Ancient Procedure Allows 21st Century Hawk to Soar

By Pamela Hartmann, PWC Volunteer

A hawk’s survival requires an exquisite ability to soar and maneuver. This is especially true of Red-shouldered Hawks. They are “masters of maneuverability,” often chasing prey through dense forest, says PWC’s Claudia Duckworth. A hawk with damaged tail feathers cannot do this.

At the PWC Rehabilitation Center, Red-shouldered Hawk #766 recovered well from the fractured wing that veterinarian Dr. Shannon Riggs had set, and he was creanced—exercised on a long line to strengthen him for release back to the wild. However, he still had broken tail feathers that Riggs describes as “kind of a disaster.” They did not allow for precise maneuvers.

The solution was “imping,” a centuries-old procedure used by falconers to attach donor feathers to a bird’s tail or wings. But imping is not taught in veterinary school. Riggs learned it from another veterinarian who was also a falconer. She now regularly harvests donor feathers from deceased birds, catalogues them, and stores them in a feather repository at the Center. The choice of feathers must be precise. Each imped feather is from a bird of the same species, size, age, and (usually) gender. Because of a shortage of Red-shouldered Hawk feathers, Riggs turned to Ojai Raptor Center for a set of feathers to imp #766.

On a sultry September afternoon, in the surgery room at PWC, Riggs set out the equipment to imp #766. Jeanette Stone, also of PWC, brought him in and soon had him anaesthetized on the operating table.

Each donor feather was attached to a bamboo skewer, which Riggs cut with a cauterizing tool and inserted into the shaft of the bird’s own, broken feather. Bamboo skewers make an almost perfect fit. Riggs inserted one, found it was too tight, and shaved it down with a scalpel blade until it slid smoothly about an inch into the shaft. She applied a drop of 5-Minute Epoxy, placed a rectangle of cardboard between this feather and the next, picked up another donor feather, and repeated the process.

When she finished, she displayed the “new” tail. It was a thing of beauty. Imping, Riggs says, is “one of the most fun things to do. Instant gratification.” But Duckworth cautions, “You don’t know how difficult it is.” Riggs makes it look easy.

When Riggs came to PWC in 2013, it was to everyone’s relief and the good fortune of Red-shouldered Hawk #766, creanced one last time by Virginia Flaherty and released on September 17 in Atascadero, an event made possible by PWC facilities, donor feathers, Riggs’ expertise, and centuries of knowledge received from falconers.
Great News!

PWC has been fortunate to have been offered two sets of matching funds this year: one intended to help us grow our donor/member base and the other to fund our wildlife veterinarian.

We are SO very pleased to announce that the $40,000 in matching funds (for new donors/members or increased support by current members) has been reached!

The $40K goal was met thanks to current members, new members who had been animal rescuers and, even more new members from our entire community via a targeted mailing.

Thank You to our “anonymous” members for this generous opportunity and to all of you who donated!

Fund-Our-Vet Matching

The 2015 Fund-Our-Vet (FOV) Campaign continues with the 2nd set of matching funds offered (up to $25,000). We encourage you to give extra to this “directed” fund. (FOV funds need to be identified on your check.)

Thanks, (as always!) for your support,

Meg Crockett, President

Avoid Taxes while helping wildlife

If you have a Simple IRA or SEP IRA* and are over 70 ½ years old, you are required by law to take your Required Mandatory Distribution (RMD) before December 31st. *applies to distributions from Pensions, Annuities, Retirement or Profit-Sharing Plans, IRAs

Did you know you can avoid paying income tax on that money by donating to P.W.C. (a qualified 501c3 non-profit) and help us serve our County’s wildlife patients?!

Please speak with your investment broker or your IRA custodian (listed on your 1099-R tax form) and consider helping P.W.C.

Note: There are exceptions, so you should talk to your CPA or retirement specialist.

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Kathy Alexander
Brenda Allmann
Theresa Anderson
Rod Aszman
Dianne Bagwell
Alex Bakula-Davis
Dianna Ballard
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Emily Schwartz
Mary & Hans Schwarz
Georgette Schaefer
Summer Schlager

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XENA Remembered  by Kathy Duncan, PWC educator

It is sad to lose a wildlife ambassador. Xena, an American Kestral, was my bullet-proof, take-anywhere, any-situation educational animal. Eleven years is a long time to share with an animal. Bob & I are still feeling the loss.

Her cage was in the patio right next to the sliding glass door going into our bedroom and as soon as she saw one of us stirring in the morning she’d peek around where she could see inside and start making her little vocalizations. Bob and Xena had this little routine where they’d talk back and forth whenever he’d come into our yard. That’s what we mainly notice now: the quiet.

When Bob heard a kestrel call the other day, for a split second he thought it was Xena and he was going to answer back, but he realized she’s not there. She’ll be missed.
On October 21, 2014, Meg Crockett, PWC President issued this press release:

Pacific Wildlife Care (PWC) is experiencing an overwhelming influx of starving juvenile Grebes at its Rehabilitation Center in Morro Bay, CA. As of today, 89 of these pelagic birds remain in PWC care. The last week has seen the arrival of 128, not all of which have survived. Emergency calls for volunteers have gone out to bring in more help for these weak and hungry birds....

The media responded by sending reporters to the Rehab Center over the course of the next three days. The grebe crisis was covered on local station nightly news and the front page of the Tribune! The reason for the large numbers of birds coming ashore is still unclear but PWC Veterinarian, Dr. Shannon Riggs, speculates the drought conditions and warmer ocean water temperatures may have caused a decrease in the number of fish available for these birds to survive.

Pacific Wildlife Care Release Photos

PWC offers our Patron & Benefactor Level members an invitation to view and take photos at a wildlife release. Here are a few photos taken of recent releases:

Top three photos by Bert Forbes: Two Brown Pelicans released in Morro Bay.

Great Horned Owl # 757 released in Arroyo Grande (photo by John Cherry)

Roger Grizzle/Grizzle Construction – for the new peli box frame
Ken Highfill – for labor to change out 3 pool filters, pumps & motors
Donna Herbst – for providing her truck to transport filters, pumps/motors and sand from Coastal Pool Center to PWC
Melinda Alvarado & her brother Greg – for helping drain and clean the flight one pools and the seatrain storage container
Marie Travers for picking up & delivering 15 cases of smelt in her VW bug and one week later: Mark & Susan Garman picked up 45 cases from Oakland!

PWC’s mission is to support San Luis Obispo wildlife through rehabilitation and educational outreach. We envision a community aware of and responsive to wildlife and wildlife issues.

Special Thank Yous

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Membership/Donations Save Lives

Yes, I would like to give wildlife a second chance!

- Benefactor $2,500
- Patron $1,000
- Sponsor $500
- Contributor $250
- Supporter $100
- Advocate $50
- Student/Senior/Volunteer $25
- Year-End-Giving ____________

I would like information on adding Pacific Wildlife Care to my will or trust.

Visit us online at www.pacificwildlifecare.org to set up a monthly subscription or pay by credit card

Name:______________________________________
Phone:____________________________________ Email:______________________________
Address:_____________________________________________________________________
City:__________________________ State:________ Zip:___________ Date: __________

Please check: ☐ New Membership  ☐ Renewal  ☐ Donation  ☐ I would like to volunteer
Please mail completed form with check to Pacific Wildlife Care, PO Box 1134, Morro Bay, CA 93443

PWC has rescued & treated over 2200 animals so far this year - please help us continue this important work