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2016

## Avian Haven Year End Report 2016

Avian Haven

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They looked like ducks, swam like ducks, and although not all of them quacked like ducks, we were nonetheless certain that 129 of the birds admitted in 2016 were members of the biological family *Anatidae*, albeit of diverse species and ages! For stories of aquatic birds as well as many other kinds, read on!

### Rehabilitation 2016 Overview

After a heavy growth year in 2015, the challenges of increased admissions unfolded again in 2016. Our 2,469 new admissions were ahead of last year's by almost 400 birds. Adding the 42 held over from 2015, we cared for 2,511 in all during 2016. There were a few surprises in the species counts, one of which was the emergence of Herring Gull as the most frequently admitted native bird. Its total of 173 was nearly double last year's. Behind it were the three non-raptor species typically at the top of our list—150 American Robins, 134 Eastern Phoebes, and 102 Mourning Doves. This year's 285 raptor total was similar to last year's; among them were 115 Barred Owls, 52 Broad-winged Hawks, 23 Bald Eagles, and 20 Ospreys. The number of Barred Owls was unusually

high, especially in the number admitted due to car strikes in the last quarter of the year. We had 69 during that period in 2016, compared with 23 in 2015 and 31 in 2014.

Among the water birds were 42 Common Loons, which was also a record high for us. The most common representatives of the 129 ducks mentioned above were 85 Mallards, but a dozen Common Eiders were among them as well. Pelagic species included Northern Gannet, Black Guillemot, Thick-billed Murre, Atlantic Puffin, and Leach's Storm-Petrel.

All of our non-native species counts were above last year's; we saw 202 Rock Pigeons, 67 House Sparrows, and 97 European Starlings. Adapted to urban areas, these birds are readily found by human rescuers, as are some of the other commonly-admitted species that typically make their nests on or near dwellings.

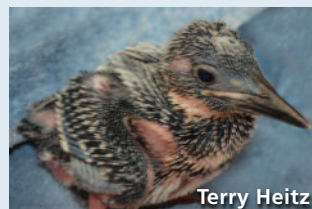
*Continued on page 2*

Belted Kingfishers often nest in burrows they have excavated in gravel pits. The entrance to the burrow may be quite small and not easily visible from the outside. An equipment operator would not suspect life inside the pit until setting horrified eyes on birds poking their heads out of a load of gravel. We admitted three sets of kingfishers orphaned in this manner in 2016: 16 birds in all, which was more than in the last several years combined! The last of them were released on July 8, just two days after the 17th and final kingfisher of the year arrived.

On July 6, Gary Clark found a nearly naked young bird on the ground in the middle of a field in Rangeley; a second bird was dead nearby. Gary sent a photo of the bird to his mother Chris, a mammal rehabilitator and proprietor of Chris's Squirrels and More in CT. Chris e-mailed the photo to us along with Gary's contact information, and in short order, we'd arranged for Gary to meet volunteer transporter Kate Weatherby in Farmington. The long beak and location of emerging feather tracts in the photo reminded us at first of a Northern Flicker, but the bird's tiny feet

did not belong to a woodpecker! We'd had the "aha" moment by the time Kate called to confirm that youngster was a kingfisher.

The bird was an eager although clumsy eater that took fish from forceps almost immediately. His feather development was well underway when this



Terry Heitz

photo was taken on July 10. He matured without incident, although regrettably without companions other than his image in a mirror. He was released at Sandy Pond on August 7, a few days after the second photo was taken. ■



As has been the case in other years, the most frequently reported causes of injury were vehicle strikes, cat predation and window collisions. Car hits are almost always unavoidable accidents, but cats will readily prey on both nestlings and flighted birds. Cat owners can protect neighborhood birds by keeping their pets indoors or by outfitting them with bibs ([www.catgoods.com](http://www.catgoods.com)) that limit pouncing. Various window treatments can help birds avoid window collisions; one of our favorites is the American Bird Conservancy's Bird Tape, [www.collidescape.org/abc-birdtape](http://www.collidescape.org/abc-birdtape). Although much less common than the aforementioned causes of difficulty, lead poisoning remained a troubling reason for mortality for Bald Eagles and Common Loons (see stories on page 5 and 6).

Avian Haven cares for reptiles and amphibians as well as birds; in 2016 we admitted 26 snapping and painted turtles, almost all of them hit by cars. We also incubate eggs harvested from gravid females that do not survive their injuries; from those eggs, 60 hatchlings were released.

## Caregivers

Our human flock comprises a diverse group that includes year-round and seasonal volunteers and employees. Together, they offer an invaluable combination of skills and experiences that ensures top-quality treatment for our patients. In addition to Marc, infirmary staff in 2016 included Glori Berry, Kim Chavez, Judi Ellal, Abby Everleth, and Laura Graham. Joining them on a regular basis were volunteers Christie Banow, Jane Brackett, Brody Crosby, Amy Dillon, Laura Lecker, Molly MacLean, Marilyn McLelland, Selkie O'Mira, Gina Sawyer, Susan Stone, and Janet Wiseley. Our summer interns were Claire Brunner (Bowdoin College), Bridget Cameron (Unity College), and Chelsey Gundlach (University of Maine). Some of our volunteers also played other roles: Christie Banow created a beautiful new garden along the walkway to our office, and Laura Lecker gave nine presentations about Avian Haven in 2016.

Though rarely able to examine birds in person, wildlife veterinarians based elsewhere were of great help via e-mail with our most challenging cases; we thank, in particular, Drs. Mark Pokras and

Erica Miller. Closer to home, we are especially grateful to Dr. Judy Herman (Augusta's Animal Wellness Center), whose surgical and homeopathic expertise benefited many of our birds. Ophthalmologic exams by Dr. Steve Witkin (Maine Eye Care Associates) provided expert diagnosis of eye injuries in numerous Barred Owls as well as in other species.

Some helpers at our collective nest were not directly involved in bird care, but, in various ways, made it possible for birds to receive that care. Members of Avian Haven's "avian ambulance" team transport birds here, sometimes in relays from distant locations. The alpha among them was Don Fournier, who drove more than 30,000 miles and delivered more than 700 patients in 2016! Others who averaged at least several trips per month included Lyn Adams, Mary & Jim Bird, Carol & Bob Jones, Diane & Rob Jones, Gail & George Leavitt, Carl Mahoney, Karen Silverman, Richard Spinney, Kathy & David Stager, and Charlene Turgeon. These individuals represent a much larger group of folks (you know who you are!) equally deserving of appreciation. We also thank the awesome directors of our cyber roosts—James Skowbo (Webmaster) and Selkie O'Mira (Facebook Manager).

Many individuals in addition to those mentioned elsewhere in this report provided various kinds of assistance, whether in the form of goods, services, funds, or shared expertise. Among them, we are especially grateful to Andrew Banow, Amy & Bob Campbell, Jan Corning, Ann Dorney, Janika Eckert & Rob Johnston, Mark Finke, Geordie Hall, Beth Henderson, Georgia Frizzell & Tug Kellough, Marilyn McLelland, Darcy Mahoney, Rita Maines, Nancy & Charlie Shuman, Marge Sorenson, Rebecca Thompson, Helen & Joseph Thibodeau, Charley West, and John Winn.

Several organizations hosted fund-raisers for us in 2016, for which we are extremely grateful! The Brunswick High School Action Team collected money and supplies at athletic events over a number of months before delivering the goods in March. In the Belfast Cooperative's May "Common Cents" program, shoppers had the option to round up the total of their purchases to the nearest dollar, with the overage going to Avian Haven. Coyote Graphics sponsored a "For the Birds" fundraiser in which \$5 for every t-shirt sold over a period of time in November was donated to Avian Haven.

Late in the day on August 19, we got a call from a man who'd rescued a hawk from a Milbridge roadside. He was traveling to Bangor the next morning, so arrangements were made for him to meet volunteer transporter Richard Spinney. We were not at all expecting the Northern Harrier we found when we opened the travel box! True, just a few days earlier, we'd admitted another car-hit harrier from Brooks, but the species is rare in our practice. In fact, in all the years since our founding in 1999, we'd admitted only three previously, all of them injured nestlings.



Northern Harriers favor marshes and grasslands; habitat loss is considered a threat to populations. Worldwide, the species appears to be declining and is listed as endangered or threatened in some New England states. In Maine, the Northern Harrier is categorized as a species of special concern (i.e., is vulnerable to

becoming endangered or threatened). Harriers are not as frequently car hit as other raptor species: although they do occasionally forage along roadsides, they typically hunt small mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians in their preferred habitat.

The Harrier from Brooks had not survived his injuries, but the bird that Richard brought had an oblique humerus fracture that was well-aligned and had a good prognosis. We wrapped the wing, and a week later, the fracture had a solid and stable callus. We moved the harrier to a small outdoor cage on August 31, and within a few days she was on the high perches. By mid-September, she was zipping around a large flight cage with no difficulty at all. We released her on September 15. ■



Terry Heitz

## Special Thanks to

### Businesses and Organizations

Albion Bait Fish  
All Creatures Veterinary Hospital (Rockport)  
Animal Wellness Center (Augusta)  
BioDiversity Research Institute  
Boothbay Animal Hospital  
Brookfield Renewable  
Craig Brook National Fish Hatchery  
Darby's Restaurant (Belfast)  
Downeast Audubon Society  
Ellsworth Builders Supply  
Lewiston Veterinary Hospital  
Loon Preservation Committee (NH)  
Little River Veterinary Hospital  
Maine Dept. of Environmental Protection  
Maine Dept. of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife  
Maine Dept. of Marine Resources  
Maine Fish Health Laboratory  
Maine Falconry and Raptor Conservancy  
Maine Warden Service  
Maine Wildlife Park  
Mid-Coast Audubon Society  
National Audubon Seabird Restoration Program  
New England Animal Hospital  
Pet Life (Augusta)  
The Raptor Trust (NJ)  
Unity Barn Raisers  
U.S.D.A. APHIS Wildlife Services  
U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
Villageside Farm (Freedom)  
Wind Over Wings

### Wildlife Colleagues

Wes Ashe  
Brad Allen  
Rose Borzik  
Rich Burton  
Erynn Call  
Judy Camuso  
Jim Connolly  
Danielle D'Auria  
Philip deMaynadier  
Robin Dyer  
Brian Engelhard  
Nate Gray  
Curt Johnson  
Eric Holmes  
Keel Kemper  
Mark McCollough  
Shearon & Kyle Murphy  
Kristin Peet  
Betsy Pratt  
Grayson Richmond  
Ann Rivers  
Francois Roodman  
Susan Schubel  
Kappy Sprenger  
Kelsey Sullivan  
Charlie Todd

In 2016, we welcomed a new member to our Board of Directors—Adrienne Leppold, Wildlife Biologist with Maine's Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. We thank her as well as continuing board members Mary Bird, Judy Herman, and Allen Stehle for counsel and support.

## New Wings

The outdoor aquatic habitat mentioned in last year's report opened for business in 2016! As shown on the back cover, this three-season facility is a pond with a surface area of about 400 square feet surrounded by a greenhouse hoop frame covered with high-strength netting. Fed by the overflow from a nearby well, the pond's surface drains via a standpipe, creating a continuous turnover of fresh water. Terry Heitz designed the facility, oversaw the site and stone work, and built the enclosure. The project was funded by grants from the Hochgraf Charitable Foundation, the Aquila Fund of the Maine Community Foundation, the John Sage Foundation, the Elsie & William Viles Foundation, and several private donors.

*Continued on page 5*

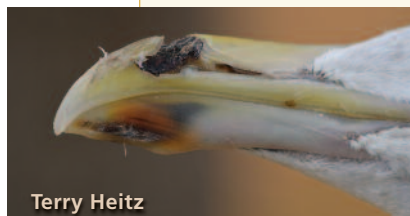
Herring Gull populations are declining along the northeast coast where, historically, islands have been the nesting habitat for most gull species. Roof-top nesting by Herring Gulls has become common in Portland, though it remains unclear whether this is non-preferred habitat utilized due to lack of vacant traditional territory, or whether there are advantages such as access to human sources of food (even though it may be of poorer quality than the conventional fish diet of nestlings).

Research by University of New England's Noah Perlut and his colleagues suggests that chicks in roof-top nests may have some advantages, but young birds that tumble into city traffic cannot be reunited with their parents and are subject to hazards unlike those on the islands. However, where there are human-related difficulties, there are also opportunities for human assistance. Of the 84 Herring Gulls admitted from Portland in 2016, 37 were July nestlings or premature fledglings who made it to safety thanks to our awesome Portland rescue team.

These youngsters had already grown up and been released by the time we admitted one of our more interesting Herring Gull cases for the year. This adult bird had been hanging around Lyman-Morse Boatbuilding in Camden for several weeks. He'd become something of a mascot and had been given the name "George." The bird was able to fly short distances, but something about him seemed not quite right. Given public concern, a decision was made to bring him in for a check-up, if he could be captured. Volunteers Selkie O'Mira and Abe Baggins were successful, and when George arrived on October 7, the something "not quite right" was a beak injury that had already partially healed. We sent photos to wildlife veterinarian Dr. Mark Pokras for an opinion. Although bone and germinative tissue had been damaged, the inside of the mouth looked fine, and there was no evidence of infection. Dr. Pokras thought the prognosis was favorable! The scab sloughed on October 24. A divot remained at the top of the beak, but the beak was stable, and there had been no indication of difficulty eating.



Marilyn McLelland



Terry Heitz



Terry Heitz

After another consult with Dr. Pokras, we filed all the remaining rough or sharp edges on October 30. George was flying and restless, and the boatyard folks were eager to have him back. Selkie took him for release back home on November 5. Upon leaving the transport crate, George scooted over to the seawall. After a few minutes of gazing out to sea, he flew off into the harbor. With his beak now in much better condition than previously, George did not once again become a fixture at the boatyard, but he was seen in the area from time to time for several weeks after release. ■

**O**n April 15, we were contacted about a nestling Great Horned Owl on the ground near a popular walking trail at Portland's Evergreen Cemetery. Apparently, the nest had disintegrated; the bird's older sibling was in the nest tree, perched on a branch overhanging a pond. Because the trail was an off-leash area for dogs, Parks & Cemetery Coordinator Joe Dumais knew it was not safe to leave the younger bird on the ground. Joe agreed to have our area volunteer, Diane Davison, secure that nestling. An adult owl in a nearby tree did not seem perturbed by the capture of the grounded youngster.



Terry Heitz

On the basis of admission weight, we judged the bird to be about 4 weeks old—roughly 2 weeks younger than the age at which young Great Horned Owls typically leave the nest for nearby branches. Short flights would not be expected for another week beyond the branching stage. We placed the remarkably uninjured chick in the custody of our surrogate adult female, and began to consider prospects for a family reunion. The nest location was well known, and its proximity to the trail was worrisome, but cemetery staff had already prohibited public access in order to prevent disturbance of the branching juvenile.

The original nest tree had a large branch that dipped toward a pond. Concern about drowning if the chick fell again guided the decision to place a substitute nest in a nearby tree with many branches, including some low to the ground. The prospective host tree was about 15' across the path from the nest tree, and Mom was often seen in it during the day. Now we needed a tree climber with raptor-handling experience. Our friend Rick Gray, biologist with BioDiversity Research Institute, was the perfect person for the job. On April 26, Terry drove our bird to the cemetery. The support team waited while Rick donned his gear and climbed up into the tree. When he'd selected a promising spot about 60' up, a brown laundry basket was hoisted up to serve as the substitute nest, followed by nest material gathered from the ground and enough food for a couple of days. Finally, up went a box containing the young owl. Rick transferred the bird from box to basket, and then descended. The adult was nearby and well aware of the proceedings: she began hooting as soon as the youngster was placed in the basket. Rick was no sooner on the ground than the re-nested owl left the basket to perch alongside it. The older sibling was still in the nest tree, but was by then on a branch close to the trunk. The question on everyone's mind was what would happen next. A scout was needed!

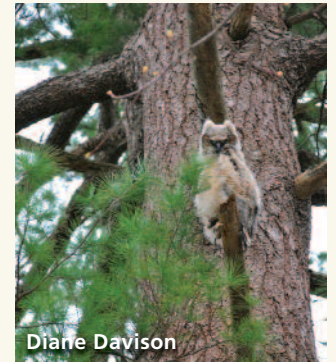


Terry Heitz

As a member of the Portland Parks Commission, our volunteer Diane Davison had worked closely with park rangers for many years. Joe agreed that she was the ideal person to monitor the owls unobtrusively and, if necessary, ensure that members of the public respected the trail closing when city staff could not be

present. In reporting her observations, Diane used the moniker "Chick B" for the younger bird we'd re-nested in the basket, and "Chick A" for his larger sibling. Both chicks remained in their respective positions for two days. On the evening of April 28, Diane saw the adult owl tearing pieces from what looked like a Mallard, presumably food for both youngsters.

But on the morning of April 29, Chick B was missing from the branch near the substitute nest. Reconnaissance missions over that day and the next failed to locate him, and we all began to fear that he was dead in the substitute nest. Plans were made for Rick to make a return climb to look into the basket. Meanwhile, however, Diane continued her routine vigils, and around 3 p.m. on May 1, she looked into the original nest tree to check on Chick A. A young owl was sitting on a low branch, and Diane wondered why the bird had come down so far. Then, looking higher into the tree, to her ecstatic delight, she saw Chick A and Mom. Despite not being mature enough for sustained flight, Chick B had managed a "leap of faith" across the trail and into the original nest tree. As best we can imagine, he had climbed higher into the tree containing the basket, and then jump-glided across the trail, just making it into the lower branches of the original nest tree.



Diane Davison

The trail remained closed, with most observers viewing the owls respectfully from across the pond. Chick B stayed on low branches for a couple of days, and then was seen on ever higher branches. On May 8 (Mother's Day!), both chicks were on the same branch preening one another, with Mom on a slightly higher limb. All three were perched together on May 9. The family continued to be seen daily over the next few days, but no one was in the nest tree when Diane checked on May 13. The young had apparently fledged and gone off with Mom. Everyone agreed that it would be fine to reopen the area the next day.

We did not expect any further news of the birds, but Diane continued to check the area, and around dusk on May 15, she saw an owl fly from the woods behind the cemetery into the original nest tree. Backlit by the setting sun, the bird was unmistakably one of the chicks. That owl's calls were answered by another juvenile that could not be seen, but the calls were enough to let her know that both youngsters were alive and well. The last photographic record of them together was provided on May 19 by Portland volunteer Karen Silverman. ■



Karen Silverman



Karen Silverman

Our Bald Eagle cases in 2016 were lower than has been typical of the previous several years. We admitted 23 in all, among which were seven nestlings or early fledglings. Of the 16 birds who were at least in their second year, 12 had elevated blood lead levels, and only three of them survived. The rescue of one of these birds was particularly dramatic: this second-year bird was seen on May 28 floating in the ocean 2-3 miles offshore of Tenants Harbor. At first, the crew of the lobster boat "Miss Jemepa" thought it was a dead gull or duck, but as they got closer, one of the crewmen recognized it as an immature eagle who was still alive, albeit with his head barely above water. The captain agreed to turn the boat around and go back for a rescue. The bird was hauled onto the deck, where he lay exhausted and motionless. When the eagle began to show signs of life, crew members secured him in a lobster crate and headed for Rockland, where volunteer Selkie O'Mira transferred the soggy bird to a carrier and drove him to Avian Haven. The lucky eagle was not injured, but feathers over much of his body were coated with a sticky substance that could not be identified. Several days later, the bird was stable enough for a Dawn® bath, from which he emerged with clean and waterproof feathers. After that, he slowly but surely recovered the strength required for flight; he was released on July 6.



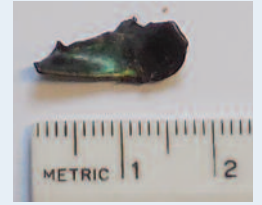
A second survivor of lead ingestion was admitted on June 29. After receiving a call about an eagle lying in a field of tall grass, we deployed Selkie and Christie Banow to the Waldoboro location. After wading through tall grass and bushwhacking through alder brush, they discovered that the eagle had made her way across the Medomak River, and was perched on a log on the opposite side. Fortunately, the property owner had a small boat! Alternately flying short distances, swimming, and climbing ashore, the eagle made her way downriver, followed by Christie on the muddy shore and Selkie in the boat. It was raining, so everyone got wet, but the rescuers eventually caught up with eagle, netted her, and brought her aboard for a boat ride back upriver to the landing. As the eagle left for Avian Haven, her mate was perched in a tall tree nearby, calling to her.



As suspected from her behavior, the eagle had a lead exposure that, although not high enough to be life threatening, was sufficient to impair stamina and coordination. Her blood lead level was below a threshold typically recommended for chelation, so we opted to wait and see if her body would rid itself of the toxin. About a month later, the property owner called to report that her mate was still in the area; unfortunately, by that time,

her blood lead level had crept up, so we decided to chelate. By the end of July, the blood level was not significantly elevated. After another two weeks to make sure the lead level stayed down, Selkie and Christie returned the bird home on August 16. The eagle started thrashing in the carrier as soon as they arrived. When Selkie opened the door, the bird bolted across the field, flew up over the trees, and down the river. She knew exactly where she was going.

Among the lead-poisoned eagles that did not survive was a second-year bird found in Mt. Vernon on May 24. Our admission x-ray showed several pieces of ingested lead ammunition apparently scavenged from a carcass; a blood test revealed a lead level off the scale of our screening instrument. One piece of lead was particularly large; although it was late in the day, we knew that waiting until morning would significantly reduce the bird's already slim chance of surviving. We removed the lead via gastric lavage and began chelation, hoping against hope for a recovery. But despite many treatment strategies, the bird's neurologic signs had worsened into seizures by early July; at that point, our state and federal raptor biologists agreed that euthanasia was the only humane option.



Lead poisoning of eagles is easily preventable by using non-toxic alternatives to lead ammunition, which are described at [www.huntingwithnonlead.org](http://www.huntingwithnonlead.org).

Of the seven youngsters, two did not survive their injuries, two were reunited with their families, and the last three were released together on September 20 at Merrymeeting Bay, where a large gathering of eagles had been present. Ed Friedman, President of Friends of Merrymeeting Bay, arranged the release site at Pleasant Point with property owner Peter McCarthy. The birds all took to the sky with strong flight. We did not expect news of any of them, but were delighted when our friend Michael Boardman e-mailed a week later to report having seen two juvenile eagles on a kayak paddle around the Goose Islands of Casco Bay, roughly 16 miles south of the release site. As he got closer, Mike could see that one of the birds was banded; the other eagle flew off as he approached, but the banded bird seemed unconcerned about the proximity of a person. The combination of band, location, date, and behavior indicated that at least one of the three had found a new friend. ■

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operational during power failures. We thank Lowe's Home Improvement (Thomaston), plus Don Fournier and Renee Fournier for making it possible. Our next capital project is to replace our ageing X-ray machine! A grant from the Hochgraf Charitable Foundation seeded a special fund that we hope to augment over the next year.



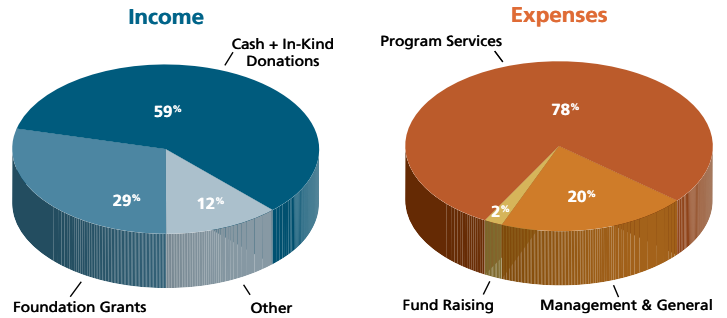
Thanks to a grant from the Adelard A. Roy and Valeda Lea Roy Foundation, a series of planned repairs and renovations to our large raptor compound was well underway by the end of the year. In 2017, that series will continue with a new roof.

Our most welcome equipment addition in 2016 was a propane generator with sufficient capacity to keep Avian Haven fully

## Feathering our Nests

Our operating expenses in 2016 were higher than in any previous year, as was our case load! Our income increased as well, however, thanks to loyal donor and foundation support. Some foundation grants were given in support of capital projects, but others were unrestricted gifts that became part of our operations budget. In the latter category, we are especially grateful to the American Foundation, the Bank of America Charitable Gift Fund, the Susan & George Craig Family Foundation, the Maine Community Foundation (Sirius Fund plus a Component Fund), the Martha Morse Foundation, the Stiffler Family Foundation, the Vanderbilt Family Foundation, and the Grace W. Wendell Charitable Gift Fund.

Other sources of revenue included honorariums, investment earnings, etc. The blue pie chart below shows the proportions of our total income in these categories.



Early winter is always a dramatic time for any Common Loons that have not left their breeding lakes for coastal wintering areas before ice formation limits the amount of open water. Loons need a relatively long water “runway” for take-off; one estimate of the minimum required is 100 feet, assuming the assistance of high winds. Due to mild temperatures in the early winter of 2015-2016, some northern New England lakes had remained open well into January rather than freezing over in December. Therefore, the drama of iced-in loons occurred in the first few weeks of the New Year.

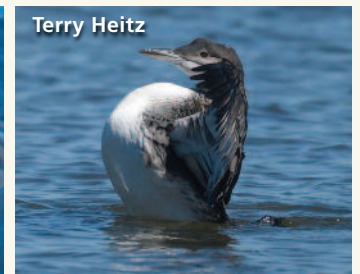
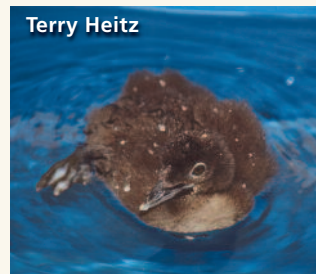
Recoveries in these situations are dangerous for both bird and rescuer. The person must cross potentially thin ice to reach a patch of open water some distance from shore. A loon spooked by the person’s approach may dive under the ice and fail to resurface. Requirements for successful rescue include training and equipment for safe ice crossing, plus a knowledge of loon behavior. That combination occurs in John Cooley, senior biologist with New Hampshire’s Loon Preservation Committee. Among the loons John rescued in January and February were five (!) recovered from Sunapee Lake on January 26. Several hours of hard work on the lake were followed by preliminary exams at LPC headquarters, where staff members were startled to discover that some of the birds were not the juveniles typically iced in, but adults that had already begun the winter molt of their wing feathers, and were therefore unable to take off. The birds were soon settled onto soft padding inside sturdy boxes, and John drove them to Fryeburg. There, they were transferred to our colleague Kappy Sprenger, who in turn connected with transporter Don Fournier in Naples. Don arrived here with five boxes around 8:30 p.m. We had three open pools in the Pool Hall that evening; two were large enough to accommodate two occupants each, so the five were soon settled in for the night.



Follow-up exams the next morning confirmed that four would be quick turn-arounds, but the fifth had a lead sinker in his intestines and an extremely high blood lead level. With the assistance of laxatives, the sinker was expelled a few days later. Over the next few weeks, the bird’s blood lead level was lowered by chelation therapy, and for a while the bird seemed to be

making progress toward recovery. But that trajectory did not continue, and the bird eventually succumbed.

We admitted two more Common Loons with lead poisoning in 2016, both from Maine, despite changes in legislation restricting the use of lead fishing tackle. One from East Pond (Smithfield) had a jighead; the second from Megunticook Lake (Camden) was particularly troubling in that the object was a 5/8” sinker illegal since 2013. The accompanying hook was evidence that the tackle had been used recently, as hooks on a lake bottom since 2013 would have long since rusted and disintegrated.



Fortunately, in between these sad cases were others with happier endings, including several very young birds rescued after being injured on their natal lakes. They grew up here, and we saved them from any ice drama by releasing them at the coast in the fall.

The calendar year finished out with two more stranded loons from LPC! A bird that arrived on December 19 had been rescued from an icy field in Ossipee by a resident who used warm water to free the bird’s feet. After a week here to ensure that his feet were not frostbitten, the bird was released into Penobscot Bay. ■



Operating expenses may be divided into three broad categories: program service costs (expenses in direct support of our mission, such as veterinary supplies, food, payroll, small equipment, etc.); management and general costs (business supplies, insurance, etc.); and fund-raising costs (production of pamphlets, this report, etc.). The orange pie chart on pg. 6 shows the proportions of the total spent in each of these categories.

Perhaps our most valuable nest egg is our endowment—investments that ensure the longevity of Avian Haven beyond the lifetimes of its present personnel. Planned gifts established by members of our Legacy Society are especially valuable in that regard; more information can be found on the “Support our Work” page of [avianhaven.org](http://avianhaven.org).

## Closing Thoughts . . .

Many of you probably already noticed that our most common species overall this year was the non-native Rock Pigeon. Today’s feral pigeons are descendants of domestic birds brought by 17th-century colonists to settlements along the Atlantic coast, a location from which they spread throughout the continent. They are particularly common in urban areas, where modern buildings offer nest sites reminiscent of the caves and cliff crevices favored by wild populations once native to Europe and other continents. These birds foraged some distance from such nests; their ability to return “home” is one of the reasons for their usefulness as domesticated birds.

Rock Pigeons selectively bred for long-distance homing were used to carry messages centuries before other forms of communication were available. More recently, during the two World Wars, there were circumstances in which important messages could not be sent by conventional means. By flying across enemy lines under fire, war pigeons trained for military service delivered information that saved

many human lives. Some of these birds perished in their attempts, and some were decorated for heroic service on the battlefield.

We were once challenged for expending our resources to rehabilitate non-native species. Other birds in this category include European Starlings and House (or English) Sparrows, groups of which were first released in North America in the 1890s. Ironically,



like most of the people currently living on the continent, the individual protesting our equal opportunity admissions policy was not Native American. In further irony, it was non-indigenous people who drove North

America’s native Passenger Pigeon to extinction in the 19th century.

History aside, non-native species are often the wildlife most familiar to people living in urban areas where these birds are common. And when such birds run into difficulty, they are rescued by human city-dwellers to whom a pigeon is just as special as a loon or an eagle might be to others. We gladly honor the compassion described in “City Kids,” a poem describing the rescue of a bird transported here and later released by its author.

Until next year –

*Diane & Marc*

Diane Winn and  
Marc Payne, Co-Directors



All photography is by Glori Berry unless otherwise credited.

# AVIAN HAVEN

is a nonprofit wild bird rehabilitation center dedicated to the return of injured and orphaned birds of all species to their natural roles in the wild.

**Support for Avian Haven comes almost entirely from foundation grants and donations made by members of the public. Your tax-deductible gifts ensure the success of our mission. Please help us continue to provide top-quality care for Maine’s wild birds by making an annual or monthly contribution.**

Gifts via credit card or PayPal may be given through our website,

[www.avianhaven.org](http://www.avianhaven.org), or checks may be sent to

418 N. Palermo Rd., Freedom, ME 04941.

We can be reached by phone at 207-382-6761

or by e-mail at [dwmp@avianhaven.org](mailto:dwmp@avianhaven.org)

*Thank you for your support!*



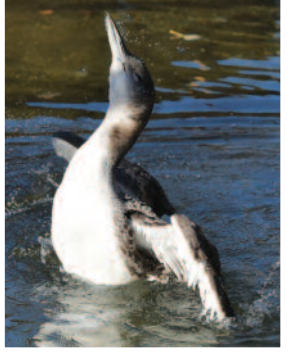
## City Kids

Down by the stream  
where the homeless kids gather,  
a scruffy young pigeon scuffles  
scoping out the scene.  
A misstep,  
a flutter of half-feathered wings,  
and suddenly this city bird  
is paddling for her life  
until skinny Jack  
wades in  
and gathers her up  
in gently cupped hands  
and holds her  
close to his heart  
as he scrambles from the water,  
and Amber  
reaches out to help.

Mary Dickinson Bird  
June, 2016



# New Outdoor Aquatic Habitat is Open for Business!



To help us reduce our use of forest resources, let us know by e-mail [dwmp@avianhaven.org](mailto:dwmp@avianhaven.org) if we may send future issues of this report to you electronically. Folks on our e-mailing list also receive notices of newly posted slide shows.