

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Peninsula Humane Society & SPCA Staff save dying pelican's life by performing CPR like procedure

BURLINGAME, CA. – On May 23, 2017, Peninsula Humane Society & SPCA (PHS/SPCA) Wildlife Care Center staff saved the life of a dying California Brown Pelican by performing an improvised CPR like procedure at their Wildlife Care Center.

The pelican was found lethargic, emaciated and covered in lice by a member of the public at a beach in Pacifica who called PHS/SPCA for help. PHS/SPCA staff transported the bird to PHS/SPCA's Wildlife Care Center. The bird's body temperature was so low it wasn't even registering and his vital signs began to plummet dramatically.

"It was clear the pelican had been starving and was dying," said PHS/SPCA Lead Wildlife Technician Greg Hassett. "I decided to try one last effort to save his life by creating a makeshift warming tent of clean towels with warm forced air and provided oxygen to the pelican while keeping his airway open."

With the pelican stretched out on a surgery table, Hassett directed three people to assist with his plan including Wildlife Technician Mariah Horan and interns Jess Qwan and Amy Caufield. "We all took turns massaging the pelican to improve circulation, keeping the warm air flowing into the towel tent that served as a warming chamber and holding the oxygen tube to his airways. When the pelican started to show signs of life by fighting back we knew our efforts were paying off."

Hassett's quick thinking saved the pelican's life. He administered an IV cocktail which helped the pelican's blood circulation. "After he was breathing more comfortably on his own and wasn't critically hypothermic, we were able to move him into a warmed kennel for further after care."

This is the first time PHS/SPCA has performed a procedure like this in its Wildlife Care Center. Staff estimates the pelican to be a one year old juvenile. "Through my training, I learned about the importance of keeping airways open, but I've never had to do anything like this on a pelican before," said Hassett. "If we'd done nothing, the pelican surely would have perished and I'm glad our efforts saved his life."

The pelican is still recovering at PHS/SPCA and currently is in stable condition. He will be fed via a feeding syringe with a mixture of a wild bird food powder, water and salmon oil every two hours and will continue to be monitored by wildlife staff until he improves enough to be returned to the wild.

"I'm so glad we took a chance on doing something unprecedented and this last ditch effort worked to save the pelican's life," according to Hassett.

The California Brown Pelican is native to the San Francisco Bay Area and is a common sight along the coastal areas of California. They are considered a conservation success after being placed on the Endangered Species List in the 1970's after being nearly wiped out due to pesticide contamination in water and food sources. The Brown Pelican was de-listed in 2009.

PHS/SPCA's Wildlife Care Center successfully rehabilitates almost 1,200 to 1,400 animals each year. They are funded entirely by donations.



Peninsula Humane Society & SPCA

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About Peninsula Humane Society & SPCA

Peninsula Humane Society & SPCA is a private, open-door, not-for-profit animal welfare organization. Primary programs include animal adoptions; animal rescue and sheltering, including specialty care for domestic animals with medical and/or behavioral challenges; wildlife rehabilitation; animal cruelty investigation; community outreach and education; low-cost spay/neuter; and obedience classes. This vital work is made possible by volunteers and donations. PHS/SPCA receives no funding from national animal welfare organizations. Visit www.phs-spca.org to learn about all PHS/SPCA's programs and services, ways to help the animals and special events.

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