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## Avian Haven Featured Cases Winter Spring 2013 - 14

Avian Haven

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# AVIAN HAVEN

## Wild Bird Rehabilitation Center



A Few of our Guests  
Winter - Spring  
2013-2014



Most Photos by Glori Berry

# Thick-billed Murre



January 19 - February 22

He was found in a road in East Boothbay, rescued by David Pratt, and brought in by volunteer transporter Bob Jones. On arrival he was emaciated, dirty, and too weak to stand up.

We rinsed off his chest, and saw immediately that he had lost water-proofing. We thought we might have to give him a Dawn bath later, but for the moment, the priority was warmth and fluids. He spent the first night in an intensive care unit.



For the next few days, he stayed mostly on the haul-out of the pool; although his brief swims were gradually cleaning his feathers, his waterproofing was still not good.



His legs were not broken, but they remained weak; when he tried to stand, he had to use his wings as crutches.



A look at a fecal sample under a microscope revealed an extremely heavy parasite load, which probably accounted for his low weight. We treated the parasites, and were glad to see that his appetite was excellent! He readily took capelin from Diane's hand or from forceps.



Another meal is enjoyed!





About a week after admission, he was spending more time in the pool. He was very enthusiastic about eating in the water!



Waterproofing is still not perfect, but is getting better every day.





On January 27, we moved him into a larger pool. He still used the haul-out occasionally . . .



. . . perhaps in part because it was near the food delivery!



By February 6, when these photos were taken, most of his time was spent in the water.



And when he did come out . . .



. . . the water droplets on his feathers showed that his waterproofing was nearly perfect.



However, although his waterproofing improved greatly over the first week of February, his appetite dropped off. True, he had gained about 200 grams, but still was not in the range we wanted to see. We re-checked for parasites and found that they had re-surfaced. So we treated again, and his appetite did pick up.

Little changed over the second week in February. We kept an eye on parasites and by the middle of the month were confident that we'd finally knocked them all out. Blood work on the 16<sup>th</sup> looked excellent. That day, Glori got her last series of photos of the bird in captivity.





He jumped in and out of the water repeatedly, and seemed restless, as if wanting to go.



On Feb. 21, the bird weighed 810 grams (up from 542 on intake). We called it good. Feb. 22 was release day; he was taken to the narrows of Little River, Ocean Point, just a mile or so from where he had been found a month earlier.



Release photos by Terry Heitz except where noted otherwise.



He came out of the carrier and hesitated on the edge of the dock for a few minutes. He looked around in all directions, stretching and flapping his wings, as if embracing the sunlight.

Then he flew off the dock  
and over the water.



Photo by John Waldman





He landed and swam around . . . then raised up and flapped.





He took an enthusiastic bath near a large float.

And then turning again toward the south, he took off from the water.

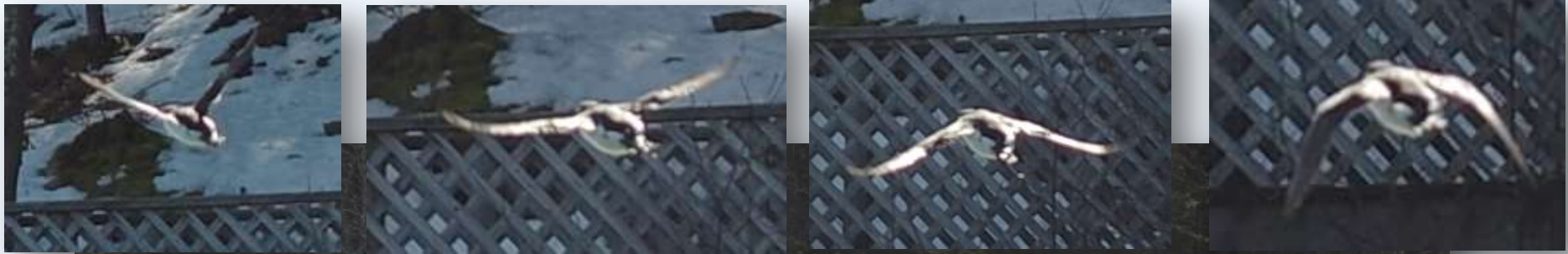




He flew low over the water at first . . .



. . . past three Mallards.



But then he banked sharply up past a house . . .

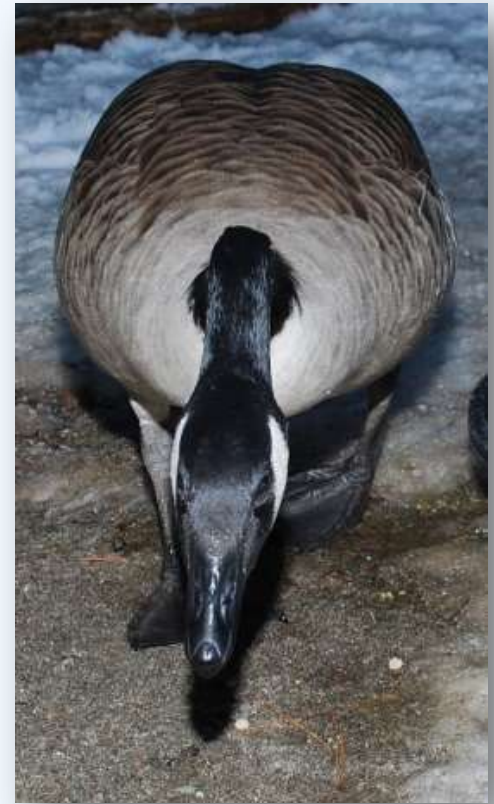


... turned across the river ...



... and flew out of sight around a corner, out to open ocean.

# Three Canada Geese



November 2013  
through  
April 2014



None of these birds had injuries such as wounds or fractures, but had a variety of other difficulties. One was rescued from a parking lot, weak and disoriented. Diagnostics revealed an elevated blood lead level (Canada geese sometimes eat pieces of lead while foraging). Another had been raised by people and was somewhat tame-acting; the best thing for this bird was the company of other geese. The third was emaciated and loaded with parasites; supportive nutritional care for the former condition and treatment for the latter resolved both problems.



Their stay with us was uneventful, but it was interesting to observe their behavior as the seasons changed from fall, through winter, into spring.

## Early November



There's still some sparse  
vegetation on the ground  
of the flight cage.

# Early December



A layer of snow covers much of the ground, but it is bare in some spots.



More  
Early  
December



They don't seem to mind an icy ground, and we almost never find them in the areas that are roofed and straw-covered except at night.



Preening helps keep their feathers in good shape - which in turn keeps them warm.

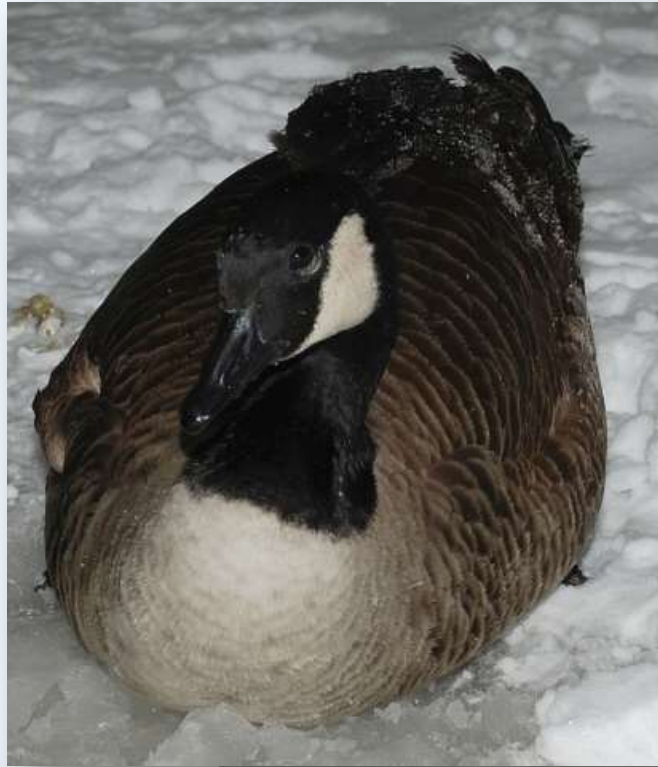
## Some Portrait Poses



## Early January



Snow now covers all the open sections of the habitat. They still rarely use the straw bedding except at night.





## Mid March



Snow cover persists,  
but there is much  
more sunlight!



## Release Day: April 29



Release Photos by Darcy Mahoney

# Their New Home



# Turkey Vulture



April 17 - April 27

On the morning of April 17, Bill and Deanna Reed of Clifton were horrified to see a Turkey Vulture hanging upside down, at least 50' up, in a tall tree near their home. Both legs were free; the bird's tail appeared to be caught in something.



Over the course of the day, several rescue ideas were considered and discarded. There was no way to get a utility truck with a bucket into the area, for example, and by nightfall, it was clear that the only solution would be arranging for a professional climber to scale the tree. We began to explore that option for the following morning.

Deanna e-mailed early the next morning, sadly reporting that the bird was hanging limp and apparently dead. But a couple hours later, she saw him move! We quickly put a plan into motion, contacting Unity College biologist Brent Bibles, who, as a raptor bander, had extensive experience with climbs to high nests. Brent gathered climbing gear, and drove with Marc to Clifton.



Just as they pulled into the dooryard, Marc noticed a vulture gliding overhead across the driveway. The bird had just then broken free; they saw him come down into another large pine, landing about 30' up. Unable to secure perching, the vulture was lying on a group of branches. Brent was putting on his climbing boots when the bird glided down again, this time to the ground. Weak and clumsy, he was unable to get far; Marc was able to capture him easily.

Emergency first-aid supplies had been brought along; with Brent holding the bird, Marc tube-fed an electrolyte solution. The Reeds estimated that the bird had been hanging in the tree for at least 28 hours.



The vulture was loaded carefully into a padded crate and was soon en route to Avian Haven.

On arrival here, the vulture was obviously weak and seemed nearly in shock. We administered pain medication and settled him onto a soft foam bed. The legs were not broken, but one wing was lacerated. Glori cleaned that abrasion with the bird lying down.



Over the remainder of the day, we continued with tubed fluids and medication for pain and inflammation.







By the end of the day, he was starting to hold his head up.





The next day, he was standing!  
Vultures can be very shy; as soon as the cage door was opened, he would turn his back toward the door, with his head in a corner.  
We continued to tube-feed the bird easy-to-digest, high-calorie liquids.  
The following day, April 19, we offered him some "real" food - and he ate!

The bird seemed to recover quickly after that; on April 20, we moved him to a small outdoor cage.



These photos, and those on the next two slides, were taken on April 21.



Some of the wing feathers were ragged, but they were not broken, and the bird's own preening would help to restore their condition.





Despite the ragged feathers on the right wing particularly, the bird was able to fly reasonably well!

However, as these photos reveal, the tail feathers were in very bad shape.



We've decided to repair them by imping, and are delighted when Brent tells us that the College has a vulture cadaver that can be used as a feather donor. The procedure was done on April 22.

Glori carries the bird indoors.



Terry has prepared the donor feathers in advance, using epoxy to secure splints into the hollow feather shafts.



One at a time, he cuts the damaged feathers, then glues the donor feathers into the base of the natural feathers.

Before



After



The donor bird had recently molted the tail feather farthest to the right, so that one could not be replaced.



Here he is up high  
in the flight cage  
with his new tail.



April 27 is release day - Marc has taken him back home to Clifton.



Release photos by Bill Reed



He flew from Marc's hands into the pine trees hosting his vulture friends. The next day, the Reeds saw two birds sitting side by side, and although from that distance they could not discern the ragged right-most tail feather on either one, they felt that one of the pair was the rescued bird.

# Barred Owls (many!)

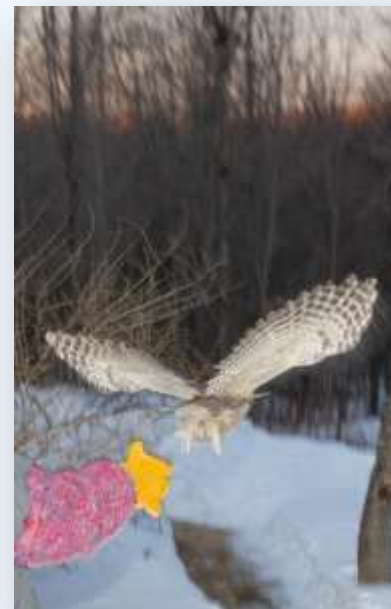


November 2013  
through  
April 2014

The winter of 2013-2014 was a tough one for raptors relying on a rodent prey base. The snow cover was deep and crusty, with mice snuggled well beneath the surface. Mice could be found around roadsides at night, but that was a dangerous place for owls to hunt. We admitted 41 Barred Owls between November 2013 and April 2014, the majority of them known or presumed car hit, but a few found on the ground near homes, too weak to stand and nearly dead from starvation. Most of them were juveniles - birds hatched in the summer of 2013, and trying to make it through first winter.



We've chosen just a few of them to tell you about.



#81 was admitted on March 16, having reportedly been disabled on the ground for several days previously. An outbuilding had collapsed in a storm, and as night fell on the 16<sup>th</sup>, the bird had sought shelter in the rubble. One of our most heroic volunteers, Rob Jones, got down on the ground, managed to get an arm in through a small opening in the debris, get hold of the bird, and pull him out. His wife Diane drove the bird here immediately, arriving around 7 p.m.



The bird was severely emaciated, weighing only about half of a normal weight. We gave him some fluids and tucked him into a heated ICU for the night. We then started a tube-fed high-calorie liquid diet.



By March 20, we were sure his GI tract had jump-started, and we started hand feeding him small pieces of pinkie mice. He graduated to self-fed whole mice a few days later.

He improved rapidly after that! Here he is in a flight cage on April 2.





A few weeks later, on April 25, he was looking good, and the worst of the winter seemed just about over.





May 2 was release day!



Release photos by Terry Heitz

He's off to a new life!



#113 arrived under unusual circumstances early in the morning of March 30. The bird had struck the front of a man's truck around midnight, while he was on his way to work an overnight shift. He thought the bird had flown off, but when he checked the front of his truck, was astonished to see the bird behind the grille! He blocked off the hole in the grille with straps. Knowing he could not get help until the following morning, he decided to leave the bird where it was for the rest of the night. For the ride over here, he taped a trash bag over the grille. Diane and Terry were ready in the dooryard when he arrived.



The top of the grille assembly was removed, and Terry freed the bird.



It was pouring rain at the time! The wet owl went right into a warm ICU to dry off.



An hour or so later, we took a more careful look at the abrasion on one foot. There was some blood in the mouth, and Glori's eye exam revealed hemorrhaging in the left eye. Over time, as the blood resorbed, Glori could see some retinal damage, but the tears in the retina mended, and by the middle of April, the bird's vision was back to normal.

Here's Lucky 113 in a flight cage on April 25.



May 2 was also release day for this bird!



Release photos by  
Connie Fotakis



#79 was car-hit on March 14 near Poland Spring. The rescuer brought him to the Gray headquarters of ME Inland Fisheries & Wildlife; he was picked up there by volunteer David Stager. Subsequently a relay comprising David and his wife Kathy, Debbie Cook, and Connie & Rick Moore brought him here.



Although it is not evident in these March 17 photos, he had hemorrhages in both eyes.

Perhaps because of his limited vision, he was extremely restless in indoor hospital cages, and by the time his eyes had healed well enough for him to be comfortable in a small outdoor cage on April 3, he had broken several of his flight feathers. Both eyes looked good when checked on April 15, but the broken feathers would need to be impied before he could be released.



Meanwhile, #79 had become very friendly with #17, another car-hit juvenile who'd arrived in the evening of January 9. The rescuer had called to say he was en route, but he did not have a container for the bird. When he arrived, the bird was perched on the passenger's side head rest, having flown there from the back seat during the trip. Diane was able to grab the bird and carry her safely to the infirmary. This bird had no fractures, but like #79, she had blood in both eyes, had to remain inside for several weeks, was agitated and restless during her recovery, and damaged several feathers before she could see well enough to go outside. We'd long since decided to release them together by the time their feathers were repaired by imping on April 19.



April 20 was release day for the young couple. The site that had been chosen was accessible by snow machine.

To the left is Tanna Witkin on board with precious cargo . . .



. . . and to the right, the two birds a few minutes later in nearby trees.

Photos by Steve Witkin

That's it  
for now!

We thank all of the  
donors who made  
these and many  
other recoveries  
possible - you know  
who you are!





We'll be very busy over the next few months with the summer's youngsters!

You can follow those activities on our [Facebook page](#), and help support this summer's birds with an online [donation](#) (thank you!).