



MARS

WILDLIFE RESCUE CENTRE

ANNUAL REPORT 2023 • 2024

VISITOR CENTRE

(778) 428-1990
Fri - Sun | 10am - 3pm

HOSPITAL

(250) 337-2021
9am - 5pm

P.O. Box 415
1331 Williams Beach Rd,
Merville, BC, V0R 2M0

info@marswildliferescue.com

www.marswildliferescue.com

 [@marswildliferescue](https://www.instagram.com/marswildliferescue)



Mountaineire Avian Rescue Society

MISSION

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

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

GOALS

PURPOSE

Rescue, Recover, Rehabilitate, and Release ill, injured, orphaned or oiled wildlife.

Conserve and 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.



LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We respectfully acknowledge that the land we gather on is on the Unceded Traditional Territory of the K'ómoks First Nation, the traditional keepers of this land.



Mountaineer Avian Rescue Society (MARS) is pleased to thank all of our generous contributors for their donations of funds, time, supplies and services that enabled our programs to continue over the past year.

Thank you to the Province of British Columbia, the Comox Valley Regional District and the Strathcona Regional District for their financial support.

As well, businesses play an important role helping MARS Wildlife Rescue with donations of equipment use (Mark of Ponting Contracting), time and support (Mark of Glacier Pipe), materials (Uplands Contracting) and rentals (United Rental and Pilon Tool Rentals). Thanks to Progressive Systems for their donated time and RK Contracting. And thanks to Wayne (BC Smoke Shop) for finding so many ways to support MARS.

Raffle prize donations also help. We greatly appreciate the generosity and support of WestJet and other supporters like the Wickaninnish Inn, two of our long-time supporters. Also most appreciated are our wonderful corporate members.

Our donor privacy policy prevents us from providing full names for individual donors like Dan and Wendy who discreetly jump in with help when needed, Chris who turns plants into donations and Cliff and Wendy who build very popular hummingbird feeders to sell in the gift shop. Thank you also to the other volunteers who very

creatively produce mittens, hats, bird houses and a number of other items that people come back to purchase year after year, raising funds for patient care.

We are very grateful to the family who quietly made a significant contribution to our hospital expansion and another that supported our education program and to the anonymous donor who helped with the costs of expanding our raccoon complex. Thanks to Sharron for her continued support and advice.

We thank our partners in rescuing and caring for wildlife, for example: BC Ferries, Pacific Coastal Airlines, Shar Kare and Planet Clean.

During this past year MARS had 96 monthly donors (up from 92 in the previous year) providing \$3,422 each month for MARS' operating costs.

We received a bequest from Dorthea Walker's estate, allowing us to put funds aside for unexpected expenses and development of our facilities.

Thanks to our Construction Committee. This committee has no meetings, no minutes and no sub-committees with no official start or end time. They are a group of handy men and women who do most of the MARS building maintenance and construction of outbuildings.

We also have a dedicated team of volunteers headed up by Brian Mitchell that maintain park trails under a Comox Valley Regional District contract that

started in 2012. Since that time, this crew has brought in remarkable total income of \$92,450!

Hands-on volunteers – e.g., animal care and rescue, tour guides, ambassador bird care and handling for public education, staffing the gift shop, filling potholes, fundraising, sorting returnable cans and bottles, maintenance of the buildings, invasive plant removal and native plant cultivation, Facebook and Instagram postings, maintenance of our website, raising meal worms – all these tasks and more are the life blood of MARS, with 27,869 volunteer hours logged during the 2023/24 year. This is an equivalent value of \$557,830, which is quite incredible, especially when not all of our volunteers track their volunteer time. All of this volunteering allows us to maintain a minimal staff at roughly 4.7 full time equivalents.

And finally, thanks and appreciation to members of our volunteer Board of Directors. As MARS grows, this group of people conscientiously steer us to a sustainable future through use of sound legal and financial policies. With your help, they are making sure that we have adequate resources to meet our mission statement.

Warren Warttig, RPBio, MARS President



Warren Holding A Baby Mink

Yearly Recap

In 2023, MARS admitted 937 patients in total, ranging from small Hummingbirds to Black-tailed Deer. This admission number decreased 16% from 2022, as there continued to be a heavy presence of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) in the area.

Wildlife came to us from all over Vancouver Island, and even from the Sunshine Coast and the Greater Vancouver Area. Just over 4% of our total intake were transfers from other rehabilitation centres, including Island Wildlife Conservancy on Salt Spring Island, and PROWLS in Powell River.

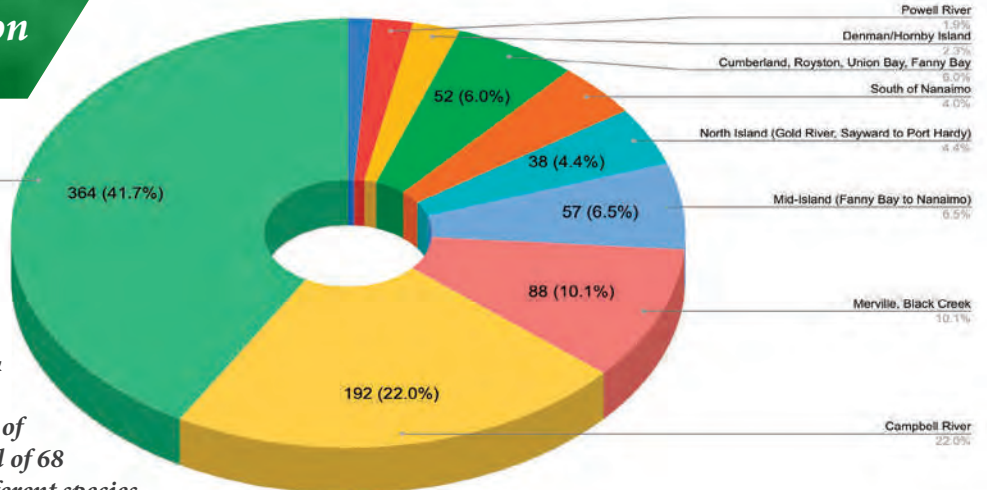
Inflation has been a large issue again this last year, with the cost of supplies rising and donations decreasing. This continues to strain our operating budget as we struggle to keep our patients fed and purchase necessities like disinfectants and cleaning material.



Intake By Region

Courtenay/Comox
41.7%

MARS continues to admit and treat **red-listed (endangered)** & **blue-listed (threatened)** species, as well as species of special concern, at a total of 68 individuals across 20 different species.



Red Listed Species

- 7 Townsend's Voles
- 2 Western Grebes
- 1 Western Painted Turtle

Any species or ecosystem that is at risk of being lost (extirpated, endangered or threatened) in British Columbia

Blue Listed Species

- 10 Barn Swallows
- 9 Great Blue Heron
- 4 Northern Saw-whet Owls
- 4 Killdeer
- 2 Townsend's Big-eared Bats
- 2 Marbled Murrelets
- 2 Surf Scoters
- 2 Band-tailed Pigeons

Includes any native species considered to be of Special Concern (formerly Vulnerable) in British Columbia

- 2 Hairy Woodpeckers
- 2 Yuma Myotis
- 1 Long-tailed Duck
- 1 California Gull
- 1 Peregrine Falcon
- 1 Common Nighthawk
- 1 Ancient Murrelet
- 1 Purple Martin

Most Common Avian Patients of 2023

88 American Robins
48 Bald Eagles
29 Barred Owls

28 American Crows
28 Common Ravens



Most Common Mammalian Patients of 2023

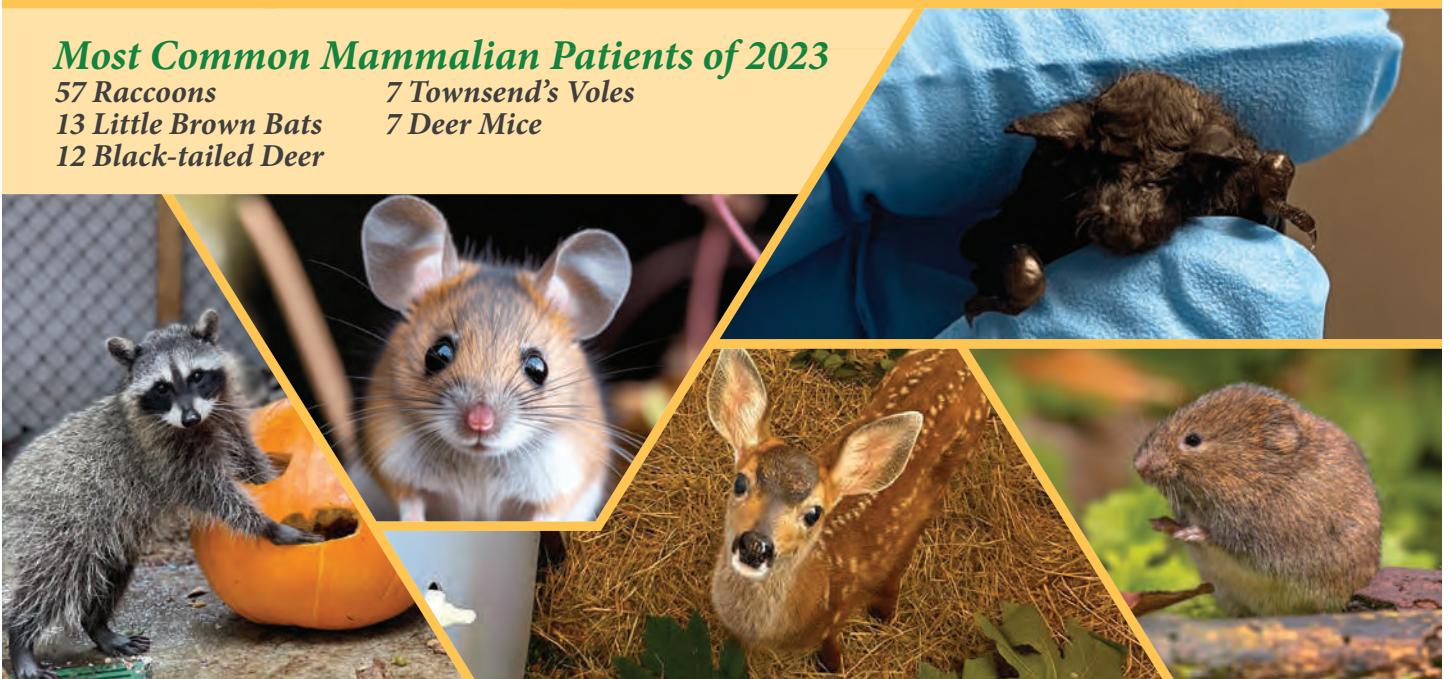
57 Raccoons

13 Little Brown Bats

12 Black-tailed Deer

7 Townsend's Voles

7 Deer Mice



Patient Admissions

2023 saw a major increase in cat attacks as a reason for wildlife admission, followed closely by impacts from vehicles and impacts on windows. These were the leading causes for admissions for all species.

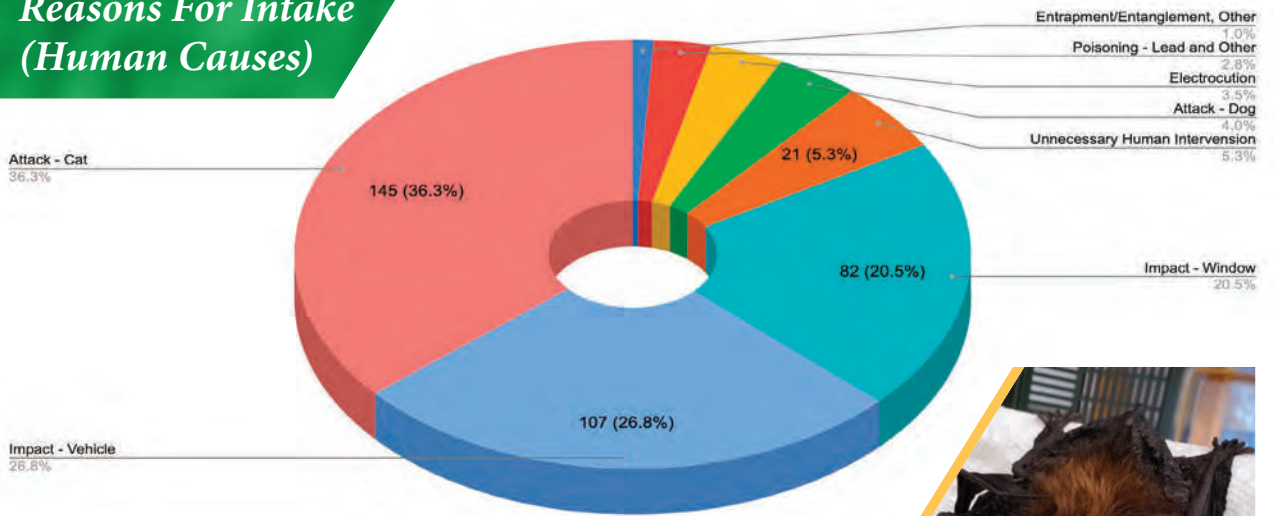
Animal populations are still struggling with plenty of diseases, the worst of these

was the return of HPAI, which greatly decimated bird populations, and which affects multiple species of birds including waterfowl, raptors and corvids. We believe this is the main reason for the greatly reduced admission numbers in 2023, as it not only affects the healthy adult birds, but those who are asymptomatic

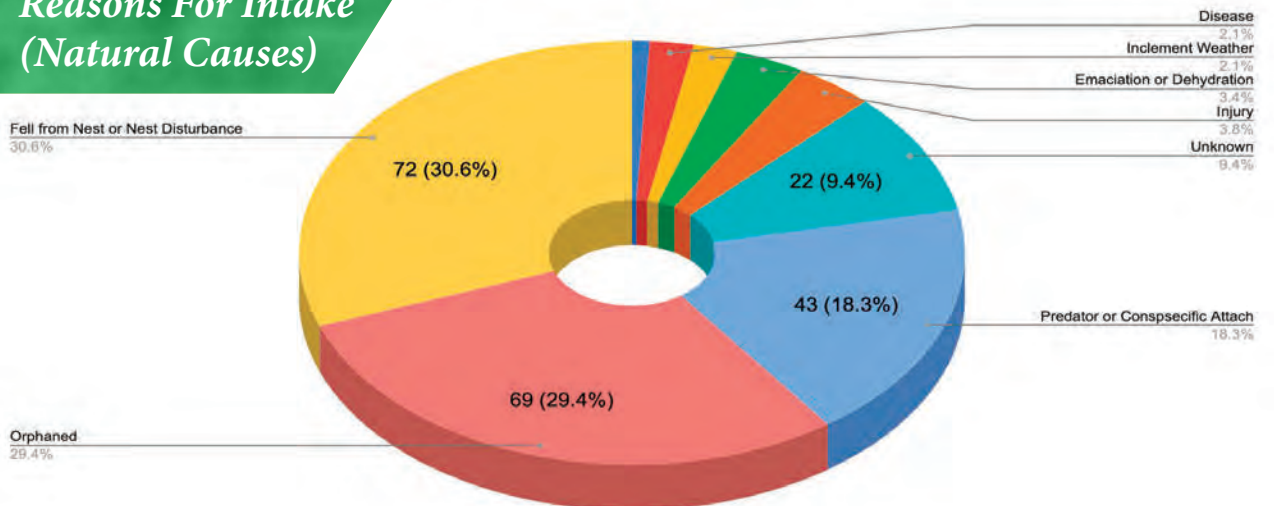
carriers appear to have a lower rate of successful broods.

Our Fawn ICU was deemed unusable in 2022, and we were unable to take in any black-tailed deer that were in need of rehabilitation, only admitting those that were requiring humane euthanasia.

Reasons For Intake (Human Causes)



Reasons For Intake (Natural Causes)





Ambassador Update

Kora

In 2023, MARS received a juvenile Common Raven from WildARC in Victoria in need of intensive rehabilitation due to her injuries. After being in our care for a number of months, veterinarians deemed this bird unreleasable due to her poor eyesight, thought to be a result of a congenital disease.

Noting Kora's docile behaviour and incredible curiosity towards humans, rehabilitators thought that she would be an excellent fit for our ambassador program. Kora was made an ambassador in early 2024.

ASSETS

	As at Feb 29, 2024		As at Feb 28, 2023	
Current Assets				
Operating Funds		227,454		328,436
Restricted Funds		171,281		331,511
Accounts Receivable		10,904		5,442
Inventory		9,190		7,080
Total Current Assets		418,828		672,469
Capital Assets				
Land	389,500		389,500	
Buildings & Outbuildings	1,682,875		1,524,489	
Furniture & Equipment	140,450		131,166	
Vehicles	75,026		52,326	
Parking & Landscaping	47,429		46,391	
		2,335,280		2,143,872
Less Depreciation		441,975		371,682
Total Capital Assets		1,893,305		1,772,190
TOTAL ASSET		2,312,134		2,444,657

LIABILITY

	As at Feb 29, 2024		As at Feb 28, 2023	
Current Liabilities				
Accounts Payable		15,652		14,094
CEBA Loan		0		30,000
Prepaid Firehall Lease		4,800		4,800
Deferred Contribution		21,658		0
CRA, GST & PST Payable		5,382		6,321
Total Current Liabilities		47,492		55,215
Long Term Liabilities				
CCCU Mortgage		225,921		278,377
Total Long Term Liabilities		225,921		278,377
TOTAL LIABILITY		273,412		333,592

EQUITY

	As at Feb 29, 2024		As at Feb 28, 2023	
Equity				
Fund Balance - Internally Restricted		61,106		68,337
Fund Balance - Externally restricted		132,758		82,854
Fund Balance - Unrestricted		423,389		292,186
Fund Balance - Capital Assets		1,493,812		1,518,856
Retained Earnings - Previous Year		0		0
Current Earnings		-72,343		148,831
Total Owners Equity		2,038,722		2,111,062
TOTAL EQUITY		2,038,722		2,111,064
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY		2,312,134		2,444,657

INCOME

	ACTUAL Mar 1, 2023 to Feb 29, 2024	ACTUAL Mar 1, 2022 to Feb 28, 2023
Visitor Education Centre & Gift Shop	108,150	90,792
Fundraising	62,020	46,598
Donations	207,604	386,099
Gaming	65,000	65,000
Grants	15,400	27,073
Parks Contract	11,400	11,400
Firehall Lease	19,200	19,200
Membership Dues	7,280	5,680
Wage Subsidy	15,391	53,188
Other Income	11,809	4,078
Total Income	523,254	709,108

EXPENSE

	ACTUAL Mar 1, 2023 to Feb 29, 2024	ACTUAL Mar 1, 2022 to Feb 28, 2023
Wildlife Care	129,767	122,041
Education	30,029	31,501
Gift Shop	29,483	24,714
Wages	231,634	213,805
Amortization	71,793	72,604
Administration & General	102,893	95,612
Total Expenses	595,599	560,277
SURPLUS/DEFICIT	(72,345)	148,831

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



March 1, 2023, to February 29, 2024

March 1, 2023 was the beginning of the 2023/24 fiscal year and also the start of a month long 50/50 raffle to raise funds for the upcoming "baby season". The event was accessible online through the Raffle Box platform and at the gift shop. This got off to a great start, and by March 31st, the jackpot was up to \$20,000 with \$10,000 for the winner,

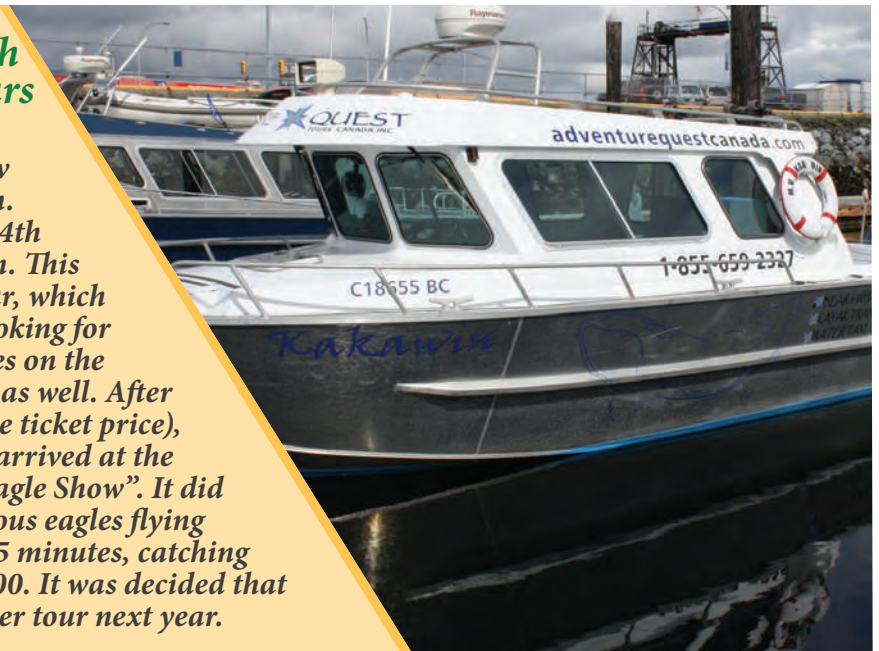
Kathy Staples, of Campbell River, and a matching amount for MARS. Kathy graciously donated a portion of her winnings back to MARS.

On April 23rd, The Raptors from Duncan were present at MARS to give a raptor demonstration. Participation fees went to The Raptors and, in return, they will be giving some additional training to our bird handlers.

Our annual Spring and Summer raffle was launched on May 20th with eight fantastic prizes. Instead of the usual four month run with all prizes being drawn in September, a prize was drawn every two weeks. Congratulations went out to all the winners and a thank you to all of those who bought tickets and continue to support MARS' vital work. Revenue from this event was just over \$25,000.

MARS partnered with Adventure Quest Tours

out of Campbell River for a 12 person 7-hour Eagle Show fundraiser, held on July 18th. Seats went on sale on May 24th and were all sold by June 5th. This was a very well-rounded tour, which departed in the morning, looking for bears foraging on the beaches on the way up and spotting whales as well. After a nice lunch, (included in the ticket price), in a remote area, the group arrived at the highlight of the tour, "The Eagle Show". It did not disappoint, with numerous eagles flying around the boat for about 45 minutes, catching hake. Proceeds were \$2400.00. It was decided that we should partner for another tour next year.



TUNDRA

In September, Gary Allan, who works with, and educates the public on wolves, joined us to present the documentary *Part of the Pack*. This film was several years in the making. One of the highlights is Gary's

work, and particularly his raising of Tundra, the wolfdog, who came with him to MARS on a few occasions before she passed away in 2022. Gary's introduction to the film, and the film itself, were very well received. Admission to this presentation was by donation and proceeds were \$375.70.



MARS' Hootin' Halloween 50/50 Raffle

Began on the first of October, running until October 31st. The winner was from Sayward, enjoying a bounty of \$5,585 with a matching amount to MARS for patient care.

A pop-up holiday Crafters sale

Held at MARS from November 16th to December 23rd featuring local Christmas-themed crafted items. Proceeds were just over \$2,000.



HELPING HANDS FOR WILDLIFE
CHRISTMAS RAFFLE
rafflebox.ca/raffle/mars
TICKETS \$20 EACH
Ends December 17th

QUILT GROBOX NESTING BOX

Licence #145715 Must be 19 and in BC at time of purchase

Campbell River Quilters

Gifted MARS with a beautiful quilt, a labour of love put together by their group. They wanted us to use the quilt to fundraise, so we held a special Christmas raffle, to do just that, and included a donated handmade bird box and a raised garden box. The raffle proceeds were almost \$5,000.

The proceeds of Crown Isle's Christmas Gingerbread House fundraiser were divided amongst MARS and two other charities. Funds were given to each charity in January 2024.

It seems like it's becoming the norm to refer to a past year as challenging, but it is, nonetheless. Covid 19, RSV,

H5N1, Human influenza are a few of the stressful components to the year we have just gone through. Regardless of these facts, we have managed to continue MARS' mandate of rescue and rehabilitation as well as educating the public on all things "wildlife" This was by no means an easy task but was made much easier with

the help of our ever-faithful supporters, who are always close by, ready, willing, and able to give us a hand. Thank you to all of them and to our amazing staff and volunteers. It truly takes a village.

Lynda Hodgkinson
Board Member,
Facebook Administrator

EDUCATION PROGRAM REPORT

At MARS Wildlife Rescue, our commitment to protecting and rehabilitating injured and orphaned wildlife is deeply intertwined with our educational mission. Over the past year, we have expanded our outreach efforts, equipping communities with vital knowledge about conservation, species protection, and treatment of local wildlife. Through our on-site tours, school programs, and public engagement events, we continued to inspire individuals to become active stewards of the environment. Our amazing family of volunteers have made incredible strides with our educational initiatives, our partnerships, and the lasting impact these programs have had on both participants and the wildlife they seek to protect.



Our on-site educational efforts, particularly through the Visitor Centre, have grown in popularity. Our guided tours allow visitors to engage and learn directly with our ambassador birds—wildlife that cannot be released back into the wild but continue to play a vital role in educating the public about

the challenges and importance of conservation.

Over 4500 guests took part in our regularly scheduled guided tours during the 2023/24 fiscal year. These tours offered unique insights into our rescue operations, including a behind-the-

scenes look at how our rehabilitation team provides care for the hundreds of animals that pass through our hospital.

Thousands of additional people viewed the displays and exhibits in the visitor centre. Visitors also explored our interactive exhibits, some old and some new, which are designed to foster curiosity and understanding about local ecosystems and the wildlife within them providing fun and education to people of all ages and backgrounds. In addition to educational

activities at the Visitor Centre, MARS continued to strengthen its outreach programs. Our team regularly collaborates with schools and community organizations to bring the message of conservation to others across Vancouver Island. By tailoring our presentations to specific age groups, we ensure that children and adults are not only educated about local wildlife but are also encouraged to take action. These educational sessions often include guest appearances from our ambassador birds, bringing

the message of wildlife protection to life in a way that resonates with learners young and old. Through these partnerships, we have reached thousands of individuals, empowering the next generation with the knowledge and tools to protect our shared environment. Volunteers with ambassador (educational) birds made 17 outreach presentations to local schools and 12 to community groups including care homes, First Nations bands and summer camps.



This outlines the milestones we have achieved in the realm of education this year, from the increased visitor numbers at our facility to the development of new educational content and strengthened community partnerships. Through these efforts, MARS has not only fostered a deeper appreciation for wildlife among the public but also instilled a sense of collective responsibility for the protection and preservation of the species that call this region home.

Aaron Schmidt,
Education and Volunteer
Coordinator

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP



In 2023, our team continued the work of expanding and tending healthy habitat at MARS Wildlife Rescue. We held three invasive plant removal events and were gratified to have teams from the Royal Bank, the Backcountry Horsemen NVI chapter, and other community volunteers join us. They removed a significant amount of blackberry, holly, broom, and other invasives from two fawn pens and the water course on the field edge.

The team monitored the 15 beds that have been seeded and planted since 2020, weeding and watering appropriately through summer drought conditions. Signs indicating sensitive areas were placed to show where to tread lightly to protect plants like native orchids. Volunteers developed two new beds: a meadow near the pump house and another extending around the ambassador memorial gardens. Community groups including Brooklyn Streamkeepers,



Cumberland Community Forest, Morrison Creek Streamkeepers and Macdonald Wood Park Society borrowed invasive plant removal tools to complete their stewardship work.

The team was invited by several groups to give online and in-person presentations about establishing healthy habitats using

native plants and ecological practices. We are grateful to the MARS board, staff, and volunteers who continue to encourage and support the protection and expansion of stewardship efforts on our property. Respectfully submitted,

Jan Smith for the Habitat Stewardship Team.

BOARD MEMBERS & STAFF

Board of Directors

President

Warren Warttig

Vice President

Pearl McKenzie

Treasurer

Jaewon Kim

— until December 2023

Secretary

Therisa Lowe

Darlene Banerd

Nicole Booth

Linda Hawk

Lynda Hodgkinson

Virginia (Ginny) Simpson

John Turner

David Volkert



Manager of Wildlife Rehabilitation

Gylaine Andersen

Assistant Manager of Wildlife Rehabilitation

Kiersten Shyian

Wildlife Rehabilitators

Melissa Steinkey

Isabel Morales

Megan Erickson

Manager of Visitor Centre

Allison Morrison

— part time

Administrator

Laurie Ulm

Education and Volunteer Coordinator

James MacKenzie

— until Nov 30, 2023, succeeded by

Aaron Schmidt

— part time

Coordinator, Ambassador Bird Program

Lara Harder

— part time

Staff

Thank You
to our
Volunteers
an integral part of the
MARS TEAM

