

Seabirds, Shorebirds, Marsh birds or Ducks

Legal Issues

A special permit is needed to hold wild birds in captivity for rehabilitation

All native wild birds are protected by federal law as well as state law and can't be released into the wild with handicaps, nor can they be kept as pets.

Water birds need specialized care, food and housing. If you do not know of a local rehabilitation group in your county or state that handles water birds, please contact your local state office of the department of Fish and Game.

State Fish and Game offices are listed in the government sections of your local telephone directory. If you cannot reach a local Fish and Game office, contact the offices of the IWRC or NWRA for help finding local rehabilitators.

Safety Issues and Handling

Cormorants, herons, egrets, loon, grebes and gulls can inflict serious injuries with their beaks. These species defend themselves by stabbing or biting with their beaks and aim at your face and eyes.

Always use gloves or a thick towel or blanket when attempting to capture or handle an injured or sick water bird. Even small egrets and herons have stiletto-like beaks.

- If no protective goggles are worn (and even if they are) throw the towel or blanket over the bird's head and body and hold the bird across the shoulders and body restraining the wings with your hands.
- ALWAYS hold the bird so the head is facing away from you.
- Enlist help from a rescue organization if the bird is aggressive and strong.

Seabirds or Wading Birds with No Obvious Sign of Injury

Birds come ashore more frequently after storms, bad weather or big surf. They may have internal injuries or hidden fractures.

- Do not return them to the water
- Do not put them in a tub of water

They have come out of the water because they do not feel well. Birds can get caught in high surf and have sand and water forced into their mouths, nostrils and feathers. Birds may also be found in urban areas after collisions with buildings or traffic. Ducks at local lakes and ponds as well as sea ducks such as scoters and mergansers may have swallowed lead shot or sinkers and be suffering from lead poisoning.

Housing

- Place them in a cardboard box with newspaper on the bottom covered with a thick towel.

- Loons, grebes or birds that cannot stand should have a foam pad, pillow or crumpled newspaper under the towel to provide a cushioning effect
- Keep warm (70-80 degrees F), dark (cover box with thin sheet or loosely close flaps) and as quiet as possible.
- If the bird starts open-mouthed breathing it may be too hot, reduce heat if this occurs.

Food and Water

- Do not try to give water to sea or shore birds except for gulls and mallard ducks (most seabirds have long beaks and cannot drink out of a bowl)
- Do not force feed. Gulls and ducks will sometimes drink water, but be sure to remove the bowl afterwards since they will tip it.
- Solid food fed to a starving seabird may precipitate death because the bird has not enough energy reserves to digest it.
- Most rehabilitators administer nutrient fluids (sometimes by feeding tube) for at least 24 hours or until the bird is rehydrated.

Injuries

- Do not try to feed the bird (remember, paramedics do not force hamburgers down the throat of accident victims).
- Avoid stressing the bird. Handle the bird as little as possible until you can get it to a rehabilitator.
- If any wound is actively bleeding apply pressure to the area with a clean dressing (a couple of minutes usually stops the flow).
- Keep the bird confined in a box which restricts flapping or agitated movement while providing adequate space for sitting, standing or lying down.
- Warm tap water applied with a cotton ball or eye dropper can be used to remove sand or debris from wound areas.
- Try not to get the whole bird wet - it will get chilled.
- Do not try splinting or immobilizing fractures unless you are experienced with wildlife or have veterinary help.

Fish Line or fishhook Damage

- Injured bird Birds with fish line or fishhook damage should be checked by a rehabilitator even if the hook or line has been removed by someone at the scene.
- If the line goes down the throat don't cut it all off, it may be the only clue to the rehabilitator that a hook is further down.
- Do no tug. Use tape to attach the line to the bird so that line is not swallowed. Hooks are rarely life threatening, but the line can be very damaging by its tourniquet effect on limbs and body.
- Line tangled around legs, wings or neck should be untangled and removed or cut through and removed.
- Deeply embedded line may need to be removed by a veterinarian or experienced rehabilitator, and the bird may need antibiotics for infected wounds.
- Line-tangled birds are often malnourished and need some recovery time to rebuild their

strength. Please do not release them until a rehabilitator has checked them.

Sick or Dying Birds

- If you see numerous sick, dying or dead seabirds or other wild birds in one location such as on a beach or in a park, contact a wildlife rehabilitator or your local department of Fish and Game or US Fish and Wildlife Service.
- Dead birds may be a sign of a disease outbreak, oil spill, pesticide poisoning or chemical spill.

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<http://www.projectwildlife.org/find-seabirds.htm>