

Endangered California Brown Pelicans in Crisis

Up and down the coast they arrived, like casualties in an undocumented war. Some were rescued and received critical medical care in time, while others likely died, unseen and uncounted. Brown Pelicans, already federally listed as endangered, are fighting new wars in the 21st century, and they may be losing the battle, in spite of federal protection and fines as high as \$200,000 for harming them.

In August 2001, more pelicans have arrived at International Bird Rescue Research Center's (IBRRC) Northern California hospital than it received in six months last year. And the birds are arriving ahead of schedule.

"Typically we start to receive large numbers of pelicans in August because the youngsters are out on their own and running into trouble. But this year, we saw more adult birds with injuries caused by fishing lines and fish hooks," said Rehabilitation Manager Coleen Doucette.

Some of the pelicans that IBRRC gets in are beyond hope; hooks have punctured eyes, torn gaping holes in pouches, and caused untreatable infections. Fishing lines wrap around wings and legs, restricting blood flow and movement, causing slow starvation and death unless the animal is quickly rescued, usually by people who see the birds in trouble. Doucette said it's particularly bad for pelicans, because they are endangered, but anything that swims, dives, or eats from lakes and oceans can be snared by discarded hooks and lines, including porpoises, turtles and even whales. Wildlife rehabilitation centers in Florida are finding that 85 percent of the pelicans there have had an encounter with fishing lines and/or hooks at some point in their lives.

The world turned very hostile for brown pelicans in the 20th century. They've endured one battle after another, sometimes barely hanging on. In the late 19th

and early 20th centuries, they were killed for their feathers, to adorn women's hats. During the food shortages following W.W.I, pelicans were slaughtered by the thousands because fishermen believed commercial fishery resources were being decimated by them, and their nests were frequently raided for eggs.

With the advent and widespread use of pesticides such as DDT and DDE beginning in the 1940s, populations again plummeted as pesticides entered the oceans, and the food chain, causing eggshells to be so thin they broke during incubation. The population of brown pelican colonies off Southern California shrank by more than 90 percent during the late 1960s. For decades a chemical plant had been discharging thousands of pounds of the pesticide into Los Angeles County sewers, which then entered coastal waters where it was absorbed by anchovies and other fish eaten by pelicans.

Then in 1996, another blow came to the brown pelicans when an outbreak of avian botulism caused 735 deaths at the Salton Sea. Outbreaks occur every year



Pelicans recuperating from fishing hook and line injuries at IBRRC and some are worse than others. Biologists studying the birds in the Channel Islands also fear an oil spill, which could devastate the only breeding colonies of

Board of Directors

Don Kane, President
Sam Sacco
Ron Holton
Dr. Michael Fry
Alice Berkner

Administrative Staff

Jay Holcomb, Executive Director
Alice Berkner, Associate Director
Tonya Owen, Administrative Manager
Christian Battaglia, Education Director
Barbara Callahan, Development Director
Karen Benzel, Public Relations/Volunteer
Coordination

Regional Representatives

Barbara Callahan, Alaska and Arctic
Curt Clumpner, Pacific Northwest
Linda Elliott, Hawaii and the Pacific

Rehabilitation Clinic Staff

Coleen Doucette, SF Rehabilitation Manager
Michelle Bellizzi
Katherine Torres
Megan Shaw-Prelinger
Gary Ward, Intern
Jeannie Magis, LA Rehabilitation Manager
Lisa Birkle, Rehabilitation Asst. Manager, LA
Kat Fernandez

IBRRC Emergency Response Team

Bruce Adkins, WA
Mdeline Averett, TX
Christian Battaglia, CA
Alice Berkner, WA
Ken Brewer, WA
Barbara Callahan, AK
Curt Clumpner, WA
Russell Curtiss, CA
Rebecca Dmytryk, CA
Coleen Doucette, CA
Linda Elliott, HI
Emil Gagliardi, CA
Deirdre Goodfriend, CA
Jay Holcomb, CA
Jeannie Magis, CA
Sean McAllister, CA
Jonolyn McKusker, TX
Mark Russell, CA
Wendy Sangiacomo, CA
James Stitch, CA
Amber Transou, CA
Millicent (Mimi) Wood-Harris, CA

On the Wing is published bi-annually by the International Bird Rescue Research Center.

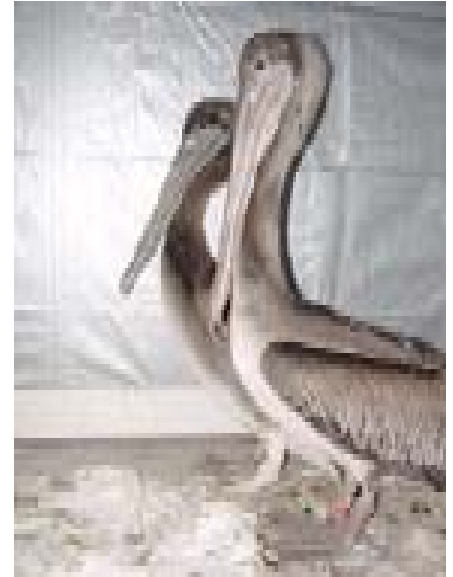
Edited by Barbara Callahan and Jay Holcomb
Comments, questions and suggestions should be sent to

IBRRC 4369 Cordelia Road
Fairfield, CA 94585
(707) 207-0380
Website: www.ibrrc.org

Brown Pelicans in the western US. "Pelicans are an indicator species," says Jay Holcomb, IBRRC's director, "They tell us when there's trouble in the environment. We're taking note of this trend because young pelicans typically have a high mortality rate, but that doesn't affect the population as much as the death of a mature pelican who would have had many years of breeding ahead of it." "We need to educate people, Holcomb continues, "and especially people who fish, that a careless action, like cutting a line, especially one with a hook and bait, will surely mean death to the animal that eats it or gets tangled in it. And if you are fishing off a boat, always scan the area for pelicans before you throw out your line, or chum. Pelicans are opportunistic and are always looking for a free lunch. Don't do anything to attract them, because they might take your fish and line, causing a dangerous situation for both you and the bird."

IBRRC is taking the situation seriously and is beginning to collect data from other wildlife centers to try and determine how many pelicans are coming in due to fishing line injuries. With a population of only about 5,000 breeding pairs, Holcomb feels every pelican successfully treated and released, can make a difference. In addition to their research, IBRRC is planning to work with other wildlife rehabilitation centers and government agencies to begin an educational campaign, similar to ones being used in Florida where signs and special containers for fishing line are provided in popular fishing spots. "We're

taking the first step,' Holcomb said, "educating the public about what is going on right in their backyard, right now and we're hoping that others will follow."



Pelicans recovering from hook injuries to the legs

In the summer of 2001, IBRRC cared for over 200 brown pelicans with fishing line or hook related injuries. In September, both the International Fund for Animal Welfare and the Disney Conservation Fund gave substantial donations to help defray the costs.

Online with [ibrrc.org](http://www.ibrrc.org)

The long awaited IBRRC web-site is now up and running, check it out! You can see the web-page at <http://www.ibrrc.org/>

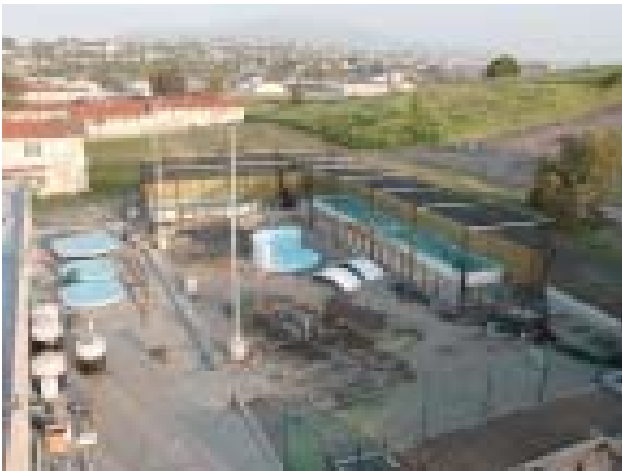
Our thanks for organization and design by volunteer webmaster Russ Curtis. Please send comments to Russ via e-mail webccot@ibrrc.org

Botulism Strikes Endangered Pelicans At Salton Sea

IBRRC has formalized an agreement with US Fish and Wildlife Service at the Sonny Bono Salton Sea National Wildlife Refuge, to care for endangered California brown pelicans that succumb to botulism infections at the Salton Sea.

With the opening of the Los Angeles Oiled Bird Care and Education facility, where we manage a year-round rehabilitation program for sick and injured aquatic birds, IBRRC is able to stabilize the sick pelicans and then rehabilitate and release them.

Every summer since 1996, as temperatures rise and heat the Salton Sea, algae blooms at a tremendous rate, causing a depletion of oxygen in the water. When these conditions occur, the bacterium type *Clostridium botulinum* becomes active in the local fish population and starts to produce toxins which cause the fish to become sluggish and easy prey for the pelicans. As the pelicans ingest this fish, they too become affected by the botulism toxins and become ill.



LA Pelican Aviary Under Construction

Usually, the first sign of this sickness involves partial paralysis of the birds. Early stages might show only the nictitating membrane, or third eyelid, being paralyzed, followed by larger muscle groups. Every day, March through November, US Fish and Wildlife Service staff patrol the 150 linear miles of shoreline using mostly airboats, looking for infected birds. Since this is a naturally occurring phenomenon, there is little that can

be done to prevent it, but the Service does try to mitigate the effects by having an aggressive search, collection and rescue system in place.

So far, this season, IBRRC has cared for 59 botulism pelicans from the Salton Sea, 46 of which have been released, 5 euthanized and 8 were dead on arrival. IBRRC is one of several rehabilitation centers that are helping to care for pelicans from the Salton Sea.

International Internship Program



Intern Gary Ward

International Bird Rescue Research Center has developed an International Internship Program, based at the headquarters center in Cordelia, California. The program is designed to provide intensive training for people in the field of oiled wildlife response by giving them opportunities to work hands on with aquatic birds while being supervised by experienced clinic staff.

One of the goals of this program is to create oiled wildlife rehabilitation expertise in geographic areas that are vulnerable to oil spills. Interns can be individuals that currently work in the field of wildlife rehabilitation, emergency response, animal husbandry, field biology or some other work that is tied to oiled wildlife response.

After participating in IBRRC's Internship Program, experienced interns will be able to train others and increase the local capacity for caring for oiled animals in their own geographic area. Having dedicated individuals, locally, that are already trained increases the quality of care available for oiled animals and greatly reduces the need to mobilize personnel from great distances.

Continued on page 5



IFAW/IBRRC Lead Rehabilitation Efforts in Galapagos

Over the past several years, IBRRC has worked with the Darwin Institute of the Galapagos Islands on the development of oil spill contingency plans for oiled wildlife. In January 2001, the Institute requested the help of IBRRC to assist with animals that had been oiled after the ship *Jessica* ran aground, spilling almost 240,000 gallons of heavy oil and diesel in the renowned World Heritage Site.

The news of a large-scale oil spill in the Galapagos Islands, known for incredible animal diversity, was devastating and the potential for the loss of thousands of rare seabirds, marine mammals and reptiles was extremely high.

Although there were oiled animals immediately after the *Jessica* ran aground, there was no funding available from the Institute for a wildlife response. IBRRC contacted the International Fund for Animal Welfare who agreed to activate their Emergency Relief Team, which is comprised of experienced responders from around the world and led by IBRRC Director, Jay Holcomb. Along with Emergency Relief Team members, marine mammal veterinarian, Marty Haulena, was sent to the Galapagos to help survey different islands with the Park officials, looking for oiled sea lions.

Working with officials from the Parque Nacional Galapagos, the Emergency Relief Team set up a makeshift rehabilitation center for oiled birds and began an intensive search, collection and rehabilitation mission.

The IFAW Emergency Relief Team focused on the difficult task of capturing and rehabilitating any oiled seabirds in the area and especially threatened or endangered species. Park officials were most concerned for lava

gulls, of which there are only 400 known pair, Galapagos penguins (1,000 to 1,300 pair) and flightless cormorants, of which the population count is unknown.

Fortunately, during the days immediately following the spill wind and the tides dispersed most of the spilled oil and prevented thousands of birds and mammals from being oiled. All told, the Emergency Relief Team saw no endangered birds that were oiled and only needed to capture 22 brown pelicans. Of those captured, 21 were rehabilitated and released. There were 10 birds found dead on the beach, as well.

Penguin Population Recovers from Massive Spill

Once considered controversial, and even counterproductive, the rescue and rehabilitation of oiled wildlife can now be done so successfully that oiled penguin rehabilitation is considered part of the conservation management plan for the endangered African penguin off the coast of Cape Town South Africa. IBRRC has learned that the population of penguins their team helped rescue and treat, by managing the world's largest oiled wildlife rehabilitation effort, in the summer of 2000, has already recovered to pre-spill numbers. A recent count found 6,700 breeding pairs, with the total population on Robbin Island, the location of a major breeding colony, numbering 20,500. This is 1,000 more breeding pairs than last year and proof that a species can recover when quick response and proper procedures are followed immediately after a spill. Jay Holcomb, director of IBRRC and veteran of over 100 oil spills said, "We are very excited to have helped preserve this endangered species. Working as members of International Fund for Animal Welfare's (IFAW) Emergency Relief Team we were able to save 90.3% of the 20,251 oiled African penguins treated". Holcomb attributes the success of the response to prompt action, by both Cape Town authorities and IFAW, as well as the local people and thousands of volunteers. "We've gone from saving almost no birds in 1971 to saving over 90% of the birds rescued from the Treasure spill in 2000". He added, "The rescue and rehabilitation of oiled wildlife is valid and we have proven that we can save a species from possible extinction. We've come a long way and we've done what others said couldn't be done."

Navy Lifts Ehime Maru Near Honolulu

In May of this year, IBRRC presented a comprehensive, hands-on two-day training course in Oiled Wildlife First Responder Training to nearly 40 wildlife agency biologists in Hawaii which covered birds, sea turtles and marine mammals. This training added to the experience gained at the HAZWOPER/Oiled Wildlife Response course and drill organized by the FWS earlier this year for over a dozen of these same biologists. Both of these training events were actively facilitated by the industry cooperative, Clean Islands Council (CIC). Hawaii's oiled wildlife response capabilities have also been significantly increased by the recent US Navy, Pacific Fleet, Ehime Maru Recovery Operation in Hawaii. IBRRC has been contracted for this project to develop oiled wildlife planning and procedural capabilities, to provide technical advice and assistance during the critical stages of the operation, first response capabilities, and subsequent rehabilitation needs to respond to the unlikely event of oiled wildlife. This work has been a great opportunity to update the State's oiled wildlife response preparedness. IBRRC Regional Representative, Linda Elliott, has developed the oiled wildlife response plan and procedures reference document for the Environmental Unit of the operation that can be used to update the area plan as well. Additionally, a supplies review and update has been performed with the assistance of the State wildlife agency and CIC, and informational charts and forms have been updated including compiling species information specifically for Hawaii/Pacific wildlife. The Stabilization Unit developed and built by CIC in time for this operation has further enhanced first response capabilities. IBRRC is also providing assistance to CIC for set up of this unit in readiness for this current response operation.

Continued from page 3

IBRRC also gives on-site classes in oiled wildlife rehabilitation (often in places where we have worked oil spills) training local personnel that are involved in wildlife rehabilitation and response. These training classes are designed to give responders experience in handling live birds and becoming comfortable with procedures such as tube-feeding, physical examination, blood draws, as well as washing and rinsing. This type of training is targeted to individuals that will work as supervisory staff and volunteers at future spills.



IBRRC Hosts Chinese Delegation for Specialized Training in Raptor Care

International Fund for Animal Welfare is in partnership with the Beijing Normal University to develop the BNU Raptor Center, a wildlife rehabilitation center in Beijing, China, dedicated to caring for sick and injured raptors. The center will be managed by Beijing Normal University Professor Song Jie, who is the Assistant Professor of the Life Science Center at the University.

IBRRC staff, Barbara Callahan and Dierdre Goodfriend, have been consulting with IFAW and BNU staff in the development of the new raptor center since March 2001 and coordinated a special training session for the raptor center staff, in California.

A delegation from the BNU Raptor Center came to California for special training with IBRRC and the UC Davis Raptor Center. During the 6 days of training, the delegation participated in course work that included intensive, hands-on training in raptor handling, gavage, venipuncture, fluid therapy and other essential topics.

The BNU Raptor Center construction has been completed and is in the final stages of being equipped and will be ready to house birds within the next few weeks.

Many of the sick and injured raptors that will come to the Center are expected to be birds that the Beijing Forestry Department has confiscated from smugglers and from illegal markets in Beijing.

IBRRC AND IFAW PARTNER

As International Bird Rescue Research Center (IBRRC) has grown over the years, we've also forged a unique relationship with another non-profit organization, the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW). IFAW's Emergency Relief Program has funded IBRRC's many international responses to devastating oil spills, often to areas that have no infrastructure to deal with large scale animal oiling events such as the Treasure spill in South Africa last year. We've continued, throughout the years and responses, to strengthen the global emergency relief team by adding experienced and trained individuals from around the globe.

After working collaboratively for many years, IBRRC and IFAW have partnered to jointly manage some aspects of IFAW's Global Emergency Relief Team. Although IFAW's Emergency Relief Program also includes animal work with sanctuaries, rehabilitation centers, mammal strandings and natural disasters, oil spill response is the strongest focus of the program and the main area of expertise that IBRRC brings to the team. Along with our collaboration on oil spill contingency plans, training and response, IBRRC also helps oversee many aspects of the work with wildlife rehabilitation centers and sanctuaries.

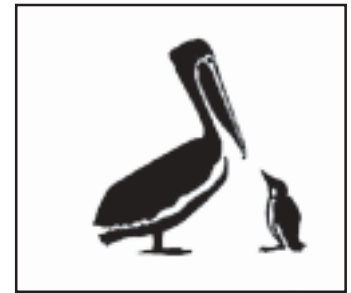
Currently, IBRRC is working on several IFAW projects ranging from assisting with the development of a new raptor center in Beijing, China to providing guidance on a cockatoo rehabilitation and reintroduction program in Australia. Within the oil spill response area we are also networking with aquaria and wildlife rehabilitation organizations, along the east coast of South America, from Brazil to the southern coast of Argentina, to respond to chronic oiling of magellanic penguins.

In addition to oil spill response, we continue to provide training in strategic areas, places that either suffer from chronic oiling or regular spills. Earlier this year we gave intensive, oil spill response training in France, near the site of last year's devastating Erika spill. Plans in the near future call for oil spill training in Germany, Ireland and South America.

In each of the geographic areas that the IFAW Global

Emergency Relief Team works, we have established working relationships with local wildlife resource managers, wildlife rehabilitation centers and industry which allow us to collaborate with local groups to bring the highest standard of animal care possible to the region.

It is through these relationships that we often receive invitations to respond to oil spills outside of the United States, such as our responses in South Africa, Japan, Germany, France, Argentina, Uruguay and Equador.



MAGELLANIC PENGUINS OILED

Each year, off the coasts of Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil, hundreds of magellanic and rockhopper penguins (*Spheniscus magellanicus* and *Eudyptes chrysocome chrysocome*, respectively) are mysteriously oiled and picked up on local beaches, dehydrated and often hypothermic.

As IFAW's Emergency Relief Team has grown, we've looked for opportunities, with strategically placed, experienced individuals, that will strengthen our ability to respond to areas of special concern, such as South America. It is estimated that each year, 40,000 magellanic and rockhopper penguins die due to chronic oiling along the southern coast of Argentina. For this reason we are working to increase local capacity in oiled wildlife response along that coast. As documented by the Cape Nature Conservation of South Africa, oiled wildlife rehabilitation can be counted as one of the many tools of wildlife conservation, particularly as it pertains to threatened or endangered species. Through the use of trained, experienced wildlife rehabilitators and protocols that allow for the highest standard of care, a large majority of these animals can be released back to the wild.

In August of this year, local wildlife rescue centers in Argentina started receiving oiled magellanic and rock hopper penguins, over 200 in all. The largest of these centers, the Fundacion Mundo Marino (FMM), located 300 km south of Buenos Aires, invited International Fund for Animal Welfare Emergency Relief Team members to respond to these oiled penguins. IFAW immediately sent two of their experienced team members from Brazil to help care for the oiled birds and train FMM staff. The team members that responded were Drs. Valerian Ruoppolo and Rodolfo Silva, who work with the Center for the Recovery of Marine Animals (CRAM) and have responded to several spills with our team. In addition to providing expertise and hands-on assistance, IFAW also provided funding for much needed equipment such as special water nozzles, water heaters, pumps and heat lamps.

With the help of the IFAW Emergency Relief Team, the Fundacion Mundo Marino has been able to successfully release over 90% of the oiled penguins.

As team members were finishing with the oiled penguins in Argentina, they learned that help was desperately needed at the SOS Fauna Marina, in Piriapolis, Uruguay, to help with more than 150 oiled penguins. IFAW continued to provide the expertise of the Emergency Relief team by sending Dr. Rodolfo Silva on to Uruguay to train local personnel and assist with the rehabilitation of these penguins. Unfortunately, only 70 penguins were still alive upon his arrival. To date, 62 of those 70 oiled penguins have been rehabilitated and released.



Rockhopper penguins await cleaning in Argentina

Acknowledgements

IBRRC appreciates the support it receives from concerned individuals, businesses and organizations throughout the year. Without the generous support of everyone, IBRRC would be unable to continue its efforts in the field of oiled wildlife response.

Staff Additions and Changes

As we continue with this year of growth and change, IBRRC says goodbye to longtime rehabilitation and LA facility Manager, Deirdre Goodfriend, as she relocates to Northern California. During her six years with IBRRC she worked on dozens of oils spills, directed the headquarters rehabilitation program and also managed the LA Center as it was developed and readied for opening. We will greatly miss Dee but look forward to working with her on the spill team and other special projects.

We welcome Jeannie Magis as she joins us as the new manager of the Los Angeles Oiled Bird Care and Education Center. Jeannie worked both the France and South Africa spills with our team last year, has rehabilitation experience from PAWS Wildlife Center in Washington and has most recently been managing another bird rescue project for us in California.

Assisting Jeannie at the new center in Los Angeles is Lisa Birkle, who is the new Rehabilitation Assistant Manager. Lisa is a tremendous asset to our staff and was very instrumental in helping to ready the center for opening. Last year, Lisa was nominated for the Red Cross Clara Barton Woman of the Year for Environmental Work Award.

Please join us in thanking Deirdre Goodfriend and wishing her the best of luck, as well as welcoming all our new staff.