

Sea Biscuit Sentinel

Baby It's Cold Outside

How are you surviving winter? Wearing a down vest? Cuddling up by the space heater? Noshing on comfort food? Well a few lucky pelicans at Sea Biscuit are doing the same things.

Fortunately, winters in Southeastern North Carolina are fairly mild, but occasionally nights are too cold even for healthy birds and it's often too cold for birds in distress. Like other birds, pelicans keep themselves warm in winter by burning fuel from food; shivering; fluffing their feathers to create insulating air pockets; tucking their feet under their bodies and their bills into their shoulder feathers; and huddling together with their flock. Injured pelicans (usually from fishing line and hooks) lose their first line of defense against the cold when they cannot catch fish. Temperatures below 45 degrees contribute to lethargy in pelicans; they don't have the energy to go fishing, and lack of food further inhibits their ability to withstand the cold. Without relief, they will become underweight and dehydrated and may eventually die.

Sustained lower temperatures create frostbite on feet, keel and pouches, which can destroy the birds' ability to land on the water. Last year Sea Biscuit had one patient with severely frostbitten feet. After 60 days of treatment with everything from Epsom salts soaks to aloe to anti-inflammatory medications, nothing worked

The websites below report on the rescue and rehabilitation of dozens of pelicans suffering from dehydration, malnutrition and frostbite during severe February weather in Maryland and Northern Virginia. These were mainly juveniles who missed the opportunity to migrate south because they were fooled either by a warm early winter or a seemingly endless food supply supplied by humans.

http://www.bayweekly.com/year07/issuexv7/leadxv7_1.html

<http://www.orphaned-wildlife-rescue-center.com/pelican-rescues.html>

and he had lost most of his feet. Since he could fly and there was enough left of his feet so he could perch, paddle and outrun his keepers, he was released at the beach.

The pelicans at Sea Biscuit Bed & Breakfast don't need to worry about catching dinner or keeping warm. They are well fed with live fish when possible or frozen fish (thawed and injected with water). When nighttime temperatures between 40 and 50 are predicted,



the birds are moved from their large open pen to the smaller sheltered outdoor pen where they gather around a cage containing a space heater. When temperatures fall below 40, the birds are kept indoors in large cages, all in a heated room – nice and toasty and very fragrant by morning.



Special Cases

The US Fish and Wildlife Service requires that migratory birds that cannot be returned to the wild must be humanely euthanized or transferred to an accredited educational facility such as a zoo or aquarium.

Connie Suffkin and her husband had been passing this bird for several days on a dirt road about 10 miles south of Lumberton. The majestic female Red Tail Hawk was reduced to eating vermin at a roadside dump. The Suffkins finally stopped and got up the courage to capture her with nets and blankets. She was brought to Dr. Travis for radiographs. Evidently, her wing had been broken for months and healed incorrectly for flight. But she was beautiful, and a fast, strong hunter. Red Tails are relatively common and very few educational facilities can handle them. After lots of searching, we found a new home for her at Possumwood Acres in Hubert, NC. She is currently being glove trained and will be working in educational programs and on display at Possumwood.



'Hobbs' was seen by dozens of people at a drainage pond behind an office building in Wilmington. Two young women managed to capture the Yellow-crowned Night Heron to us last May. His injured wing was repeatedly splinted, bandaged and treated but was amputated at the wrist a month later. Hobbs had an eclectic appetite and ate anything that moved ...bugs, lizards, fish, crabs and shrimp. The Flint River Aquarium in Albany, Georgia had just completed a wading bird exhibit and were looking for native residents for its opening in October. Hobbs has a new home in a magnolia tree over his 'creek' and lots of loyal fans.

Eastern Screech Owls make a habit of capturing prey as it runs across open roads. Unfortunately, they are often hit by cars. An owl from Hamstead, NC had a serious eye injury that improved to the point that there is limited vision on that side. Because the owl would not be able to capture prey, arrangements were made to give it a new home at the Oak Island Nature Center. An orphaned baby screech owl was found by Teddy Bullard of Whiteville. The baby was placed within eyesight of the adult who displayed strong curiosity about the fluffy little guy. After 2 months of mentoring by the older owl, the orphan was fully feathered in adult plumage, flying and hunting well. He was released on Oak Island and the adult, now named Liz, has a wonderful home at the Oak Island Nature Center.



Flying Free

Richard Teague noticed this Barred Owl near his chicken coops. Corneal scratches on one eye caused inflammation and the left wing tip was broken so it had two strikes against it. Lack of food made it subject to flat flies and feather mites to further weaken it. After three months of painkillers and antibiotics, it's splinted and bandaged wing enabled it to fly again. One eye still had good vision so it became adept at catching live prey. It was happily released in the Green Swamp.

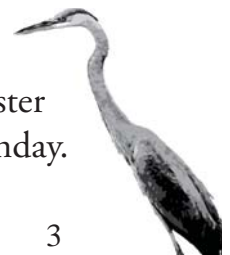


'Lookout', the pelican spent a lot of time on Laura Henderson's rocking chair watching the marsh nearby. When Martha Latta brought it to Oak Island, it was found to have a fish hook in its wing. She was also very thin but made up for lost time and was up to normal body weight and flying well enough three weeks later. She was released near the Southport location where she was found.

John Ennis has seen his share of wild birds over the years but this one needed his help. Rosie the swan had a hook injury and an infection in her leg. Since swans are such social creatures, it was decided that it would be better off with other swans. John returned her to her family after just 3 days at the shelter. However, its treatment did not stop and he coordinated her medication feeding. Every day, the neighbors took turns hiding her antibiotics in tasty tidbits of bread and croissants. She is still gracing the waters of the subdivision in her new plumage.



Gus Grosch and his son, Perry, frequently have assisted at the shelter. Their photos record treatments and releases. But on May 4th, they also served to rescue a Northern Gannet in the surf. Weighing in at only 4.8 lbs, it was severely emaciated and too weak to continue migration in heavy winds and water conditions. It continued to lose weight in care until internal parasites were eliminated. Then the weight gain was dramatic. The feisty youngster weighed in at 7.4 lbs at its release on Easter Sunday.



From the Director

Since opening the doors to wild birds in March of 2007, we have been able to handle over 400 birds from all over the region. Through public awareness of the operations, it's expected to increase to about 350 per year. This presents some logistical challenges but it is a wonderful opportunity to see trends in bird behavior, pollution threats and habitat changes. Over time and experience, the shelter will increase its role to include research and education.

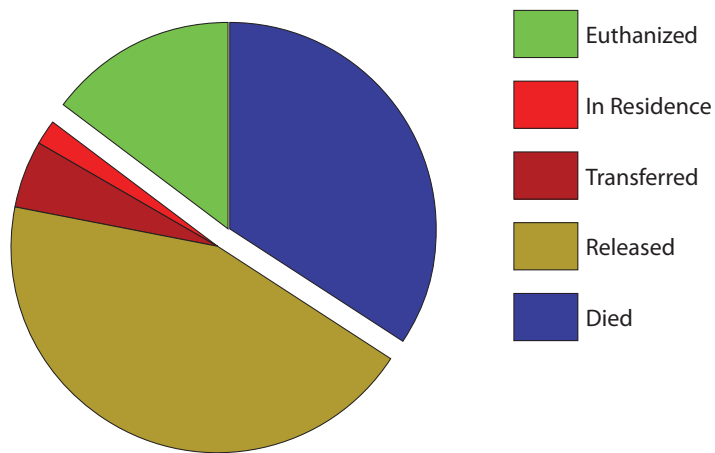


This newsletter's intent is to keep our supporters informed regarding changes as we grow. We cannot do what we do without you!

Mary Ellen Rogers

Shelter Statistics as of Dec. 31, 2008

248 incoming (includes several counted as 1 for a nest full) 56 were in bad shape and died the same day (23%)



Of the 192 birds that lived longer than 24 hours:

84 released
66 died
28 euthanized
10 transferred
4 still in care



Where did they come from?

106 from Oak Island
24 from Southport
12 from Carolina Beach and Holden Beach
11 each from Wilmington, Caswell Beach
8 from Kure Beach
7 each from Ft. Fisher and Sunset Beach
6 from Leland
5 from Wrightsville Beach
4 each from Calabash, Ocean Isle and Supply
2 each from Bolivia, Fayetteville, St. James, Winnabow and Sunset Harbor
1 each from Belville, Bald Head, Lumberton, Little River, Varnumtown, Shallotte, Tabor City, Delco, Waccamaw and Whiteville. A few arrived without any information at all.

61 Bird Species were admitted, from a tiny hummingbird to a tall Great Blue Heron 40 pelicans, 24 gulls, 15 loons, 13 gannets and mourning doves, 9 grackles, 8 mockingbirds, 6 cormorants, shearwaters and wrens, 5 clapper rails and royal terns, 4 geese, mallards, screech owls and red tail hawks. There were swifts, crows, herons, vultures and woodpeckers and others. We even had a scoter, a sora and a swan!

Celebrate Nature in the Lower Cape Fear

May 12-16, 2009

Ibis Fest, Southport, NC

Field Trips to local natural areas including the Green Swamp, Bald Head Island and NC Aquarium at Fort Fisher

Boat Trips including a trip to the Battery Island Audubon Sanctuary

Kayak Trips to Dutchman's Creek, Sheep's Island, Rices Creek and Upper Lockwood Folly

Workshops on birding, wildlife photography, turtles and other wild creatures.

And Other Activities like a wine tasting, movie on Garrison House lawn and Bird song Identification quiz

Please visit the festival website for more information and registration

www.ibisfest.org



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Dave LaBounty	Allen Wood
Martha Latta	Barbara Youngbluth
Barbara and Alan Lecron	George and Margaret Yu



The volunteers who give the priceless gift of their time and energy:

Diane and Lee Butzin, Jane Kulesza, Gus Grosch, Perry Grosch, Linda Carver, Randy and Lisa Weller, Gerhard, Julia and Stephanie Zapf, Brooke Russell, Niki Cutler, Jacci Hohnstein, Joshua, Kristina and Andrew Bruce, John Ennis, Mike Romano, Anne Corrao, Rick Cole, Nancy Fahey, Dawn Olmstead, Kim Gallup, Tami Smith, Carol Hasty, Barbara McLain



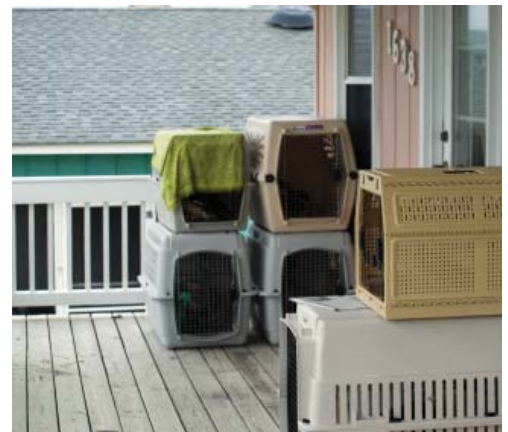
Professionals who donate their expertise

Dr. Alyse Travis
Dr. Audra Rickman
Dr. Flint King



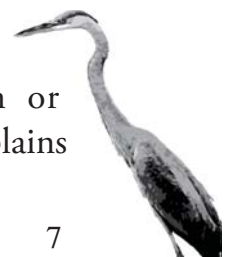
Tropical Storm Hanna

As any resident of the Carolina Coast, Sea Biscuit has to be ready for hurricanes. In addition to the questions of Stay Put or Bug Out, the question of who can better survive out in the wilds versus staying at the shelter must be asked. Thankfully the 2008 Hurricane season did not hit the Carolina Coast too hard. Things looked rocky enough with TS Cristobal forming just south of Oak Island, though never making landfall. TS Fay seemed ready to come give us a visit, but veered back across Florida. Tropical Storm Hanna made landfall at the NC/ SC border, putting hurricane plans into effect.



For a weak tropical system, Sea Biscuit plans to put all residents that can not be released into carriers and shelter them on the second floor of the property. This avoids the threats from overwash impacting the birds while avoiding great disturbance to their routines. During the peak of the storm, Mary Ellen reported having a number of avian visitors in her living room. After the storm everyone took residence in their regular places. Overwash was not serious near the shelter, but dunes were severely overwashed several blocks down.

Sea Biscuit is seeking for options for off island bird storage should a large Category 2 Hurricane or better threaten the shelter. A barn or similar structure outside of flood plains would be perfect.





To:

Sea Biscuit Shelter
1638 E Beach Dr
Oak Island, NC 28465

WISH LIST

*Cash donations will be used for
food and veterinary supplies*

**Things needed every
day**

Copy paper
Plastic bags
Detergent
Mops, brooms
Paper towels

Rolled gauze
Rolled cotton padding
Gavage tubes/soft
rubber catheters
Vinyl gloves

Miscellaneous:

Pool filter
Heat lamps
Astro turf doormats
for lining kennels

Medical Stuff:

Scalpels
Black light flashlight
Friendly plastic (craft
molding) for casts/
splints
Microscope
Gram (meat) Scale

Foodstuff:

All sizes of fish, alive
or frozen
Bird seed

Mission Statement

The Sea Biscuit Wildlife Shelter cares for injured or orphaned wild birds. We provide minimum medical care, safety from predators, food and shelter from the elements. When an animal is able to care for itself, it is released to the wild. We do not keep nonreleasable animals nor use heroic methods to sustain the quality of their life. However, the Shelter does make every effort to rehabilitate an endangered species and every animal brought here is treated with respect and caring.

Board of Directors

Mary Ellen Rogers, President
Diane W. Butzin, Secretary
Jane A. Kulesza, Treasurer

Call Mary Ellen Rogers at 910 278-7871