It Takes a Village: Reuniting Ducklings with Mom -by Pamela Hartmann

One sign of spring is the appearance of ducklings in places they shouldn’t be. This year, near the end of March, three Mallard ducklings showed up in a drainage pipe in San Luis Obispo.

The drama began in a parking lot off Higuera Street. Capturing each duckling took three firefighters, two police officers, and one itinerant man (who suggested using a tool for grabbing trash, which worked well). Then they escorted mom and ducklings—a family of eleven—across Higuera and back to the creek.

Somehow, one didn’t make it. This Mallard sibling was later brought to Pacific Wildlife Care.

At the suggestion of PWC Veterinarian Shannon Riggs, this lost duckling began its own journey home the next evening. Despite a long-held belief among wildlife rehabilitators that ducklings separated from their mother cannot be reunited with her, Shannon thought it worth a try, so Melinda Alvarado put some food, a feather duster (a sort of security blanket), and the duckling in a carrier and took it to Steve Lombardi.

Steve was the right man for the job. A longtime supporter of PWC and former member of the Board of Directors, he has an office right on the creek in SLO, near the spot where the rest of the Mallard family had been previously released.

He kept the duckling overnight and the next morning, with a friend to help out, rappelled down the steep slope to the creek and carefully released the baby bird into the water. “All of a sudden,” he says, the mom quacked, and the baby made a “top-water skitter” toward her. Mother and baby were reunited, and the field of wildlife rehabilitation was advanced. As Melinda Alvarado puts it, “We know now that we can do it.”
PWC’s First Employee

-by Meg Crockett, President

In our ongoing effort to continue to improve our animal care, as well as the training of staff and volunteers, PWC will be hiring a full-time Center Director/Volunteer Coordinator in the upcoming months. PWC received two sets of matching funds and an increase in overall donations over the past year and we are confident that our financial situation will allow us to hire for this important position.

This will be a big job, requiring management skills and extensive knowledge of wildlife rehabilitation. The hiring committee (composed of two Board members, a Rehabilitation Technician, and the Director of Animal Care) received several applications.

Three of the applicants met our criteria. Phone interviews of the candidates took place in May. The committee is bringing the top candidate or candidates for a working interview at the Center during June.

Because all of the potential candidates currently live out of our area, the start date for this position has yet to be determined.

We are looking forward to this important addition to our staff and the positive changes it will bring to our organization.

Attendees enjoyed strolling under the oak canopy as they viewed a wide variety of donated silent auction items.

Photos by Richard Baccigaluppi

The orphaned Grosbeak (top) and Cottontail bunnies are just a few of over 730 wildlife cases brought to the Center in the first quarter of 2015.

Photos by Shannon Riggs

Lovely food table by Donna Herbst (PWC’s food maven extraordinaire!)
Spring and summer are very busy times at Pacific Wildlife Care. This season, we are fortunate to be able to expand our intern program and will be welcoming 5 interns in the next few weeks to help with the large patient load. A sixth intern will be joining us in late September, in anticipation of the large number of sea birds, especially grebes, that we have seen in autumn the past couple of years.

PWC expanded our intern search this year, advertising the position nationally, and received over 20 applications for the 6 positions. We were therefore able to choose the most qualified people for the positions. Interns will spend 3 months at the Center, working 40 hours per week, helping in both the general operation of the center and in the baby bird room. A couple of them are local students, but others are coming from as far away as New York State. Our interns have expressed interests in wildlife rehabilitation and veterinary medicine and have had past experiences that should make them a huge help to the center over the next several weeks. We are looking forward to all of the help that these interns will provide.
Thank You Members! With so many hungry mouths to feed, YOU make it possible!

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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

Tiber Canyon Ranch (Chris & Will) – hosting our 7th Annual Windows into Wildlife benefit
Kelly Cherry, Kathleen Dillon & Donna Herbst – delicious food at Windows into Wildlife
Phantom Rivers Wine – discounting wine and pouring at Windows into Wildlife
Bob Bruington – designing a water recirculation-filtering-heating system for hospital pools
Steve Borges – long list of repairs, help with maintenance & building projects at the Center
Cambria Community Council – grant for 3 pet dryers to dry oiled birds washed by the PWC Wash Team
Fitting Image (Robyn & Kitty) – discounting repair of animal carrier zippers, manufacture of seabird & raptor nets
Oak Country Lumber (Nick) – for finishing our fawn enclosure 2 weeks early!

Thank you to all who donate to make this newsletter possible.