



Amy Campbell

# AVIAN HAVEN

2007

## Year End Report

*According to a Chinese proverb, "A crane is obvious when standing amidst a flock of chickens." The Sandhill Crane we cared for this year was a first in our practice, and certainly obvious, despite the lack of chickens in our flock. For his story and others, read on!*

### Rehabilitation 2007: Overview

This year brought another increase in case load: we cared for a total of 1,223 wild birds from 108 species. As in every past year, the American Robin was by far the most common (141 in all). Others among our top ten native birds were Eastern Phoebe (69), American Crow (58), Barred Owl (48), Mourning Dove (47), Blue Jay (41), Chimney Swift (31), Cedar Waxwing (28), Herring Gull (26), and, in a tie for 10th place, American Goldfinch and Common Grackle (23 each). Raptor admissions were up as well at 133 in all, with the most common species after Barred Owl being Broad-winged Hawk (23), Osprey (15), Bald Eagle (12), American Kestrel (8). To the extent that we see trends, this was the second year of

increased corvid admissions (crows and jays) after a low in 2005. Birds historically rare in our practice included a Glossy Ibis, Yellow-breasted Chat, and Northern Shrike. Nonnative birds were admitted in numbers similar to those in previous years: 72 Rock Pigeons, 48 European Starlings, and 30 English Sparrows.

Consistent with past years, roughly half of our admissions were nestlings. Cats were known to have injured 119 birds – nearly the sum of injuries by vehicles (94) and windows (36). Among less common causes of difficulty were eagle combat (3 birds), an encounter with the hot tank of a lobster boat (by a kestrel), and lead poisoning (1 eagle and 1 loon). Wing injuries (roughly 200) outnumbered leg injuries by about 3:1. Of the 1,223 total, 26 were transferred elsewhere for continuing specialized care or placement. Among the remainder, 609 were released, and 21 were still pending as of Dec. 31. In addition to birds, we cared for a total of 124 turtles (85 of which were from the Annabessacook Lake oil spill – see story on p.6), and hatched another 45 from eggs taken from females killed by cars.

Having raised several thousand nestlings, it's rare that we cannot identify the species of even a new hatchling. But we were stumped when, on 6/28, we received two "mystery" nestlings from the Chewonki Foundation. The only history they had on the birds was that they had fallen a very long way. One had been hurt in that fall; it had a large bruise on one hip, its breathing was labored, and despite intensive care, it died two days later. By that time, we were already starting to have some ideas about the identity of the survivor, which resembled a giant phoebe. Its begging call was different from a phoebe's, but we were fairly confident that it was a flycatcher of some kind. On 7/4, Diane read a post on a rehab listserv describing the begging call of a Great Crested Flycatcher; it matched



Marie Read

what she was hearing, the size was right, and as the magnificent rust-colored tail emerged, the species identity was confirmed. It was unfortunate that we had no others of his kind, but the plucky flycatcher seemed content among cousins of a sort – Eastern Phoebes. We released him on 7/27, and saw him frequently for some time after that. Easy to spot with the striking tail, he occasionally flew down to a deck railing, and from there, would hawk mealworms tossed in his direction. We saw him for the last time just before dark on 8/17. Fall migration of Great Crested Flycatchers begins around mid August; they generally migrate alone and at least sometimes at night. We like to think that our bird headed south that evening, and we hope with all our hearts to see him again come spring.

## Sprucing Up

Both of our major construction projects for 2006 needed final touches in 2007. Our large corvid habitat grew “wings” this summer – an elevated flight tunnel that allows continuous flying at about 100’ per lap (see photo below). Completed in time for the raven fledglings of the year to get in shape before release, it was later a boardwalk for afternoon strolls by our unflighted resident ravens. Our masterful designer and builder, Terry Heitz, also installed a second-level aerie on the eagle recovery habitat. Intended as a substitute for the “lofty nest” of an orphaned youngster, it could also function as a hospital cage for an injured adult ( see back cover). Last and, in this case, least in size, Terry built a new cage for small songbirds. In addition to Terry, we thank Kathy Kandziolka for landscaping around the new buildings, and Ellsworth Builders Supply for discounts on building materials.



Terry Heitz

Proud as we are of our physical plant in Freedom, our home on the web ([www.avianhaven.org](http://www.avianhaven.org)) is also a sight to be seen. For awesome renovations in 2007, as well as ongoing electronic housekeeping, we thank our talented webmaster, James Skowbo.

On 4/25, we admitted a Pine Warbler that had been captured the day before by a cat belonging to a family on Isle au Haut. The cat caught the bird by its tail feathers, which were lost when the bird escaped from its predator only to fly into a car. The child who rescued the bird kept it overnight and tried letting it go in the morning, but when the bird could only fly a few feet without crashing, we were contacted. The family had business off the island that day, and one of our transporters, Bill, was able to meet the rescuer’s father in Ellsworth. We could not palpate any fractures, but as a precaution, kept the bird in a small cage for the first couple of days. On 4/27, he failed a flight test; although the wings were held normally, the bird could not get lift, which suggested an injury to the shoulder. But starting on 5/1, in a series of upgrades to larger cages, flight that was first clumsy improved rapidly, and by 5/6, we thought the bird could be released. The family could not leave the island for the next few days, so another of our transporters, George, took the bird to Blue Hill and released it, roughly 20 miles “as the crow flies” from the island. The bird was out of the box the instant it was opened, and George could follow its movements in a nearby pine tree for only a few minutes.



Garth McElroy

## Partners in Flight

Our summer days are long and busy, but the comradery of our many “helpers at the nest” keeps everything running smoothly (most of the time!). Our Unity College interns were April Brooks, Chelsey Jenkins, and Karen Symes. Community volunteers who worked on site for at least part of the season were Susan Bailey, Bob Brooks, Amy Campbell, Amy Dillon, Leslie Latt, Laura Lecker, Katie McCormack, Kim Mullen, Caren Plank, Chris Reinig, Lynne Rothney-Kolzack, Sydney Thomas, and Janet Wiseley. Nearly half of our admissions were brought in by volunteer transporters who stepped in when folks reporting injured birds were unable or unwilling to drive here. Each trip saved a life, but among the many on our helper list, the “avian ambulances” accumulating the most miles belonged to Anne Beaulieu, Anne Bourassa, Angela & Jim Bellegarde, Colleen Connell, Edward Hinckley, Gabrielle Isenbrand, Bob Jones, Linda Kennedy, George Klueber, Darcie Lamont, Carolyn & Steve Richens, Susan Smith-Hudson, and George & Terri Stone.

For consultations on our most challenging cases, we thank some of the best wildlife veterinarians in the country: Drs. Mark Pokras and Flo Tseng (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). Although our local veterinarian, Dr. Judy Herman (Animal Wellness Center, Augusta), does not specialize in wildlife, she is a skilled surgeon and learned homeopath: we are grateful to her as well as her staff members Jamie & Gina. For nutritional consultations, we thank Dr. Mark Finke (AZ); and for support and advice of many kinds, through many situations, we thank board members Judy Herman and Allen Stehle.

This cat victim escaped with its life, but on 6/30, we got another call from the same family. This time, their cat had caught a juvenile Hermit Thrush, and as the child reported to us, this one was “in much worse shape” than the warbler. His mother was able to get the bird onto the afternoon ferry, so we set up a network of folks to meet the ferry, then leap-frog the bird from point to point, with George making the last leg. When the bird arrived about 8 p.m., it was indeed in bad shape. The cat had torn away a large patch of skin from wrist to shoulder; there wasn’t enough left to suture. The bird seemed at risk for shock, so we quickly dressed the wound, gave her fluids, pain medication and antibiotics, and tucked her into an ICU. The other injuries were not apparent until the next morning, when we found the bird dead and could do a more thorough exam. The poor little thrush had so many punctures from the cat’s teeth that parts of its body resembled hamburger.

As already mentioned, cat predation has been by far the leading cause of injuries in our practice. For more information on reasons to keep cats indoors, take a look at the American Bird Conservancy’s Cats Indoors program ([www.abcbirds.org/abcprograms/policy/cats/](http://www.abcbirds.org/abcprograms/policy/cats/)); for an essay that likens outdoor cats to poachers, see [www.remainewild.org/cats.htm](http://www.remainewild.org/cats.htm).

Networks among our Maine colleagues are also a crucial part of our practice. As in past years, roughly a third of our admissions were from animal professionals such as other rehabilitators, veterinarians, animal control officers, wardens, and wildlife biologists. It is our pleasure to work closely with governmental wildlife agencies. From Maine's Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife, we thank in particular biologists Brad Allen, Buster Carter, Keel Kemper, Jonathan Mays, Tom Schaeffer, and Charlie Todd; and also the many wardens who referred or

brought birds here (especially Dave Chabot, Jim Fahey, and Shannon Fish). At the federal level, from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, we are most grateful to Eric Holmes and Mark McCollough; and from U.S.D.A., to Robin Dyer and Adam Vashon. In the private sector, biologists with whom we have frequent contact include Chris DeSorbo (BioDiversity Research Institute) and Bill Hanson (Florida Power & Light Energy). Finally, we thank nearby Animal Control Officers Pat Faucher, Charles Theobald, and Cathie Virgie for their many bird rescues.

**O**n the morning of 7/27, Diane answered the phone to find IF&W wildlife biologist Jim Connelly on the line. "Are you up for a challenge?" he asked. Jim had just received a report of a Sandhill Crane chick on the ground, untended and alone. Marc quickly gathered emergency supplies and met Jim at the site, where the two captured the bird. The young crane was thin, but had been surviving on local blueberries. This was a new species for us, so in the days that followed, we made dozens of phone calls to people knowledgeable about Sandhill Cranes, both in the wild and in captivity. Folks at The Crane Foundation (Baraboo, WI, [www.savingcranes.org](http://www.savingcranes.org)) were very helpful.

Among the oldest of birds now living, the species is known to nest primarily from the Great Lakes northwest across a broad expanse into Alaska and Siberia. Most Sandhill Crane populations are now considered stable; some are even increasing. Historical records suggest that Sandhill Cranes may once have been common in New England, but were extirpated soon after European settlement. We learned, however, that Sandhill Cranes had been seen in a central Maine wetland in the early 1990s, that a breeding pair had been confirmed at that site in 2000 and 2001, and that other reports now suggested 5-6 pairs possibly nesting in Maine. Sandhill Cranes lay two eggs, but usually raise only one chick. This bird was assumed to have been the reject, so any idea of family reunion was tabled early on. The preliminary plan developed in conjunction with IF&W and other local ornithologists was to release the bird into a pre-migratory staging group in September.

At first, we concentrated on making sure the bird was stable and gaining weight while also minimizing visual contact with human caregivers. On 8/5, we moved him to one of our flight cages. But two days later, Marc noticed that one ankle seemed slightly swollen. The next day, he took a radiograph, and sent it to Dr. Erica Miller at Tri-State. Her first impression was one of a sprain, and we started the bird on anti-inflammatory medication. But although the swelling in the ankle decreased



somewhat, the foot ball became swollen, and a week later, Marc aspirated what appeared to be pus from that foot. A short time later, we were dismayed to see the other foot begin to swell. After further conversations with Dr. Miller, Dr. Flo Tseng at Tufts, and our local veterinarian, Dr. Judy Herman, we concluded that the bird had some sort of infection in his feet.

Over the next month, our treatments were based on that assumption, which was confirmed by a culture taken early on from feet and ankles. As treatments progressed, there were no further signs of infection, but the swelling did not resolve. Adding to the puzzle, the bird did not seem to find standing or walking uncomfortable. But well before the end of September, it was clear that our release plan would have to be abandoned; we had run out of time. So after another round of consultations, it was agreed

that the crane would be transferred to Tri-State, where more specialized care could be given and the bird over-wintered if necessary. Shortly after Marc and the bird arrived there on 9/22, Dr. Miller carefully opened up the feet for a closer look at the fluids beneath the surface. "I think this is joint fluid!" she said. Dr. Miller speculated that sprains or other injuries early in the chick's life might have caused joint capsules to rupture; over time, leaking synovial fluid might pool into the feet and remain there regardless of the presence or absence of any infection.

The crane received top-notch care at Tri-State, and by mid-October, the feet were much better. But the concern was the likelihood that joint problems could recur, especially under the strenuous conditions of life in the wild, if the bird were to be released. An additional issue was the bird's having already been in captivity for three of its five months of life. We talked at great length with Dr. Miller about various options and scenarios, and concurred that the best one for the bird was placement rather than release. The nearby Brandywine Zoo had a crane exhibit currently occupied by one lonely juvenile. The curator was delighted to offer our bird a new home, and his guardians accepted unanimously on his behalf. Because of its proximity to Tri-State, Dr. Miller would be able to monitor the bird's feet. Named Sandy, he was taken to that new home on Nov. 28, where he joined his soon-to-be best friend, Spike. As this report goes to press, Zoo curators report that Sandy is doing just fine.



Amy Campbell



At about 1:30 on 9/17, Diane took the first of seven cell-phone calls that afternoon from Ellen Connors, who, from a kayak, was watching two Bald Eagles locked up in the water near an Eddington-area shore. Her companion Susan Stonestreet had also called the warden service, and in turn, Maine's eagle biologist, Charlie Todd, had been notified. But although Charlie's office was not far away, the site was accessible only by water. Due to his having to obtain a boat and some confusion about the birds' exact location, Charlie was delayed, so meanwhile, Ellen kept Diane apprised. At first, Ellen and Susan thought one bird had drowned, but as they waited for Charlie, that bird revived, and then the two birds unlocked. The one that seemed to have risen from dead scrambled up the steep bank and disappeared into the woods. The other fighter had been slower to recover, but had made it up the bank by the time Charlie arrived. He was nevertheless able to chase it down, and at 4:00, Ellen called for the last time that day to say that the bird was in custody. Charlie's hands were otherwise occupied, so Ellen relayed messages regarding when and where Terry could meet him to bring the bird in. Charlie secured the bird in a large bag, then paddled back to the Orono boat landing; after a quick stop at his office, he was on his way to the rendezvous point.

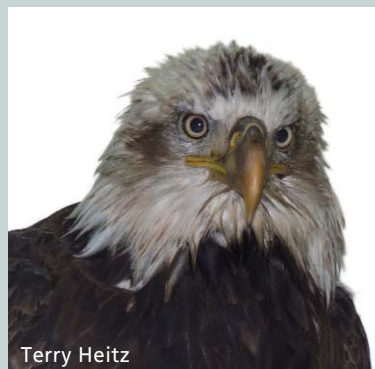
On intake here, the bird had subcutaneous bleeding and two punctures along the underside of one wing; there was also a puncture in the other wing, one on the chest, and another deep one in a foot. We knew from past experience that, because of eagles' scavenging habits, wounds made by their talons can become badly infected. We cleaned the abrasions and punctures, and started the bird on antibiotics. By 9/21 the wounds looked good and the bird was getting restless in our indoor hospital cage. We moved him to one of the outside flight cages just in time for one of the most bizarre coincidences of our practice.

Marc had left that morning to take another of our guests on a road trip south (see story on p. 3). Diane and Terry were looking forward to a quiet day, but had no sooner cleaned out the eagle hospital cage when Warden Shannon Fish phoned with a heads-up regarding two eagles in combat. The man who called him had heard a "whoosh" followed by a thumping crash, and then had noticed that cars were slowing down. Turning toward a nearby road, he saw one eagle walking away from another motionless on the ground. Shannon instructed the caller to pull the downed bird from the road, and then broke all speed records getting to the scene. On his arrival, the apparent victor was still in sight; Shannon was able to chase the bird down, roughly 100 yards into the woods. The other bird, which had been taken at first for dead, was still alive. Meanwhile, Terry had quickly packed his truck with carriers for two and headed north to meet Shannon.

After he left, Diane worried about our antibiotic supply; we did not have enough on hand for two more eagles with talon-inflicted injuries. She called one of our volunteer transporters, Gabrielle, with an unusual request: could she pick up antibiotics from Dr. Herman's office and bring them here? Gabrielle could and did, arriving within moments of the birds. The apparent "loser" was a 4th year bird that still had some brown streaks on his nearly-white head. His face was covered with blood,

most of which had come from a wound in the mouth. The bird seemed at risk for shock, so Diane cleaned blood from the mouth, but did only a superficial exam of wings and legs. She gave the bird fluids and settled it in on a bed of pillows, where it was soon sound asleep. The "winner," a full adult, had no apparent wounds, but also seemed happy to lie down.

All Diane knew at the time was that the incident had occurred somewhere around greater Bangor. The next morning, when Shannon called to check on the birds, Diane asked him for location details, remarking on having recently admitted another eagle from the Bangor area. Not long after that, when Ellen called to check on her bird, Diane told her of the second combat situation, and repeated the location Shannon had given her. Ellen's gasp confirmed what Diane had begun to suspect: the second fight



Terry Heitz

had also occurred in Eddington, within a mile of the first one! Ellen had gotten a good look at the "phoenix bird" of the first encounter before it got away; she'd believed it a 4th year bird because of brown streaks on the head, and later, she thought she recognized that bird in a photo of the one we had. As more details were reviewed with Charlie, Shannon, Ellen and Susan, a plausible scenario emerged of an aggressive young upstart attempting to oust resident adults from prime territory along the Penobscot. In this scenario, the young upstart was the bird that had gotten away from the first encounter only to be captured in the second one – and also the bird that had, both times, been thought dead.



Susan Stonestreet

The adult eagle from that first situation recovered fairly quickly; the foot did not become infected, and flight was fine. On the assumption that this was one of the resident birds, on 9/29, Charlie and Marc released that bird in Eddington, with both Susan and Ellen attending and photographing. At least three other eagles were seen in the area that morning! The young upstart's recovery was slow but steady. No fractures were apparent, and the mouth laceration healed nicely. But by the time the first bird was released, this one was still lying down to sleep, so when we moved him outside, we set up a padded bed in one corner of the cage. He became restless around the

first of October, and although he seemed fine in the larger cage we moved him to, he did not fly to the high perches. We brought him back inside on 10/10 for more radiographs. It took three tries to get one with a position that revealed the problem – a scapula fracture, already well on its way to healing. Cage rest would have been the only remedy, so we returned the bird outside, and within a few days, he flew for the first time. Not quite a month later, he was ready for release; not wanting to risk further incidents in Eddington, Charlie chose Moose Point, and Marc took the bird on 11/10, accompanied by Ellen and Susan.

Our tale now returns to the other adult, the apparent winner in the second combat. Two days after admission, this bird was now lying down more often than standing up. Marc took a radiograph as soon as he returned on 9/23, and it showed the



Terry Heitz

reason: a femur fracture we could best describe as “crunched.” But we could find no wounds on the leg – not even a puncture. Our best guess was that this injury, like the other bird’s scapula fracture, was incurred on impact with the ground. We e-mailed the radiograph to Dr. Erica Miller; in the absence of a wound, her advice was to rely on cage rest rather than attempt a splint so close to the knee. So we set up a large dog bed for the bird, and over the next few days, she spent almost all her time lying down. But within a week, she was starting to stand more often, and roughly two weeks after the injury, we moved the bird (and her bed) to an outdoor cage. Over the following two weeks, the proportion of time spent standing, and then perching, continued to increase. When we moved her to a cage large enough for eagle flight on 10/19, she flew to a high perch almost immediately. We released her back at Eddington on 11/7.



Terry Heitz



Susan Stonestreet

One of our biggest mysteries of the year involved another eagle – a first-year bird recovered in Edmunds Township on 10/22 by IF&W Biologist Tom Schaeffer. The young eagle was thoroughly coated with a sticky substance Tom originally assumed to be fish oils, though subsequent guesses from others as to the nature of the “goop” included restaurant fryer grease, fiberglass resin without the hardener, and waterproofing products for boots. We tried many solvents on contaminated feathers clipped from the bird; 100% acetone worked very well, and although Terry and Diane were able to (very carefully!) clean the long flight feathers with acetone while Marc held the bird, we could not use this substance on the hundreds of other feathers closer to the skin. An alternative was suggested by our friend and plumber Dave Pottle: Tide detergent. Having tried other detergents with little success, we were surprised but delighted at the results on a sample feather. Consulting again with Erica Miller, we ramped down the proportion of detergent to water until we found the minimum concentration that would clean sample feathers. Then, on 11/13, we tried the bird’s first

bath: a 15-minute soak followed by gentle underwater feather-scrubbing. Judging from the brown color of the water alone, a fair amount was removed. We repeated the Tide baths several times over the next two weeks, but by the 12/3 bath, we had reached a point of diminished returns. Still, we had accomplished enough to feel comfortable letting the bird stay outside in a small, wind-protected cage. We knew he was not waterproof, but as long as the contour feathers were clean enough for him to stay warm, we would call that good enough for the time being. On 12/30, we moved the bird to our eagle recovery habitat, where he was eager to cozy up to a resident adult on a low perch. Within a few days, we saw him on a high perch.

The identity of the goop was never ascertained, but the only combination of “smells like” and “could have been encountered in large quantities in that area” would be grease (animal or vegetable) used at a baiting station that would have been dismantled by the time the bird was captured. Though cleaning removed the worst of the substance, the eagle’s plumage will be completely restored only upon a molt, which we now await.



Amy Dillon





Lynda Clancy/VillageSoup

**B**arred Owls are by far our most common raptor; we admit them throughout the year, and car-hits are the most frequent reason for their injuries. Litter thrown from cars may attract mice to roadsides; the combination of both mice and owls looking for food at night on or near roads can be a dangerous one. But the winter of 2007-2008 brought an irruption of Barred Owls alongside northern species such as Pine

Grosbeaks, Common Redpolls and Bohemian Waxwings. Why Barred Owls? Well-known Maine birder Derek Lovitch (Wild Bird Center of Yarmouth, [www.yarmouthbirds.com](http://www.yarmouthbirds.com)) suggested that a crash in Red-backed Vole populations may have driven owls from southern Canadian forests into northern New England, adding their numbers to the normal resident population. First-year birds may be among those most likely to try making a living farther south in a winter of scare prey. But these birds are also less experienced hunters, and may lack the "street-smarts" of owls resident in more developed areas. In a winter that also brought early snow cover, plowed roads were both the most likely and the most risky place for an owl to find food at night.

Starting with a bird admitted on Oct. 27, a series of 23 car-hit Barred Owls (half our total admissions for the year) came through our doors in the remainder of 2007; in 2006, only 7 were admitted in this time period. Most of the injuries were to wings or heads, and as of the end of February 2008, 10 had been released, with 3 still pending. Among those released in late January was the Oct. 27 owl, hit in Monroe the previous night and rescued by the driver. The bird had a high femur fracture we considered a poor prognosis. But this lucky bird surprised us by regaining full use of his leg and toes; his rescuers released him three months to the day after his accident.

## Nest Eggs

**A**s in past years, nearly half of our expenses were construction-related. Neither Diane nor Marc takes a salary, but other operating costs included corporate expenses (such as insurance, fees, registrations, utilities, supplies, and postage) as well as veterinary and general equipment, bird food, travel, etc. Roughly half of our income in 2007 came from grants, with most of the remainder from private or corporate donations. For financial support, we are particularly grateful to the American Foundation, the Baker Street Trust, the Grace Butnam Foundation, Florida Power & Light Energy, Mary Offutt, the Osprey Foundation, the Raymond & Gladys Perlstine Trust, Charlie & Nancy Shuman, and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

Support in the form of services, goods, discounts, and other noncash contributions are very important to us. Among many who helped in a large variety of ways, we thank especially the Acadia Zoo, the Belfast Cooperative, Charlie's Toyota of Augusta, Craig Brook National Fish Hatchery, Dutton's Nursery & Greenhouse, Hancock County Cooperative Extension Master Gardener Program, Heron Dance, Ltd., Rani Howe, Maine DIFW Fish Health Lab, Maine Department of Marine Resources, Louie Murray, The Penobscot Nation, PetCo, Pet Quarters, The Raptor Trust, Raelene & Ray Rogers, Sand Hill Strawberry Farm, and Craig Wood.

## For the Future

**A**dditions to our flight and habitat cages have kept up with our increased case load, but some of the earlier structures are now in need of remodeling. And as more and more birds crossed our threshold in 2007, we imagined other kinds of items sure to be needed if growth continues. Acquisitions

**D**uring the heavy rains of late April, oil was flushed from bedrock beneath an old mill into Annabessacook Lake in Winthrop. Biologist Nicole Munkwitz headed the IF&W recovery team that responded to reports of oiled wildlife. A number of turtles were seen in oiled vegetation and, over the next few weeks, were caught, mostly by trapping. From late April through May, a total of 85 native turtles (84 Painted and one Snapping Turtle) were taken to IF&W headquarters in Bangor for washing, a process that averaged about 2 hours per turtle.

While clean-up efforts continued at the lake, the turtles needed a place to recover prior to release. The first batch of freshly-cleaned animals, 8 Painted Turtles, was brought to Avian Haven on 4/25, with additional deliveries varying in size from 3 to 22 animals arriving every few days over the next three weeks. As the number grew, we set up an expanding array of aquariums, stock tanks, utility tubs and pools ranging in capacity



Jonathan Mays

from 20 to 350 gallons. Thankfully, it was still before baby season, so we were able to use two of our outdoor flight cages as enclosures for the larger tubs and pools. As each batch was delivered, we separated males from females and sorted them according to size. New arrivals were kept indoors before being rotated outdoors.

On the morning of 5/9, a new group of 16 was added to the 57 we already had; there were 73 turtles here for a few hours, while Nicole and Unity College professor Dave Knupp measured and marked the 49 turtles that Nicole took for release later that day. After that, ongoing releases outnumbered new admissions, and the last three of our guests returned to Annabessacook on 5/27. Continuing trap checks confirmed the success of the lake clean-up: none of the previously released turtles that were captured had become re-oiled. However, on 7/10, one last oiled turtle was recovered in follow-up trapping efforts. We received that animal two days later, and released it on 7/20.



Jonathan Mays

planned for 2008 include additional incubators and brooders, lab equipment, and (gulp!) a full-time staff member for the summer season. February of 2009 marks the 10th anniversary of Avian Haven's incorporation. In the first nine years of that decade, we cared for roughly 7,000 birds (including 60 bald eagles) and became one of the largest practices in New England; next year's report will recap some of the highlights of that period. Our home base in Freedom has been an ideal setting for a wildlife hospital: good friends and neighbors; rich and diverse surrounding habitat; peace, quiet, and safety, thanks to the absence of any nearby industrial development. We hope it can remain so.

### In Closing . . .

Our close encounter with cranes led us to many books about them, including Peter Matthiessen's *The Birds of Heaven* and Barbara Katz's *So Cranes May Dance*. But few passages in recent works moved us as much as some in an older classic, Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac*, especially the chapter called *Marshland Elegy*. We leave you with this excerpt: "Our ability to perceive quality in nature begins, as in art, with the pretty. It expands through successive stages of the beautiful to values as yet uncaptured by language. The quality of cranes lies, I think, in this higher gamut, as yet beyond the reach of words." Later in this chapter, Leopold writes, "The sadness discernible in some marshes arises, perhaps, from their once having harbored cranes." We know you join us in this wish: May the marshes of Maine reclaim the joy of new crane nurseries.

Until next year –

*Diane & Marc*

Diane Winn & Marc Payne  
 Avian Haven Wild Bird Rehabilitation Center  
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Holly S. Anderson/VillageSoup

On 4/18, we received a call from Ron Howard, manager of Aldermere Farm in Rockport, about a nestling Great-horned Owl found on the ground by farmhands and assumed to have been blown from its nest during the nor'easter two days earlier. Nest remains could be seen 50-60 feet up in a pine tree, but even if it had not been damaged, there was no way to return the bird to such a high spot. Additionally, the owlet had hurt

its wings, probably from bumping against branches on its way down. Though bones were intact, patches of skin on parts of the wings analogous to human fingers were scraped and swollen. This youngster was about 4 weeks old, and roughly of an age for imprinting, a process by which some birds acquire a species identity determined by what is seen at close quarters during a critical developmental period. Normally a young raptor imprints to its parents, but if its caregiver is a different species – say, human – that raptor may come to view people as potential friends and mates. Imprinting can be a very rapid process and is considered irreversible. We wanted to get this bird into the company of an adult Great-horned Owl as soon as possible, and made plans to transfer the youngster to Center for Wildlife in Cape Neddick, where a foster-mom was available.

But those plans changed when the wings healed more quickly than anticipated, and the continuing presence of the parents was confirmed by prey remains on the ground near the nest tree. We decided on the 21st to try for a reunion at the nest site. Along with the owlet, Marc brought along a wicker laundry basket to serve as a substitute nest. While other helpers lined the basket with pine needles, Ron and Marc nailed flashing around the trunk of the tree that would contain the new nest, so that predators could not climb the tree to reach it. Then, it was time to secure the basket to the tree, as high up as the ladder would allow. Finally, Marc took the owlet up the ladder and gently deposited the bird in its new nest, to which Ron added a few dead mice – food for the bird until its parents returned.

Ron did not see them that evening, but up early for his morning rounds, he heard the owlet calling at 4 a.m. – and an adult answered! Over the course of the day, he saw an adult in the tree

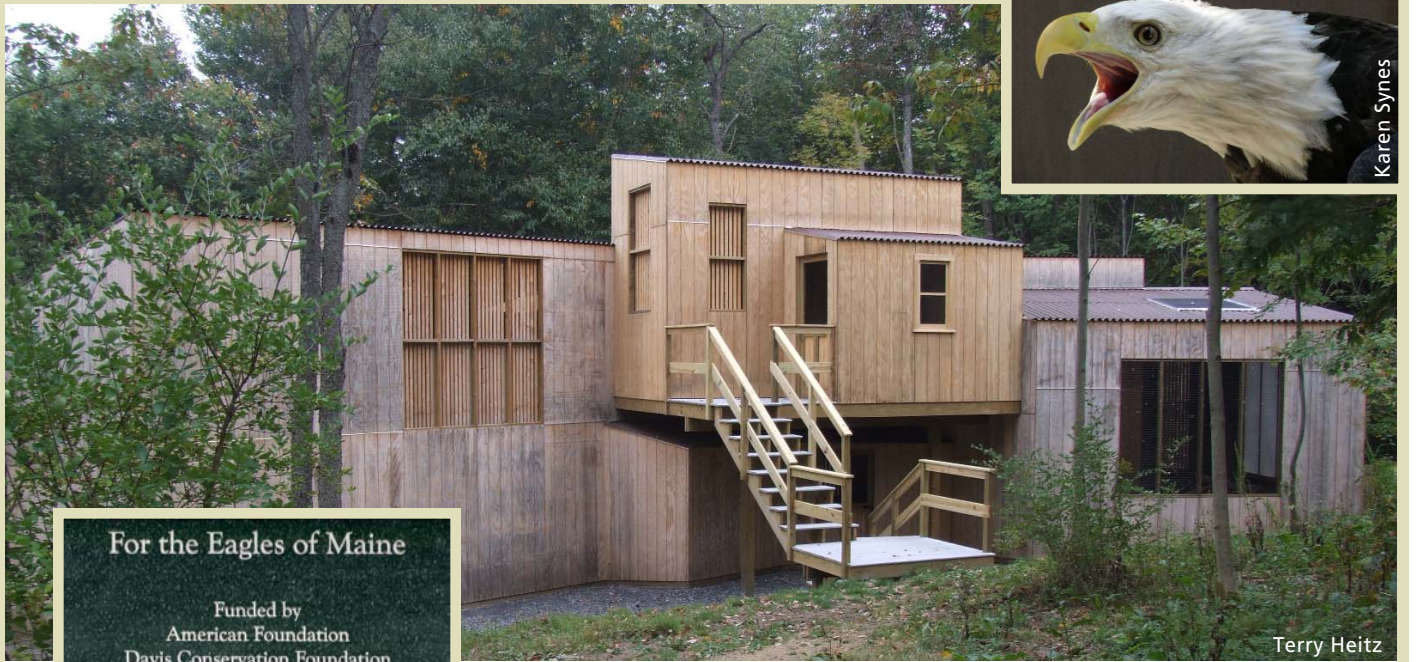


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next to the nest tree several times. Ron continued to monitor the nest area for the next three days; he called on 4/25 to say that he'd seen them nearby on numerous occasions, and had never heard the youngster calling since that first morning. Things were assumed to be fine, but Ron continued to keep an occasional eye on things, and beginning around 5/4, saw the bird standing on the edge of the basket and flapping its wings. The next time we heard from Ron was on 5/7, when he called, happy to report that the juvenile had fledged.



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