

AVIAN HAVEN

2006

Year End Report

"The early bird catches the worm." Though we have said it before, this proverb has never been more apt: our first baby birds of the season were seven woodcocks who caught and ate more than 2,000 worms apiece while growing up at Avian Haven. For their stories and more, read on!



Amy Campbell

Rehabilitation 2006: Overview

We cared for 1047 wild birds this year (about 100 over our totals for 2005 and 2004) from 99 species. The American robin easily retained its title of most-frequently admitted species (118 in all), followed by mourning dove (66), Eastern phoebe (59), cedar waxwing (36), blue jay (34), American crow (33), barred owl (29), chipping sparrow (25), herring gull (25), chimney swift (21). Comparing these to last year's "top ten" reveals a few changes: crows, jays, chippies and waxwings were admitted in more than double their 2005 numbers, while our 2006 birds included less than half of last year's chickadees and house finches. Our nonnative numbers (61 pigeons, 46 European starlings, 26 English sparrows) were similar to last year's. We had a small increase in raptor guests: 114 in all compared to 101 last year. After barred owls, the most common were broad-winged hawks (14), American kestrels (14), saw-whet owls (11), ospreys (9), and bald eagles (8).

A little over half of our admissions were nestlings, as has been the case in previous years. Where causes of injuries were known, the most common were cat predation (72, of which 34 were nestlings), car hits (73), and window strikes (22). A dozen or so birds were trapped in various locations that included a chimney, barn, office, and culvert; three raptors (two bald eagles and one red-tailed hawk) were caught in traps set for mammals, and one (a Cooper's hawk) was fished out of a river. More generally, fractures or other injuries to wings were incurred by 152 of our cases; an additional 48 had leg injuries. Of the 1047 total, we transferred 22 to other rehabilitators for specialized continued care. Of the 1025 remaining, we released 534 and placed 11; 19 were still pending as of Dec. 31. We also cared for 22 snapping and painted turtles, most of them car-hit. From snapping turtles with fatal injuries (including several DOA), we harvested eggs and released 46 hatchlings.

The American Woodcock, popularly known as the "timberdoodle," is well known for the males' spectacular spring courtship flights. Its long bill does a good job of grabbing its favorite food: earthworms. Woodcocks are big eaters, with estimates of daily food consumption as high as twice the bird's body weight. Young leave the nest within a few hours of hatching and remain dependent on their mother for food for about the first week. Early on, if she is killed or they are separated from her, their chances of survival are reduced. We admitted eight hatchlings over the first five days of May.

One died a few hours later, but by 5/8, the survivors all were stable and eating on their own and we moved the seven of them into a large enclosure. Up to that point, we'd been able to dig enough worms on the property, but we could no longer keep up with their voracious appetites, even with the help of neighborhood kids (thanks, guys!) who brought worms from their own yards and gardens. On 5/10, we bought our first 1000 worms from Taylor Bait Farm; they lasted less than two days. All told, we purchased 11,500 worms and dug or were brought several thousand more. Though most of the ravenous youngsters had been released by the end of May, one stayed behind until 6/6, while a broken leg mended.

Amy Campbell

New Wings

2006 was a major building year, with two spacious enclosures on the flight deck – one for large corvids (crows and ravens) and another for bald eagles recovering from injuries. Our gifted habitat designer and builder, Terry Heitz, surpassed his previous accomplishments in both structures. Because our permanent-resident corvids are unflighted, we wanted a habitat with “handicap access” to the area’s prime space: the high lookout tower you can see in back-cover photo. A series of hop-up perches makes a staircase to the “crow’s nest,” where the birds spend much of their time. The eagle habitat, shown here, features a large main area plus a separate but connecting apartment. Major funding was provided by grants from the American Foundation Corporation, the Davis Conservation Foundation, and the Grace Butnam Foundation. Rick Gray helped Terry with construction, and EBS Belfast supported the projects with discounts on materials. It was a long building season; in order to ensure full occupancy by winter, we opted to postpone the corvid habitat’s flight corridor and the eagle compound’s aerie until spring. The ravens and crows moved in around mid-July, and the eagles early in December.

Partners in Flight

We couldn’t manage the long, busy days of “baby season” without a dedicated summer staff. Once again, we were fortunate to have high-quality interns from Unity College: April Brooks, Nicole Monkiewicz, Jackie Slawson, & Allison Wilson. Our regular community volunteers were Bob Brooks, Amy Campbell, Greg Closter, Amy Dillon, Kathy Kandziolka, Leslie Latt, & Janet Wiseley. One of our most valuable assets is our gaggle of volunteer transporters, who help birds get here quickly and safely when individuals reporting birds in distress are unwilling or unable to do so. Roughly 1/3 of our deliveries were made by our avian ambulance drivers; each trip helped save a life. Though we appreciate every delivery, we thank in particular those who



Terry Heitz

accumulated the most “frequent flier” miles: Glen & Dave Bridges, Colleen Connell, Marge Cottle, Amanda Dube, Doreen Ferenc, Lloyd Ferris, Jane Frost, Edward Hinckley, Bob & Carol Jones, George Klueber, Laura & Don Lecker, Kim Mullen, Jan Rosa, Lynne Rothney-Kozlak, Susan Smith Hudson, Kim Spender, and Molly Stern.

Networking is a crucial part of our practice; we benefit particularly from the expertise of wildlife veterinarians who give their time generously in consultations on our most difficult cases. We thank especially Drs. Maureen Murray, Flo Tseng and Mark Pokras (Tufts Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine, MA); Drs. Erica Miller and Sallie Welte (Tri-State Bird Rescue & Research, DE); and Dr. Andy Major (The Raptor Trust, NJ). Locally, Dr. Judy Herman (Animal Wellness Center in Augusta) is our surgeon and homeopathic consultant; she and her staff (Gina & Jamie) have been wonderful.

Our networks in the local rehab community are just as important; they support an ethic of ensuring the best care that can be given. When the needs of a bird can be better met elsewhere, we do not hesitate to transfer that bird to a colleague, and, as in past years, we passed many of the shore and sea birds we admitted on to Kappy Sprenger of Bridgeton. Conversely, we receive many birds from other rehabilitators who have the same ethic; roughly 30% of our admissions came from colleagues or other

The Eastern phoebe is one of our favorites; because it often constructs its mud-and-moss nests on buildings, it is also one of our most commonly-admitted birds. On 6/7, when Carolyn Richens of Pittsfield delivered a cat-caught adult with a wing fracture, our concern was not only for the injured bird, but also for the possibility of orphaned babies. Carolyn knew of no phoebe nests on her house or barn, but we showed her a phoebe nest and told her to look beneath overhangs such as eaves. A couple hours later, she called back excitedly: “We found it!” Watching the nest for an hour, they saw a phoebe repeatedly fly toward the nest without entering it. In phoebe families, the female does all the brooding and most of the feeding, so if she dies, younger nestlings succumb to starvation and hypothermia. On the basis of Carolyn’s observation of the remaining adult’s behavior, we were fairly certain that the injured bird we had was the mom, so we advised Carolyn to collect the babies and bring them in.



Of course we housed them all together, and over the first few days, mom fed her babies at least some of the time. Her wing injury had a nearly-hopeless prognosis, but we were happy to give her the chance to watch her children grow up. By the time they were released on 6/25, she had been adopted by more recently-admitted youngsters (some of which are shown here), and though she did not feed them, she allowed them to snuggle close to her. But as June turned to July, it became clear that the wing was not viable; perhaps it was clear to her too, as her appetite diminished and she became increasingly listless. She remained in the close company of nestlings until she died on 7/6.

Bill Green and his crew were here the day Carolyn brought in the phoebes, so you might have seen them all on *Bill Green’s Maine* a couple weeks later. Carolyn signed on as one of our volunteer transporters, and on a cold November day, did a spectacular and heroic rescue of an injured heron in knee-deep water. But that’s another story!

As several of this year's stories indicate, a decision to intervene is sometimes postponed so long that a good outcome is compromised. But we do have one tale of a late intervention with a happy ending. On 8/23, we got a call from a woman named Janine Philler, whose husband worked for D.O.T. in the Rangeley area. Members of his crew had seen a great-horned owl on a roadside on the 21st; on the 22nd, a "nature photographer" had taken numerous close-up pictures of the bird. The road crew did not realize the bird was in trouble, but when Janine's husband told her about it, she knew immediately there was something wrong with an owl that remained on the ground in daylight even when approached closely for photographs. Janine called to give us a heads-up, then went to fetch the bird. Our ace transporter Ed Hinckley met her in Farmington and brought the bird in. Although we could find no injuries, either by palpation or radiograph, the bird was thin. One plausible scenario is that he had been hit by a car, after which he was too dazed and bruised to fly away.



We hand-fed the bird at first, but by 9/7, when we moved him into a flight cage, he was eating on his own. On 9/21 the rescue transport was reversed: Ed took the bird to Farmington, and Janine drove the bird from there back to near where it had been found.

While we're on the subject of owls, we can't resist an excuse to show off this photo

of a first-year male snowy owl rescued on 11/13 by John Soule, wildlife biologist for the Passamaquoddy Nation. His counterpart with the Penobscot Nation, Kristin Dilworth, helped with the transport here. Like the great-horned, the snowy was apparently uninjured, but extremely thin at only 940 grams on intake, most likely due to no meals having been served on the flight south from the arctic breeding range. But over the course of the next three weeks, he gained weight and on 12/5, tipped the scales at 1600 grams. We released him two days later.



Bill Hanson

animal professionals such as game wardens, wildlife biologists, veterinarians, animal-control officers, etc.

It is our pleasure and privilege to maintain close ties with the state and federal agencies that issue our permits. For counsel and assistance of many kinds from Maine's Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife, we thank in particular biologists Brad Allen, Buster Carter, Keel Kemper and Charlie Todd, plus many game wardens in surrounding areas, but especially Dave Chabot, Chris Dyer, Jim Fahey, Dan Scott, and Micah Thurston. Our appreciation also extends to tribal wildlife biologists Kristin Dilworth (Penobscot Nation) and John Soule (Passamaquoddy Nation) and Camden-area Lake Warden Ken Bailey. From the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, we thank one last time before saying farewell to our newly-retired district permit officer, David Dobias. Other U.S.F.W.S. personnel to whom we are especially grateful include Eric Holmes and Mark McCollough. We have continued cooperative ventures with the U.S.D.A., mostly through Augusta-based wildlife specialists Robin Dyer and Adam Vashon. In non-governmental sectors, our heroes are wildlife biologists Bill Hanson (Florida Power & Light Energy) plus Chris DeSorbo and other biologists at BioDiversity Research Institute. We are pleased to continue our association with Unity College, both students and faculty, and welcome in particular Unity's new professor of Wildlife Care and Education, Amy D'Archangelo.

Finally, animal control officers in many surrounding towns work with us; we thank especially Pat Faucher, Charles Theobald, and Cathie Virgie for their many bird rescues.

It was Avian Haven's honor to be featured on *Bill Green's Maine* (WLBZ/WCSH) in June; we thank Bill and his crew for making the film session such a pleasure. In May, Diane received an American Psychological Association Presidential Citation honoring her achievements in her "second career" of wildlife rehabilitation. The A.P.A. published an article about Diane ("The Bird Lady") in the July/August issue of its *Monitor on Psychology*. She thanks John Lorenz and A.P.A. President Gerald Koocher for their roles in crafting that award.

Part of Avian Haven's mission is rehabilitation education, and 2006 was a productive year in that regard. Diane's article "When Food can be Fatal: Recovery from Emaciation" was published in the National Wildlife Rehabilitators Association's *Wildlife Rehabilitation Bulletin* early this winter. Between them, Marc and Diane gave 8 conference presentations, some for ReMaine Wild's conference in October, and some for the New York State Wildlife Rehabilitation Council in November. Diane also published several articles in various state association newsletters. For her own continuing education in animal nutrition, she thanks her mentor and collaborator, Dr. Mark Finke.



As is the case every year, in some of our most heart-breaking cases of 2006, birds died because of cat attacks. This cardinal was one of them. As predators, cats are not responsible or ethical hunters; ask yourself if you would want someone on your property who hunted regardless of time of year or day, and age or breeding status of the animal. We implore readers who allow their cats outdoors to educate themselves about the impact of cat predation on declining populations of small mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians – and also about the risks to the health and lives of cats, often beloved family members, allowed outside. The American Bird Conservancy's Cats Indoors campaign, www.abcbird.org/cats, is an excellent repository of information.

Many of you probably remember last-year's story of an eagle fitted with a satellite transmitter and released near Lake Auburn early in December. For those who have not tracked her progress on the BioDiversity Research Institute website (www.briloon.org), she meandered south as far as northern MA, where she spent the early part of 2006, but made a beeline for home in March. The telemetry map shows that she has stayed in Maine since, with clusters of signals from the Scarborough Marsh area in late April, the southern tip of the Phippsburg peninsula in May and June, and the Bath-Brunswick area in August. As of the end of January (2007), she was back near Auburn and the Androscoggin River nest presumed to have been hers before her injury in June of 2005. Although that river nest was active in 2006, there were no offspring. One speculation is that the male took a new mate while his former "wife" was down south, but the birds were too inexperienced as a couple to breed successfully. If "Gulf Island Girl" stays in town for the 2007 courting season, the upcoming summer may have a different outcome. Stay tuned to the BRI website!

Several groups collaborate to band eagle nestlings and evaluate mercury impacts on our eagle population – those groups include BioDiversity Research Institute, ME Dept. of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and Florida Power & Light Energy. Teams that band and sample blood from eaglets in the nest sometimes discover youngsters in distress, as happened on June 12, when BRI's Chris DeSorbo climbed to a nest on Thorne Island (Kennebec River near Bath). His helper that day, Ed Friedman (Director of Friends of Merymeeting Bay) photographed a 4-5 week old eaglet with a strange lump on the side of his face, between eye and nostril.



Ed Friedman

Charlie Todd forwarded Ed's photos to Tufts veterinarian Mark Pokras and to us; Dr. Pokras judged it a likely sinus infection. The danger that the infection might worsen and become systemic troubled everyone participating in the discussion, and we affirmed our readiness to help. On June

26, after Ed flew over and confirmed that the eaglet was alive, a plan quickly formed for Bill Hanson (wildlife biologist with Florida Power & Light Energy) and Marc to return to the nest the next day. If necessary, the bird could be brought back to Avian Haven, but this bird had no siblings and Charlie was concerned that removing a singleton nestling would be a setback to the breeding pair. So, after a consultation with Dr. Andy Major, Marc went prepared for field treatment.

After Bill brought the bird down, it was evident that the lump was still there, and Marc's examination confirmed Dr. Pokras' diagnosis—a pocket of infection



Bill Hanson

near the sinus cavity. While Bill's son held the eaglet, Marc lanced, drained and cleaned the infected area, then inserted an antibiotic pellet compounded by Dr. Major and closed the area with a single suture. Bill took the bird back up to the nest, and the team left feeling hopeful of a second chance. In a flyover about a week later, Charlie saw the bird standing on the edge of the nest and flapping.



Bill Hanson

Among our other 2006 eagle cases were two caught in traps set for fur-bearing mammals. Trap injuries often seem deceptively minor. Shortly after one bird was freed on 11/30, only a thin red line above the foot marked where the trap jaws had closed. But a few hours later, when the bird arrived here, that thin red line had become a thick black ring, and on 12/1, our Doppler detected blood flow only in two of the toes. Nothing we tried to promote circulation was successful; on 12/4 we could not discern blood flow anywhere in the foot, which was rapidly turning dark. By two days later, two of the toes were becoming necrotic, and when Dr. Herman examined the bird, she was sure that not even a footpad was viable. On 12/8, after lengthy consultations with Charlie Todd (MEDIFW) and Mark McCollough (USFWS), we euthanized the bird, a 23-year-old that hatched in New Brunswick.



Russ Dillingham

The other trap-caught eagle had been caught only by one toe, and was in the trap for a much shorter duration, thanks to the fast response of Warden Dave Chabot. The awesome photos taken at the rescue and release by Lewiston Sun Journal's Russ Dillingham made newspapers as far away as Florida. Our friend and colleague Sherri Gee, who had helped Dave with rescue and transport, released the bird on 12/9, as shown here in Russ' photo. The bird flew from Sherri's arms in the direction of a nest at Androscoggin Lake, and the following morning, watchers of the nest area reported two eagles



Bill Hanson

together in their favorite snag for the first time since the trap incident, leaving little doubt that this bird was indeed the resident male and father of these two chicks (bottom right page 4), banded last spring by Bill Hanson.



Michael Hallahan

A third eagle for '06 had also been trapped, though in a different way. This bird, a banded fledgling from a nearby nest, was seen by a young man named Brent Hall in a vertical section of concrete culvert in an abandoned area near Hampden on 9/4. Brent assumed that the bird was there to eat or cache prey; he did not realize the bird could not escape until three days later, when he brought his friend Michael Hallahan back to the site to see if the bird might be there. Indeed it was, and the blood lining the inside of the culvert left no doubt that the bird was in trouble. Michael called the Maine Audubon center at Field's Pond and was referred here. He and Brent had no way of rescuing the bird, but agreed to stay until we could send someone up. Marc was in NJ releasing swifts, so Diane asked Terry to leave work on the eagle cage; he gathered rescue gear and headed for Hampden, where Michael photographed Terry's rescue. When the bird arrived here, he was thin and weak, but that was the least of his problems. Attempts to beat his way out of the culvert had abraded parts of his wings down to the bone and broken many of his still-immature primary flight feathers. Although the bird stabilized and gained weight rapidly, several of his damaged flight feathers fell out a few days after the rescue. Between the end of September and the end of December, replacement feathers grew in partially, but dropped before maturing, presumably due to damage to the feather follicles. Marc brought in the third set of dropped feathers on Christmas Day, and as of mid-January, after Dr. Erica Miller (Tri-State Bird Rescue & Research) told us about the outcome of a similar case she'd once had, we were not optimistic about our bird's chances for release.



Our last eagle of 2006 was another with an uncertain prognosis – in this case, as a result of lead poisoning, which eagles may acquire from scavenging carcasses containing shot fragments. It is treated in birds as it is in humans by administering a chelating agent that binds to and sequesters lead ions. This bird, banded as a nestling in 1984 in Addison, ME, was captured and brought here from the Union area by our colleague Don Cote on 12/16. The eagle was emaciated and too weak to even hold his head up; he had the labored, snorty breathing characteristic of lead toxicosis, and our test kit confirmed the presence of high blood lead levels. But after only a few days of aggressive chelation therapy, the bird was standing, with basic blood parameters showing improvement. On the last day of 2006, blood lead levels were close to a “normal background” range and, after consultation with Dr. Miller, we discontinued chelation. But despite the clearance of lead from the body, damage may have been done to the nervous system, and as 2007 unfolded, the bird still lacked appetite and seemed to have impaired visual perception.



In an effort to coax his neurons into remembering their jobs, we moved the bird outside. His first flight attempts ended with clumsy or missed landings, but they gradually improved. On 1/22/07, he made it up to a high perch, and on that same day, a



Terry Heitz

close examination of the Hampden bird revealed new primaries that had grown in significantly farther than ever before. That evening when Diane e-mailed Charlie Todd with an update on both birds, she typed in the subject line: “Hope reigns.”



Amy Campbell

Red-winged blackbird nestlings are rare in our practice. Because they typically nest in marshy, wetland areas rather than close to human dwellings, their family activities are not often observed by people. But our friend Ron Ladd of Albion knew of a nest, and when he saw a female nearby killed by a car in the morning of 6/11, he made a point of keeping an eye on things. Observing from an unobtrusive distance, he saw the male visit the nest frequently over the course of the day, but he did not brood or feed the babies. So late in the afternoon, Ron brought the three nestlings in. Quite the characters, they were irresistibly photogenic to one of our volunteers, whose shot of this youngster just after she fed him shows his bulging crop. They were released on 7/6.

Feathering the Nest

Given what we've already told you about our new buildings in 2006, it's no surprise that about half of our total expenses were construction-related. Other expenses included corporate costs such as insurance, fees, registrations, utilities and postage (neither Marc nor Diane takes a salary); equipment and supplies of many kinds; bird food; and internships. We were delighted in 2006 to receive a grant enabling us to substantially enhance our endowment. Other grants amounted to more than half of our operating income, with most of the remainder comprising private donations. We are most grateful for grants from the American Foundation Corporation, the Davis Conservation Foundation, the Grace Butnam Foundation, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and the Winn Foundation Trust. We appreciate each and every one of the nearly 200 private individuals who supported us financially in 2006, but thank in particular Bob & Amy Campbell, Jan Corning, MacInsey Emory, Mary Offutt, Charlie & Nancy Shuman, Neal & Paula Williamson.

Noncash donations such as services, goods, and discounts are an important form of support. We had much-appreciated help of many different kinds from both corporations and individuals, including: the Acadia Zoo, the Belfast Cooperative, Charlie's Toyota, Chase's Home Furnishings, Craig Brook National Fish Hatchery, Dog Days Café, Fish Health Lab (MEDIFW), Dutton's Nursery & Greenhouse, Ellsworth Builders Supply, Federal Express, Florida Power & Light Energy, Level Best Land Services, Micro Technologies Inc., the Penobscot Nation, PetCo (Augusta), The Raptor Trust, Sand Hill Strawberry Farm, Taylor Bait Farm; Tom Berry, Lewis Cisle, Rani Howe, Mark Jordan, Allan Lord, Peggy McKenna, Penelope Olson, Jim Parker, Raelene & Ray Rogers, Sue Shane, Susan Smith Hudson, Sydney Thomas, Doug Van Horn, and Craig Wood.

Our wondrous webmaster, James Skowbo, continued to brighten our electronic home, and we received other valuable computer assistance from David Asselin. Kathy Kandziolka again worked her grounds and garden magic. Finally, we thank board members Dick Hanson (now retired), Judy Herman, and Allen Stehle.

The Spring 2006 issue of *Chaetura*, the newsletter of Driftwood Wildlife Association (and chimney swift experts Georgean & Paul Kyle) had a disturbing article on the "avian aftermath of the 2005 hurricanes." Hurricane Wilma caught huge numbers of birds on their southerly migration and carried them far back to the north. As Wilma disintegrated off the coast of Nova Scotia, thousands of chimney swifts were dropped on the shores; many more surely perished at sea. One local family reported to *Chaetura* that, of about 400 birds that went down their chimney, about 300 were removed dead. Swifts normally leave Nova Scotia in August; by the end of October, the aerial insects on which they feed would be in extremely short supply. Birds that had survived several days in Wilma would be hard pressed to find enough food to keep them alive through a second long trip south.

With this kind of population impact, we were prepared for low numbers of swift admissions. As it turned out, ours were not that different from previous years, but centers elsewhere in the state and in other parts of New England reported declines. We received our first hatchlings on 7/20, and by 8/15, two fledglings were ready to go. We had already been monitoring our favorite release site at the school in Unity; in previous years, we'd observed as many as 80 birds entering the roost toward the end of August, but so far, it had been rare to see more than a few. But on the 15th, 20 birds appeared in the sky, and when our two joined them, we felt good about the release even though most of them did not enter the chimney. Two days later, we had three more ready, and were thrilled when they joined

as many as 30 birds in the sky. But as darkness fell, only two birds had gone into the chimney, and we became concerned when several birds began flying lower and lower. Concern turned to horror, when a cat watching from a nearby yard jumped high enough to catch one of these swifts in mid-air. Helpers at the scene could not catch the cat before it disappeared with its prey. We could not see where the other low-flying birds finally landed, and though we searched in the darkness with flashlights and returned at dawn the next morning, there was no sign of them.

After that experience, we decided to look elsewhere for release sites, but as our scouts checked in over the following week, none of the chimneys historically active in central Maine were occupied. By the end of the month, we'd decided to release all our remaining birds farther south, which we'd done in past years only for the last few stragglers of the season. We made contact with our friends at NJ Audubon, and their scouts reported good numbers at a school in Ridgewood. On 9/7, Marc packed up the rest of "the kids" and headed south, releasing them into a flock of about 450 birds that evening.

At one time, chimney swifts used large hollow trees for roosting and breeding, and as the forests of North America dwindled, swifts adapted to human presence by using our outbuildings and chimneys. But the spacious masonry chimneys so well suited to swifts are no longer fashionable in modern construction, and many still in existence have been capped, further reducing the availability of breeding sites. In

an effort to support if not restore their declining populations, swift-lovers all over eastern North America have erected towers in a huge variety of attractive and creative designs (we have two at Avian Haven). For more information about swift tower construction and chimney swift conservation, visit the DWA website, www.chimneyswifts.org.



Bob Brooks

For most of the day, July 18 was unremarkable. By the time our interns and volunteers left around 6:45 we had admitted only five birds – four injured fledglings (kestrel, crow, pigeon, kingbird) plus a cat-caught field sparrow. But as we were about to discover, the “real” day began around 7 p.m., with the appearance of the first of nine



Amy Campbell

more birds, a purple finch that had struck a window in Dixmont. The next three arrivals came in one delivery from Molly Stern, a Bangor-area volunteer transporter. Molly had picked up a starling nestling that had somehow made its way into an apartment, an injured nestling warbler whose mom and clutchmate had been killed by a cat, and a nestling raptor found on the ground at Pine Grove Lane Cemetery and retrieved from groundskeepers by Warden Jim Fahey, who was unable to find its nest. On the phone, Jim said he wasn't “100% sure” what the bird was. Indeed, this bird was not one of the more common Maine raptors, but Jim's guess was right: it was the merlin shown in this photo.

While Marc was unpacking Molly's delivery, Diane was on the phone with a Lewiston woman who had been watching four young phoebes that had bailed from their nest. Two had already died. Diane advised her to bring the two survivors inside for the night; she then began making arrangements for one volunteer driver to get the birds in Lewiston the following morning, and another to meet the first driver in Augusta for the second leg of the trip. The next arrival was a robin nestling found on the ground after the afternoon's thunderstorm; it was delivered by Paula Williamson, one of our long-time volunteers. Before Paula left, another of our friends, Caren Plank, arrived with a crow with multiple fractures, found near death on a roadside. Meanwhile, Diane was back on the phone with the Lewiston woman, who had not followed through with the plan to rescue the birds, but instead had left them “scampering around” on the grass, confident in her assumption that the mom was nearby watching them. Again, Diane urged her to rescue the unflighted and vulnerable babies before it became too dark to find them.

The next arrivals were two chipping sparrow nestlings found on the ground after the afternoon's storm; they were still cold and wet when our intern April retrieved them and an English sparrow fledgling from Vassalboro. By the time we got the chippies into the ICU, it was completely dark, and the Lewiston woman called back, sad and abashed, to report that another of the phoebes had died while the other had “scampered” too far away to be found. In between calls to cancel the transport plan for the phoebes, Diane talked to a Bangor woman about a chipping sparrow hatchling found on the ground after the storm. It was too late by then to get the bird down before morning, so Diane gave the rescuer instructions on how to keep the bird warm enough to survive the night. It was well after 9:00 when we had done what we could for our new arrivals, and started to think about feeding ourselves.

In the morning, the cat-caught warbler was dead, as was the car-hit crow. But unlike the woman from Lewiston, the woman in Bangor had followed Diane's suggestions, and by noon, the tiny chippie had arrived alive. Not all of our summer evenings were like this one, but this snapshot contained many of the elements that characterize our practice: birds delivered by strangers, birds brought in by friends; a warden to the rescue, an intern helping out after hours, a volunteer driver coordinating multiple pick-ups en route via cell phone; a caller who listens to advice, a caller who doesn't; common birds, rare birds, birds killed by cat bites or car hits, and a brand-new baby bird, rescued from a storm and surviving, against all odds.

Next Year's Flight Plans

After a year of intensive new construction, we plan a more relaxed building season for 2007. As mentioned, our two major projects for this year will both require some finishing touches come spring, and we will spruce up and enlarge a couple of our older habitats over the summer. If time and funding permit, we might also consider a second small songbird habitat. However, as Avian Haven's 10th anniversary approaches (February 2009), we plan to broaden our financial focus from physical plant to endowment, to ensure that Avian Haven survives Diane & Marc.

In Closing . . .

One of our favorite books of 2006 was Julie Zickefoose's *Letters from Eden*. We couldn't say it better than Julie: “Watch swallows skim low over the lawn in the sidelight of a summer evening; watch a phoebe whirl out to snap up a passing crane fly, then fetch up on a dead branch, and then imagine the scene without their spark.” We hope none of you can imagine any scene without them; we surely cannot. This report is our major annual fund-raising effort: your support determines what we can accomplish in the season ahead. Please help ensure that scenes sparked by birds continue to brighten life on our world.

Until next year –

Diane & Marc

Diane Winn & Marc Payne
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AVIAN HAVEN:

A nonprofit wild bird rehabilitation center dedicated to the return of injured and orphaned wild birds of all species to their natural roles in the wild.

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Photography by Marc Payne unless otherwise noted.



Casa Corvus



Corvus Corax

AVIAN HAVEN

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