



Snow Geese

Thank You for Being a Part of Our Wildlife Community

The world is changing in so many ways and it can feel a bit overwhelming. In normal times, we turn to each other for comfort. Getting together in person - laughing, hugging, sharing - has always fostered a sense of connectedness and reassurance. Social distancing and other safety measures have limited those ways of connecting with each other.

And yet, during these challenging times, people are finding new ways to connect and nurture a sense of community. Whether by video-calling, walking in nature with friends and family, or helping neighbours - including our wild animal neighbours.

Empathy for our wild neighbours has surged during the present COVID-19 health crisis. Likely, in part, because turning to nature reminds us of how interconnected we all are. Each fall, when we look overhead, we see countless birds making their arduous migration journey together, relying on each other for strength and support. It is a positive reminder that together, we will get through this.

And so, during this unprecedented time in our world, when every one of us is facing personal challenges, we especially want to thank you for being part of our wildlife community.

Together we can meet adversity and help protect vulnerable wildlife.

*From the Staff & Board of Directors,
Wildlife Rescue Association of BC*

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New Ways of Caring for Wildlife



What is Wildlife Rescue doing to help animals during the COVID-19 crisis?

Wildlife Rescue has continued providing full services to wildlife and the public throughout the pandemic, having been deemed an essential service by the provincial government during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Has animal care been compromised due to the pandemic?

No! As the team adapt to this new reality, we assure you that animal care excellence has not been compromised. Staff and volunteers continue to deliver the same high standard of expert counsel, response services, and medical facilities to treat wildlife in distress.

How has animal care changed during the COVID-19 crisis?

Wildlife Rescue has always operated above and beyond the leading international rehabilitation standards to ensure the welfare and ethical treatment of wildlife in its care. So, since the pandemic began, thorough assessments of operating practices, physical work environments, animal welfare and human safety are conducted to ensure that our efforts to save injured and orphaned animals can safely continue.

Is Wildlife Rescue seeing fewer injured animals because of the pandemic?

Actually, we're seeing far more animals! With COVID-19 closures of public businesses and gatherings, people have been outside more than ever. Compared to last year, we've already treated close to 300 more animals since March. We expect this to continue into Spring 2021 with the increase in nestling intakes we receive each year.



Who-who's in Care? Northern Saw-whet Owl

The tiny owl crouched in the box, gazing up at the Wildlife Technician with huge, unblinking golden eyes. He was silent but his long, sharp talons spoke of the danger. As the two stared at each other, the Wildlife Technician was on the phone with the hospital manager. "Janelle," she spoke breathlessly, "an owl has just arrived" she said excitedly as the tone of her words captured the thrill of seeing this reclusive species at Wildlife Rescue.

The Northern Saw-whet Owl is tiny with mesmerizing features. It is one of the most common owls in forests across northern North America but is rarely seen as they are highly nocturnal.

This particular saw-whet was brought to the wildlife hospital on October 27 by a homeowner in North Vancouver. They had noticed him on their backyard patio, having trouble flapping his wings, so they followed him into their yard and put him in a box to bring to Wildlife Rescue.

Now, the little owl was crouched on the exam table. In pain and fearful, he watched the humans warily.

Saw-whet Owls are small but mighty. Their cute little faces can deceive you into thinking they are gentle; however, they are predators and use those wicked little talons to catch and kill their prey. We, as wildlife rehabilitators, make sure to stay safe by wearing proper gloves to protect us - and the owl - when we care for them.

- Meghan, Wildlife Technician

After donning raptor gloves for protection, our Wildlife Technicians moved slowly and carefully to minimize his stress. Though dehydrated, they were pleased to note that he was otherwise a nice, healthy weight – about 80 grams. Imagine holding a deck of cards in your hand – that's about the same weight.

During the exam, however, the seriousness of the owl's injuries quickly became apparent. His eyes revealed uneven pupil dilation and slow response to light-testing as well as a slow demeanour and loss of balance, all indicating a concussion. His right wing tilted up at an odd angle and had limited movement. Gentle prodding over the breast muscle showed that the right coracoid bone was fractured.

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Wildlife Rescue Association of BC

5216 Glencarin Drive
Burnaby, BC V5B 3C1 Canada

WILDLIFE HELPLINE	604-526-7275
ADMINISTRATION	604-526-2747
EMAIL	info@wildliferescue.ca
WEB	wildliferescue.ca
INSTAGRAM	@wildliferescuebc
FACEBOOK	wildliferescue
YOUTUBE	Wildlife Rescue
TWITTER	WRAofBC

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EDITOR	Shantal Cashman
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Wildlife Highlights 2020

January

Each winter, Wildlife Rescue receives hundreds of concerned calls about lethargic or unmoving hummingbirds. Most often, they are suffering from starvation and hypothermia caused by chilly temperatures and frozen or empty feeders. Thankfully, with dedicated care and warm conditions, most of the hummingbirds brought to us survive and can be released back to the wild once temperatures warm up.



March

An adult Spotted Towhee was brought to the hospital after it struck a homeowner's window. Upon examination, it was found that the bird was suffering from Avian Pox, a viral disease that can spread between birds. Sadly there was no choice but to end its suffering and protect other birds from contracting the disease.

May

In May, a mother Mallard was struck and killed by a passing vehicle, leaving her young brood of 13 ducklings orphaned. At the time of rescue, these baby Mallards were only a couple of days old and huddled close together for comfort. They were raised at Wildlife Rescue and released after 6 weeks.



February

In February, a kind-hearted person rescued this fledgling Albino Northwestern Crow, knowing he would be picked up by predators because of his distinct coloring. After an extensive health check, Wildlife Rescue worked with regional biologists to learn if and how to safely return this vulnerable bird to the wild.



April

Two Cedar Waxwings were admitted to Wildlife Rescue in April after both struck a large window in a residential home in Coquitlam. The injuries the duo suffered included head trauma, pectoral muscle bruising, and an air sac puncture that causes swelling around the body. Luckily, the injuries were treatable with extensive therapy and medication.

June

A deadly tree fall in June knocked over several trees in which great blue herons were raising their babies on Tsawwassen First Nations land. The accident resulted in a dozen baby herons perishing. Wildlife Rescue was able to rescue and rehabilitate two of the young herons and ultimately return them to the wild.





July

A juvenile Pelagic Cormorant was found on Granville Street bridge in July where he was rescued after being hit by a car. This diving bird suffered from a laceration on his upper mandible and a possible hairline fracture on his pelvis. He initially responded well to treatment however was unable to overcome his severe injuries.

September

In September, an onlooker rescued an adult Sora waterbird on the side of the road after a neighbor's cat had pounced on it. Cats transfer bacteria from their claws and mouth when they bite which can be fatal to birds. The Sora responded well to treatment thankfully and after release quickly flew into the trees.



October

Two Red Crossbill nestlings were found abandoned in Stanley Park in early October and brought to our hospital. While Wildlife Rescue has treated adult crossbills before, it is rare to have two nestlings in care without parents. They were cared for by staff and released when they could fly and feed on their own.



August

17 California Quails were found abandoned in their nest near a construction site in Osoyoos, BC. Wildlife Rescue staff fed the babies a nutritional diet of seeds, chick mix, and insects essential for their development. Staff then worked with regional biologists to ensure a safe and natural release to their native habitat in Osoyoos, BC.

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Northern Saw-whet Owl

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The coracoid is a stout, strong bone that connects the sternum to the shoulder joint and is needed for flight. This fracture confirmed to our Wildlife Technicians that the owl had likely collided with the homeowner's large window chest-first. This occurs when the bird senses or see the window at the last moment and tries to turn away.

Once his injuries were assessed, our Wildlife Technicians quickly got to work. They wanted to do everything in their power to try and save this handsome raptor. Staff gave the owl fluid therapy to rehydrate him, as well as medication and an anti-inflammatory to help with the pain and concussion recovery.

With the owl a little more settled, the next step was to re-align the bone fracture and carefully wrap the owl's wing to his body. This helps to stabilize the bone in place and ensure he won't aggravate the injury. If the coracoid heals in the wrong position, it will prevent him from ever flying again.



With the wrap having to remain in place for several days, the owl was moved to a small, quiet enclosure to minimize movement.

WRA has a lot of songbirds and other prey species in care throughout the year, therefore whenever our hospital gets a predator species, we need to make sure the prey and predators are kept in separate rooms and cannot hear each other. Noises from the predators will cause stress and reduce healing for the other patients in care.

- Janelle Stephenson, Hospital Manager

It's not just prey species that experience stress though. The little saw-whet owl huddled in the corner of his enclosure, refusing to eat on his own. For the next five days, hospital staff manually fed him with tweezers and cut-up pieces of mice placed down his throat. Mice, particularly deer mice, are his natural diet in the wild.

This is one of the realities of rehabilitating wildlife – it is important to provide them with the appropriate diet for their digestive system. Owls are a predator species and Wildlife Rescue always makes sure to responsibly source food from verified suppliers. Fortunately, once the owl's pain subsided, he began to willingly eat on his own.

On November 1st, our hospital staff removed the wing wrap to assess the healing. After another 48 hours of rest, his wings were flapping evenly though the muscles on his right side were somewhat weaker. Staff knew it was imperative to begin the rehabilitation phase without delay so that the muscles wouldn't have a chance to atrophy or tendons tighten.

On November 3rd, the saw-whet was moved to a recovery suite, a limited activity space that is outside but still protected from the elements. This space is ideal to help him rebuild his strength but not so large that he will "over-do" it and re-injure himself. Once in his new enclosure, the little saw-whet was understandably confused and uncertain. He was alert but still, keeping his penetrating eyes on the hospital staff as they watched him from outside the enclosure. Eventually, he began to show interest in his surroundings, stretching his wings and flapping over to another perch.

Over the next few days, the little owl will continue to strengthen his muscles and regain his confidence. Soon, he will be moved to pre-release conditioning where he will enjoy unlimited activity space. Wildlife Technicians will continue to assess his wing flexibility, strength, and agility daily.

At this point, this Northern Saw-whet Owl's recovery looks promising and we are hopeful that he can be released.

Help support our wild animal patients.

Consider "adopting" an animal for someone this holiday season.

Learn more at wildliferescue.ca/adoption



Wildlife Rescue Association of BC
5216 Glencarin Drive
Burnaby, BC
V5B 3C1

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