

To The Rescue

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Saving the Day for Birds of Prey

By Devin Manky, Wildlife Rehabilitator

Each year, the Wildlife Rescue Association admits about 50 injured raptors. Stemming from the Latin term *rapere*, which means to seize, raptors share the common trait of being meat eaters. They are birds that have evolved to be efficient and deadly hunters. Most will hunt for their prey, but some have been known to be opportunistic scavengers too. Eagles, hawks, falcons, kites, osprey, owls and vultures are all raptors.

Although raptors are expert predators at the top of the food chain, they are still vulnerable to human activities and development. Numerous raptors are admitted to WRA's Care Centre with serious trauma, usually as a result of impacts with vehicles or, in the case of smaller raptors, windows. Broken bones, concussions and damaged eyes are just some of the injuries we see on a frequent basis. Unfortunately, for birds that depend on excellent reflexes and perfect eyesight for their very survival, these injuries are often fatal.

Rehabilitation centres in southern Canada and central and northern United States normally see more raptor cases in the wintertime. Many species of raptors are migratory to some degree.

Several species (such as snowy owls and rough-legged hawks) fly from higher latitudes and the arctic tundra in search of easier prey and warmer temperatures. As the density of raptors around the Lower Mainland increases during the win-



Rough-legged Hawk

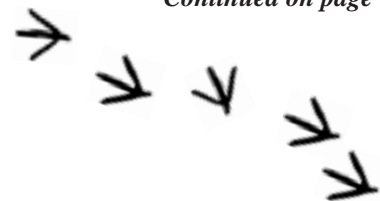
ter months, so too does the number of injured birds.

Raptors admitted during the winter are normally in much worse condition than those admitted in the summer. Prey is scarcer during the wintertime, as many mammals and birds are less active, or have migrated out of the area. Injured birds also have to expend more energy to stay warm.

Thus, winter patients are challenging to treat as they are often emaciated, severely dehydrated and very weak.

Raptor diets also present special challenges for WRA's food supplies. Bird of prey diets are varied: some eat fish; some eat mammals; some even eat other birds. All of this food must be kept in WRA's freezers since we never know what species may arrive. Raptors also rip, tear and shake their food as they eat—not exactly a prescription for cleanliness in a contained environment. Feathers must be observed for contaminants and long feathers are wrapped to prevent breakage.

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To The Rescue

Winter 2007

Vol. 28 - No. 1

To The Rescue is the newsletter of WRA Wildlife Rescue Association of BC and is produced three times a year.

WRA Wildlife Rescue Association of BC provides leadership in the care and rehabilitation of injured, orphaned and pollution damaged wildlife, primarily in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia.

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Executive Director's Message

Power in Numbers: Ordinary People Doing Extraordinary Things

By Janice Dickie, Executive Director

Last year, WRA staff came to expect the unexpected. First, we contended with two, back-to-back oil spills in B.C., then multiple news stories about our struggles to save the impacted wildlife, and finally late-year meetings with politicians about improving oil spill policy. What a whirlwind!

Many people offered their support to WRA, not only during the oil spills but also throughout the year for our regular wildlife programs. Your contributions helped us treat 2,722 injured, orphaned and pollution damaged wildlife and respond to over 12,000 public inquiries. We also reached thousands of British Columbians through our education program and "Wildlife Weekly" show on Shaw TV's *The Express*.

With about 80 percent of WRA's operating revenue raised through public donations, fundraising is always a critical part of our work. Within our own team, numerous



Photo credit: Tracy Riddell

Janice Dickie

staff members and volunteers raised money for WRA's wildlife programs by running or walking the Burnaby Lake 7-Miler in November—in the pouring rain! Organized by Try Events Inc. and sponsored by the Running Room Ltd., the race raised over \$3,000 for the wildlife in our care.

Volunteers contributed services worth approximately \$150,000 last year. Although a remarkable sum, this dollar figure does not truly capture our volunteers' dedication and hard work around the Care Centre, grounds, garden and office. Without them, WRA simply would not have the resources to care for thousands of wildlife every year.

Continued on next page



Annual General Meeting

Please join us on:

Wednesday, June 13, 2007 @ 7:00 pm
WRA, 5216 Glencarin Drive, Burnaby, BC

Refreshments will be served



Power in Numbers *(Continued from previous page)*

A number of companies, foundations and groups supported WRA, in many cases without even being solicited. Contributions from long-term donors like Vancouver Condominium Services and the Wildlife Thrift Store helped us purchase food, medications and supplies. Chevron Canada and Vancouver Foundation funded the construction of a spacious new songbird aviary. Chevron also donated other supplies for the Care Centre throughout the year.

holiday season fundraising campaign.



*Janice Dickie & Jackie Ward:
Burnaby Lake 7-Miler Participants*

The gifts kept coming as the Burnaby Rhododendron and Gardens Society kindly donated a large quantity of shade cloth, a material that lines aviaries to protect patients from heat and insects. We were also particularly grateful to Colourtime Printing, who donated the printing of our annual report and

Members and supporters responded to WRA's once-a-year mail campaign in record breaking numbers, helping us raise funds to care for patients in 2007. Thank you for your donations—and WRA will never inundate your homes with mail or trade your information with other organizations!

Stable funding for WRA's wildlife

programs over the long-term is made possible by the ongoing support of monthly donors and other individuals who leave legacy gifts. Five years ago, WRA created an Endowment Fund from several of these bequests. Income from the Flora Gray and Lucy Grace Davies Funds has been used to purchase books and computers for our wildlife education program, and surgical supplies, caging and other critical equipment for the Care Centre.

Helen Keller once said, "The world is moved along, not only by the mighty shoves of its heroes, but also by the aggregate of tiny pushes of each honest worker." Every day at WRA, we see that many small acts create big results for the wildlife in our care. Thanks again for your support in 2006—you are our heroes.

In Memory

Billy Garrison
 Charlie (House Sparrow)
 David Robinson
 Frank & Edyth Mclvor
 Frank Holt
 Hannelore Frohloff
 Hella
 Jack Scholefield
 Jean McCrae
 Jean Simpson
 Joey
 John Senkow
 Lloyd Grinder
 Peppy
 Valentina Koza

Raffle for Wildlife - Winners

Draw held October 18, 2006

Grand Prize (\$700 Value)

Douglas Charles - "Mouse" Painting Prize Package

WINNER: Babita Fisher

Get Spoiled Prize Package (\$756 Value)

WINNER: B. Christiansen

Golf Prize Package (\$735 Value)

WINNER: Brad McCaffrey

Night on the Town Prize Package (\$550 Value)

WINNER: Arman Kassam

Thank you for Celebrating Wildlife!

Thanks to everyone who helped wildlife this past holiday season by donating to WRA's Celebrate campaign.



-
- A large, light-colored background image of a heron standing on a wooden post in a body of water, with its reflection visible below. The text is overlaid on this image.
- | | | |
|------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
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Photo credit: Tracy Riddell



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Thank you to all members of WRA's Circle of Friends. Your generous contributions will help to rehabilitate thousands of animals in 2007.

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Traveler Films Inc.

Success Stories

Snow Goose

By Marcy Potter, Wildlife Rehabilitator

In late October, the Care Centre received multiple reports from the public about a lone snow goose (*Chen caerulescens*) hanging around a vacant lot on the North Shore. As I live nearby, I went to investigate.

The goose had somehow been separated from its flock and was definitely not in a good location. However, the bird was not obviously injured and still able to fly, so it could not be captured for an examination.

In the days ahead, I continued checking on the snow goose. The

bird hadn't flown away and its movements were slowing down. Finally, two WRA rehabilitators and a bystander were able to capture the goose, which was then transported to WRA's Care Centre.

A full examination revealed that the bird was thin, had abraded wrists and a high number of internal parasites. It was treated with antibiotics, anti-parasitics, topical cream for the abrasions and placed on a diet of green vegetation, mealworms, and grains.



Photo credit: Paul Steeves

Snow Goose

A month later, the snow goose had regained full health, and was released at the Reifel Migratory Bird Sanctuary in Delta where he immediately joined a flock of other snow geese.



Lesser Scaup

By Juliet Mohlmann, Volunteer

On December 11th, a lesser scaup was found on the ground in Vancouver, not far from Pacific Spirit Park. Like most other diving ducks and sea birds, scaups are unable to take off from land. This bird was lethargic and weak, and had compound fractures on his left foot plus a small wound on his bill.

Staff treated the wounds, and splinted and wrapped the left foot. As soon as possible, the scaup was moved into water. Being in water was better for him, but meant that the glue holding his wraps in place would not hold as long. The wraps were monitored daily, and changed

frequently until the wounds healed.

While in care, the scaup was hand-fed as he was not feeding on his own. The bird also had a distressing habit of playing dead when scared – giving staff and volunteers a bit of a fright!

In early January, having regained his strength and fully able to dive while chasing fish in the deep outdoor pool, the scaup was banded



Photo credit: Paul Steeves

Lesser Scaup

and released near Vanier Park in Vancouver.



Rough-legged Hawk

By Juliet Mohlmann, Volunteer

On November 11th, a rough-legged hawk (*Buteo lagopus*) was brought into WRA by the Coquitlam SPCA. The hawk was dehydrated, weak and very thin. Staff worked to rehydrate the bird, and cleaned a sore on the left foot. He was considerably underweight – 702 grams compared to a normal weight of approximately 1000 grams. Staff hand-fed him initially until he started eating on his own. While in care, the hawk’s diet consisted primarily of mice and quail.

Once past the critical phase, the hawk was moved outside to a large enclosure.

He had difficulty flying initially. To encourage him to fly more often, staff and volunteers had to chase him during feedings, and hang his food from high perches. It was nearly a month before he was flying well again.

Prior to release, the hawk was provided with live mice to verify his ability to catch prey. Having passed this test with “flying colours,” he was banded and released in Minnehada Park at the end of December.



Photo credit: Paul Steeves

Rough-legged Hawk

Chukar

By Marcy Potter, Wildlife Rehabilitator

Chukars (*Alectoris chukar*) are patients seen rarely at WRA. A small chicken-like bird originally introduced from Pakistan to be a game bird, they are striking with bold black and chestnut barring on the flanks, greyish brown back and chest, and bright red legs and bill.

In late November, a Burnaby man found a chukar in the back of his pickup truck and brought it to WRA. The young chukar could barely open its eyes, had lost primary feathers, and couldn’t fly. An examination revealed that it had central nervous trauma—likely from an impact.

Staff treated the condition with medications that included antibiotics and steroid injections to reduce swelling.

The chukar responded quickly to treatment and soon recovered. However, the lost feathers still had to re-grow. The bird was moved to one of WRA’s outdoor enclosures during its final stage of recovery.

Chukars are stocky, ground-dwelling members of the pheasant



Photo credit: Paul Steeves

Chukar

family that reside in drier, open country. In late January, the patient was released to a suitable habitat at the BC Wildlife Park in Kamloops, BC.



Saving the Day for Birds of Prey

(Continued from page 1)

Other rehabilitation challenges appear as the birds get closer to release. They need a sizable flight space for exercise and physiotherapy. They also will not tolerate other birds – even members of their own species – sharing the same space.

Before return to the wild, raptors need to be tested to ensure that their eyesight, flight and stealth are sufficient for hunting of live prey. Finally, staff must critically assess each bird's fitness and spatial awareness (ability to negotiate around barriers and track prey) before we can be confident that the individual is a good candidate for release.

For all the challenges involved in rehabilitating raptors, there is also a unique appeal and satisfaction in seeing these patients released back to the wild. They are magnificent and yes, sometimes even cute, wild creatures that fire the soul and imagination.

One of our more recent raptor success stories, featured in this newsletter, will introduce you to a rough-legged hawk who was found emaciated at a bus loop in Coquitlam, B.C. After a couple of months of rehabilitation, the bird was successfully returned to the wild in January.



Photo credit: Paul Steeves

Snowy Owl

Be sure to read his story (page 7), as it is representative of the many times that raptors have been in trouble and WRA was there to help.



New Website Launched!

Visit WRA's new website to see our wildlife photo gallery, "Wildlife Weekly" video clips and a photo tour of the rehabilitation facilities. Learn more about wildlife by reviewing the informative FAQ section, electronic brochures and education handouts. Interested in volunteering? Find out everything you need to know about WRA's volunteer program and then apply online! We hope you enjoy our colourful new website!



www.wildliferescue.ca

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- Aquarium Hoods and Lights
- Bird Spotting Scope
- Canadian Tire Money
- Dawn Dish Soap (original)
- Digital Gram Scales (1/10 of gram)
- Dish/Floor Scrub Brushes
- Frozen Berries
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- Hematocrit Centrifuge
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- Lab Coats
- Large Bath Towels (no holes)
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- Leather Animal Handling Gloves
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Photo credit: Paul Steeves



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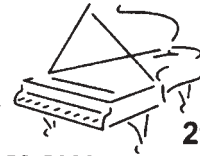
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Van. Office



Photo credit: Paul Steeves

Snowshoe Hare

Volunteer Corner

Interview with Susan Stevens: Celebrating 20 Years of Volunteer Service

By Janice Dickie, Executive Director

We are amazed that you have contributed over 3,200 hours of service to WRA since 1987. What was WRA like back then?

Twenty years ago, WRA was located on the north side of Burnaby Lake Park in very small and cramped quarters at the Nature House. We had few outdoor enclosures for mammals or birds, and accepted less than half the caseload that we see today. Later that year, I remember how thrilled we were to move to spacious quarters at the south end of the Lake, and then to a new rehabilitation facility in 1988. Of course what seemed spacious in those days is less so today. We now admit about double the number of patients!

How have your volunteer duties at WRA changed over the years?

The biggest change is that I was asked to stand for election to WRA's Board of Directors in 2000. For me, this work is the most difficult because we have to grapple with both policy and governance issues in an increasingly complex legal environment for Canadian charities. I also still volunteer in the Care Centre (preparing diets, setting up caging, cleaning and assisting with animal care) and

have advanced through the various training levels.

What do you think is the most significant change at WRA since you started volunteering?

The training program for volunteers is much more advanced than when I started. Volunteers receive a de-



Photo credit: Tracy Riddell

Susan Stevens: Preparing diets in Care Centre

tailed manual and hands-on training from beginner to assistant staff level. The program gives all volunteers an equal opportunity to learn about wildlife and rehabilitation practices as they work through the different levels.

In addition, WRA has always employed dedicated and caring staff but over the years the level of staff education and training has increased tremendously. Today, staff members are often trained biologists who also have hands-on experience working with injured wildlife.

What do you most enjoy about volunteering at WRA?

I enjoy learning about and caring for animals that I would not normally see up close in the wild. I can identify many more species, and have a better understanding of their diets and habitats in the wild. Baby bird season is always my favourite. I come in for my shift in the spring season and care for these helpless nestling songbirds. They look so small and vulnerable and I always wonder if they will survive. Yet, as the weeks go by, I can see the tremendous growth and development underway, and before I know it, they have fledged and are being moved to outdoor aviaries—the last stop before release to the wild. It is fascinating to see how these birds, once helpless

patients, grow to become independent animals that are no longer interested in their human caregivers.

Would you recommend volunteering to others?

Yes! Volunteering gives people an opportunity to contribute to a cause that excites them. You meet people from all different walks of life who share your interests. After 20 years with WRA, I still feel as passionate about this organization as when I first started. I am proud to be part of such a wonderful charity and hope to continue for many years to come.

Foster Fur & Feathers



By becoming a Foster Fur and Feathers sponsor, you are joining our efforts to save an injured or orphaned bird or animal. Consider giving a gift of caring to yourself or to someone you know. Each fosterer receives a Foster Certificate with a photograph and educational information about the sponsored animal. You may choose either a printed certificate, which will be mailed to you *or* your gift recipient, or an electronic certificate if you wish to save paper.

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Foster Me! Bufflehead

By Janice Dickie, Executive Director

Many people enjoy spotting buffleheads (*Bucephala albeola*), the diminutive black and white ducks often seen wintering around the Lower Mainland in shallow saltwater, or in lakes or rivers. The smallest diving duck in North America, the bufflehead is a quiet bird that normally remains with the same mate for several years.

Like other ducks that dive for prey, the bufflehead's legs and feet are set far back on the body, providing excellent propulsion

under water, but making it difficult for the bird to walk on land. These birds are often injured if they accidentally land on wet roads and parking lots, which can appear as open water during dark or stormy weather. One such bufflehead was admitted in mid-January after it was discovered flapping on a sidewalk in Tsawwassen, B.C.

The young bird was thin and dehydrated, and also suffering from an eye infection. Staff treated the infection, and put the patient in a



Bufflehead

pool to allow it to drink and rehydrate. Several weeks later, the bufflehead is slowly gaining weight on a diet of clams, blood worms, mealworms and the occasional smelt. It will remain in care until an adequate weight (about 330 grams) has been reached.

Wildlife Rescue Association of BC
5216 Glencarin Drive
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V5B 3C1



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Request for information: I would like information on:

- Volunteer Opportunities
- Planned Giving: Leaving a Legacy for Wildlife