



**MARS**  
WILDLIFE RESCUE CENTRE



# Annual Report

2020-2021

**Mountaineer Avian Rescue Society**  
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**After Hours Emergency:** 1-250-897-2257  
**Hospital Hours:** 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM  
**Visitor Centre Tel:** 1-250-778-428-1990

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# Mission

To conserve and protect native wildlife and its natural habitat through education and rehabilitation.

# Goals

To reduce suffering of wildlife often affected by human influences, educate the public about their effect on nature, and how to reduce that impact.

# Philosophy

We are a non-profit organization. Our energy is directed towards rehabilitation and education, and the funding for those endeavours.

We abide by all governing laws and regulations under which we operate. MARS holds permits from federal and provincial governments that allow us to rescue, keep in captivity, and care for wildlife.

# Purpose

## **Rescue, Recover, Rehabilitate, & Release**

ill, injured, orphaned or oiled wildlife

## **Conserve & Protect**

wildlife by promoting the conservation of wildlife habitat.

## **Contribute**

to the knowledge and understanding of wildlife by participating in research and sharing that information with wildlife organizations and the general public.

## **Educate**

the general public about wildlife issues through lectures, displays, workshops, reports, and publications.



# President's Report

MARS would like to thank all of our generous contributors for helping us continue wildlife rehabilitation and conservation efforts in 2020/2021. These selfless contributions allowed for this year's programs to proceed.

Organizations such as Comox Valley Horticulture Society, RK Contracting, Progressive Electrical, Centra Windows, BC Hydro, Thrifty Foods, My Tech Guys, Animalitos Pet Wellness, Comox Valley Regional District, Strathcona Regional District, Pod Creative and Art Knapp, our neighbours Sam and Bruce, The Harbour Hideout B & B, Ucluelet, BC, Ponting Road Building, Westjet, Wickaninnish Inn, C.R. Whale & Wildlife Zodiac Tours, West Coast Helicopters, Old House Law & Notary, Moeller Matthews, Chartered Professional Accountants and more stepped up significantly.

Thanks to Sharron for our fabulous new Flight Cage, Brenda Louise Weis estate, Chris Hatfield for turning plants into donations and Courtenay Rotary for the Kiosk at the entrance of MARS and the Duck Blind. We acknowledge the financial support of the Province of British Columbia.

We appreciate the support of the MARS Wildlife Rescue board of directors, staff, contractors and our many volunteers. Without you this could not have been possible. Many donors provided assistance directly to MARS Wildlife Rescue for animal care, and MEWS funding, and through Canada Helps.



## Acknowledgements

gilakas'la čečɛ haθeč, We respectfully acknowledge that we live, work and play within the unceded traditional territory of the K'ómoks Nation.

Of particular interest (and excitement) is the growing number of people contributing through monthly automatic debit. These monthly contributions provide a level of certainty and are now up to **81 monthly donors** contributing **\$3,000** per month.

Several anonymous donors, and those who cared enough to contribute time and/or supplies also helped us out but are too numerous to mention. After several short notice call-outs on Facebook for specific supplies, we were often overwhelmed by the instant generosity. Every little bit helps contribute to a lot.

MARS Wildlife Rescue is a volunteer organization with only three (full-time equivalents) expert staff to guide volunteers with their shared knowledge. In other words, volunteers are the lifeblood of our organization. It may sound crazy, but the dozens of volunteers (ranging from Animal Care to Education to the Visitor Building crew, parks maintenance volunteers, bird handlers to construction volunteers officially logged **28,955 volunteer hours** during 2020/2021 for an astounding in-kind value of **\$579,095**. We know that not everyone tracks their hours, so the actual total value is much higher.

We apologize if we inadvertently missed any donors or volunteers. We thank all that have donated. time, money and supplies.





Mountaineer Avian Rescue Society (MARS or MARS Wildlife Rescue) officially opened its doors in 1995 and recorded a wildlife caseload of **102**. Since 1995, we've received **12,637** animals.

By the end of our 2020/21 fiscal year, we received **1077** injured animals (not counting DOA), **352** cases were released back to the wild (36.7% release rate) (tables 2 and 3). While this may not seem to be a high release rate, the base case level includes animals that succumbed to injuries very shortly after we received them. Unfortunately, many of the rest have serious injuries that rendered them unable to survive in the wild.

One of the many important functions that MARS accomplishes is our contribution to the recovery of species of interest (yellow listed), species at risk (blue listed) and endangered species (red-listed). Endangered is when a species has a population so low and threats (e.g. habitat loss) are so high that there is a real chance these species could go extinct unless something is done. Blue-listed species are those that are showing population decline that could end up as red-listed if something isn't done. Yellow-listed species are those of particular interest.

Table 1 Number of Cases per Year

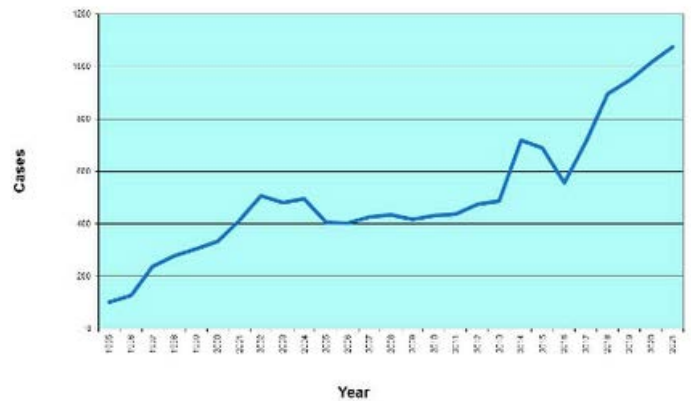


Table 2 Number of Releases per Year

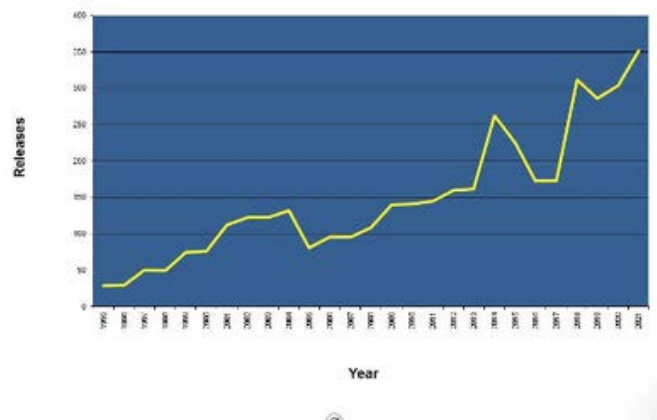
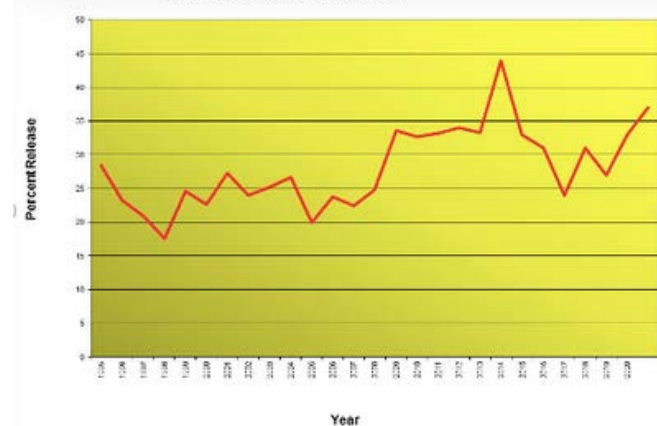


Table 3 Percent Release Rate per Year



# Blue-Listed

- 2 Band-tailed pigeon
- 2 California Gulls
- 16 Great Blue Herons
- 1 Northern Pygmy Owl
- 3 Peregrine Falcons
- 1 Western Screech Owl

# Red-Listed

- 2 Barn Owls
- 1 Northern Fulmar
- 1 Northern Goshawk
- 1 Western Painted Turtle
- 1 Western Grebe

**- Warren Warttig, RPBio, President**



# Rehabilitation Manager's Report

2020 was a challenging time for the Wildlife Hospital, but it also brought out the best in our community. The tenacity of our supporters and the unwavering dedication of our volunteers allowed us to rise to the challenges and achieve new heights amidst a global pandemic. It was another record year for patient admissions: we admitted a total of **1136** patients in 2020, a **20%** increase over 2019.



## Patients

This increase is partially explained by the wider reach of our organization. When other larger rehabilitation centers lacked the resources to help wildlife outside of their immediate area, MARS stepped up to the plate.

We formed a partnership with **Island Wildlife Natural Care Centre**, a triage facility on Salt Spring Island, and retrieved animals from Nanaimo, the Gulf Islands, the Cowichan Valley, and even the Greater Victoria area. This endeavour was only made possible by our tireless Caregivers and Transport Volunteers and the tremendous work of the construction team, which gave us the new Global Aviary and Flight Pen.

## Most Common Avian Patients (2020)

**82** American Robins

**60** Bald Eagles

**42** Pine Siskins

**34** Mallard Ducks

**34** American Crows

## Most Common Mammal Patients (2020)

**59** Racoons

**47** Black-tailed Deer

**7** Harbour Seals

**7** Red Squirrels

**6** Little Brown Bats





## Species at Risk

We continued to contribute to the recovery of at-risk (blue-listed) and endangered (red-listed) species. The Wildlife Hospital treated six blue-listed species, including:

**2 Band-tailed Pigeons, 2 California Gulls, 16 Great Blue Herons, 1 Northern Goshawk, 1 Northern Pygmy Owl, and 1 Western Screech Owl. Red-listed species included 2 Barn Owls, 1 Northern Fulmar, 3 Peregrine Falcons, and 1 Painted Turtle.**

Despite the increase in wildlife patients, our release rate remained stable at **36.7%**. This is a great achievement, as the majority of animals are admitted in very poor condition.

## Ambassadors

**Marlowe** was admitted to the Wildlife Hospital in September of 2019 after a collision with a window in the middle of the night. Following weeks of treatment, a vet specialist determined that this young Barred Owl's eyesight and hearing were intact, but that he lacked the normal fight-or-flight and predatory responses needed for survival in the wild. His calm and gentle nature made him an excellent candidate as a teaching animal, and he took to the glove right away. He officially became a MARS ambassador in September 2020.

In July of 2020, two very special American Crows were admitted to the Wildlife Hospital after being attacked by other crows in Port McNeill. **Nimpkish and Kokish** are siblings and true albinos. Complete absence of the pigment melanin causes a host of problems for wild birds, including brittle feathers, impaired vision, and poor thermoregulation, so with the support of our vet, we came to the conclusion that the most compassionate option for the twins was to give them a permanent home at MARS. These delightful pair are much loved by the Caregivers and officially became our first corvid ambassadors early this year. Altogether, it was truly inspiring to be a part of so much positivity and good news in such a dark time. What started as a year of challenges, turned out to be a year of successes that we can look back on with pride.

**- Gyl Andersen, Manager**

# Financial Reports

## Income Summary

	ACTUAL Mar 1, 2020 to Feb 28, 2021	ACTUAL Mar 1, 2019 to Feb 29, 2020
<b>INCOME</b>		
Visitor Education Centre & Gift Shop	40,686.15	66,294.89
Fundraising	44,119.97	42,442.42
Donations	373,706.21	391,601.74
Province of BC Community Gaming	46,000	46,000
Grants	31,000	56,182.02
Parks Contract	10,400	10,300
Government Subsidies	10,000	0
Membership Dues	5,629	4,060
Wage Subsidy	23,035	4,411
Other Income	5,463.19	3,221.19
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>590,039.52</b>	<b>624,513.26</b>
<b>EXPENSE</b>		
Wildlife Care	36,528.22	36,506.53
Education	7,030.12	7,487.03
Gift Shop	10,660.4	14,514.42
Wages	147,285.24	136,028.02
Amortization	67,569.32	63,395.7
Administration & General	89,817.29	82,180.08
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>358,890.59</b>	<b>340,111.78</b>
<b>SURPLUS/DEFICIT</b>	<b>231,148.93</b>	<b>284,401.48</b>



# Financial Reports

## Balance Summary

### MARS Wildlife Rescue Centre Comparative Balance Sheet

	Year Ended Feb 28, 2021	Year Ended Feb 29, 2020
<b>ASSET</b>		
<b>Current Assets</b>		
Operating Funds	69,558	58,491
Restricted Funds	276,254	74,884
Accounts Receivable	6,102	8,527
Inventory	6,026	5,677
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<u>357,940</u>	<u>147,578</u>
<b>Capital Assets</b>		
Land	389,500	389,500
Buildings & Outbuildings	1,455,674	1,349,592
Furniture & Equipment	88,106	84,123
Vehicles	63,492	58,492
Parking & Landscaping	34,367	34,367
	2,031,140	1,916,074
Less Depreciation	-248,955	-181,386
<b>Total Capital Assets</b>	<u>1,782,185</u>	<u>1,734,688</u>
<b>TOTAL ASSET</b>	<u>2,140,125</u>	<u>1,882,266</u>
<b>LIABILITY</b>		
<b>Current Liabilities</b>		
Accounts Payable	12,806	19,970
CEBA Loan	40,000	0
CRA, GST & PST Payable	5,601	5,046
<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>	<u>58,407</u>	<u>25,017</u>
<b>Long Term Liabilities</b>		
CCCU Mortgage	291,866	288,546
<b>Total Long Term Liabilities</b>	<u>291,866</u>	<u>288,546</u>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITY</b>	<u>350,272</u>	<u>313,563</u>
<b>EQUITY</b>		
Fund Balance - Internally Restricted	31,521	31,951
Fund Balance - Externally restricted	61,000	50,811
Fund Balance - Capital Assets	1,476,182	1,201,539
Current Earnings	231,150	284,402
<b>TOTAL EQUITY</b>	<u>1,799,853</u>	<u>1,568,703</u>
<b>LIABILITIES AND EQUITY</b>	<u>2,150,125</u>	<u>1,882,266</u>

The chartered accounting firm, Moeller Matthews, prepared a Review Engagement Report for this fiscal year for MARS. For a copy of these financial statements, email: [pearl\\_mckenzie@telus.net](mailto:pearl_mckenzie@telus.net)

# Special Events & Fundraising

Our 2020 fiscal year started out relatively normal but was soon to take a drastic turn with the outbreak of COVID-19. While March and April are primarily spent planning our fundraising strategies for the coming months, we were halted in our tracks by what turned out to be a pandemic. All the usual venues for selling raffle tickets and educating the public about wildlife and the environment were now off-limits. Our new normal was numerous cancelled events, the closure of our Visitor Centre, wearing face masks and social distancing.

We were able to re-open the Visitor Centre at the beginning of July for three days a week to offer outdoor tours of eight people at a time with COVID-19 restrictions in place. **Our annual summer raffle**, our biggest fundraiser, usually kicks off at the end of May at Kitty Coleman Woodland Gardens Spring Art and Bloom Festival. Since these were unusual times, we decided to begin the raffle in March and carry it out online. This enabled us to have a much longer selling period which we hoped would partially compensate for the fact that we could not sell them at events. The public didn't disappoint.





Online raffle ticket sales did incredibly well with us selling all but **441** of the **2,500** tickets for a total income of **\$20,590**. **A young girl donated** some money to MARS from a project she was involved in at her school called "Save the Bees" She made paper mâché ornaments into which seeds were planted and these were sold to raise funds. This was such an amazing gesture from a young person and hopefully, she will continue to care for wildlife and the environment as an adult.

**A Philanthropic Shop in Courtenay** called "Uplifters", a hip west coast shop, with everything for the animal lover, environmentalist or positive self-care fashionista is a new business in Courtenay that donates a percentage of profits back to various community groups, one of which is MARS Wildlife Rescue Centre. Gift boxes and care packages could be purchased with 20% of the cost of the gift going to MARS. **In September and October**, Body Craft Therapeutics generously held a fundraiser with proceeds going to MARS. In October we decided to launch an online 50/50 raffle which started on October 23rd and ended with a draw at MARS on February 28th, 2021. Proceeds from this were: **\$19,750** with **\$9,875** for MARS and the same amount for the jackpot winner, Nadine Watson from Langley City on the mainland. **Art Knapp's Garden Centre** in Courtenay contacted MARS to say they are selling a tree of Christmas ornaments and would like to donate all proceeds from the sale of these ornaments to MARS.

We let them know that we appreciated them thinking of us. The sale started in early November until after Christmas and brought in **\$372**. They were also kind enough to sell some of our COVID-19 masks with proceeds of **\$571.20**. We were planning to have a Christmas Craft Fair at the Visitor Centre starting in November but due to the pandemic, we chose to err on the side of caution and close our doors in mid-November. They remained closed with a view to re-opening when restrictions would allow.

**One of our ongoing fundraisers** has been refundable cans and bottles that people take to the recycling depot and then have the money deposited in an account that MARS has set up at three Return-It Depots in Comox, Courtenay and Campbell River. When COVID-19 hit, many people did not want to sort these items at the depot and subsequently asked if they could drop them off at MARS. We encouraged them to do so and MARS volunteers sorted them and cashed them in which raised a fair amount of money.

We discussed ways to make this a more lucrative enterprise by possibly having regular pick-ups around the valley. Our Board of Director's secretary, Jae, took the lead on this. Instead of curbside pick-up, we opted for express recycling where people bag their refundables in clear plastic bags, put a printed MARS sticker on it, and drop them off at the recycling depot. Here, the depot does the sorting and credits the MARS account.

There is still the option to sort them at the depot as well and credit MARS. **In January** we started a new campaign to raise money for a larger updated fawn complex, since we are taking in fawns from all over the Island and did not have adequate rehabilitation facilities for them. The total raised as of February 28th, the end of our fiscal year, was **\$10,226**. The campaign for Raptor Sponsorship had reached **\$6,340** and the Wildlife Release campaign total was **\$4,575**.

Through all the uncertainty and concern about job loss and financial woes, our wonderful supporters continued to be there for us through thick and thin. There are not enough words to express how grateful we are for our generous community and our members and supporters who have played a huge part in keeping the wildlife centre operational. This has been a year like no other with public events being cancelled and COVID-19 restrictions in place everywhere. Our wildlife hospital and visitor centre staff, volunteers and incredible supporters are helping us weather this storm and I am at a loss to adequately express the gratitude we all feel as we work together toward the common goal of wildlife rehabilitation and preservation.

**- Lynda Hodgkinson, Chair of the Special Events Committee & Facebook Administrator**

# Visitor Centre Report

We celebrated opening the new visitor building in June 2019. Unfortunately, less than a year later, in March 2020, the first wave of the COVID pandemic closed us down along many other businesses and organizations. After researching Worksafe BC guidelines, our manager implemented safety measures that made it possible for us to open the gift shop off and on during the year as health guidelines permitted. Even with this reduction in hours, retail sales brought in almost **\$17,000** during this very challenging year. Not surprisingly, the best-selling items were the beautifully designed and crafted masks made by MARS' sewing volunteers.

Given that open air is safer for visitors and volunteers, we shifted our focus from indoor exhibits to pre-booked outdoor tours of the property. Judging from comments in our guest book, this was a very popular option. Admission to the visitor centre is by donation and our visitors have been very generous and supportive.

Another highlight of this fiscal year was the generous gift of a tiny house from a supporter who was moving to Europe. We were able to sell this little building and raise **\$46,000** for wildlife care.



# Visitor Centre Report

During the summer of 2020 we were assisted with tours by two students funded by a Canada Summer Jobs grant and high school student volunteers who helped with the cash register and setting up a wetland display.

The success of the visitor centre is due to a great number of people who volunteer their time and skill: artists who donate their work for us to sell and cashiers in the gift shop; guides who lead visitors on tours of the property and tell the stories of our patients; bird handlers who make presentations with our ambassador birds; and gardeners landscaping the site with native plants.

We could not do this work without the two part time staff who give many hours of volunteer time to make it all work safely and efficiently and the visitors who every day lift our spirits and join us in our efforts to help MARS' wildlife patients.

**- Pearl McKenzie, Vice-President**



# Education Report

The education program at MARS exists to fulfill our mission, **to conserve and protect native wildlife and its natural habitat through education and rehabilitation.** Despite the challenges of 2020, we were able to continue that work, due to the foundational efforts of so many in years before and the commitment of current staff and volunteers.



We had an energetic and successful start to 2020 but, due to Covid 19, we closed both the gift shop and visitor centre in mid-March. We also suspended school visits of ambassador birds and public events. For the remainder of the fiscal year, our open days ebbed and flowed based on public health orders. In total, we were open seven months in 2020, but only five in the fiscal year. During that time, we welcomed **2000 visitors** for outdoor tours.

Throughout the year, we relied heavily on social media (Facebook especially), our website, and local media (newspapers, radio, and television) to share the stories of our patients, provide information about human-caused harm to wildlife, and raise funds when we couldn't through our traditional means.



We held **12 outdoor daycare and school-guided tours** with ambassador birds before and after the summer. Bird handlers made four school presentations reaching **310 children and adults**.

In July we reopened the gift shop and invited guests to book outdoor tours. These were well received and continued until we closed again in November. With a few exceptions, we remained closed through the rest of the fiscal year. Along with the rest of the world, we moved to online presentations. **8 virtual tours reached 160 adults and children**. We continued online training for both guides and bird handlers.

A few highlights of the year: in July we celebrated the opening of the flight pen with a small but powerful ceremony. We were honoured to welcome Chief Councillor Nicole Rempel of K'ómoks First Nation, K'ómoks elders and families, and the Kumugwe Dancers. The construction team completed the wetland blind and the gravel pathway through the alder grove, opening a new dimension to our tours. The team also completed the kiosk at the entrance to the visitor center. It has become a focal point for information about MARS history, our legacy donors, and wildlife information. And work continued around the MARS property with the removal of invasive species such as Scotch Broom and Cutleaf Blackberry, improving soil, developing beds, and planting native trees, shrubs, grasses, and flowers. The goals are to create habitat for birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians and all manner of insects, to educate the public about strategies for land restoration, and to continuing to make MARS a beautiful place. All of this work required a great deal of planning, energy, and flexibility as we faced changing health orders. The visitor center team of managers, steering committee members, guides, bird handlers, gift shop volunteers, habitat stewards, and summer staff worked collaboratively in challenging times with the safety of the public and each other in mind.

Bravo to everyone for all we achieved.

**- Jan Smith, Education Program**



# Board Members & Staff List

## Board of Directors

**President:** Warren Warttig

**Vice President:** Pearl McKenzie

**Treasurer:** Paul Jackman

**Secretary:** Jaewon Kim

Darlene Banerd

Lynda Hodgkinson

Therisa Lowe

Allison Morrison

Virginia (Ginny) Simpson

Janet (Jan) Smith

John Turner

## Staff

**Manager of Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre:** Gylaine Andersen

**Assistant Manager of Wildlife Rehabilitation:** Kiersten Shyian

**Manager of Visitor Centre:** Diane Weir

**Administrator:** Laurie Ulm

