Avian Haven Winter Spring Releases 2013

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AVIAN HAVEN
Wild Bird Rehabilitation Center

A Few of our Releases
Winter-Spring 2013

Photos are (mostly) by Glori Berry unless credited otherwise.
Bald Eagle
Released May 3
Early in the evening of April 21, Warden Shannon Fish called to pass along a report of an eagle said to have been “just standing” for several hours in the shallows of Long Pond (between Bucksport and Dedham). Shannon was nearly an hour away and with darkness fast approaching, this seemed like an emergency situation. We called volunteer William Nichols in Stockton Springs. Luckily, he and his brother Kyle were available; they quickly gathered up rescue gear, and headed for Long Pond. To get to the bird from where the car was parked, they had to wade through a brook and then into the water of Long Pond.

William called around 8:30 to say that the capture had been surprisingly easy; the bird had barely moved when approached and netted. The eagle and his rescuers arrived here around 9:45. William held the bird while Marc did a quick exam.
The eagle was drooling, glassy-eyed and dopey-acting, nearly passing out in William’s arms. Basic blood work did not look good – packed cell volume (“PCV” – the proportion of red blood cells in blood) was only 10%. A normal range would be 40-50%.

Suspecting a toxin exposure, but not knowing what it might have been, we administered a charcoal slurry (activated charcoal binds to and helps eliminate undesirable substances from the body). The crop was very full, so Diane maneuvered the delivery tube around the crop contents and into the stomach. Shortly after being tucked into a hospital cage, the bird vomited what looked like the remains of a freshly-eaten large rodent.
The next morning the bird was alive but virtually comatose. The GI system was not working; the crop still contained some prey remains, and a bad smell came from the bird’s mouth. Marc used long forceps to remove the rest of the crop contents (the now-rotting meat is coated with the charcoal slurry we’d administered the night before); this is what the floor looked like afterwards!

Meanwhile, pieces of a puzzle were coming together: the combination of rat remains, low PCV, and comatose-acting patient added up to a possibility of a secondary exposure to an anti-coagulant rodenticide. We started the bird on vitamin K injections, a Chinese medicinal herbal combination to stop bleeding, and a homeopathic remedy indicated for toxin ingestion.
For the remainder of the day, we continued with supportive care and tubed fluids. Early on the second morning, the bird was still lying down but his eyes were open. By noon, he had struggled upright, and although he was still too woozy to stand, it seemed likely that he would survive. The tube mix was upgraded to a fish slurry; the bird demonstrated recovery of GI tract function by casting a pellet that presumably contained the final remnants of the rat.

That evening as Diane and Marc were preparing dinner, they heard a commotion in the infirmary. Rushing downstairs, they discovered that the eagle had pushed open the hospital cage door and flown across the room to a counter, the contents of which were strewn on the floor. We knew then that he would be just fine!
Release day was May 3; the eagle was banded and driven to Craig Brook National Fish Hatchery in East Orland, overlooking Alamoosook Lake. The bird was released in front of the building marked with the arrow, facing the lake.
Denise
(Craig Brook NFH)  Marc  William

Release photos by Terry Heitz
The bird came out of the carrier strong and sure, circling above the tree tops, then flying until out of sight, into the wild blue yonder.
Black Guillemot
Released May 6
Late in the afternoon of Aug. 5 (2012), Camden area volunteer transporter Barbara Favicchia was out walking, when she saw a small seabird beached on Atlantic Avenue near the library. She called Diane and described the situation; Diane advised her to attempt to contain the bird, and Barbara was able to do so, though it meant wading into shallows. A transportation relay was quickly arranged, and by nightfall, we had the little seabird.

Barbara’s rescue was a juvenile Black Guillemot, a small seabird about the size of a pigeon. This individual was very thin and had lost waterproofing. An external exam revealed no obvious injuries; in the first week, we concentrated on building up the bird’s strength.
Things seemed to be going well at first, but on Aug. 17, the area around the left eye was badly swollen and breathing was raspy. We took an x-ray and found a broken clavicle, but saw nothing that would explain the swollen face. Over the next few weeks, we tried several treatments, and although some seemed successful for a short while, the swelling ultimately returned. Despite the appearance of the face, however, waterproofing had improved, water time was enjoyed. . .
... and the bird’s appetite was nothing short of remarkable!

Sept. 1
Atlantic capelin was a favorite food.
The head swelling persisted, despite various treatment strategies. Our x-ray clearly showed inflammation on the left side of the head; it seemed as if pressure behind the eye was causing it to protrude.

After consulting with a seabird veterinarian in another state, around the middle of September, we decided to try a nasal flush, and were encouraged when some whitish fluid drained out. We repeated this treatment twice over the next week, and were delighted to see the swelling improve dramatically. Some raspy breathing sounds continued, but we seemed to be making progress.
By the end of September, the eye area looked much better. We set up a 150-gallon heated pool in an outside habitat; he could swim or bask on a sunny shelf, and seemed quite content there.
October went fairly well, and we continued occasional nasal flushes. But the raspy respiration sounds persisted, and we knew we needed more information than our x-rays could provide about what was going on in the sinuses. On Oct. 22, Dr. Karen Tichy (Atlantic Veterinary Care in Damariscotta) took several digital radiographs for us, and although they revealed more than our images, we still could not see enough detail to determine the nature of the problem. And at about that time, when we examined the bird’s mouth, a reddish sac could be seen protruding from the choanal slit (an opening from the roof of the mouth into the sinuses). Another seabird veterinarian who saw the photo below thought it looked like a manifestation of a sinus infection and judged the prognosis poor.

We still thought we needed to know more than any of the radiographic images to date had revealed, and were delighted when Dr. Bjorn Lee at PenBay Veterinary Associates in Rockland offered the use of his digital dental x-ray unit. On Nov. 1, Shelley took the bird there.
The image revealed two tiny skull fractures! Now we had a working hypothesis:

Some sort of head trauma may have damaged soft tissue around the sinus area, resulting in swelling and setting the stage for infection.

Dr. Lee also took a sample of sinus fluid, which was sent off to be cultured.

Photos courtesy of PenBay Veterinary Associates
The culture revealed several kinds of bacteria as well as the antibiotic sensitivity to each one. After more veterinary consultations, the treatment plan was using a nebulizer to administer a 10-day course of the antibiotic indicated as appropriate for all of the types of bacteria that were present. The bird was in the nebulizer chamber for 10 minutes twice a day. He readily adapted to the new routine.

After the treatment was finished, the reddish bubble was gone, but a couple weeks later, the left eye was swollen again, and breathing markedly raspy. The choanal bubble returned within another week. We decided to try another round of nebulization therapy using a different unit with a more powerful air flow.
After the second round of nebulization, the bubble was still present, but it was significantly smaller, and the area around the left eye was only slightly swollen.

We were able to keep an outdoor pool going well into January, and the bird seemed content to be outdoors. Given that the treatments tried to date had been at least partly successful, we opted for a period of waiting and seeing with no treatments administered.
For the duration of colder weather in February, the bird occupied indoor habitats with a smaller pool. The left eye and the protrusion from the choana remained about the same, but the bird maintained waterproofing and a great appetite.
We were soon confident that the bird could be released, and began re-introducing salt into the diet in preparation for an offshore release.

Around the end of February, board member Dr. Judy Herman (Animal Wellness Center of Augusta) was here for our annual board meeting; she examined the bird on that occasion. A Certified Veterinary Homeopath, she was well-versed in alternative treatments; we had already consulted her about a homeopathic remedy the previous fall. The one recommended at that time was among various treatments that had helped, but not completely or long term. After taking a close look at the eye and mouth areas, Dr. Herman took some time to research potential remedies. On March 3, we began her recommended treatment.

By March 15, when this photo was taken, both the bubble and the swelling around the left eye were gone. This time, they stayed gone!
By this time, two of the pools in our new aquatic bird facility were open. One of its first occupants was the Guillemot, who had already shown a remarkable attraction for a Red-necked Grebe we had in that time frame. The Grebe tolerated “Guilly,” and they spent several days together before the Grebe was released.
By early May, Guilly was molting actively. With his Grebe friend gone, his companion was once again his mirror image. But as can be seen from these photos, the eye area swelling had not returned. The choana also remained normal.
We then turned to the question of where to release the bird. We wanted to let him go in the vicinity of other Guillemots, and islands hosting nesting colonies seemed like good places to find them. We e-mailed an individual known to state water bird biologists as “Mr. Cormorant” – John Drury, whose seabird cruises from Vinalhaven aboard his wooden lobster boat Fluke are well known around the mid-coast area. John had already released a couple of Great Cormorants for us, including one on April 8 (shown to the right).

Diane asked, “Do you know of any reliable Guillemot hang-outs in the area you travel?” John’s answer made her day: “This is Guillemot country! They nest at Brimstone, Roberts, Otter, Seal, etc.” The even better news was that John was willing to take time out from spring boat repairs to take the bird out.

Cormorant release photos by John Drury
The islands John mentioned are among the ones circled below.

On May 6, Diane, Selkie and the bird took the ferry from Rockland to Vinalhaven, where they were met by John. Fluke was in the boatyard; John took his guests out on a new acquisition, Blue Tip 3.

John pointed out a number of pelagic birds along the way, including Great and Double-crested Cormorants, Common Eiders, a Razorbill, and of course Black Guillemots!
But although we saw perhaps a dozen Guillemots, we found only one at a time, and never near any of the islands. Given that our bird had been in pools for several months, we opted for calmer and more shallow water on the lee side of Roberts. John assured us that there would be plenty of Guillemots there by early the following morning, if not sooner.
With heavy fog coming in, we preferred not to linger; we also thought that the boat's proximity to the bird might keep other Guillemots away. John took us in a slow circle around our Guilly as he seemed to get his bearings. Confident that he would be fine, we headed back toward Vinalhaven; less than 100 yards farther, Selkie saw another Guillemot, facing the direction from which we had come.
Ruby-throated Hummingbird
Released May 30
The beginning of this bird’s story was told in our 2012 Year End Report; here is an update accompanied by many more photos! To recap:

Late in the morning of November 4, Juanita Roushdy of Bremen was astonished to see a hummingbird at a feeder she’d forgotten to take down earlier in the fall.

Juanita rushed inside to make a sugar-water solution, and as soon as the bird left the old feeder, she replaced it with two fresh ones. The bird looked bedraggled and exhausted; photos taken from Juanita’s spotting scope showed yellow spots of pollen dust on his forehead and throat – supporting the hypothesis that the bird had recently been a significant distance farther south. A likely scenario was that he had been carried north a few days earlier by Hurricane (“Superstorm”) Sandy.

Despite the cold temperatures that night, he was back the next day, and visited both feeders frequently. But on the following day, the hummer’s wings were drooping again, with forecasts predicting an approaching nor’easter and even colder temperatures. Juanita knew the bird’s prospects for surviving a second storm were poor, and decided to intervene.
When the bird arrived here on Nov. 9, he had a prominent keel and weighed only 2.8 g. The yellow pollen spots were still visible near the bird’s beak, and in the right light, just a few red spots were the beginning of the ruby throat this juvenile male would eventually acquire.

He readily adapted to a feeding station equipped with a complete food for hummingbirds.

Within a few days in a warm environment with good nutritional support, he was up to 3.4 g, a respectable weight for his species.
On Nov. 11, he was moved into a spacious indoor aviary we call “the Penthouse.” There, he would spend the winter. The Penthouse has large windows on three sides and is filled with natural and artificial plants.

The bird’s favorite spot was the long “stem” of an artificial plant hung in the east window.

The photos on the next two slides were taken in late November.
December and January passed uneventfully. In February, however, the humming sound of the bird's flight had taken on a lower pitch than previously. Glori's camera revealed the reason - he was molting, and missing a window of flight feathers on both wings!
One of his favorite activities was taking a daily morning “shower” provided by a plant sprayer.
By early March, the new flight feathers had matured significantly, and more ruby gorget feathers were appearing.
By early April, even more progress had been made, especially to the gorget!
By the end of May, his ruby throat was in full glory.
The release site was Avena Botanicals in Rockport, where the hummingbird garden was already blooming. Herbalist Deb Soule unzipped the bird’s netted travel container.

The bird did some zipping of his own, leaving the container the instant it was open! Juanita was unable to attend, but loved these photos. The feeder that the bird found in Juanita’s yard last fall, and that had saved his life, was left hanging in Avena’s garden.

Photos by Selkie O’Mira
The birds described in the previous slides are cases we found particularly interesting or unusual. However, they comprise only a few of the success stories of the season, and photos of some of our other releases are shown in the slides that follow.

American Woodcock
Released May 31
Mallard
Released Feb. 11
Photos by
William Nichols

Black Duck
Released April 15
Photos by Scott Bergquist
Red-tailed Hawk
Released April 21
Photos by Tanna Witkin

Barred Owl
Released May 19
Photos by Tanna Witkin
Common Murre
Released March 24
Photo by David Volin

In Care  March 18

Rescue  March 13
Photo by David Volin
Bald Eagle
Released
March 30
Photos by Terry Heitz
Red-throated Loon

In Care March 25

Released March 28
Release
Photos by Kelani Cundy

Mallard
Released May 24
Photos by Cheryl Sleeper
American Robin
Released April 28
Photos by Terry Heitz

White-throated Sparrow
Released May 17
That’s it for now! We’ll be pretty busy for the next few months, but our Facebook page will have updates over the summer’s “baby” season.

We can’t do this without you! To help support our mission of returning injured, sick and orphaned birds to the wild, please make a credit card or PayPal donation or send a check to Avian Haven at 418 North Palermo Road, Freedom, ME 04941. THANK YOU!