



**Final Report to the
Alameda County Fish and Game Commission**

***Resolving Negative Human-Wildlife Interactions
(AKA Urban Wildlife Conflicts) in Alameda County - 2020***

December 11, 2020

Original Funding Request and Project Description

International Bird Rescue was awarded a \$5,000 grant from the Alameda County Fish and Game Commission in March 2020. The goal of the grant was to address known, ongoing Urban Wildlife Conflicts (negative human-wildlife interactions) in Alameda County in 2020, and to benefit Alameda wildlife by giving aquatic birds that have been harmed by human impact a second chance at a normal life. The grant's purpose was to offset nutrition, medicine, and basic veterinary care costs for birds admitted from Alameda County to our San Francisco Bay-Delta Wildlife Center between April and December, 2020.

Our San Francisco Bay-Delta Wildlife Center in Cordelia, CA admits more than 2,000 local aquatic birds annually, and releases them back into the wild once they are successfully rehabilitated. Over the past 4 years, we've received an average of 200+ birds annually from Alameda County. As a "referral hospital," we often treat the most challenging cases that are beyond the capacity or skills of other regional wildlife centers and clinics.

Unlike traditional veterinary clinics, our patients come to us with no funding, no insurance, and no one responsible for paying the bill. Birds injured by human impact (as the majority of our cases are) require capable hands and large volumes of food and vitamins in order to be rehabilitated successfully and returned to the environment. Only with philanthropic support from concerned citizens, foundations, corporations, and municipal agencies are we able to meet the demand for our services.

The original grant proposal requesting \$10,000 was to treat and rehabilitate approximately 42 wild avian patients admitted from Alameda after April 1, 2020. Commission funds were to be used to pay for costs of animal nutrition, medicine, and basic medical supplies:

- \$13.38: average cost per bird for one day's worth of animal care, including nutrition, medicine, vitamins, dietary supplements, veterinary supplies (such as vet wrap, sutures, surgical supplies), enclosures, etc.
- 18: average length of days of stay for a bird in care.
- 42 birds supported by an Alameda County Fish and Wildlife Propagation Fund \$10,000 grant in 2020.

Alameda County Fish and Game Commission's \$5,000 grant funds were to be used to pay for animal nutrition, medicine, and basic medical supplies.

COVID-19 Response

No discussion of 2020 would be complete without an acknowledgement of how the COVID-19 global pandemic affected our work.

We at International Bird Rescue have completely pivoted our operations to remain viable during the pandemic. We were designated as an “essential service” by the State of California, and continue to take extraordinary measures to maintain our levels of service and responsiveness, while protecting the safety of our people, and while experiencing dramatically reduced funding.

We lost over \$20,000 of earned income in March alone from cancelled emergency response trainings and drills. Since then, many other organizational funders (foundations, corporations, and government agencies) redirected their philanthropy to other pandemic-related charities, or delayed their deadlines, timelines, and decision-making processes. While we support those individual choices, the result was a more-than-\$100,000 loss in philanthropic contributions that support our core work.

In addition, "shelter-in-place / safer-at-home" orders mandated that only paid professional staff were able to work on-site for a number of months, and even then only when appropriate safety measures are in place. Functionally, this means we were without the hundreds of volunteers we normally rely upon to do our work. This resulted in a loss of approximately 15 full-time-equivalent staff for over 4 months. We have only recently begun to welcome back a limited number of volunteers.

Program Results

Grant funds were received in late May 2020. With data still coming in for Q4, we are happy to report on the period between 4/1/20 and 9/30/20, when we admitted 63 Alameda patients for care. This figure comports with historical averages, and shows that COVID-19 has not diminished human-related impacts on wildlife. Patient data pulled from our RaptorMed software (which we use to track medical information specific to each patient) shows the following for Alameda County patients we received:

- 4 – Egrets – Snowy, Great
- 11 – Herons – Green, Black-crowned Night-Heron
- 10 – Ducks – Mallard
- 16 – Geese – Canada
- 2 – Brown Pelicans
- 8 – Gulls – Western, California
- 3 – Killdeer
- 2 – Common Murre
- 1 – Double-crested Cormorant
- 1 – Least Tern, California
- 1 – each: Northern Fulmar, Rock Pigeon, Hybrid Duck, Sora, Western Snowy Plover

The average length of stay for these patients was 9.33 days. With an average cost of \$13.38 per bird for one day's worth of animal care (including nutrition, medicine, vitamins, dietary supplements, veterinary supplies (vet wrap, sutures, surgical supplies), enclosures, etc.), the economic impact of Alameda County service we provided between 4/1/20 and 9/30/20 was \$7,865, \$5,000 of which was supported by a 2020 grant from Alameda County Fish and Game Commission.

We were able to efficiently and effectively rescue and rehabilitate so many wild birds because of our well-established response protocols, developed through years of direct, hands-on experience:

1. **Rescue:** Volunteers, citizens, and other rescue agencies transport injured or orphaned birds to our Wildlife Center in Fairfield, CA.
2. **Triage:** Birds undergo a triage assessment by our professional veterinary staff where vital signs are taken, the bird's weight and measurements are recorded, and blood work is often done. A medical treatment plan and a nutrition plan are created specific to each bird.
3. **Medical Intervention:** Typically initiated after the first 24-428 hours in care, so that the initial trauma of capture can abate (remaining mindful that these are wild animals), and we can be assured that the animal has the strength to endure the stress of a medical procedure such as washing or surgery.
4. **Recovery:** Treated birds move to a recovery area, just as a patient would be at a human hospital. Here, their progress is closely monitored until they are ready to move to a rehabilitation area.
5. **Rehabilitation:** Birds heal their wounds and gain strength in our predator-proof aviary enclosures.
6. **Release:** When birds have healed and matured to be capable of survival on their own, they are released back into the wild at species-appropriate locations.

Images



Many public programs pivoted on-line in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Here Isabel Luevano, Center Manager for our San Francisco Bay-Delta Wildlife Center participates in our 2020 Virtual Open House programming. Photo by International Bird Rescue



Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation continued throughout 2020 with little reduction in patient cases, although volunteer support was significantly diminished. We leaned into our experience as emergency responders to keep our staff safe while still treating wildlife. Photo by International Bird Rescue

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