



**Final Report to the Alameda County Fish and Game Commission
Resolving Negative Human-Wildlife Interactions
(AKA Human Wildlife Conflicts) in Alameda County - 2022**

November 23, 2022

Original Funding Request and Project Description

International Bird Rescue was awarded a \$10,000 grant from the Alameda County Fish and Game Commission in March 2022. The goal of the grant was to address known, ongoing human-wildlife conflicts and negative interactions in Alameda County in 2022, 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, 2022.

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. We typically received approximately 200 birds annually from Alameda County. As a "referral hospital," we treat the most challenging cases that are beyond the capacity or skills of other 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 54 wild avian patients admitted from Alameda County after April 1, 2022. 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.
- 14: average length of days of stay for a bird in care.
- 54 birds supported by an Alameda County Fish and Wildlife Propagation Fund \$10,000 grant in 2022.

Program Results

Grant funds were received in May 2022. In our FY22: 10/1/21-9/30/22, we rescued 374 Alameda County birds, *well above historical averages*. (In the grant program period of 4/1/22 through 9/30/22, we admitted 344 Alameda patients for care.) 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 in FY22:

- 138 – Herons – Green, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Great Blue
- 93 – Ducks – Mallard
- 45 – Double-crested Cormorant
- 22 – Gulls – Western, California, Glaucous-winged

20 – Geese – Canada, Great White-fronted
20 – Egrets – Snowy, Great, Cattle
9 – Snowy Plover
5 – Common Murre
4 – Tern – Least, California, Caspian
3 – Pelicans – American White, Brown
3 – Scaup – Lesser, Greater
2 – each: Bufflehead, Cassin’s Auklet, Leach’s Storm-Petrel
1 – each: Northern Fulmar, Barn Owl, Belted Kingfisher, Pacific Loon, Virginia Rail, Wilson’s Snipe

The average length of stay for these patients was 15.4 days. With an average cost of \$13.38 per bird (not yet adjusted for this year’s extraordinary inflation) 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 was just over \$77,000, \$10,000 of which was supported by a 2022 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. Each rescued bird is given an improved quality of life. Each released bird is an indicator of progress towards our goals of mitigating human impact on the environment and conserving biological diversity. Treated birds are banded so that they can be tracked by scientists, volunteers, and the Federal Bird Banding Lab. Data from the banding effort is analyzed by our veterinary care team as part of ongoing research, and the results shared at professional conferences.

In addition to our core, ongoing wildlife rescue, rehabilitation, and emergency preparedness work, we hosted an international emergency response conference in 2022 and also responded to:

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza

There is a new deadly threat facing North America’s wild birds: a new strain of avian influenza, called Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) Eurasian strain H5N1 2.3.4.4.b. This strain is different from other avian influenza strains that have long plagued the poultry industry. This virus has been spreading around the globe for the past decade and finally reached the east coast of North America this past winter. It had been slow to hit the southwestern United States. Unfortunately, July 15, 2022 was the first detection of the strain in California, affecting two Canada Geese and an American White Pelican at [Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge](#).

This HPAI virus strain is not considered to be a high risk to humans, but it is highly-contagious among birds. It can be carried from place to place on human shoes and clothing, even on vehicle tires. Crowded conditions at breeding areas and other areas where wild birds congregate are spots where they are at high risk of this disease spreading and causing [mass mortality](#).

We are encouraging the public to be [educated and aware that HPAI is a serious and deadly bird virus](#). We have added protocols to protect our current clinic patients and to reduce the likelihood of infected birds entering our facilities, including outdoor screening of new birds, staff wearing Personal Protective

Equipment (PPE) when screening incoming patients for HPAI symptoms, laboratory testing as needed, and reorganizing interior spaces to minimize cross-contamination.

California Brown Pelican Crisis

In May 2022, our Wildlife Centers were inundated with Brown Pelicans. Van-loads of patients arrived daily from other regional wildlife centers and rescue organizations. With intakes totaling 345, staff and volunteers were hard at work with exams, patient evaluations, care, and feeding of each arrival. This was the largest influx of pelicans we've seen since 2012, and gearing up for such a large influx of large birds was an enormous challenge. We redeployed staff to assist with the patient volume; we dramatically increased our supplies of fish; and we reorganized our clinic layouts to provide indoor caging for birds that were not yet healthy enough for the outdoor aviaries.

KCRW Radio and FOX11 TV-LA both have excellent reporting on this work. This crisis reminds us that birds in a changing world face new and challenging environmental obstacles. In this case, we saw symptoms of starvation which point towards a food-scarcity issue. Whatever the cause, the birds were failing to find enough to eat and took extra risks when foraging. We continue to work with US Fish and Wildlife Service and California Department of Fish and Game to attempt to determine the cause(s) of this "crash." Regardless of the reasons, we knew that we needed to respond immediately to provide care to these emaciated, and-sometimes-entangled birds if we were to make a difference in their survival (and we have data that shows our interventions are successful: we released 66% of the pelicans rescued and rehabilitated during this crisis back to their native habitat).

Although no Brown Pelicans from this crisis were admitted from Alameda County, we wanted to highlight this emergency response because the ongoing work you support keeps our skills and facilities sharp and prepared to respond to unpredictable-yet-sadly-inevitable wildlife emergencies as they arise.

All photos: International Bird Rescue



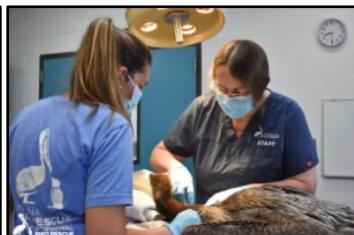
Bird Rescue staff unload pelicans arriving at the Wildlife Center.



Wildlife Center Manager Kylie Clatterbuck begins intake on a rescued Brown Pelican. When rescuers ran out of large pet-carriers, they were forced to resort to shipping boxes.



Wildlife Rehabilitation Technician Kadi Erickson performs an exam on one of the 300+ Brown Pelicans in care.



Although most Brown Pelicans admitted were starving and sick, some arrived with wing fractures and fish hook-inflicted wounds. Veterinarian Dr. Rebecca Duerr worked tirelessly to aid these injuries.

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