

# AVIAN HAVEN

## 2019 Year End Report

Common Loons have many voices, including a tremolo resembling human maniacal laughter and inspiring the simile “Crazy as a Loon.” Biologists understand the tremolo as an alarm signal or territorial statement. However the tremolo is interpreted, we rarely hear it here at Avian Haven; social hoots are much more common, especially among youngsters like these. For their stories and more, read on!

### Rehabilitation 2019 Overview

For the first half of the year, admissions closely paralleled those of 2018. A slight increase over the summer months was followed by a decline that began in October. We finished 2019 with 2,807 admissions, a 3% decrease from last year’s 2,900 total. We also cared for 32 birds held over from 2018. As in past years, the most common reported causes of injury were cat predation plus vehicle and window strikes. About 40% of our total admissions were orphaned nestlings.

Top place-holders were similar to those of previous years. Our most frequently admitted species was Herring Gull, with 268 intakes. Native species following Herring Gull were American

Robin (198), Mourning Dove (153), Eastern Phoebe (129), and Barred Owl (120). Herring Gulls eclipsed even non-native admissions (213 Rock Pigeons and 127 European Starlings). Like our overall profile, our 295 raptor admissions were down from last year’s 353, but the most common species among them were similar. Following Barred Owls were 35 Broad-winged Hawks, 28 Bald Eagles, 16 American Kestrels, 15 Cooper’s Hawks, 15 Merlins, 14 Great Horned Owls, and 14 Red-tailed Hawks. Aquatic species included 87 Mallards and 40 Common Loons, plus an assortment of other ducks, grebes, murrets, and pelagics. It was a record-breaking year for turtles: we had 86 in all, including 28 Snapping Turtles, 54 Painted Turtles, plus a Spotted Turtle, a Musk Turtle, and two Wood Turtles.

2019 was a record year for wrens; in all, we admitted 16 juvenile House Wrens from three clutches, one group of which traveled from Connecticut to Maine in the wheel well of a camper trailer before being discovered. Another displaced clutch comprised two nestling Carolina Wrens discovered in a plant pot that had been transported from a porch in Assonet, Massachusetts to a summer home in Lincolnville. The home owners, Linda and Ed, knew there had been a nest in the pot, but when they left MA on July 28, the nest was empty, so they assumed the birds had fledged. But



when they unpacked the plant, they heard peeping and found two nestlings hidden under the foliage. The hungry but uninjured nestlings adapted quickly to their new surroundings and matured without incident. Although some Carolina wrens are seen in Maine, much of the state is a bit north of their range. We wanted to make sure these kids found others of their



own kind, so our preference was to send them back home. Several weeks later, Linda and Ed were in Maine again, planning to return to MA on August 25. We packed the birds up for travel, and a few hours later, they were released in their parents’ home yard. Linda reported back that there were many wrens in the yard that day—hopefully our orphans’ mom and dad were among them! The last of our young House Wrens had been released here in Maine two days earlier, on August 23. ■

# Helpers at the Nest

Our human flock is a diverse group of people whose invaluable combination of skills and experiences ensures top-quality treatment for our patients. Senior staff in 2019 comprised Kristen Bishop (our new Clinic Manager), Kim Chavez (Rehabilitation Manager), Terry Heitz (Physical Plant Manager), Laura Graham (Rehabilitation Specialist), and Caroline Neville (Staff Veterinarian). After two years with us, Caroline fledged from Avian Haven in October to pursue a new career at a veterinary hospital; we wish her all the best moving forward!

Dr. Judy Herman (Animal Wellness Center in Augusta) continued her long-standing role as consulting veterinarian, and a second

consulting veterinarian, Dr. Rob Adamski (Associate Professor, Captive Wildlife Care & Education Program, Unity College) began partnering with us in October. Dr. Steve Witkin (Eye Care of Maine) remained with us as a consulting ophthalmologist.

Others who helped with patient care, whether as volunteers or paid seasonal staff, were Katie Bates, Maggie Cheney (summer intern), Amy Dillon, Michelle Duffy, Breanna Fleet, Nora Freese, Kshanti Greene, Ace Hickey, Deb Huard, Jess Jasenski, Kathleen Lally, Kelley Moore, Hannah Rothlauf, Susan Stone, Janet Wiseley, and Dee Zak.

## 2019 Special Thanks to

### Businesses and Organizations

Animal Wellness Center (Augusta)  
Belfast Cooperative  
Biodiversity Research Institute  
Boothbay Animal Hospital  
Brookfield White Pine Hydro  
Craig Brook National Fish Hatchery  
Downeast Audubon Society  
Hammond Lumber Company  
Loon Preservation Committee (NH)  
Little River Veterinary Hospital  
Maine Dept. of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife  
Maine Dept. of Marine Resources  
Maine Fish Health Laboratory  
Maine Falconry and Raptor Conservancy  
Maine Warden Service  
Mid-Coast Audubon Society  
The Raptor Trust (NJ)  
Unity Barn Raisers  
U.S.D.A. APHIS Wildlife Services  
U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service

### Wildlife Colleagues

Brad Allen  
Rose Borzik  
Erynn Call  
Judy Camuso  
Jim Connolly  
Danielle D'Auria  
Robin Dyer  
Brian Engelhard  
Nate Gray  
Keel Kemper  
Jen Marchigiani  
Mark McCollough  
Erica Miller  
Kyle Murphy  
Mark Pokras  
Betsy Pratt  
Grayson Richmond  
Kappy Sprenger  
Kelsey Sullivan  
Charlie Todd  
C.J. Virgie  
Ruu Weist



The Horned Grebe came to us on February 19. Chris Creps, the Scarborough Animal Control Officer, fetched the bird from a beach, after which a relay comprising Karen Silverman, Cheryl King, and Don Fournier got the bird here. Although no attack had been witnessed, the bird had multiple puncture wounds on the right side of the body and chest. Dr. Neville sutured several of them, and after diligent wound management, she pronounced them all healed on March 12. By then, the bird's lost waterproofing had been restored, and about a week later, Deb Huard drove the grebe to a coastal site near the rescue location, where Karen was on hand to see the bird off.



Karen Silverman



On July 9, an unusual-looking bird was reported injured to Maine Mall Security. Security staff secured the bird, and transportation team Mary Woodward, Mandy Madsen, and Don Fournier relayed it to us. That bird was a Pied-billed Grebe with an old toe injury and some minor puncture wounds. This photo of our patient shows the conspicuous dark band around the bill that gives the species its common name. The toe injury had left the tip of that digit nonfunctional; it required surgical repair. But healing progressed rapidly, and the bird was released on July 19.

We were certainly not expecting another grebe by the end of the year, but one was found on a Camden road on November 6! The bird was brought to Selkie O'Mira, our illustrious Facebook Manager, by a friend who'd happened by that roadside. Selkie met volunteer Norman Schultz in Belfast the next morning, and Norman made the delivery here. That the bird was one of the grebe species was evident from her lobed toes. She did not look like the Pied-billed Grebe we'd had earlier in the year, but her identity was confirmed as soon as we remembered that the species has pied bills only during breeding season.



Our latest grebe had no injuries but was underweight with poor waterproofing. It took about three weeks to remedy both problems; by then, we were close to the end of the species' migration window. But on November 24, the temperature was in the 40's and predicted to remain there for several more days. Christie Banow took the bird for release at a coastal-area pond not far from her rescue location, and where other grebes had been seen in the past. The species winters as far north as Massachusetts, so she did not have far to travel. ■

## Frequent Fliers

Our practice covers a huge portion of Maine. Of equal importance to the onsite caregivers are the volunteers who drive “avian ambulances” carrying patients whose rescuers were unable to travel. We have more than a hundred such volunteers scattered in locations from Portland north through Aroostook County, and from the western mountains east to the coast. Roughly three-quarters of our 2019 admissions were delivered by team members who often worked in relays from farther locations. In addition, these wonderful people often delivered birds back to their rescue locations. Due to space limitations, we can’t list them all here, but, as in previous years, we would like to gratefully acknowledge those who averaged at least one trip per week over the calendar year: Lyn Adams, Diane Davison, Don Fournier, Deb Huard, Carol & Pep Jones, Cheryl King, Gail & George Leavitt, Karen LeGendre, Karen Silverman, Richard Spinney, Kate Weatherby, and Mary Woodward. Like last year, Don Fournier led the proverbial pack, participating in 948 admissions and 174 releases, travelling approximately 37,000 miles in the process.

Due to a fierce winter storm on January 20, we weren’t expecting any admissions. But in the midst of that storm, the Great Black Hawk that had been the celebrity of Portland’s Deering Oaks Park since late November was found there on snow-covered ground by Alfredo Nicholas. A short time later, Terra Fletcher, who was in the park for some cross-country skiing, happened upon Alfredo and the hawk. She recognized both the bird and signs of frostbite on his feet. Terra got the bird into a box, took him home, and called us. In turn, we contacted Diane Davison, the volunteer closest to the bird’s location. When Diane got the hawk to her house, the bird was unmoving and barely breathing. She concentrated on warming him up. Travel conditions were extremely poor, but we knew the hawk’s transport should not wait until the next day. The rugged vehicles driven by Maine Game Wardens seemed the best bet, and Wdn. Josh Tibbets cheerfully agreed to start the relay. But before he could get on the road, Josh called to say he had fallen on ice and was headed to the ER. Our intrepid volunteer transporters rose to the challenge, deciding to travel in pairs. Diane and Karen Silverman set out from Portland, barely able to exceed 30 mph. The hawk’s eyes opened when they checked on him at the hand-off to Lyn Adams and Cheryl King in Topsham. Lyn and Cheryl connected with Wdn. Chris Roy in Gardiner, and then Chris met Marc in Albion. A trip that normally takes an hour and a half had taken four hours.

When Marc returned around 5 p.m., the hawk was actively moving. Other than frostbitten feet, no concerns were evident in a cursory exam. We immediately began topical and pharmaceutical treatments to promote circulation to the feet. Because we had no way of knowing how much damage had already been done, a prognosis was impossible. Early on, we were cautiously hopeful, thinking that perhaps only one or two toes would be lost. But despite continuing treatments, on the 25th, we could see color change spreading up the legs. The hawk retained some use of his feet for a day or two after that, but by the 29th, all of the toes were dead or dying.



## Flocking Together

Avian Haven is blessed with a vast and loyal support system that, in addition to monetary donations, includes contributors of specialized services, essential supplies or equipment, professional expertise, sponsorship of donation collections, etc. Among many people who supported in myriad ways in 2019 but are not noted elsewhere in this report, we would like to give special mention here to Rosemary Binda, Alex Costantino, Perley Emory, Mark Finke, Pauline Hagelin, Mary Jane Low, Marsha Mongell, Mary Offutt, Matthew Seich, Francie Smith, and Kristen & Dick Winn.

For counsel and support of many kinds, we are most grateful to 2019 members of our Board of Directors: Mary Dickinson Bird, Diane Davison, Judy Herman, Adrienne Leppold, and Juanita Roushdy. For expert maintenance of our virtual roosts, we thank Selkie O’Mira (Facebook Manager) and James Skowbo (Webmaster). We also extend special appreciation to our Outreach Manager, Laura Suomi-Lecker.

A group of professionals convened here on the 30th—our senior staff, two consulting veterinarians, and two wildlife biologists. A thermal imager confirmed what was visually obvious, namely, that the feet and lower legs were not viable. All of us agreed that quality of life in captivity would not be possible, and that the only humane course of action was an end to suffering. None of us doubted the decision, but nevertheless it broke our hearts, as well as those of thousands of people who had followed his story.

The aftermath was full of hindsight speculation. Some people wondered if an attempt should have been made to capture and relocate the bird before colder weather set in. Others thought that the abundance of prey in the park should have been enough to sustain him. But the long legs of this Central American native had no protection from the cold of a Maine winter, and in the end, that was his undoing. After some discussion as to the disposition of the remains, it was decided by M.D.I.F.W. that the Maine State Museum should have the bird mounted for display there. Friends of Deering Oaks is currently raising funds for a life-sized bronze statue and interpretive display for Deering Oaks Park.

For more information, visit [www.deeringoaks.org](http://www.deeringoaks.org).

How or why the hawk ended up in Portland will likely always remain a mystery. On the basis of plumage idiosyncrasies, he was definitely the same bird seen in Texas in April of 2018. But how could such a rare individual have traveled all the way from there to Biddeford by August 2018 without being seen and reported even once along the way? The “why” was equally inexplicable; we heard biological, ecological and mystical conjectures. Did he have defective navigation genes? Did something seem amiss in his native habitat, prompting him to travel in search of other circumstances? Did he have a spiritual destiny as a Messenger or Teacher? Unanswered questions notwithstanding, the Great Black Hawk united thousands of people of diverse backgrounds in an enhanced appreciation of wild creatures and their vulnerability to changing landscapes. We will always remember him for his impact on our community. ■

In our 2018 Year End Report, we commented on the unusually large number of Barred Owls admitted in the last quarter of that calendar year—76 in all. That trend continued into 2019, with 78 individuals in the first quarter of the new year, many of them injured by vehicles. During that time frame, we received starving Barred Owls almost daily, and were told of many more found dead on roadsides. Why was it such a tough winter for them? One explanation is that alternating episodes of thawing and freezing created layers of ice throughout a deep snow cover. Rodents in snow tunnels beneath those ice layers could not be detected by owls hunting them; sadly, many owls perished for lack of food. But those that made it here and recovered kept our flight cages very full in the late winter and early spring!

From April through December, only 42 more Barred Owls came through our doors, bringing the year's total to 120, as mentioned earlier. Our last quarter of 2019, in sharp contrast to the same quarter in 2018, brought only 11 Barred Owls to us. The other unusual thing about 2019 was that, for the first time in all our years of operation, we admitted no nestling Barred Owls at all. Perhaps heavy mortalities in the prior winter had negatively impacted breeding success in the following season. ■



### Gala Contributors

- 250 Main Hotel
- Ann Birmingham
- A Bee in My Bonnet
- Bar Harbor Bag Lady
- Bar Harbor Wine Cellars
- Cheryl King
- Crystal Clear Pets
- Coyote Graphics
- Dan Johnson Designs
- Diane Jones
- Dick's Stix
- Fernwood Nursery
- Forever Boards
- Forrest Hart
- Friends of Hog Island
- Gryffin Ridge Spices
- Hannaford (Bangor)
- Home Depot (Bangor)
- Island Artisans
- Jada Ftich Illustrations
- J F Burns
- Johno Prascak
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- Maine Coastal Flight
- Maine Craft Fermentory
- Maine Island Soaps
- Maine's Own Treats
- Marias Ideas
- Messier Studios
- Naturally Bee-ewe-tiful
- Petsmart (Bangor)
- Richard & Susan Stone
- Rising Tide Brewing
- Shaw's (Bangor)
- Sherri Williams
- Stacey Feldmus
- The Willie Wags
- The Dance of Art
- The Truman Collar
- Thistle Bee Farm
- Tiller and Rye
- Tractor Supply (Bangor)
- Tree to Sky Studio
- Urban Farm Fermentory
- Wanda Mitchell
- Winterport Winery

## Feathering our Nest

Fundraising for operating expenses can be a challenge for any nonprofit organization, but thanks to all of you who responded to our 2019 Annual Appeal, we are prepared to move forward with plans to add an Admissions Manager to our senior staff in 2020.

Several successful fundraisers were sponsored in 2019 by friends that included Louise Alley (Louise's Day Lillies), Michael Boardman (Coyote Graphics t-shirts), and Laura Zamfirescu (calendars featuring her avian photography). We are very grateful to them, as well as to Elmer's Barn, Motifs (Portland), and various individuals who organized birthday and other Facebook fundraisers to benefit Avian Haven.

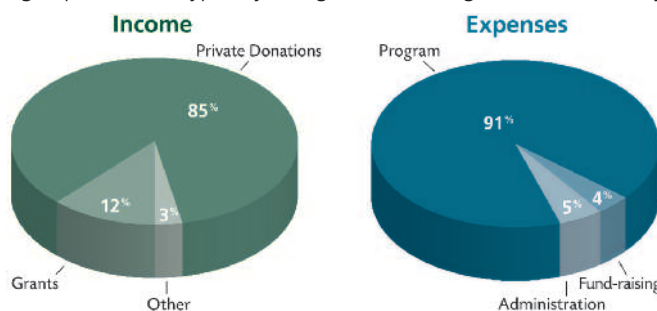
**A Feathered Affair** was a fundraising gala celebration of Avian Haven's twenty years of operation. Held on a perfect late September day at Maine Audubon's Gilsland Farm, the event featured raffles and a live auction (contributors listed in the side panel); terrific food, drinks, and live music; plus great conversation among both new and old friends. We thank Maine Audubon for hosting and donating beverages, and extend special appreciation to MA's Events Manager Laurie Gilman and her staff.



Kshanti Greene

We send special thanks to foundations that gave grants for general support: Borman Family Foundation, Susan & George Craig Family Foundation, Conger Family Foundation, Gwendolyn Elwell Flanagan Foundation, Mark & Diana McNabb Charitable Fund of the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, Maine Community Foundation (Aquila Fund plus a second donor-advised fund), Martha Morse Foundation, P.W. Sprague Memorial Foundation, and Stiffler Family Foundation.

Income used for operations can be classified into the categories of Foundation Grants, Private Donations (including bequests, appeal returns, in-kind contributions, etc.), and Other (honorariums, contracted services, gala proceeds, etc.). The green pie chart shows those groups and their respective proportions of our total operations income. Operating expenses are typically categorized as Program (costs directly related to our mission, such as food, utilities, payroll, veterinary supplies, etc.), Administration (property and liability insurance, bank service charges, etc.), and Fund-raising (production of mailings, event-associated expenses, etc.). Proportions of expenses in those categories are shown in the blue pie chart.



Avian Haven's complete financial picture includes an endowment portfolio designed to provide long-term security for our organization (planned gifts that contribute to that security are most welcome!). The charts above summarize our annual operations budget, but anyone interested in our investment activities and other financial information is welcome to examine our IRS Form 990s (the annual return for a nonprofit organization), either upon request or online at Candid, [www.candid.org](http://www.candid.org).

## Spreading Our Wings

As briefly mentioned in last year's report, plans for a major expansion of our current campus are underway! Last summer, land directly across the North Palermo Road was cleared for three buildings dedicated to the rehabilitation of waterfowl species. Waterfowl Manor will be a complex featuring six habitats, each with its own in-ground pool (see back cover for an image). Waterfowl Clinic & Nursery will be a more compact structure for sick or injured birds, as well as for ducklings and goslings too young for the outdoor habitats of the Manor. The third building, Warden House, will be a human dwelling needed for safety and security reasons; senior staff living there will keep watch over

the waterfowl habitats, and respond to any situations that might need attention after hours.

Our Physical Plant Manager, Terry Heitz, designed and will oversee construction of the two waterfowl habitats. We are most grateful to Wendy Stanley for designing the house. A capital campaign to raise funds for the buildings has begun; more information will be circulated in the public domain later this year. For contributions to date, we thank the Ding Fund (a Bank of America Charitable Gift Fund), the Hochgraf Charitable Foundation, and several private donors, including Susan & George Craig, Bill Conger, Don Fournier, Rob Johnston & Janika Eckert, and Nancy & Charlie Shuman.

All told, we admitted 29 Bald Eagles in 2019, ten of which were hatch-year birds. Among the 19 birds older than one year, nine had elevated blood lead levels, as did one juvenile admitted at the end of October. That individual recovered and was released, but none of the other nine survived.



Deb Huard

One of our more interesting adult cases was a male retrieved by Wdn. Bob Decker after a vehicle strike on the turnpike near Sabattus. A quick set of radiographs on intake revealed something we'd seen in loons and gulls but never before in an eagle—a fish hook in the gizzard! It was impossible to tell from radiographic images whether the barb of the hook was embedded in the gizzard wall. Rather than schedule endoscopy or surgery, we decided to capitalize on a peculiarity of raptor digestion—the formation of a mass of indigestible parts of prey items known as a “pellet”. When pellets have been completed, they are regurgitated (“cast”), so we provided the eagle with plentiful potential pellet material in hopes that the hook would be incorporated into it and cast. On August 19th, the eagle cast the first pellet since his arrival. The hook was not in it, but when a second pellet was cast on the 21st, there it



was, surrounded by a clump of mouse fur! We moved the bird outside the next day; he flew well, and was upgraded to the flyway a couple of weeks later. After another two weeks of exercise there, he was released on September 19.

At the other end of the age spectrum, the hatch-year birds we saw during the summer were typically debilitated due to starvation, having become separated from their parents before being mature enough to procure sufficient food for themselves. Some,

of course, were also injured, occasionally from impact with the ground in a premature fledge. Perhaps our most challenging youngster was discovered on August 24, lying down on Richmond Island, a privately owned wildlife sanctuary off the coast of Cape Elizabeth. After some discussion with various individuals, island caretaker Lisa Vestiglia took control of the situation, securing the bird and arranging transportation to the mainland. From there, volunteer transporters Gary Archibald and Casey Sullivan drove the bird here. On arrival late that day, the youngster was thin and unable to stand. His presentation was somewhat neurologic, suggestive of a possible back injury and/or toxin ingestion. Rehabilitation Manager Kim Chavez oversaw emergency care that evening; she cleaned sand from his face and eyes, tubed activated charcoal, and provided extra subcutaneous fluids. We closed up shop for the day without feeling especially optimistic, but Kim had pulled him through the crisis; the next morning, we found him standing. Over the course of the day, his head tremors resolved, and on the 26th, he ate fish eagerly. Improvement continued after that; he remained “not totally with it” for a few more days, but soon became restless in the indoor hospital cage, and on September 4, he was moved outside. His positive trajectory continued through a series of habitat upgrades; he was released on October 3, with Kim and Casey there to see him off.

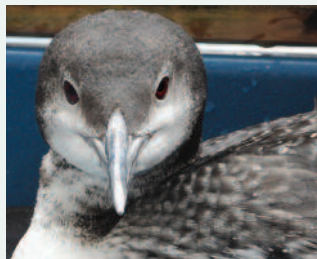


A particularly sad eagle case was the elder female rescued from Haycock Harbor (Trescott) and featured in our 2017 Year End Report. Having been banded as a nestling in 1983, she held the longevity record for an eagle associated with Maine. She was not releasable due to complications from her lead exposure and presenting injuries; we had hoped to keep her as a permanent resident surrogate, and plans to that end were underway with U.S.F.W.S. Those plans became moot in May, when a caregiver found the eagle on the ground with a leg fracture of her left leg near the ankle joint. Radiographs also revealed what was surely a painful osteoarthritis in her left knee. Consulting veterinarians and biologists reviewing the case agreed that quality of life had become impossible, and we bade farewell to her a few days later. ■

Despite Maine's six-year-old ban on the use of lead sinkers and jigs, we continued in 2019 to admit Common Loons that succumbed to lead poisoning. There were three this year with blood lead levels off the scale of our screening instrument and sinkers clearly visible on radiographs of their GI tracts. Two other loons were entangled in fishing gear; one was released but the other had to be euthanized due to irreparable damage from treble hooks in the face and wing.

Our longest-term Common Loon patient in 2019 came to us in December 2018 from Maranacook Lake, where he had been discovered iced in by skaters named Darcy, Henry, and Dave. After discussing the situation with us, the plan had been to use recorded social hoots to coax the bird up onto firm ice, but when the group skated out the next morning, the loon's patch of open water had buttoned up considerably, and the experienced skaters recognized significantly thicker ice than the previous day. Taking appropriate safety precautions that included spreading body weight by lying down, one of the rescuers was able to get about 12' from the loon's location, and scoop the bird up on the first try with a large, long-handled net. Volunteer transporter Don Fournier met the capture posse in Readfield and drove the bird here.

The loon was a large, fractious adult with several problems: poor waterproofing, an open fracture on one toe of the right foot, and a swollen left ankle. The toe injury was not recent, and radiographs suggested that infection had penetrated one of the bones. In mid-December, Dr. Neville removed the infected section of toe from the right foot.



Deb Huard

In further consultation with the rescuers, it seemed that the left ankle may have been injured during aborted attempts to take off in semi-frozen slush. Whatever its origin, the swollen area waxed and waned for no apparent reason over the next six weeks, with corresponding fluctuations in leg use. Various medications were started and discontinued; no treatment seemed to have any particular effect. Eventually, in consultation with our loon veterinarian guru, Dr. Mark Pokras, it was decided that the joint capsule had been compromised in association with rupture of the ligament that crossed the swollen area; samples drawn from the swollen area were obviously joint fluid. The prognosis seemed poor, especially given the bird's minimal use of the left leg. But later in January, leg function improved. Slow-motion videos of the loon swimming underwater showed the ankle flexing and extending, albeit to a limited extent. By the end of January, the swelling around the ankle had almost completely resolved. We were delighted with that improvement, but throughout February, the loon could be seen holding his left leg in odd positions, often with the foot up in the air for minutes at a time. No explanation could be fathomed; the bird's diving was perfect, and the ankle joints of both legs looked and felt virtually identical. By the third week in March, the loon was eating voraciously and had become extremely restless, jumping out of the pool whenever the panel doors were opened for food provisioning or siphoning. It was time for him to go, and on March 24, he was set free in Penobscot Bay. He swam well and flapped several times. Occasionally, the left foot could be seen



sticking out of the water, but it did not impede his progress, as he swam steadily farther out from shore.

At the other end of a length-of-stay spectrum was a three-week-old Common Loon observed with an abscess on the right foot. The report came from Gary Bennett, a Maine Guide who



operates Snow Pond Cruises on Messalonskee Lake. Gary captured the bird (who had been named "Jordan") on the morning of August 3, and volunteer transporter Rob Jones delivered him here. A large mass hanging off the tip of the middle toe of the right foot looked like a

tumor of possible viral origin. In consultation again with Dr. Pokras, it was decided that Dr. Neville would remove the mass as well as the tip of the toe in order to minimize a risk of recurrence. Surgery on the 4th went well, and the chick did fine in a pool the next morning. We had already planned on a quick turn-around so that Jordan could be returned to his parents. Diane Jones drove Jordan back to Sidney, and Rob went out onto the lake with Gary and company. They found the parents right away, and a happy family reunion was witnessed. Gary saw Jordan every day for the remainder of the summer. Several months later, in early December, a juvenile loon was seen on Snow Pond when it started to ice up, and from the location, the bird could well have been Jordan. This individual seemed to be doing quite well—diving, coming up with fish, flapping his wings. And then one morning, he was gone, presumably having flown from the lake well before it buttoned up.

We had sent sections of the removed mass to the University of New Hampshire Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory. It was several weeks before we got the result: infection with avian poxvirus. The UNH pathologists indicated that, to their knowledge, this was the first confirmed poxvirus case in a New England Common Loon. Interestingly, however, we had admitted a young Black Guillemot earlier in the summer with a mass of similar size and appearance that was also confirmed as avian pox. There are many strains of avian poxvirus; in general, they are fairly species specific, and mosquitoes are considered the primary vector. We see pox most frequently in Mourning Doves and larger corvids, but in August and September, we also noted what appeared to be pox lesions in several robins plus an occasional gull and sparrow. For unknown reasons, these viruses seemed to be unusually prevalent in the late summer of 2019, and we were relieved when the arrival of cold weather marked the end of mosquito season. ■

## In Closing

Although “seagull” is a common term in ordinary speech, there is actually no such species! More than a dozen gull species can be found in Maine, including Bonaparte’s Gull, Ivory Gull, Laughing Gull, Iceland Gull, Glaucous Gull, and Mew Gull. The species most commonly seen are Great Black-backed Gull, Herring Gull, and Ring-billed Gull. We admitted nearly 300 gulls in all in 2019, with our record-setting 268 Herring Gulls by far the most numerous among them.

Reasons for that increase are complicated, but they begin, perhaps, with a decline in the number of Herring Gull nests on traditional island locations in Maine over the last several decades. At some point, in that time frame, Herring Gulls began nesting on the rooftops of Portland. Fascinating research led by Dr. Noah Perlut at the University of New England has compared nesting success in urban versus nearby island settings. Rooftop nesting has possible advantages; for example, anthropogenic food is plentiful in urban areas, though this food may be lower in quality than that available on islands. Also, rooftop nestlings are safe from predation by Great Black-backed Gulls, which is a hazard on island sites. But some young birds tumble from the rooftops well before their wings are mature enough for even limited flight. They, like older juveniles fledging from rooftops, land on city streets and parking lots, where car strikes are likely. Adult gulls can feed their youngsters down below, but cannot protect them from traffic. Calls from concerned Portland citizens about young gulls are plentiful in summer months, especially in July. There is a fine line between rescuing and kidnapping in some situations, but in many cases, the juveniles have already been injured.

The gull numbers should now make sense! Of our 268 total Herring Gulls, 125 were from Portland, and among them were 55 youngsters, 11 of which had been banded by Dr. Perlut in their rooftop nests. Portland gull rescues expend significant resources, particularly local volunteer time in securing and transporting. We are grateful for assistance from our awesome local on-the-ground volunteers (Diane Davison, Karen Silverman, and Mary Woodward), Portland-area veterinary hospitals (especially Cape Veterinary Clinic in South Portland), and Portland’s Animal Control Officer, Ruu Weist.

The loss or degradation of natural habitats can force encroachment of wildlife into areas inhabited by people. As the human populace continues to grow, the ability of species to co-exist with hominids will increasingly impact some wildlife populations. One microcosm of this broader issue is the question of how vehicle collisions and human rescues operate in the suite of factors working for and against the next generations of Portland’s rooftop-nesting Herring Gulls.

It may be years before there is an answer to this question, but meanwhile, we will continue our efforts to return lost juveniles to the shores of their hometown.

Until next year –

*Diane & Marc*

Diane Winn and Marc Payne, Co-Founders

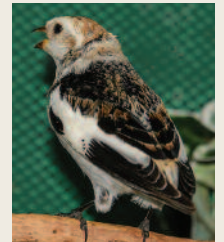
Photos by Terry Heitz unless otherwise credited.



Karen Silverman

Snow Buntings are songbirds that breed in high arctic tundra regions. They spend the winter in more southerly areas, including ours, with males typically returning to the breeding ground in April.

On April 11, a Snow Bunting was discovered stuck to a branch in what appeared at first to be oozing sap. The property owner, David, freed the bird and called us. Unfortunately, his location was Grand Isle, Maine, which is about as far north from us as it is possible to get without crossing into Canada. Equally unfortunately, David’s call came just after our Presque Isle volunteer transporters, Elizabeth and Chris Crawford, had already left on a relay south with another bird. But fortunately, a friend of Chris’s who liked to shop in Bangor was willing to travel the following day, and volunteer transporter Richard Spinney brought the bird here from Bangor. Upon close examination, we discovered that the sticky substance on the feathers was not sap, but instead appeared to be Tanglefoot®, a gummy product marketed as an insect barrier. The bird’s flight feathers were tacked together on both wings, and his tail feathers were completely missing. Our staff feather-cleaning expert, Kim Chavez, removed the product and gave the bird a graduated series of Dawn baths to restore contaminated feathers to pristine condition.



Two days later, we test flew the bunting, but he could not get lift. Radiographs provided no conclusive evidence of an orthopedic abnormality, so we assumed a soft tissue injury. A second flight test a week later had better results, and a few days later, we upgraded the bird to the Penthouse. Within another week, he was ready for release. But how were we going to get him back home? Presque-Isle birder extraordinaire, Bill Sheehan, provided the plan. His friend Laura was visiting family in Waterville, planning a return to P.I. on the 28th. Volunteer Don Fournier picked up the bird here early that morning, handed him off to Laura, Laura met Bill back in P.I., and the two of them met Elizabeth and Chris in Caribou. From there, four people and the bunting headed farther north to the rescue property. We’d been in touch with David; he’d seen other buntings on the property as recently as a few days earlier. Of course, our hope had been that the flock was still there, but we knew from e-bird posts that they were not far away. When the crate was opened, the bird flew into a thicket, and after a lengthy bout of feather fluffing, he looked back toward Elizabeth as if to say “You may now take my picture.” He seemed to be happily taking in his surroundings as other local birds returned to nearby trees. ■



Elizabeth Crawford

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## Coming in 2020: Waterfowl Manor

Waterfowl photos by Glori Berry



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