

# Cordelia's gone to the birds

By Susan Winlow



Staff at the International Bird Rescue Research Center washes a Common Murre that had oil on its coat of feathers. (Photo by Zachary Kaufman/Daily Republic)

**CORDELIA, CA -- September 3, 2006--** No doubt about it, a fish smell permeates the animal hospital.

This isn't your run-of-the-mill veterinary facility, however. The hospital is located in Cordelia and is called the San Francisco Bay Oiled Wildlife Care and Education Center. While it rescues and treats all aquatic and oiled wildlife, the center is part of the International Bird Rescue Research Center and specializes in aquatic birds.

So instead of bags of dog or cat food, fish is the hospital's main food.

Many of the birds rescued are covered in oil, as the center's name indicates, but others suffer broken legs, fish hook injuries, infections and various other illnesses that prevent them from fending for themselves in the wild.

Most are fixed and released within three weeks but others, such the 5-month-old White Pelican in residence now, will never live in the wild.

Someone found the bird walking along a road with a broken wing. Staff initially tried to interest it in the fish, said Megan Prelinger, the assistant Rehabilitation Manager, but soon realized the bird was tame and wanted to be hand fed.

"She went through fish training school," Prelinger said of the pelican. It now eats on its own but because wild pelicans herd food in a group it's doubtful the bird can return to the wild. "I don't see how she can learn to do that as an adult," Prelinger said.

The center uses public volunteers. With 1,100 ducklings abandoned or "duck-napped" (by good Samaritans who think Mother Duck flew the coop) coming in this summer, 15 pelicans last month and 50 common murrelets in the last five weeks, they always need volunteers.

Four years ago Donna Callison of Vacaville began volunteering at the center because of her love for animals. She chose the bird rehab center because it's illegal to adopt and keep wildlife without permits. "I was afraid if I worked at an animal shelter I'd take them all home," she said, laughing. "This is safe here." Callison does everything from cage cleaning to administering medicine. And that's what Fairfield resident Jon Gourdine hopes to do in the near future.

Gourdine attended the volunteer orientation Saturday to nurse a continuing fascination with birds that began with a trip to the pet store over a year ago. Forty-five finches and a green cheek conure later, he found himself out in Cordelia on sunny Saturday morning looking forward to working aquatic birds.

"I've been taking and taking and taking," he said. "(Now) I want to give back."

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At a glance

Who: The **International Bird Rescue** Research Center

What: Volunteer training

When: Sept. 23, 10 a.m.

Where: 4369 Cordelia Road, Fairfield

Contact: Ann Yasuda, 207-0380 Ext. 109 or sign up online at [www.ibrrc.org](http://www.ibrrc.org).

**Karen Benzel**  
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