

In this issue:

Bear Talk	1
Meeting with MNRO	2
Beak Deformities in Crows	3
Oiled Wildlife Society Update	4



**WILDLIFE
REHABILITATORS'
NETWORK**
Of British Columbia

Bear Talk

By Angelika Langen, WRNBC President



Many of you may have heard by now that 2010 was a bad year for our bear population in BC. A combination of factors created situations of human-bear conflict and an unprecedented number of orphans sent to rehabilitation.

Following 2009, which was a really good year for bears with an abundant berry crop across the province, many female black bears appeared from hibernation with multiple cubs. We received a number of reports of twins, triplets and even quadruplets. But the food abundance seen in 2009 was not repeated in 2010. Dry weather conditions not only destroyed the berry crop, but also had a negative impact on most other plant food sources. In addition, the fish crop was compromised in many areas for a variety of reasons, and bears soon became desperate for food. All regions reported an unusually high number of human-bear conflict situations.

As a result of these conditions, the province's 4 bear rehabilitators were inundated with orphaned cubs. Critter Care Wildlife Society reports 12 cubs in care; North Island Wildlife Recovery Centre has admitted 6 cubs; and Northern Lights Wildlife Shelter is caring for 36 cubs, including 4 grizzlies. Numbers for Hillspring Wildlife Rehabilitation Facility were not available at press time.



These numbers are not expected to repeat in the coming years, as it is likely there will be fewer cubs born this spring due to the fact that bears did not go into hibernation in good physical condition.

2011 AGM & Speaker Series – still time to register!

Think you "missed the boat" for our fabulous 2011 AGM in Abbotsford? There's still time to register! Walk-in registrations will be accepted Saturday morning, February 19th, from 8:30 to 9:00 AM.

Get Involved!

Environmental Mitigation and Offsetting Policy Engagement Team

<http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/emop/>
<http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/emop/get-involved.html>

WRNBC Meeting with the Ministry of Natural Resource Operations

November 10, 2010

In attendance:

Angelika Langen (President, WRNBC)
Coleen Doucette (Vice President, WRNBC)
Sean Pendergast (MNRO, R1)
Mike Stalberg (MNRO, R1)
Brent Gurd (MNRO, R2)
Felice Griffiths (MNRO, HQ)
Helen Schwantje (MNRO, HQ)

In attendance for portions of the meeting:

Gerad Hales (MNRO, HQ)
Jen Smith (MNRO, HQ)
Mike Badry (MoE, COS)
Myke Chutter (MNRO, HQ)
Tony Hamilton (MoE, HQ)

The new President and returning Vice President of WRNBC initiated a meeting with Ministry staff to be proactive, to improve communications with government and to open dialogue between WRNBC and the Ministry on issues concerning wildlife rehabilitation in BC.

The meeting was considered a starting point to discuss the role of rehabilitation in wildlife management, its implications and its execution. Dialogue between the WRNBC and Ministry representatives was open and productive.

During the meeting, the Ministry defined its issues of concern. It was decided that these concerns would be brought back to the WRNBC membership for discussion, and that further meetings would be held to address WRNBC membership concerns and issues.

The following is a summary of the issues discussed:

- MNRO could potentially adopt WRNBC's animal care protocols and standards, as well as its education program, as a prerequisite to obtaining a permit. WRNBC would sponsor the courses and secure funding to deliver the education programs.
- MNRO described situations where lines are being blurred between rehabilitation and zoo permits. It was agreed that there is a distinction between the two, and that these activities should be physically and financially separated.
- MNRO would like to see the exclusion of Schedule C Wildlife from rehabilitation efforts. It was explained that this would lead to illegal, unpermitted rehabilitation by the public, as the public would not support such exclusions. It was agreed that this issue would be taken to the WRNBC membership for discussion.
- Standardized permits with add-ons as amendments were seen as desirable.
- Standardized reporting and record keeping (by rehabilitators) is something all would like to achieve.
- Missed animals and animals switched to/kept under zoo permits and lost to records were discussed.
- There have been some instances of a lack of reporting to regional MNRO biologists when red-listed species are admitted to rehabilitation centres.
- **A reminder to the WRNBC membership to notify regional biologists of animals kept over the time limit and of red-listed species. Refer to your permit for detailed contact instructions and species requiring notification.**

- Electronic reporting would be ideal, with annual reporting and longer term permits.
- WRNBC stressed the need for a contact person in Victoria to deal with, hopefully on a long-term basis. WRNBC will write a letter to Tom Ethier, Director of the Fish, Wildlife and Habitat Management Branch, referencing this meeting and requesting a contact person for rehabilitation issues.

These issues will be discussed at the upcoming AGM. It is very important that as many members as possible participate. For those of you who will be unable to attend the AGM, please take the time to contact Angelika at info@wildlifeshelter.com or 250-847-5101 with your comments and concerns.

Beak Deformities in Northwestern Crows: Evidence of a Multispecies Epizootic

C. Van Hemert and C. M. Handel

The Auk 127(4): 746–751

Beak abnormalities are rare among adult birds and, typically, are not widespread in a given population, within a region, or across multiple species. A high concentration of beak deformities was recently documented in Black-capped Chickadees (*Poecile atricapillus*) and other resident avian species in Alaska. We describe a parallel condition in Northwestern Crows (*Corvus caurinus*) that signals the emergence of a multispecies epizootic.

On the basis of 186 Northwestern Crows captured at six sites in Alaska during 2007 and 2008, we estimated the prevalence of beak deformities in adults to be $16.9 \pm 5.3\%$, the highest rate of gross deformities ever recorded in a wild bird population. Prevalence varied among sites and was as high as 36% on the Kenai Peninsula, which suggests possible epizootic clusters. We also documented beak abnormalities in an additional 148 Northwestern Crows in south-central and southeastern Alaska and in 64 crows near **Vancouver, British Columbia**, and Puget Sound, Washington, a region where both Northwestern Crows and American Crows (*C. brachyrhynchos*) occur.

The increase in frequency and distribution of crows observed with abnormal beaks throughout the Pacific Northwest since the late 1990s indicates a geographic expansion of this problem. Affected crows exhibited elongated and often crossed beaks that were morphologically similar to deformities documented in Black-capped Chickadees and other species in Alaska over approximately the same period. Additional research is needed to determine the etiology and potential adverse effects on bird populations affected by this disorder.

To report a bird with a deformed beak:

http://alaska.usgs.gov/science/biology/landbirds/beak_deformity/observerreport.html



Black-capped Chickadee with beak deformity.
Photo credit: USGS.

Oops! Our mistake - the article in the last newsletter, "WRNBC Member Marine Mammal Rescue Assists with BP Oil Spill," was actually written by Lindsaye Akhurst, Marine Mammal Rescue Coordinator for the Vancouver Aquarium, not Coleen Doucette.

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The Wildlife Rehabilitators' Network of BC explicitly disclaims any legal liability for the contents of this newsletter, and the opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of the Network or its representatives.

Oiled Wildlife Society Update

By Coleen Doucette, Oiled Wildlife Society, WRNBC Vice President

The Oiled Wildlife Society of British Columbia (OWS) is holding its 2011 Annual General Meeting on Thursday, February 3, 2011. We look forward to the addition of new board members and **hope that YOU will become a member this year!**

OWS works on projects to assist in wildlife response preparedness in BC. The organization has also provided past assistance by supplying equipment aid during large responses in Alberta.

As part of preparedness operations, board representatives attend planning meetings with regulatory agencies and industry on a regular basis throughout the year. In partnership, we are currently working on the development of the much needed "Wildlife Branch" that would provide a wildlife management system within the emergency response system used by industry and most government agencies here in BC.

Other activities include the joint project with WRNBC of developing First Responder Training, targeted to launch in 2011, as well as acquiring an inventory system to provide better management of equipment and supplies.

Our **mission** is "to promote a high level of emergency preparedness and awareness of oiled wildlife response through equipment management and ongoing oil spill response training."

Our **purpose** is "to maintain preparedness for oiled wildlife response in British Columbia. This includes maintaining a centralized stockpile of equipment, establishing contingency plans, and providing training to key personnel."

Our **vision** is "to work with government agencies, industry, non-profit wildlife organizations, and professional wildlife responders, to ensure oiled wildlife response is integrated into spill response for events that have the potential to impact wildlife on water and land in British Columbia."



Please consider becoming a member of the Oiled Wildlife Society for 2011!

For more information, visit our website at www.oiledwildlifesociety.com.

What has your Board of Directors been up to?

- Planning your 2011 AGM in Abbotsford, BC
- Updating WRNBC's comprehensive Board of Director's package documents, Protocols of Care and Bylaws for presentation at the 2011 AGM
- Recruiting for your 2011-2012 Board of Directors!
- Establishing communications with the Ministry of Natural Resource Operations
- Working within the Oiled Wildlife Trust to engage government stakeholders in the development of oiled wildlife response guidelines for BC

Current Board Members

Angelika Langen, President - angelika@wildlifeshelter.com

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Marcy Potter, Treasurer & Membership - marcy.potter@gmail.com

Lani Sheldon, Secretary - lanisheldon@shaw.ca

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Help us save paper and reduce costs! If you would prefer to receive your newsletter by *email only*, please contact our Membership Secretary, Marcy Potter, at marcy.potter@gmail.com.