WHEN IT COMES TO WILDLIFE REHABILITATION, MY HEART IS ALWAYS QUITE SET ON BIRDS. WHETHER IT’S OUT OF SHEER ENVY THAT THEY CAN FLY OR THE UNMATCHED ANATOMY THEY POSSESS, THERE IS NOTHING BORING ABOUT BIRDS.

WHEN I WAS APPROACHED WITH THE POSSIBILITY OF AIDING IN THE REHABILITATION OF A BABY RACCOON, I HESITATED. I’VE WORKED WITH RACCOONS, AND AS WITH ALL WILDLIFE, I RESPECT EACH SPECIES AND THE NICHES THEY SERVE; HOWEVER, I CERTAINLY DO NOT GRAVITATE TOWARD MAMMALS.

I AGREED TO CARE FOR THIS LITTLE FEMALE SINGLETON UNTIL OTHER ARRANGEMENTS COULD BE MADE. LITTLE DID I KNOW THE IMPACT THIS LITTLE 220 GRAM RACCOON WOULD HAVE ON ME. LIKE A NEWBORN BABY, SHE WORE ME DOWN UNTIL WE WERE ABLE TO FALL INTO A FEEDING SCHEDULE THAT BENEFITED HER WITHOUT TIRED ME OUT. SHE ATE AND GAINED WELL, BUT SHE HAD DIGESTIVE ISSUES THAT WERE NOT TYPICAL, RUN-OF-THE-MILL DIGESTIVE ISSUES YOU SEE IN BABY RACCOONS.

NOT ONE TO SHY AWAY FROM A CHALLENGE, I BEGAN TO CONSULT WITH PWC STAFF AND CONTINUED TO TRY DIFFERENT METHODS TO RECTIFY THE ISSUES. FINALLY, AFTER WEEKS OF EFFORT AND COLLABORATION AMONG SEVERAL OF US (LAUREN BROTHERTON, VIRGINIA FLAHERTY AND TAYLOR HOWLETT), THE PROBLEM RESOLVED.

I WOULDN’T CHANGE THIS EXPERIENCE FOR ANYTHING. I CONSIDER IT TO BE NOTHING SHORT OF AN HONOR. NOW, THIS LITTLE CRITTER IS AMONGST HER OWN AT THE CLINIC DOING WELL AND SCHEDULED FOR RELEASE IN THE NEAR FUTURE. WHILE, GIVING UP ON ANYONE’S PART COULD HAVE BEEN AN EASY THING TO DO, WE PERSERVED TO PRESERVE AND PUSHED THROUGH OBSTACLES THAT MOST WOULDN’T HAVE.

HEREIN LIES THE VERY PHILOSOPHY I SEE IN PRACTICE EVERY TIME I’M AT THE CLINIC (AND THE REASON I JUST CAN’T SEE TO STAY AWAY); THE SAME GREAT EFFORT MADE TO SAVE A BALD EAGLE OR ANY OTHER PUBLICLY-PRaised ANIMAL IS THE SAME EFFORT PUT FORTH TO SAVE ANIMALS WHO HAVE A LESS-THAN-STELLAR REPUTATION IN THE PUBLIC’S EYES. OUR STAFF AND OUR VET TREAT EACH PATIENT JUST AS IMPORTANTLY AS THE NEXT.
On August 15th PWC received an unusual patient- a Sabine’s Gull, which marks only the second time in our history that this species has come into care. This bird was found at the mouth of Morro Creek, on the beach near Morro Rock.

Sabine’s Gulls are infrequent visitors to our coastline. These birds nest during summer in the far north- from Alaska to Greenland- and migrate through while heading to the tropics to winter. Outside of nesting season they are mainly pelagic birds, found offshore on the open ocean; rarely coming to land.

For days local birders had been taking photos of the unusual bird and posting them to the eBird website, noting that the bird was oiled and unable to fly, but appeared to be able to subsist on bugs foraged from the kelp washed up on the beach. Finally a Good Samaritan captured the bird and brought it to our Clinic for treatment.

Our initial examination found the gull to be alert, but moderately dehydrated and rather thin. The notorious Central Coast tar that regularly washes up on our beaches had covered the bird’s right side, flight feathers, and retrices in black, sticky clumps. Most alarming was a burned area on the bird’s right leg. As all too often happens with oiled wildlife, the thick, noxious tar had caused a chemical burn to develop on the bird’s skin. Sometimes these burns may be so severe so as to render the patient untreatable, for even when all the contaminant has been removed, the remaining burn will continue to negatively affect the birds’ waterproofing through weeping and/or feather loss. All birds need a full coat of waterproof feathers to survive, and a pelagic bird that’s unable to become waterproof often develops life-threatening injuries or illnesses while in care. These may range from lesions to a bird’s keel, legs, or feet, caused by being unable to house the bird in water; to serious ailments such as aspergillosis, a respiratory fungal disease common to pelagic and other birds in prolonged captivity. Fortunately, this gull’s burn was relatively minor and it made a remarkably quick turn-around in our care.

Soon after the initial exam, where bloodwork was performed to ensure the bird was healthy enough to withstand the rigors of being washed, the wash was performed by two of our highly skilled technicians. During washing the tar that had fouled the bird’s feathers and leg was completely removed. Then the soaps and solvents that were used to remove the tar, which are contaminants themselves, were meticulously rinsed from each of the bird’s feathers using specialized equipment in PWC’s state-of-the-art wash room. Next, several days were spent with the gull being cycled between warm water pools and drying pens, to allow us to monitor the progress the bird was making on restoring waterproofing, while it performed much vigorous preening to get each feather realigned to exactly where it needed to be. And through it all the bird ate with gusto- particularly relishing floating superworms, a PWC house specialty.

This Sabine’s Gull, our 1,963rd patient of 2019, was successfully released after ten days of treatment. Special thanks are due to the Morro Bay Harbor Patrol for ferrying our patient to the release site, the open ocean beyond Morro Rock, during one of their routine patrols; and to each of our volunteers, interns, and staff who contributed to this bird’s rehabilitation.

On an early Friday morning in July, I was on duty as a PWC, RTV (Rescue Transport Volunteer) and got a call from the Hotline Volunteer about a hawk hit by a car.

The location was six miles east of Morro Bay on Highway One. When I arrived at the scene I found an adult Red-tailed Hawk lodged in the grille of an SUV! The car's owner had pulled onto a side road at the shooting range, and she was very upset about hitting the bird.

It was a newer model car so the grille was made of plastic. The Hawk had hit her car, had broken through the grille and pierced the radiator which was hissing.

I got my carrier box and welding gloves out and started to pull the broken grille apart. The Hawk was very much alive, but quite stuck. I slowly worked the bird loose being sure to secure its talons and hooked beak.

I saw there was a small amount of blood on the grille, so there was no question I would need to take the bird into the PWC Clinic.

As soon as I got the Hawk out, it came to life and was not very keen on going into my box, but I was able to get it in. (To my eye, it did not appear to have any broken bones.)

At the Clinic it was examined, radiographed and found to be in remarkably good shape despite a 55 mile-an-hour impact with a car! Recovery continues at PWC and hopefully this beautiful bird will be released soon.
Thank You to Roger Grizzle of Grizzle Construction and carpenter Robin Anderson for building our new 4’ x 8’ Hummingbird Aviary and an addition to Flight 4 (our raptor, owl flight cage).

Thank you also to volunteers John Baumgart and David Pope for assisting in roof completion and installation of interior pet screen. Construction was made possible by the generous donations from the 2017 Soupabration! Fund-A-Need campaign.

Thanks to all of our supporters!

Thank you to family and friends who donated to PWC In Memory of Monica Cantu (who always put the needs of others, above her own).

Sullivan Family (Nuala, Maggie & Frankie) for their summer Read-a-thon fundraiser (They raised over $181.00)

County of SLO for support of Soupabration! venue costs and a generous Grant for our Internship Program

PWC’s mission is to support San Luis Obispo wildlife through rehabilitation and educational outreach. We envision Pacific Wildlife Care as an advocate for wildlife. By sharing our experiences, we inspire community participation to reduce harm to our wild neighbors.

SPECIAL THANK YOUS

Thank You to Roger Grizzle of Grizzle Construction and carpenter Robin Anderson for building our new 4’ x 8’ Hummingbird Aviary and an addition to Flight 4 (our raptor, owl flight cage).

Thank you also to volunteers John Baumgart and David Pope for assisting in roof completion and installation of interior pet screen. Construction was made possible by the generous donations from the 2017 Soupabration! Fund-A-Need campaign. 

Thanks to all of our supporters!

Thank you to family and friends who donated to PWC In Memory of Monica Cantu (who always put the needs of others, above her own).

Sullivan Family (Nuala, Maggie & Frankie) for their summer Read-a-thon fundraiser (They raised over $181.00)

County of SLO for support of Soupabration! venue costs and a generous Grant for our Internship Program

Membership/Donations Save Lives

“ Yes, I would like to give wildlife a second chance! ”

- Benefactor $3,000
- Patron $1,500
- Sponsor $600
- Contributor $300
- Supporter $150
- Advocate $60
- Student/Senior/Volunteer $30
- EXTRA END OF YEAR GIVING ________

I would like information on adding Pacific Wildlife Care to my will or trust.

Visit us online at pacificwildlifecare.org to set up a monthly subscription or pay by credit card

Name:________________________________________________________________________
Phone:____________________________ Email:___________________________________
Address:________________________________________________________________________
City:_________________________________ State:______ Zip:___________ Date: _______

Please check:  ❑ New Membership  ❑ Renewal  ❑ Donation  ❑ I would like to volunteer

Please mail completed form with check to Pacific Wildlife Care, PO Box 1134, Morro Bay, CA 93443

Board Officers
President: Kimberly Perez
Vice President: Marcelle Bakula
Secretary: Open
Treasurer: Bob Blakely

Board Members
Craig Christakos
Kathleen Dillon
Kate Capela

Newsletter
Editor: Marcelle Bakula
Copy Editor: John FitzRandolph
Layout: Jeanette Stone

Thank you to all who donate to pacificwildlifecare.org (805) 543-WILD (9453)