Brown Pelicans are easily recognizable thanks to their oversized bills, sinuous throat pouches and large brown bodies. They are also one of those species that many of us hope to see when we vacation in a warmer climate. So, it was a pleasant surprise for many of the residents, vacationers and nature photographers in Montauk to see two brown pelicans hanging around the local beaches this summer.

Brown pelicans live year-round in estuaries and coastal marine habitats on both the east and west coasts. Here on the east coast, their breeding grounds range from Maryland to Venezuela. After breeding season, brown pelicans tend to disperse northward for the remainder of the summer before returning south sometime in autumn. They will come as far north as (you guessed it) New York! Long Island is the northernmost part of their habitat range. While it is not commonplace to see a pod or squadron of pelicans here, a few will show up every year or so. At the Center, when calls come in about sightings of pelicans, we notice that most of the time the pelicans that do come here are immature pelicans. In addition, they seem to arrive shortly after a tropical storm or hurricane comes through. This pattern leads us to suspect that these pelicans are surfing the headwinds of these storms when they come here as some migrating birds are known to do if the conditions are right.

What is unusual about these two visiting pelicans is that they missed their migration back to warmer waters. Brown Pelicans are not adapted to sustain cold and freezing temperatures and can easily succumb to sickness and frostbite once the weather starts to turn. The other reason they must migrate south is that their food leaves. A brown pelican’s diet depending on location is comprised of menhaden, mullet, anchovies, herring, sailfin mollies and some crustaceans. What all these fish have in common is that they are usually found in large schools close to the water’s surface. Foraging brown pelicans will spot fish while flying up to sixty feet in the air and then dive headfirst into the water to catch their prey. The force of impact will actually stun the fish! The other way these pelicans eat is by sitting on the surface of the water and scooping up fish in their pouches, this is more common if the water is too murky or too shallow to dive.

Continued, page 3
Welcome to the Winter Edition of our newsletter! We have been enjoying the slower winter season here at the Center. There are naturally less animal intakes since many birds have migrated and mammals are less active. We are preparing, however, for the busy spring and summer season ahead—painting, making repairs and planning for new cages.

Last summer was particularly difficult for us as far as baby raccoons were concerned. As some of you may know, special strict licensing and protocols are involved in rehabilitating raccoons. An additional license is required; staff must be vaccinated; and caging must be specialized, separate, and inspected by NYS Agriculture and Markets personnel. Vaccinations are extremely expensive which is why there are not many wildlife rehabilitators or centers able to admit raccoons for treatment. In fact, it seems we are the only facility in Suffolk County that is able to take in raccoons.

Last summer, we had people dropping off baby raccoons without appointments, without our approval, and many times without our knowledge. This happens when people trap and kill or relocate (illegally!) adult raccoons during spring-time which results in the orphaning of young. We did, in fact, exceed our capacity and as a result, had an unnatural die-off of many of these babies. This was heartbreaking to our staff especially since many of them took these babies home for overnight nursing and put a lot of work into raising them. We are in the process of planning for additional cages, but we must wait for approval from Suffolk County, whose land we are located on. So to prevent another overcrowding situation and likely euthanasia of healthy young due to space constraints, we ask the following of people finding raccoons nesting in unwelcome areas:

- Please call us for advice first! Or visit our website or the website, www.wildneighbors.org to find out the easy ways to humanely evict these animals and have them take any young with them. It’s free and it works! Do not trap raccoons!
- If you come across baby raccoons or a single baby you feel may be orphaned, again please call us! We will give you excellent tips on verifying whether a baby needs help. If the baby or babies look healthy, we will ask you to wait one night to see if they are there in the morning. Mom does not abandon her young.
- If you come across a nest of babies in an unwelcome spot (a garage, shed, deck, boat), place a battery operated radio near the babies and leave it playing all night long. The babies WILL BE GONE in the morning.
- And, finally, please call us BEFORE bringing baby raccoons in. Even if you feel certain the mother is dead, that may not always be the case. To bring baby raccoons to us without an appointment will most likely result in them being euthanized.
- Remember, a wild animal baby’s best chance is with its mother and not in a hospital setting. I know our readers love and respect our native wildlife here on Long Island. We are truly blessed to have them as our wild neighbors!

- Virginia Frati,
  Executive Director

Bernadette E. Tuthill, Esq.

We are pleased to announce Bernadette’s promotion to the position of Partner. Her practice will continue to focus on Estate Planning and Taxation, Estate Administration and Taxation, Corporate Law and Elder Law.

We are equally proud of her generous work at the Evelyn Alexander Wildlife Rescue Center.

We congratulate her for the manner in which she has distinguished herself as a lawyer, mentor and member of the community and look forward to the continued benefit of her knowledge and experience in providing the best possible service to our clients and the center.

-Virginia Frati,
  Executive Director
The question becomes then, why didn’t our visiting pelicans leave? Why didn’t they follow the concentration of fish back down south? Although we can only speculate, we do know some contributing factors. First and foremost, they were being fed. Brown pelicans are known to become ‘tame’ and approach fishermen looking for handouts, especially when there is not a readily available food source. Another factor has to do with their age. Both pelicans hatched in 2019 from the same colony. We know this thanks to their bands. They were banded on 07/19/19 while they were still too young to fly and were living on Beacon Island, North Carolina. Breeding colonies of brown pelicans can range up to several thousand pairs. After just 3 months young pelicans can fly and fend for themselves.

Summer ended; autumn arrived. The first full frost came and went, but the pelicans remained. At this point, we began to realize that these two would most likely need a little assistance with their trip south. The fish they would normally eat during their journey were no longer around. There would be little if anything for the pelicans to easily source as food on the potential 1,000+ mile migration. The last week of November, calls started coming in that both pelicans were no longer thriving; they weren’t flying as much and didn’t seem well. While this isn’t a good thing, it does make it substantially easier for our rescuers to step in and get, well, any animal to us. A flying healthy bird is hard to capture and bring in even with a net. On December 3rd & 4th both pelicans made their way to the Center, stopping over at the Vet Clinic of East Hampton for Dr. Turetsky to look them over. Once he gave the okay that they were stable enough to finish the drive to the Center and no medical emergency was present, volunteers brought them the rest of the way. The first pelican arrived very late in the day on the 3rd so he (gender assumed) was setup for the evening and would get his intake exam the following morning.

Just before we started his intake exam, the second Pelican arrived at the Center. He (gender assumed) was setup in a dark and quiet place to destress from his travels while we examined the first. Since it is much easier for the staff to remember which pelican is which by name vs 19-1724 & 19-1726, names were assigned during their intake. The first, dubbed Kylo Ren, had a good overall body condition. He was bright, alert and aggressive during his intake which is a very good thing. His breathing was a bit strained and his epiglottis was very swollen and discolored. Kylo also had bumps and discoloration on the inside of his pouch and swollen third eyelids on both eyes. All these clinical signs point towards a possible bacterial infection. Vitamins were administered, and he placed on a course of antibiotics to treat the infection.

The second pelican was examined a short time later. His respiration was very moist and audible leading the staff to dub him Darth Vader. Vader also had two patches of necrotic tissue that appeared to be from frostbite. Both were concerning to the staff as it could affect whether he was releasable back into the wild or not. The first patch of necrotic tissue was on the rostral end of his pouch and would most likely leave a hole once it was resolved. The second necrotic area was on his right foot and he would lose part of the webbing as a result which could affect his swimming in the water. His body condition overall was reasonable, being just a bit under what his ideal weight should be.

Kylo Ren and Darth Vader, our pelican patients, were reunited in our waterfowl pen. Due to their large stature, the divider between the pens was removed to create one large pen for them to swim, eat and have enough space to fly if they so desired. While our pen was a great temporary option, it was less than ideal for pelican rehab in the winter. Our pen was designed with our more common patients in mind as an area to reacclimate patients to the weather before release. The pen was insulated for some protection from the weather and heat lamps were setup to keep the pelicans warm and happy while they stayed with us. However, their transfer to another wildlife rehabilitation facility that was in a warmer climate and that had experience with brown pelicans was necessary. Continued page 13

Did you know...

Brown pelicans are considered a living symbol for how successful wildlife conservation can be. Brown pelicans were once on the brink of extinction. Like bald eagles and vultures, pelicans nearly disappeared from North America due to heavy pesticide use between the 1950’s-1970’s. The pesticide endrin killed pelicans outright when they were exposed to it, while DDT contamination led to thin-shelled eggs.

Unlike most bird species you probably know, brown pelicans incubate their eggs with the webbing of their feet and not by sitting on them. Unfortunately, with thin-shelled eggs, many were crushed by the parents’ feet during incubation. Brown Pelicans became federally endangered in 1970. Luckily, DDT was banned in 1972 due to the unfortunate plight it caused for many birds. By the 1990’s, the number of brown pelicans had once again reached pre-pesticide numbers.
We are so grateful to everyone who has assisted us over these 20 years in so many ways. Without your support, we cannot exist. The impact that the actions of our volunteers and supporters have on the Center is unimaginable—even the smallest gesture moves mountains. Please know that all of us at EAWRC appreciate you!

**RESCUE/TRANSPORT VOLUNTEERS:**

**HOSPITAL/EDUCATION VOLUNTEERS:**

**COOPERATING VETERINARIANS:**
Dr. Jennifer Katz and Dr. Jonathan Turetsky from the Veterinary Clinic of East Hampton; Dr. Justin Molnar of Shinnecock Animal Hospital; Dr. Gal Vatash and Dr. Robin Jeager of East End Veterinary Emergency Center; Dr. Robert Piscottta of North Fork Animal Hospital, Dr. Karen Johnston of Hampton Veterinary Hospital, Dr. Claude Grosjean of Old Towne Animal Hospital, Dr. Noelle LeCroix of Veterinary Medical Center of Long Island, and Dr. Arnold Lesser and Dr. Alan Carb of NY Veterinary Specialty Center

**Supporter of the Quarter**
We would like to thank **Leslie Alexander** for his consistent, generous support of our past, present and future endeavors. His kindness has allowed us to grow and develop into the wildlife hospital that we are today, and with his help, we will become better still.

**CHEERS TO OUR VOLUNTEERS!**
Congratulations to **Lisa Jaeger** and **Don Lanham**, our 2019 Champions of the Wild. We are in awe of Lisa’s devotion to rescuing and transporting wildlife in need. She is always willing to assist, no matter the distance! Where we would be without Don, we don’t even want to guess! His commitment to the Center is evident in so many ways here—from representing us at events, building cages, maintaining our education animals to his weekly hospital shifts. We are eternally grateful for both of you!

Thank you to **Bob Eisenberg at East End Blue Print** in Water Mill for donating the printing of our newsletter.

Thank you to **Charlie Trapasso** for donating our new shed and to **Gail and Lynn Murcott** for donating our new shed and to **Charlie Trapasso** who volunteered his time to build it!

Thank you to **Shea Egan**, **Brianna Farrell and Sarah Chami** of Girl Scout Troop 475 who created “Rescue Kits” for our Rescue/Transport Volunteers. The ventilated plastic 27 gallon totes with lids contain a bath towel, hand towel, goggles, heavy duty gloves, flashlight, pillowcase swan holder and net. They are available at our Rescue-Transport Classes or at the Center. Thank you, girls!

Thank you to **Cile Downs**, a wonderful woman who has loved owls her whole life! She generously funded our new education animal transport boxes.

Thank you to the **Life Skills Academy of Hampton Bays High School**. They sold bags of homemade dog treats and raised $400.00 for EAWRC! Great job!

Special thanks to **Jim and Frank at Wild by Nature** in Hampton Bays for supplying us with produce almost every day for our recuperating wild patients.

Thank you to **Gail and Lynn Murcott** for donating our new shed and to **Charlie Trapasso** who volunteered his time to build it!

Thank you to **Adrienne Gillespie, Kyra Leonardi and Valerie Van Houten** for our photos!

Thank you to **Shayna Carter**, **Adrienne Gillespie, Kyra Leonardi and Valerie Van Houten** for our photos!
In 1999, when the County of Suffolk first offered the Munn’s Pond site for a wildlife hospital, it obviously wasn’t much, just an old, dilapidated barn that was sagging in the middle and leaning over with age. The structure was built in 1922 and part of an active chicken farm. The main building burned to the ground, and the rest of the property abandoned until the Parks Department was formed by the County of Suffolk in the 1960s.

It was the entrance to Sears Bellow Park until Sunrise Highway cut off the southern forty acres. The entrance to Sears Bellows was then relocated to Bellows Pond Road, as it exists today. The small forty-acre piece then became another park, which they named Munn’s Pond.

When we first stood looking at the wreck of a building that we were offered, Ginnie remembered that one of her neighbors was part of a group of retired men who volunteered their time repairing old buildings. In fact, they had successfully restored the sailing ship Stella Maris and also rebuilt the structures at Hallocksville on the North Fork. She contacted John Anderson, and soon they were on board for the project.

We soon discovered that there was another group in Hampton Bays called “the East End Men,” who volunteered to work on select projects. This group was spearheaded by local contractor, Jason Klinge, who also jumped on the project.

This began a year of work, which included hooking a steel cable on the building and pulling it up to a plumb position with a truck and shoring up the sagging headers with screw jacks until they could be manually replaced. It was a long, arduous job that took us over a year to accomplish.

This whole project and, in fact, the whole concept for the Wildlife Rescue Center, which was the dream of founder, Virginia Frati, would have never come to fruition without the generosity of these men and women who provided the necessary labor without charge.

The next time you visit the Center, please stop for a moment to read the names of these generous people on the plaque located just outside the entrance. It is with their diligence that this organization exists today. It is with their dedication that thousands of impacted animals have been returned to their natural environment. Thank you.
Thank you Marianne Barnett for your support! Please shop OLLYWEAR’S latest wildlife collection—a percentage of all sales will be donated to EAWRC.
In Loving Memory

Fred Demme  
June D. O’Hara  
Michael Vignato  
Dr. James F. Nelson  
Claire Brady Frank  
Matthew Rewinski  
Jim-11/27/2018  
“Haley” Kappel  
Barbara H. Wright  
Suzanne Obser  
Megan Pritchard  
LaVerne Mades  
Jeri Frances Gargano Diaz  
Edmund Pelis  
Catherine Cahill  
Mack P. Serres  
Daryl Brown  
Merritt Miller  
Ludwig Koukal  
Suzanne Harsanyi  
Jean Araneo  
Edward Miezianka  
Carolyn Skiffington  
Jeannette George Carillo  
Nadeen Peterson  
Stanley W. Pollack  
Maureen Heinzerling  
Jeffrey Upton  
Joseph and Josephine Faller  
Brett Locke  
John W. Lochner  
Nancy Mason  
Laurie Bovich Wallis  
Puss-Puss

From the Mailbag...

I am a real estate agent in Syracuse, New York and read an article on Lisa Jaeger and wanted to help with wildlife...

S.C., Manilius, NY

Please accept this donation for the vital work that you do... Keep up the good work and thank you for helping the innocent!

M.C., Dix Hills, NY

...saw your birds of prey at Marders today. Thank you for what you do! Time for an owl house.

S.B., Hampton Bays, NY

We recently helped Lisa Jaeger with a buck rescue in Southampton. She was fantastic! Did a great job—so enclosed is a donation to help continue your work!

R. and N.W., Southampton, NY

...we’d like to designate [our donation] for deer care...[we] appreciated Amanda’s quick response and care.

H.S., Hamptons, NY

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Thank you to Andrew LoMonaco for all of his help at the Center!
From humble beginnings as a dilapidated barn, the Evelyn Alexander Wildlife Rescue Center has grown over the past two decades into the fully-established wildlife hospital that exists today. Since opening in the year 2000, EAWRC has grown both in size and in numbers, with the amount of animal patients ever on the rise. In its first year, the Center took in approximately three hundred animals. This past year, we admitted nearly 2,000 animals...wow!!!

With every patient that passes through our doors comes a story and the hope of successful rehabilitation and release. In honor of the 20th anniversary of EAWRC’s opening, I asked volunteers and staff members alike what their favorite animals and memories were, based on patients that have been under our care.

-Danielle Sheehan

**Danielle Sheehan—Hospital Staff**
Start Date: May 2017

**Favorite Animal:** “I love chimney swifts! They are difficult to care for, but the *meepmeepmeepmeep*-sounds they make while eating are adorable! I also love baby blue jays because they remind me of little princes with their striking wing patterns and polite behavior; the latter disappears quickly in adulthood!”

**Favorite Memory:** “Chasing a juvenile bald eagle around the flight pen the day of release: I had to capture a rehabilitated eagle in order to put him in a tote for our transporter, but he did not want to be caught! He kept flying back and forth high above my head, too high for a net to reach, so I had to keep running laps around the pen until he wore himself (and me!) out. He eventually landed in a spot where I could safely snag him.”

“One of our receptionists, Jackie, went on a late-afternoon rescue to retrieve a garter snake that had been stuck in a glue trap. I had never handled a snake before, so I was excited to have the opportunity to free the frightened reptile by using some chinchilla dust to help gently peel off the paper that was adhered to his head, too high for a net to reach, so I had to keep running laps around the pen until he wore himself (and me!) out. He eventually landed in a spot where I could safely snag him.”

“Before I came to EAWRC, I didn’t realize how much I loved birds, but the foxes and birds of prey are up there on the list.”

**Favorite Animal:** “Vlad, the fledgling turkey vulture who had been hit by a train. He came in with a fractured leg and fractured wing with maggots and fly eggs all over him. He healed up well enough that he is fully flighted, and I was so thrilled that all our hard work had paid off. Following unfortunate circumstances after his release, he is back at the Center and so thrilled that all our hard work had paid off. Following unfortunate circumstances after his release, he is back at the Center and being glove-trained so he can serve as an animal ambassador.”

**Favorite Memory:** “The first time I had to work with a bald eagle, a juvenile around three years old. The actual size of the bird is so impressive; it is a two-person job to work with them. He was so louse-infested, that when you had to hold him for wound treatment, the lice would crawl onto your hands, then up your arms, and then you would feel them crawling on your neck, but you couldn’t move or try to remove them because holding the eagle required both hands to restrain the legs and feet to safely work with him. He was successfully rehabbed and released, which was very rewarding.”

**Delma Schoeppler—Hospital Staff**
Start Date: Volunteered in 1998-2002; returned as a Hospital Staff member March 2018

**Favorite Animal:** “Herman, the American Crow”

**Favorite Memory:** “In 1998, I met a woman who changed my life. I saw a squirrel get hit by a car in Hampton Bays. After many calls to find help, I was directed to Ginnie Frati. She dropped everything and came from Sag Harbor to help a perfect stranger. She was caring for injured wildlife out of her house after work. I was so thankful and in awe of her that I began volunteering at her house and helping to feed and care for patients. One of the patients was a juvenile bald eagle. When we got a single fox kit in and decided to try and put it with another family at Smith’s Point. It worked! The family accepted the new kit.”

**Valerie Van Houten—Hospital Supervisor**
Start Date: Intern January 2014; Hospital Staff June 2014

**Favorite Animal:** “My favorite animal of all time is Vlad, the fledgling turkey vulture who had been hit by a train. He came in with a fractured leg and fractured wing with maggots and fly eggs all over him. He healed up well enough that he is fully flighted, and I was so thrilled that all our hard work had paid off. Following unfortunate circumstances after his release, he is back at the Center and being glove-trained so he can serve as an animal ambassador.”

**Favorite Memory:** “In 2002, I was in a bad car accident. The foxes and birds of prey are up there on the list.”

**Shane Carter—Rescue/Transport and Education Volunteer**
Start Date: Fall 2014

**Favorite Animal:** “I can’t pick a favorite because I like them all, but the foxes and birds of prey are up there on the list.”

**Favorite Memory:** “I went on a deer call in Quogue. The homeowner strung rope around the perimeter of his entire property as a “fence” and a huge buck had become tangled in it. The rope was stuck on a tree and stuck in his antlers. I grabbed the rope that he was dragging and he started running around the tree, wrapping himself tighter and tighter until he was tethered up against it. At that point, I was able to grab his antlers and cut him free. The officer on scene told me I was “out of my mind.”

**Adrienne Gillespie—Hospital Staff**
Start Date: Volunteer February 2013; Staff May 2013

**Favorite Animal:** “The female fox that had the horrific fracture with the pin that made a full recovery.”

**Favorite Memory:** “When we got a single fox kit in and decided to try and put it with another family at Smith's Point. It worked! The family accepted the new kit.”
Shelley Berkoski– Director of Development
Start Date: January 2015

Favorite Animal: "Martino, an eastern screech owl, used to reside indoors by the offices in the winter. He was unable to be outdoors due to a missing wing. I admired him on a daily basis. The day I was taught how to properly handle him, I was completely over the moon. That is when my owl crush began!"

Favorite Memory: "There are so many! I treasure the relationships built with the staff, volunteers, and supporters that I have met through the Center! It has been an exceptional fundraiser that it was decided to name the sale after her."

Amanda Daley– Office Manager
Start Date: January 2015

Favorite Animal: "Bob, the bobwhite. Before we transferred her to an education program in Massachusetts, she used to hang around the office. I left her sitting on my desk and brought a chart to the exam room. When I came back, I discovered her with her entire head in my coffee cup, drinking it! Of course, then I wondered how long she had been doing that..."

Favorite Memory: "The first time I had to tube fluids to an animal happened to be a gannet, a large, angry bird with a very long and sharp beak. He was dropped off at my house after the Center had closed for me to bring to work in the morning. I had to sit him between my legs and let him bite my fingers while I held his mouth open and pushed the tube down his throat. Valerie said it was the extreme sports of tubing. He ended up being placed in Florida with another non-releasable gannet at a zoo."

The first time I had to catch and contain our education birds by myself. The hospital staff was very busy as it was summer so I didn't want to bother them. I had to get them ready for a program, but I had never actually walked into a cage and tried to catch a hawk or an owl. I had to go in with no fear and just grab the jesses hanging from their legs. I love handling the birds now and am grateful I have the opportunity."

Susan Siegel– Rescue/Transport and Hospital Volunteer
Start Date: July 2009

Favorite Animal: "Having dovekies here! And baby squirrels- I love taking them home!"

Favorite Memory: "I rescued a pelican in Westhampton Beach. After a couple of months here, I drove it to Queens, where Staci’s parents were visiting. They drove the pelican to North Carolina, where another rescuer took it, and it was driven to South Carolina and released at Folly Beach."

Sue Vaughan– Hospital Volunteer
Start Date: June 2010

Favorite Animal: "My favorite animal memories are of the albino robin and Denali the cardinal."

Favorite Memory: "So many memories! There was a baby crow several years back who couldn’t stand. We built a support for his body and his legs just touched the bottom. He eventually gained strength in his legs."

Doria Canino– Hospital Staff
Start Date: Volunteer January 2017; Hospital Staff June 2018

Favorite Animals: "My favorite animals at the Center are long-tailed ducks, Canada geese, mourning doves, and fawns."

Favorite Memory: "In January 2017, I found a Canada goose that had been shot. It was struggling in the middle of the street. I took a beach towel from my car, caught the goose, and put it in my front seat. At this time, I didn’t know about the Rescue, so I Googled where to bring injured wildlife and the Center came up. I called and spoke to Amanda and brought the goose in. After that, I started to volunteer and was able to release my goose."

Lori Wilder— Hospital Staff
Start Date: Volunteer March 2018; Hospital Staff May 2018

Favorite Animal: “Franklin the baby Canada goose. He was my first animal baby that I raised and released.”

Kimberly Murawski– Office Staff
Start Date: January 2015

Favorite Memory: “The Evelyn Alexander Wildlife Rescue Center is a unique place to work and the job can be very fulfilling. I have worked here since January 2015 as the receptionist answering the phones on the front line, and one gets many calls for animals in distress. I find it satisfying to be able to coordinate help for wildlife without them coming into the hospital at the center."

Our most famous rescue a couple years ago was in an eighty foot high osprey nest. Viewers of a webcam on an osprey nest could see a young osprey with a string tangled around one leg, making it caught in the nest. After careful consideration, we decided to intervene because it was man-made trash interfering with wildlife’s well-being. I coordinated with PSEG, people who ran the web cam and our rescuer. Evelyn Alexander Wildlife Rescue Center rescuer Jim MacDougall went up in a PSEG cherry picker truck up the eighty feet to the nest amid the swooping parent osprey who were not happy about anyone being so close to their nest. Jim was able to free the young osprey’s leg from entanglement early enough so as not to need any further medical attention. Some of the most satisfying rescues for me are ones that happen yearly with the little ducklings that never come to the Center. Unfortunately, baby ducks who follow mom from nest to water often fall down into drainage pipes and have no way to get out of them. Good Samaritans hear the peeping from the grate and call us. I am able to coordinate with the Department of Public Works or the local fire departments to lift the heavy grates and remove the ducklings and reunite with the baby ducks with mom without needing to come into the Center.”
Although they are likely the most frequently encountered group of birds on Long Island, few people know much about gulls beyond their penchant for stealing chips from sleeping beachgoers. With a little knowledge, these humble birds can be just as interesting to watch as the chickadees at your feeder!

What is a gull?

Never make the mistake of mentioning that interesting “seagull” you saw to a birder, or you will find yourself on the receiving end of the “there’s no such thing as a seagull, only gulls” speech. They belong to the family Laridae, which includes about 100 species of gulls, terns and skimmers. Gulls differ from terns and skimmers in that they tend to have a bulkier build and chunkier bills. They are very variable in size. The smallest, aptly named Little Gull, weighs in at as little as 100 grams, or just larger than a Blue Jay. The largest, the Great Black-Backed Gull, weighs as much as 2000 grams—about as much as our education ambassador Meep, the Great Horned Owl.

Which gulls do we have?

On Long Island, you will likely see four main species: Great Black-Backed Gulls, Herring Gulls, Ring-Billed Gulls, and Laughing Gulls. From time to time we may find other gulls visiting us, such as Bonaparte’s Gull, Lesser Black-Backed Gulls, and Iceland Gulls, to name a few. The easiest way to tell these gulls apart is their size, however this can be a little tricky from a distance. Adult birds in breeding plumage are easy enough to tell apart, but juveniles and winter birds will look very different. Often a combination of different clues is required to get an accurate identification for a gull. Even then, from time to time, you may encounter a bird that stumps you. This past year, we had 84 Herring Gulls, 46 Great Black-Backed Gulls, 4 Ring-Billed Gulls, and 5 Laughing Gulls. We even had a Thayer’s Gull and a mysterious gull that we suspect is a Herring Gull x Lesser Black-Backed Gull hybrid.

What makes gulls interesting?

Volunteers at the center quickly become charmed by these pushy and brazen patients. They sit in front of the glass refrigerator to admire their reflections; they knock over the supplies on the counter in the exam room so they can sun themselves in the window, and they gather around the cricket tank in the hopes of catching any escapees. Their nature as scavengers makes them curious, and they’re not nearly as bothered by humans as most songbirds.

Communication between gulls is complex and involves both body language and vocalization. A slight tilt of the head says quite plainly to other gulls “if you don’t move away from me, I’m going to bite your face” but may be easily overlooked by an observer. Certain behaviors, however, are well studied and can easily be interpreted. With a little knowledge, you can come to appreciate the extensive gull drama on the beach.

The quintessential gull cry, called the long call, is usually interpreted to mean “this is mine!” It involves rearing the head back and then throwing it forward, all while vocalizing. Often you can see a gull performing the long call to claim some especially delicious looking beach debris. Another common behavior is the mew call, which is characterized by a posture in which the body is arched, the head is pointed down, and the wings are held out slightly. This call can have multiple meanings depending on the context. It is a contact call that is used for mates to find each other and their chicks, but it is also used for resource defense.

A particularly fun call to observe is the choking call, in which a gull leans forward with its head down and heaves, which a gull leans forward with its head down and heaves, all while calling. This call means “I’m not moving!” and is usually used in courtship, nest selection, and territory defense. A common call heard within the center is the alarm call, which is a simple “kek-kek” given in response to a threat, such as one of the hospital staff approaching with a towel for bath time. Young birds can often be seen head tossing, in which they give a high-pitched begging call and flick their bill at another gull in the hopes of being fed. Adult birds may do this to their mates as well. In the center we sometimes see young gulls perform the begging call to affronted older gulls who quickly run off.

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**Gulls of Long Island**

-Kyra Leonardi

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**Most Common Gulls on Long Island from tallest to smallest**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gull Type</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Markings</th>
<th>Life Span</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Great Black-Backed Gull</td>
<td>28-31 in. long</td>
<td>pink legs, yellow bill, very dark back</td>
<td>10-20 years</td>
<td>Most widespread gull in America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herring Gull</td>
<td>22-26 in. long</td>
<td>yellow bill, pink legs, gray back</td>
<td>30-49 years</td>
<td>Most abundant gull worldwide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ring Billed Gull</td>
<td>17-21 in. long</td>
<td>yellow legs and bill with a clean-cut black subterminal ring</td>
<td>10-15 years</td>
<td>Monogamous gull found mostly on the coast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laughing Gull</td>
<td>15-18 in. long</td>
<td>black hood, white eye arcs, red bill, dark gray back</td>
<td>15-20 years</td>
<td>Monogamous gull found mostly on the coast</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Largest gull in the world**

Great Black-Backed Gull: 31 in. long; pink legs, yellow bill, dark gray back
Life Span: 20 years
Most abundant gull worldwide

**Most abundant gull worldwide**

Herring Gull: 22-26 in. long; yellow bill, pink legs, gray back
Life Span: 30-49 years
Most abundant gull worldwide

**Most common, widespread gull in North America**

Ring Billed Gull: 17-21 in. long; yellow legs and bill with a clean-cut black subterminal ring
Life Span: 10-15 years
Most common, widespread gull in North America

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Gulls perform some important services for us. They’re a good bioindicator species, so if there is a problem with them, it is a sign that there is a larger environmental health issue at play. A problem with the gulls could indicate a problem for our fishermen. On a smaller scale, they are useful for the individual fisherman: If you’re out fishing and you see a bunch of gulls in one spot on the water, it’s likely that that is a good spot to try fishing. Gulls also eat a wide variety of foods, and in doing so, keep other populations in check. Gulls are partly to thank for keeping the number of insects and rodents near the beach at a reasonable number.

Why have I never seen a baby gull?

Gulls nest on the ground, and while from time to time they may nest on large flat rooftops, it is safer for their nesting colonies to be on small islands with few predators. A single cat, fox, or raccoon could decimate a nesting colony. When a suitable island is found, both members of a pair will look for the perfect nest site and use the choke call to communicate their preference. When they have chosen a nest site, they scrape out the area and add some vegetation to make the nest.

More Drama than Jersey Shore

On the beach, the drama is real. With just a little knowledge, you can watch the situations unfold and understand the trials and tribulations when gulls stop being polite and start getting real...

Long Call:
Head tossed back then pushed forward
Meaning:
I call this spot.
That is mine!
Finders, keepers!

Mew Call:
Head down, body arched
Meaning:
Where’s my baby?
Come over here, hubby!
Don’t mess with territory!

Feed Me:
Bill pecking and head tossing accompanied by soft begging noises
Meaning:
Mom, dad, any adult will do...I’m hungry!
Hey big guy, you look like you have a nice nesting territory...want to feed me too?

Hunched Posture:
Head up, body arched
Meaning:
I come in peace...Where’s the love?
Can’t we all just get along?

Grass Pulling:
An emphatic threat...
Meaning:
Not a step closer or this is what I’ll do to you!

Upright Threat Posture: (right)
Neck stretched up, bill pointing down ready to strike, eyes half closed for protection, wings pushed forward ready to beat the enemy with
Meaning:
Get away. Or else...
What’s Happening...

This winter, the Center got a much needed facelift! After the wonderful renovation of our exam room, courtesy of Fred Obser in memory of his daughter, Suzanne, the rest of the Center just seemed, well, understated. Since our animal load is much lower in the winter, staff and volunteers decided to roll up their sleeves and pitch in. A massive cleaning effort went under way; long put-off fixes were finally attended to; fresh paint was applied to every inch.

Thanks to new storage sheds, donated by Gail and Lynn Murcott, the clutter and chaos can be managed and maintained neatly. All of our storage areas were organized and cleaned by Andrew LoMonaco, owner of Green Guardian Organic Pest Control, who continues to donate countless hours to the efforts here.

The change in our laundry room is perhaps the biggest. With a poor layout, the room was barely usable. Our Board President, Jim Hunter, a retired assistant civil engineer, redesigned the existing room to create a functional space that could even fit a second commercial washer and dryer. The funding for the project came from one of our biggest supporters, Ingrid Arneberg and the Greater Houston Foundation.

With the help of Coastal Pro Enterprises, Inc., our tired, inadequate laundry room became a clean, neat and inviting space. Our existing washer and dryer was serviced and reinstalled by J. Paolo. Soon our new washer and dryer units, generously donated by Frederick and Sadhana Downs, will be installed as well.

Thank you to everyone involved with the makeover! We love our updated, organized and clean work space!

Advertise with us!

Please contact EAWRC to learn more about sponsorship, advertising, and upcoming events!

www.wildliferescuecenter.org

19-1668 Great Black Backed Gull

This gull, affectionately know as “Sly,” suffered multiple injuries after being hit by a vehicle near the Ponquogue Bridge in Hampton Bays. He had small wounds to his hock, left wrist, and hind end, but more critically, he fractured both the radius and ulna of his left wing. Staff administered heavy pain medication and, after lining up the break as best as possible, applied a figure eight body wrap to stabilize the wing. Unfortunately, Sly’s splintered fractures were very unstable. Staff took great care when handling him so as not to disturb the alignment of the bones. His prognosis remained guarded. The likelihood that fractures so severe would heal properly was very low and Sly’s chances of flying again were slim. Happily, after about 8 weeks, he began making short attempts to fly onto surfaces like the countertops. He was placed outside in our waterfowl pen to exercise and strengthen the his wings. To everyone’s delight, Sly made great progress and soon he was flying between the two pens. Finally, after almost three months of recovery, Sly was released near the area where he was first rescued!

-Amanda Daley

Contributed by:
Camden, age 12
Baiting Hollow, NY
Transfer would allow for a quicker recovery with a reduced chance of complications from the brutal cold that we sometimes endure on Long Island. Before we started the search for a place to take our patients in, we needed a better idea if Vader was releasable. Because placing a non-releasable patient can be difficult sometime, our worry was that another facility would be wary of taking in a transfer patient that didn’t have a good chance of being released.

We reached out to the Clinic for the Rehabilitation of Wildlife (CROW), located in Sanibel, Florida, with whom we have a working relationship and to which we had previously transferred an osprey. We emailed photographs from the intake exams of both pelicans, seeking their thoughts on our assessment of Kylo and the release criteria in general for pelicans to get a better idea on where Vader stood. And what we heard back was all good news! Kylo’s infection was presenting as a bacterial infection that CROW commonly sees in brown pelicans. CROW recommended that we continue the antibiotics and treatment plan that he was already on. Vader would still be releasable even with the lost webbing on his foot. The criteria for webbing was that the pelican still has 2/3 of the webbing and foot intact. Which he would. As far as the hole, that was most likely remain in his pouch. Thankfully, CROW advised that the sinuous tissue of the pouch is easily sutured with minimal risk of tearing during the healing process. With this knowledge in hand we began to reach out to other rehab in Florida to take in our releasable patients. CROW was full and did not have any vacancies to take our pelicans themselves.

Luck was on our (and the pelicans) side and we heard back quickly from the South Florida Wildlife Center in Fort Lauderdale. They were able to take both of our patients! With a green light from SPWC, we got to work arranging transportation to the airport and a flight for them down to Florida. After just 10 days with us at the Center, the pelicans finished their migration with the help of many transport volunteers and a Boeing 737. We are so grateful to everyone who donated on Facebook and our website to help cover the cost of their flight. And our last update was that both pelicans were recovering well, and they would be released together once they were ready.

The best news we could have received came just two weeks ago. Both of our pelican patients were successfully released in Florida! Thank you to South Florida Wildlife Center and to Dr. Antonia Gardner, Medical Director, for their excellent care.

Sometimes things just don’t go as planned...in a perfect world, Vlad would have flown away, found his family and led a normal vulture life. Buuut...since the area at the canal where his family had been living is now a massive construction site, they decided to move. Where? We don’t know. We sent him to Raptor Trust where we hoped he would assimilate into vulture life with their vultures, but sadly, he did not. We want the best for him, so we tried to release him in Hampton Bays to give him a chance. Although he befriended another vulture, our efforts were for naught. In spite of our attempts to keep Vlad from becoming reliant on people for food, over the summer, he discovered that when humans catch fish, he gets to eat them too. Thus, he is back and here to stay. Because he is so food motivated, training on the glove is fun and easy. We are working very slowly with Vlad as his natural defense when afraid is projectile vomiting. With baby steps and rewards, he is learning to come to the glove, stand calmly, and go on walks. With patience, we hope to teach him recall where he would fly between two people. Soon, he will join our education team and revel in the limelight (and the people) he enjoys.
Every Problem has a Solution!

Wildlife Rescue Center

“Family means no one gets left behind or forgotten.”
David Ogden Stiers

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ANSWER KEY

1. Party
2. Gaggle
3. Amen
4. Bazaar
5. Menagerie
6. Cassette
7. Soand
8. Gaze
9. Mischief
10. Kettle
11. Company
12. Party

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A group of sheep is a herd. A group of dogs is a pack. But what is group of vultures or loons or bats? Match the animals with their family group name.

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<th>B. Asylum</th>
<th>C. Gaze</th>
<th>D. Gaggle (on the ground); Wedge (in flight)</th>
<th>E. Colony</th>
<th>F. Congregation</th>
<th>G. Mischief</th>
<th>H. Sord (on the ground); Flock (in flight)</th>
<th>I. Party</th>
<th>J. Rafter</th>
<th>K. Kettle (in flight); Committee (resting); Wake (feeding)</th>
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1. Mallards_________________  2. Plovers_________________  3. Finches_________________


6. Canada Geese_________________  7. Turkeys_________________

8. Raccoons_________________

9. Rats_________________

10. Vultures_________________  11. Bats_________________

12. Blue Jays_________________
Thanks to Bob from East End Blueprint for printing our newsletter!