

MOUNTAINAIRE AVIAN RESCUE SOCIETY

Annual Report

2024-2025



REPORTING DATES: MARCH 1, 2024 – FEBRUARY 28, 2025

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Merville, BC, Canada V0R 2M0
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www.marswildliferescue.com

Telephone: 1-250-337-2021

Hospital Hours: Daily 9:00 am-5:00 pm

Visitor Centre Hours: Fri-Sun 10:00 am-3:00 pm

Gilakas'la čεčε haθεč

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



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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 the federal and provincial governments that allow us to rescue, keep in captivity, and care for wildlife.

Purposes

Educate

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

Rescue, Recover, Rehabilitate, & Release

ill, injured, orphaned, or oiled wildlife.

Contribute

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

Conserve & Protect

wildlife by promoting the conservation of wildlife habitat.

Summary

(Reporting dates: March 1, 2024 – February 28, 2025)

ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN SUPPORT OF WILDLIFE RESCUE

- Hospital expansion completed: better public service, patient intake, donor welcome, staff office space, and kitchen for work experience students
- Fawn ICU: eight bays and full kitchen & laundry
- Underground services across the property: very big, complex job
- Permanent home for Kora, the Common Raven
- A purpose-built shed for refundables return and sorting

CHALLENGES TO MEETING OUR MISSION

- Complexities and costs due to HPAI (Avian Influenza)
- Did not receive Canada Summer Job Grant funding in 2024

PLANS & PROJECTS IN THE COMING YEAR

- Complete ambassador flight pen
- Complete bat enclosure to exercise and house bats
- Complete outdoor education pavilion



President's Report

Mountaineer Avian Rescue Society (MARS Wildlife Rescue) is grateful to all our supporters for their contributions, both big and small. Your donations of money and time have enabled our programs to thrive over the past year. We are thankful for the financial support from the Province of British Columbia, the Comox Valley Regional District, the Strathcona Regional District, the Comox Valley Community Foundation, and the Calgary Foundation.

Businesses play an essential role in helping us with equipment, materials, reduced rental costs, and time. We thank Mark Hargraves of Glacier Pipe, Uplands Excavation, United Rentals, and Pilon Tool Rentals. We are grateful to Progressive Electrical for their donated time and RK Septic Contracting for keeping us going. A special thank you to Mark Ponting of Ponting Contracting. Mark is unfortunately no longer with us, but his contributions will live on as a legacy.

Several community members expressed their support for MARS and our mission with generous bequests this year. One benefactor provided us with significant funding to finish our Fawn ICU, as well as our animal hospital addition.



The team at Uptown Dental has generously supported our care of hospital patients. Tim of Tim's Infotech was ready to help us with time and equipment to solve our challenges. Dr. Josh Tollman and the exotics team at the Mahalo Veterinary Hospital in Nanaimo donated a lot of time and supplies for a number of life-saving surgical procedures. Their help allowed us to release many animals back into the wild. We are grateful for our partners in rescuing and caring for wildlife, like BC Ferries, Pacific Coastal Airlines, Sealand Aviation, Shar-Kare Campbell River, Outback Nursery, and Woofy's.

President's Report

Our corporate and service group supporters include Dr. Fran Dental Care, Shannon Lawrence Physiotherapy, and Spike Top Cedar Ltd., as well as the Rotary Club, Eagles Ladies Auxiliary, Kinsmen, and Kinettes of Campbell River. Thank you to the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 160. and the Provincial Government Employees Community Services Fund.

Highly desired prizes helped us sell raffle tickets this year. We thank WestJet, Charles from the Wickaninnish Inn in Tofino, the Old House Hotel and Spa and other businesses and individuals for their generosity.

Then there are the donors like Chris, who turn plants into donations, and Dan and Wendy, who watch us closely and quietly jump in to help us when we need it. Cliff and Wendy and many other generous and talented people are our partners in creating a thriving gift shop. We are immensely grateful to Helga and Terry. Many thanks to Sharron for her continued support and advice.

We now have 110 monthly donors (up by 14 donors this year), providing MARS with a steady, predictable income of \$3461 each month. One of these consistent supporters is Wayne, of BC Smoke Shop in Victoria; this fine fellow will periodically drive to MARS with needed supplies.

Thanks go 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 like to build stuff. This committee does most of the MARS building maintenance and construction of outbuildings.

Hands-on volunteers (locals and international students) who worked in animal care, tour guiding, ambassador care and handling, pothole filling, and invasive plant removal are the life blood of MARS. From greeting guests in our gift shop to trails maintenance for the Regional District, from sorting bottles and cans, to serving on committees and on our board of directors, MARS volunteers have racked up an incredible 24,687 volunteer hours (the equivalent value of \$493,733) this year.

We appreciate every person who drops off food and supplies for our patients, those who bring guests to our Visitor Centre, and the children who donate their birthday money and sell lemonade to raise funds to help wildlife.

If we have missed thanking you for your support of MARS Wildlife Rescue, please accept our apologies and know we are grateful for your kindness.

- Warren Warttig, RPBio, MARS President



Wildlife Rehabilitation Report

In 2024, MARS admitted 1035 patients in total. This admission number increased 9.5% from 2023. Wildlife was brought to us through many avenues from all over Vancouver Island, the Sunshine Coast and even one case from Mission, BC. MARS took in just under 4% of our total admissions as transfers from other rehabilitation centres, including Island Wildlife Conservancy on Salt Spring Island, and PROWLS in Powell River (similar numbers to 2023).

Surprisingly, cat attacks were not the leading cause of admission this year, it was overtaken by orphaned wildlife (172 cases) where parents were confirmed deceased, which leads us to believe that there were higher than average fatal collisions (either vehicle or window) or attacks (either cat or predator) on adult animals for the year, which lead to a larger than normal number of orphans brought into care. 2024 saw a small decrease in the number of cat attack patients from last year (124). The third most common cause for admission was vehicle impacts (111), followed by window strikes (78).

Bird populations are still struggling with HPAI, which greatly decimated the population of waterfowl in the Comox Valley. According to the swan count occurring in the valley, the swan populations have been increasing slowly, but they are still much lower than in previous years. 2024 saw a number of different species with symptoms of HPAI, including Northern Shovelers, American Wigeons, White-winged Scoters, Buffleheads, and multiple species of gulls. Surprisingly, we did not see any corvids or raptors exhibiting symptoms this year. Of the 24 patients admitted to the hospital for HPAI, 13 were Canada Geese.

Our new Fawn ICU was not completed until later in the season so we were only able to successfully raise two fawns to the age of release.

Inflation has again been a large issue this last year, with the cost of supplies rising, and donations decreasing. Thankfully, 2024 did not see the addition of tariffs to that problem, which will be a problem for next year's report.

The support and kindness from our community never ceases to amaze us whenever we send a call-out for supplies. The staff and volunteers are ever humbled by the dedication, and wish to say a heartfelt "Thank you!" to all of our supporters.

- Megan Erickson, Interim Manager of Wildlife Rehabilitation



PHOTOS BY MEGAN ERICKSON



WESTERN GREBE
-NIAMH CARROLL-MARSH



SURF SCOTER - MEGAN ERICKSON

Red-Listed Species

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

- 7 Townsend's Voles
- 1 Common Murre
- 1 Northern Goshawk
- 1 Western Grebe

MARS continues to admit and treat red-listed (endangered) and blue-listed (threatened) species, as well as species of special concern, at a total of 58 individuals across 16 different species.

Blue-Listed Species

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

- 13 Great Blue Heron
- 8 Band-tailed Pigeon
- 7 Barn Swallow
- 3 California Gull
- 2 Long-tailed Duck
- 2 Purple Martin
- 2 Red-necked Phalarope
- 2 Surf Scoter
- 2 Townsend's Big-eared Bat
- 1 Marbled Murrelet



GREAT BLUE HERON
-NIAMH CARROLL-MARSH



PURPLE MARTIN
-TASH DAVIES

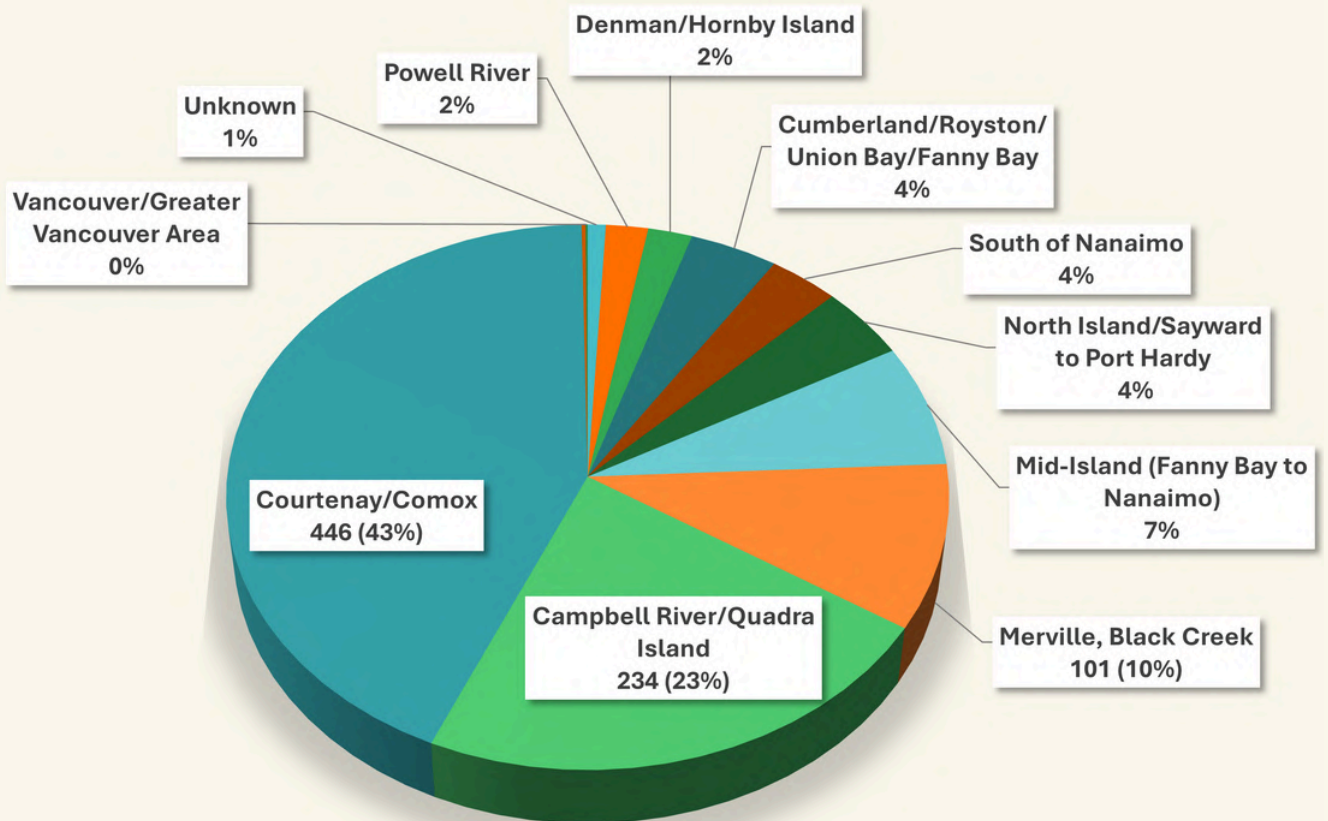
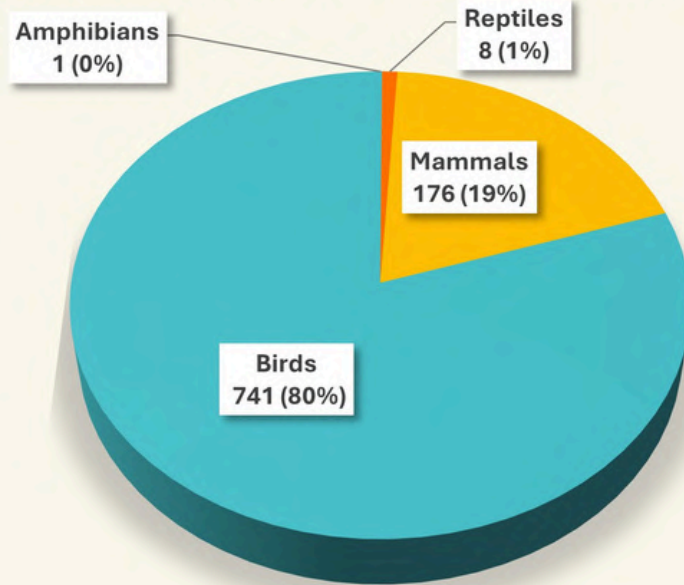


TOWNSEND'S BIG-EARED BAT
-MEGAN ERICKSON



NIAMH CARROLL-MARSH

All Wildlife Admitted to MARS in 2024



Intake by Region



DYLAN DOUCET

Most Common Avian Patients in 2024

- 85** American Robin
- 60** Mallard
- 46** Bald Eagle
- 29** Anna's Hummingbird
- 25** Canada Goose



MEGAN ERICKSON

Most Common Mammalian Patients in 2024

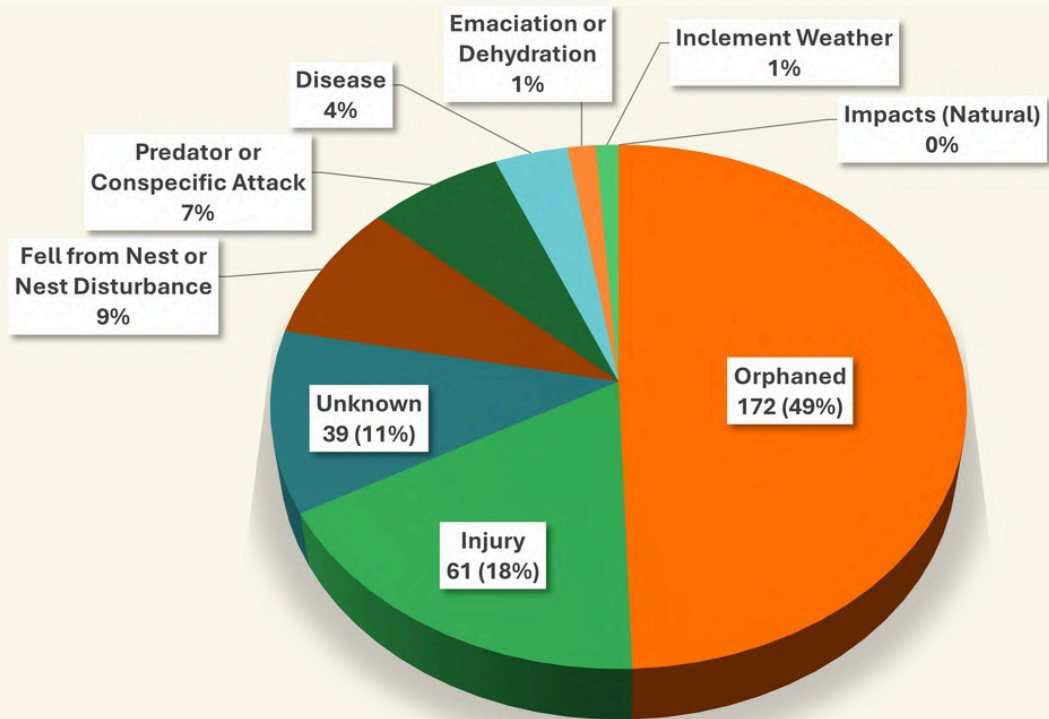
- 72** Raccoon
- 30** Black-tailed Deer
- 15** Yuma Myotis
- 9** Big Brown Bat
- 9** Red Squirrel



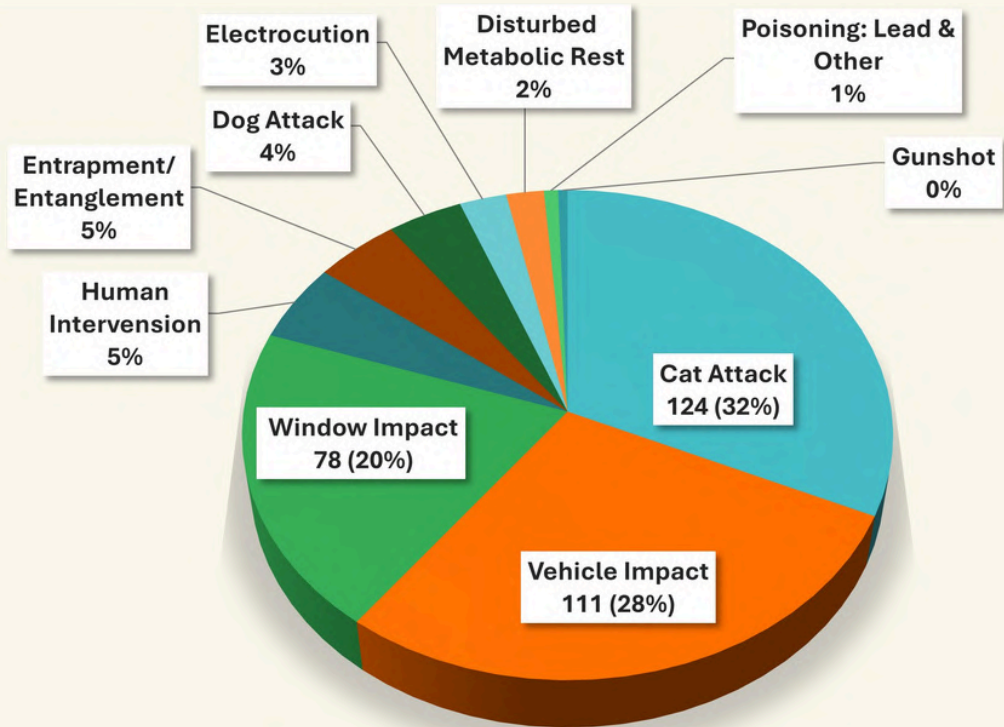
TASH DAVIES



DYLAN DOUCET



Reasons for Intake (Natural Causes)



Reasons for Intake (Human Causes)

Financial Reports 2024-2025

Nicole Booth - Treasurer

Reporting dates:
March 1, 2024 – February 28, 2025

THREE-YEAR FINANCIAL RESULT SUMMARY

	FY 2024-2025	FY 2023-2024	FY 2022-2023
Total Revenue	843,751	523,254	709,107
<small>* not including in-kind and amortization</small>			
Total Expenses	594,908	523,806	487,674
<small>* not including in-kind and amortization</small>			
Net Surplus (Deficit)	248,843	(552)	221,433
Accumulated Surplus (Net Assets) Balance	2,218,992	2,038,722	2,111,064

REVENUE BREAKDOWN

	FY 2024-2025		FY 2023-2024		FY 2022-2023	
General Donations	504,910	59.4%	207,604	39.6%	386,302	54.5%
Government Grants	37,788	4.4%	30,791	5.9%	80,261	11.3%
Gaming	72,744	8.6%	65,000	12.4%	65,000	9.2%
Visitor Centre Donations	53,982	6.3%	53,415	10.2%	48,160	6.8%
Gift Shop	55,063	6.5%	54,735	10.5%	42,633	6.0%
Raffles	45,580	5.4%	46,855	9.0%	36,870	5.2%
Other Income	54,064	6.4%	49,689	9.5%	40,155	5.7%
Other Fundraising	<u>25,881</u>	3.0%	<u>15,165</u>	2.9%	<u>9,727</u>	1.4%
TOTAL	850,012		523,254		709,108	
In Kind Labour	493,733		557,440		457,450	

* Other income includes firehall lease, parks contract, membership dues, general income and interest income.

EXPENSE BREAKDOWN

	FY 2024-2025		FY 2023-2024		FY 2022-2023	
Wages	222,624	37.4%	231,634	44.3%	213,206	43.7%
Wildlife Care	199,081	33.4%	129,767	24.8%	123,721	25.4%
General and Administrative	105,185	17.6%	102,893	19.6%	95,614	19.6%
Education	42,243	7.1%	30,029	5.7%	30,419	6.2%
Gift Shop	<u>25,776</u>	4.3%	<u>29,483</u>	5.6%	<u>24,714</u>	5.1%
TOTAL	594,908		523,806		487,674	

Financial Reports

IN-KIND LABOUR

	2024-2025	2023-2024	2022-2023
In kind labour (\$)	\$493,733	\$557,440	\$457,450
In kind labour (hours)	24,686 hours	38,252 hours	22,872 hours
Comparison to full time positions (based on 40 hours x 50 weeks)	12.3 FT positions	19.1 FT positions	11.4 FT positions
Patient Admissions	1035 patients	937 patients	1082 patients
Hours per Patient	23.9 hours per patient	40.8 hours per patient	21.1 hours per patient

BALANCE SHEET OVERVIEW

	2024-2025	2023-2024	2022-2023
ASSETS			
Operating Funds	316,818	207,000	282,723
Restricted Funds	120,315	191,735	377,224
Accounts Receivable	30,497	10,904	5,442
Inventory	<u>9,387</u>	<u>9,190</u>	<u>7,080</u>
Total Current Assets	477,016	418,828	672,469
Capital Assets	<u>2,001,731</u>	<u>1,893,305</u>	<u>1,772,189</u>
TOTAL ASSETS	2,478,747	2,312,134	2,444,658
LIABILITIES			
Accounts Payable	14,320	15,652	14,094
CEBA Loan	0	0	30,000
Prepaid Firehall Lease	4,800	4,800	4,800
CRA, GST & PST Payable	6,207	5,382	6,321
Deferred Contribution	<u>15,397</u>	<u>21,658</u>	<u>0</u>
Total Current Liabilities	40,723	47,492	55,215
CCCU Mortgage	<u>219,035</u>	<u>225,921</u>	<u>278,377</u>
TOTAL LIABILITIES	259,758	273,412	333,592
TOTAL EQUITY	2,218,989	2,038,722	2,111,066

REVIEW ENGAGEMENT REPORT

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: info@marswildliferescue.com

Financial Reports

COMPARATIVE BALANCE SUMMARY 2024-2025

ASSETS	As at Feb 28, 2025		As at Feb 29, 2024	
Current Assets				
Operating Funds		316,818		227,454
Restricted Funds		120,315		171,281
Accounts Receivable		30,497		10,904
Inventory		9,387		9,190
Total Current Assets		477,016		418,828
Capital Assets				
Land	389,500		389,500	
Buildings & Outbuildings	1,844,331		1,682,875	
Furniture & Equipment	155,013		134,209	
Vehicles	81,268		81,268	
Parking & Landscaping	47,429		47,429	
				2,335,280
Less Depreciation		515,809		441,975
Total Capital Assets		2,001,731		1,893,305
TOTAL ASSET		2,478,747		2,312,134

LIABILITIES	As at Feb 28, 2025		As at Feb 29, 2024	
Current Liabilities				
Accounts Payable		14,320		15,652
CEBA Loan		0		0
Prepaid Firehall Lease		4,800		4,800
Deferred Contribution		15,397		21,658
CRA, GST & PST Payable		6,207		5,382
Total Current Liabilities		40,723		47,492
Long Term Liabilities				
CCCU Mortgage		219,035		225,921
Total Long Term Liabilities		219,035		225,921
TOTAL LIABILITY		259,758		273,412

Financial Reports

EQUITY	As at Feb 28, 2025		As at Feb 29, 2024	
Equity				
Fund Balance – Internally Restricted		72,935		61,106
Fund Balance – Externally Restricted		97,602		132,758
Fund Balance – Unrestricted		200,800		423,389
Fund Balance – Capital Assets		1,667,384		1,493,812
Retained Earnings – Previous Year		0		0
Current Earnings		180,268		-72,343
Total Owners Equity		2,218,989		2,038,721
TOTAL EQUITY		2,218,989		2,038,721
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY		2,478,747		2,312,134

INCOME & EXPENSE SUMMARY 2024-2025

INCOME	ACTUAL	
	Mar 1, 2024 to Feb 28, 2025	Mar 1, 2023 to Feb 29, 2024
Visitor Education Centre & Gift Shop	109,045	108,150
Fundraising	71,461	62,020
Donations	187,174	187,228
Donations for Capital Projects	116,500	9,725
Bequests	201,236	10,652
Gaming	72,744	65,000
Grants	37,788	15,400
Parks Contract	11,400	11,400
Firehall Lease	19,200	19,200
Membership Dues	3,520	7,280
Wage Subsidy	0	15,391
Other Income	19,944	11,809
TOTAL INCOME	850,012	523,254

EXPENSE	ACTUAL	
	Mar 1, 2024 to Feb 28, 2025	Mar 1, 2023 to Feb 29, 2024
Wildlife Care	199,081	129,767
Education	42,243	30,029
Gift Shop	25,776	29,483
Wages	222,624	231,634
Amortization	74,835	71,793
Administration & General	105,185	102,893
TOTAL EXPENSES	669,743	595,599

SURPLUS DEFICIT	ACTUAL	
	Mar 1, 2024 to Feb 28, 2025	Mar 1, 2023 to Feb 29, 2024
SURPLUS/DEFICIT	180,269	(72,345)

Special Events & Fundraising Report

Long-time supporters may recall that in the early years our largest source of income was from the Harvest Banquet event. Fortunately, today there are many different sources of funding to support the work we do.

During the 2024/25 year we received grants from Community Gaming (Province of BC), Comox Valley Regional District and Strathcona Regional District. Hardy volunteers looked after trails in local regional parks, earning a total of more than \$100,000 for MARS over the past 12 years. There was also income from leased land occupied by the Merville Fire Hall.

Our gift shop had increased sales due to the creativity of people who made and donated local products like owl toques, hummingbird feeder heaters, and beautiful artwork. We also started making more money from deposits of donated cans and bottles. An industrious supporter organized a bottle drive, raising thousands of dollars.

Our operating costs were reduced by donations of equipment or professional services from local businesses. Service clubs helped with building enclosures and local residents donated food and supplies for the wildlife hospital.

In the spring, a generous donor made it possible for us to construct a very specialized intensive care unit for fawns. This same person also donated funds to purchase state of the art equipment for patient care. A great number of donations are made by visitors after they tour our site, meet ambassador birds and hear stories about our patients.



JAN SMITH





Sometimes a thoughtful person will remember us when making their will. Bequest income is used to make long term improvements that will benefit our organization for years. During this past year several generous bequests allowed us to complete the hospital expansion, purchase equipment and put aside money for contingencies.

Our more traditional fundraising activities involved one 50/50 cash draw and two prize winning raffles. Volunteers sold tickets at community events and used this exposure as an opportunity to tell people about the work we do.

During this past year, the number of Facebook followers exceeded 60,000 and a growing number of people opened our website and checked out Instagram. Many supporters read our social media stories about patients and chose to donate to our wildlife hospital.

Other donors, understanding the need for prevention of harm to wildlife and habitat, directed their donations to our education program.

From Visitor Centre Guestbook:

“What an incredible experience at MARS! From the majestic owls to the awe-inspiring bald eagles, every moment was filled with wonder and education. The sight of albino crows and hawks added a unique touch to the already diverse array of birds.

The staff were not only knowledgeable but also passionate about their work, making the experience both educational and enjoyable for visitors of all ages. It was fascinating to learn about the different species, their habitats, and the conservation efforts being undertaken to protect them.”

Behind each of these funding sources was a person, or persons, who decided to help MARS. They are our partners in this work, and we greatly appreciate their help.

- Pearl McKenzie, Chair of the Fundraising & Special Events Committee



Education & Ambassador Program Report

This past year, as with every year, education has remained a cornerstone of MARS Wildlife Rescue's work. By combining hands-on experiences, community partnerships, and inspiring encounters with wildlife, we have continued to build awareness and encourage stewardship of the natural world.

Interest in our Visitor Centre grew significantly this year, with more than 5,200 people taking part in guided tours, an increase of more than 20% over 2023-24. Several thousand more guests came by to shop for gifts and browse our exhibits hall. The outdoor tours, along with indoor interactive exhibits, seasonal displays, and examples of British Columbian wildlife, have created opportunities for guests of all ages to engage with local ecosystems. Visitors developed a deeper understanding of the challenges facing wildlife, including what may lead to injury, orphaning, or illness and cause them to be admitted to our wildlife hospital.

We hosted more than 40 pre-booked large group tours this year, reaching over 2000 people. This included welcoming 20 elementary school classes of over 500 children. Seniors groups, mental health organizations, local clubs and others also experienced our tailored presentations. Participants, from children to adults, gained practical knowledge, respect for wildlife, and affection for MARS. Ambassador birds often joined these sessions, creating memorable experiences that underscored the value of protecting wildlife.

Encounters with our educational ambassador birds remain especially meaningful, helping visitors connect personally with the importance of conservation and our local ecosystems. During Visitor Centre tours, our



JAN SMITH



TASH DAVIES



AARON SCHMIDT



TASH DAVIES

Education & Ambassador Program Report

guests met Bald Eagles Hyacinth and Humpty, Barred Owl Marlowe, albino American Crows Nimpkish and Kokish, Western Screech Owl Lanei, Common Raven, Kora and Red-tailed Hawk, Horus. Very sadly, our beloved Horus died in the summer of 2025.

Many outreach opportunities were offered off site. In 2024, MARS educators, both human and feathered, brought conservation messages to classrooms, care homes, First Nations communities, summer camps, and others in the wider community. These visits ranged from simple presentations about an ambassador bird in a casual setting like Miracle Beach Nature House, to complete, formal presentations with case studies from rescue to release that highlighted the lengths our caregivers go to for patients. MARS staff and volunteers have made over 30 of these presentations, some of which boasted more than 150 participants.

These experiences are possible because of the enthusiastic people who dedicated over 1500 hours this year to public education. MARS is grateful to the small but mighty team of twelve volunteer tour guides, six bird handlers, and ten other Visitor Centre volunteers. Together, we are working to inspire the current and next generation of environmental stewards while strengthening MARS' role and capacity in wildlife conservation and rehabilitation.

- **Aaron Schmidt, Education & Ambassador Program Coordinator**



Habitat Stewardship



In 2024, the native plant meadows, wild corridors, and wetlands of MARS continued to provide healthy habitat for birds, bats, bugs, and other beasts. One of our international students prepared and planted two of our wetland islands with native trees and shrubs, protecting them from deer browse using raw sheep's wool. We raised a new bat nursery box over our wetland blind and inventoried the 15+ bird boxes on site. Small teams continued pushing back invasives like Scotch broom, cut-leaf blackberry, and reed canary grass. We hosted two seed gathering and one planting workshop. The MARS invasive plant removal tool lending library continued to be actively used by our partners in conservation. Thanks to all who contributed to these efforts for the enjoyment of both people and wildlife.

- **Jan Smith, Habitat Stewardship Team**



Board Members & Staff

Board of Directors

President: Warren Warttig

Vice President: Pearl McKenzie

Treasurer: Nicole Booth

Secretary: Therisa Lowe

Darlene Banerd

Leona Doig

Lynda Hodgkinson

Robert McLennan

Virginia (Ginny) Simpson

Janet (Jan) Smith

John Turner

Staff (During 2024-2025 Fiscal Year)

Acting Manager of Wildlife Rehabilitation: Megan Erickson*

Wildlife Hospital Volunteer Coordinator: Gyl Andersen

Wildlife Rehabilitators: Melissa Steinkey, Lauren Wigard,
Kayla Williams, Justine Pfeifer

Manager of Visitor Centre: Allison Morrison

Administrator: Laurie Ulm

Education & Visitor Centre Volunteer Coordinator: Aaron Schmidt*

Ambassador Program Coordinator: Lara Harder / Meghan Keelan /
Aaron Schmidt

* Full-time staff



Thank you to our staff,
volunteers, and supporters!



