked to call the California Department of Fish & Game tip line at 1-888 DFG-CALTIP (888 334-2258).

IBRRC has set up a fund for anyone interested in helping offset the substantial cost of caring for this Great Blue. IBRRC treats thousands of avian patients on a limited budget. Every donation, no matter how small, is greatly appreciated. Please see ibrrc.org for more information.