Dr. Shannon Riggs Hired as Full-Time Veterinarian by John FitzRandolph

They say a bird in hand is worth two in the bush, so having a wildlife veterinarian on hand at Pacific Wildlife Care – who specializes in tending to injured birds – is, like the commercial says, “priceless.”

Meanwhile, after volunteering services on an as-needed basis – and making important contributions to PWC for several years – Dr. Shannon Riggs has been hired as a full-time veterinarian. Thanks to a one-year funding source, Shannon is available every day and has been provided with new and upgraded rehab facilities at PWC.

Growing up in southern Iowa, it wasn’t Shannon’s dream to become a veterinarian. But she does recall a 4th grade summer “conservation camp” around her hometown of Atlantic, Iowa, that got her interested in wildlife.

And she remembers in 6th grade helping a fledgling sparrow that a cat had attacked – her initial attempt at rehabbing a bird.

“It died and we buried it in the back yard,” she remembers.

Shannon was not pointing toward a veterinarian career when she worked on her Bachelor of Arts at the University of Iowa. “I was originally planning on going into the medical field,” she told a reporter. “I had thought about physical therapy, or being an MD. It was pretty late in college when I decided that veterinary work was the track I would follow.”

The bottom line for Shannon was she decided she’d rather work with animals than humans. And in time, she also realized she’d rather work with wildlife than pets. Her Doctor of Veterinary Medicine was achieved at the University of California at Davis.

“How Funds Became Available to Hire Dr. Riggs

It all started one day when PWC Volunteer, Kathleen Dillon, was speaking with a family friend, Glen Lewis. She expressed her excitement about volunteering with PWC and the fine work we do for wildlife and told him about our Rehab Center.

Glen expressed interest in learning more as he is the executor for the Vetter-Winters Trust and Thelma Vetter had specified that her monies were to be used to support animals and educationally handicapped children.

He toured the Center with Kathleen and Center Director, Jeanette Stone. He was impressed enough to ask them to think about the best use of a generous donation from the Trust. Many ideas were bounced around, but Jeanette felt that funding for a wildlife vet would not only elevate the care we give to our wildlife patients, save funds on outside services but also potentially bring in more donations and even student internships to the Center.
Life Saving Message

Babies Deserve Living Free!

YOU can spread the word by sharing this life-saving information with friends, family & your local newspapers.

Fawns - If you find an uninjured fawn, do not pick it up! Keep people and dogs away so that the mother can return. Fawns are often left alone for long periods of time while the mother (dove) goes off and forages for food.

Baby Birds - If the bird has no feathers, it is a nesting and it needs to be brought to the PWC Center to be checked for injuries or cat/dog punctures. If uninjured, it can be returned to the nest the same day (So, try to locate the nest for re-nesting.)

Young Fledgling Birds - Most fledgling birds cannot fly when they first leave the nest. They are often found hopping around on the ground. Keep pets and children away. The parents will continue to care for and encourage them to learn to fly. This is an important learning period in the little bird’s life and lasts only a few days.

Baby Mammals - We get calls regarding raccoons and opossums whose parents have been trapped, with babies left to die. Do not trap and relocate opossums, raccoons, or skunks. The babies will soon grow up and the family will usually go on its way. If you need help, call our 805-543-WILD (9453).

PWC Humane Exclusion Program – For a $50 donation, PWC Exclusion experts will check out homeowner’s who may have wildlife in their attic, garage or under their house or deck. They will help solve the “problem” in humane way so the wildlife can move back to the their native habitat.

Reminders: Don’t trim bushes or trees before checking for nests! Never feed orphaned or injured wildlife – get the animal to the PWC Rehab Center ASAP!

On January 7th, I had an experience I’ll never forget! Around 5:00 pm I got a call from PWC Phone Volunteer, Barbara, telling me that the Highway Patrol reported a hawk needed rescuing on Highway 101 near San Miguel. Yikes!

The Highway Patrol officer returned my call and told me that the bird was in the center divider and was “just sitting there, not able to fly” so, it would be easy to get. The officer would be waiting for me. He told me to pull off the road in the divide behind his vehicle (south of the 10th Street exit).

I drove from Paso Robles arriving about 5:45 p.m. No Highway Patrol car was visible, so I called him. The bird had moved!

I was instructed to drive to the next exit and then come back south to find the officer parked near the Mission Street exit. The officer was there with his large flashlight. When traffic cleared, we crossed the highway and climbed over the guardrail. He shone the light on the bird – a Red-shouldered Hawk - that was tucked amongst brambles down a very steep slope. One of its wings was spread out open and the other lay against its body. The beautiful bird appeared to be glaring fiercely at me with a sharp, wicked-looking beak ready to defend itself. I was scared!

I am in my third year as a transporter and have only done two captures: both in broad daylight. (My first was a barn owl that was stunned and simple to pick up. The second was a juvenile Red-tailed Hawk that I was able to easily sneak up on.) But, looking at that hawk at night, I thought to myself: “OMG! How will I ever manage this?!”

I could barely get my footing on that slope. I had to push around many brambles to get close. The officer carried my rescue box and got it as close down the slope towards me as he could. Finally, I threw my blanket over the bird and tried to pick it up but didn’t have a good grip and I could feel the bird’s beak clamp down (thank goodness for welding gloves!) So, I let go.

There was a long pause while I talked myself back into doing what needed to be done. I calmed down and remembered the raptor rescue training I had received! Pick him up by the legs (like I do with my chickens), I thought. I threw the blanket over the bird’s upper body and face as the officer shone the light on its legs/talons.

This time it went easily into the box. We climbed back up the hill, waited for a long line of cars to go by, crossed the highway and the rescue was complete! Hurrah!

I got home at 6:30 and put the bird and box into a closet for the night. Early the next morning I took the bird to the PWC Rehab Center. I felt such a wonderful “high” (as I always do) after delivering a creature to be cared for. What a great volunteer job it is to be a PWC transporter!

The President’s Perch

What an exciting year this will be for PWC! We are all so delighted to have Dr. Shannon Riggs as our vet and for the great changes to the Rehab Center that include a surgery suite room for her. We are working to gather the additional resources Shannon will need for her work.

My goals for the year definitely include fundraising so we can acquire the items needed (such as an autoclave) and above all, raise the funds needed to keep Shannon on board for additional years to come. We count on our members and donors to support our work and help raise the funds needed to be able to continue to serve orphaned and injured wildlife in San Luis Obispo County.

PWC needs more members to step forward and serve on the Volunteer Recruitment and Retention Committee. Those willing to serve, or who have suggestions for PWC, please email to suggest@pacificwildlifecare.org.

Thanks to all!
Meg Crockett, President, Pacific Wildlife Care

Waste not – Want not

At the PWC Rehab Center a great deal of money is spent on animal care. In the case of food: local, fresh, high quality suppliers are utilized. However, whenever possible, donations are welcomed. One of our active volunteers was recently caught in a “Kodak moment” sorting acorns that she had gleaned from her own backyard oak trees.

Yum, yum, for our hungry raccoons!
Rabbits by Karen Johnston

Brush, Jack & Cotton-tailed

It’s almost that time of year again when baby mammals and birds will be pouring into the Rehab Center. One of the most challenging animals to raise and rehabilitate are rabbits and hares. Here on the Central Coast we see 3 different types: the Black-tailed Jackrabbit, Cottontail Rabbit, and Brush Rabbit.

Jackrabbits are not actually rabbits at all and are instead members of the hare family. They are born fully furred and eyes open. Whereas, Cottontails and Brush Rabbits are born naked, helpless, and eyes closed.

Last season, PWC had one of the most successful seasons raising and rehabbing baby bunnies. Generally, we receive baby bunnies from March through June but can see them as early as February and as late as August. The reason rabbits and hares are so difficult to rehabilitate is because they are very skittish and have an extremely sensitive digestive tract.

After ten days, one of the babies was not thriving and had to be returned to their nest of babies 2-3 times a day when no one is around so as not to attract predators. If you uncover a nest of babies and see no injuries and they look healthy, please leave them alone.

Some of the baby bunnies we receive actually do not need to be rescued at all. Mother rabbits will usually only return to their nest of babies 2-3 times a day when no one is around so as not to attract predators. If you uncover a nest of babies and see no injuries and they look healthy, please leave them alone.

The most common problems that we treat are dog/cat attack injuries, being hit by a car, and orphaned or abandoned babies.

Raising baby bunnies is extremely time-consuming and labor intensive. Bunnies have to be fed a special formula with additives and be slowly introduced to grasses and weeds. They also need to be specially-housed so they do not hurt themselves and in a completely quiet room to minimize stress.

A big thanks to:
- Lisa Stewart of Sierra Wildlife Rescue for sharing your invaluable information and expertise on rabbit/hare rehabilitation. We would not have had such a successful season without your help.
- Suzie Lytsell and Jenni Clayton for your tireless efforts and dedication for raising these little ones.
PWC's mission is to rehabilitate and return to their natural habitat, orphaned or injured wildlife, and to educate our community to value and respect wildlife and the environment we share with them.

SPECIAL THANK YOUS

Dr. Steven Paulick – donation of cabinets and equipment
Frank Alvarado & James Hadsel – (of Alan Roinestad Construction) removing, moving, & installing cabinets, etc.
Asa Stone – for helping with moving cabinets etc.
Eric Bakula-Davis – help with moving cabinets, assembling shelving etc.
Chris Hudson – help with moving cabinets
Melinda Alvarado – planning, organizing, moving (a little prodding?) to help PWC remodel the Rehab Center and create a surgery suite
Kathleen Dillon (Remodel Project Manager) – planning, organizing, moving, ordering & purchasing equipment for the remodel

Harvey Cohon – help with construction
Dorothy Correa & Garrett Foulke – substantial donation: the purchase of a digital x-ray machine!
Kathy & Harvey Cohon – front-loading, Energy Star, washing machine
Dorothy Correa & Garrett Foulke – donation for new Center rain gutters
Clayton McCall – Eagle Scout project donation of Barn Owl boxes (Troop 26 of Arroyo Grande)
Terry Cook – cleaning up and restoring Dr. Paulicks old office after cabinets were removed.

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

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
Top (Left to Right) California Council Wildlife Rehabilitators (CCWR) Symposium, Nov. 2012, Tenaya Lodge, Fish Camp, CA. Photos by Jeanette Stone
Brittany Butcher and Karen Johnston enjoying a snack between classes.
Jeanette Stone and Kathy Duncan attend the parasitology lab class.
Joan Carter and Kathy Duncan pose for a photo at the Saturday evening icebreaker.

Middle (Left to Right)
Frank Alvarado and James Hadsel install a sink in the new surgery suite. A huge “shout-out” to Frank for the greater than 100 hours of physically exhausting labor installing cabinets and sinks so that everything was ready for Dr. Riggs arrival. Photo by Jeanette Stone
Dave Klinzman accepting Barn Owl boxes donated to PWC from Clay McCall of Scout Troop 26, Arroyo Grande. Clay’s Eagle Scout project involved research, building and donating boxes that PWC can offer as a fund raiser. Clay reported he is “overwhelmed with the amount of help and support I received from members of the troop as well as my friends, family, and neighbors. I can't help but feel incredibly grateful for their readily given time and effort.” Photo by Jennifer Campbell

Bottom (Left to Right)
Melinda Alvarado, PWC senior rehabilitator, assists Dr. Shannon Riggs, DVM on her first day at the Rehab Center. Photo by Dave Klinzman
Sponsor, Patron & Benefactor Members enjoyed a Tour/Reception at the Rehab Center in November 2012.
Top (Left to right)
Loggerhead Shrike that was found by a biologist at Topaz Solar Farm in the Carrizo Plain. The bird had flown into a structure there, and it rendered him flightless. After nearly 3 weeks of crate/aviary rest, he was finally released back to the found site, where another Shrike came flying over to meet him. The release took about 2 hours, since Debbie Buckheim had to clear security and don protective gear before being escorted with the bird to the release site.
Photo by Debbie Buckheim

Jack Lowe experiencing the joy of releasing a rehabilitated Brown Pelican. Photo by Christine Lowe.

This Say’s Phoebe was oilied and found under a pipeline by a worker at the Chevron Oil Refinery near Guadalupe. Dani Nicholson and Debbie Buckheim washed her and she regained her waterproofing. She was released at the Guadalupe Dunes Restoration Project, not far from where she was found.
Photo by Debbie Buckheim

Bottom Photos-Skunk Rescue: original story entitled “Brave Rescue” by Claudia Duckworth, phone volunteer, and Richard Grise, PWC rescuer. Photos by Laurie Greco

On Sunday, December 31, around 1:30 PM a call came into the PWC hot-line from a man who had been trying to encourage a skunk to climb out of an empty swimming pool at a home for sale in Morro Bay. The skunk didn’t seem able to climb up the board he had left for it in the pool and now he had to leave town and was worried about the skunk’s welfare. I called the Center & Karen said she’d ask Richard Grise.... - Claudia.

When PWC rescuer, Richard Grise arrived to assess the situation, he determined that “the sides of the pool were very steep and the board not climbable by the skunk.” He further reported “rather than trying to trap and delay capture” (since it had been in the pool for several days), “I took a recovery net and at that distance thought maybe the skunk wouldn’t feel threatened as I scooped it up and raised it to safety.” “After preparing a water source and laying out some kibble, the skunk was released on the property,” It was an “amazingly beautiful animal, healthy coat, eager for freedom.”

Not many folks would touch this type of rescue with a ten-foot pole! Thanks Richard.