



FALL 2024 NEWSLETTER - You wanted to know!

Welcome to the fall edition of our newsletter. In this edition, we are addressing some questions that have been asked and supplying you with the answers to those questions.

You'll hear from various departments on what is happening at MARS, as well as news on some of the exciting things coming up.

The first question we are often asked is:
“Does MARS only deal with birds?”

Our main focus is Avian, but we receive a number of other animals to the Rescue Centre. Our Wildlife Hospital Team Leader, Megan Erikson, has provided a list of the total number of “Other” patients we have received this year, along with a breakdown between birds, amphibians, reptiles, and mammals. Notice that the fawn is being fed without any human interaction - this is because when we built the pen, it was with input from hospital workers who wanted to make sure all fawns have the best chance for a successful release!



Amphibians
Pacific Tree Frog 1

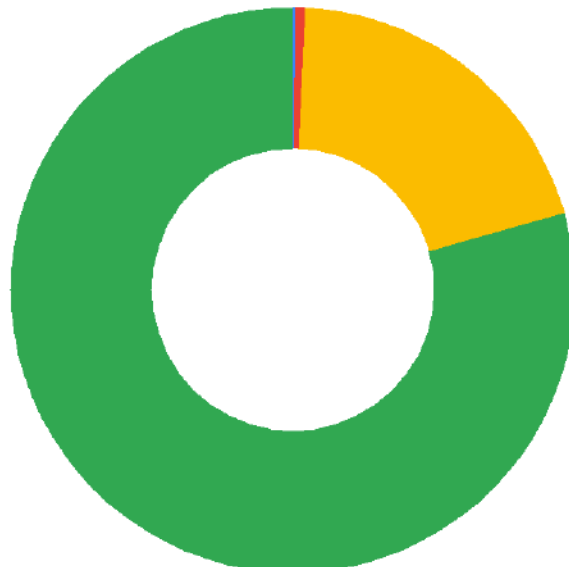


Reptiles
Garter Snake 4

- Mammals**
- Raccoon 64
 - Black-tailed Deer 28
 - Yuma Myotis (Bat) 13
 - Big Brown Bat 8
 - Red Squirrel 7
 - Little Brown Bat 6
 - Townsend's Vole 6
 - American Mink 5
 - Long-eared Myotis (Bat) 3
 - Silver-haired Bat 3
 - Deer Mouse 2
 - Harbour Seal 2
 - Beaver 2
 - Townsend's Big-eared Bat 2

- Totals**
- Amphibians 1
 - Reptiles 4
 - Mammals 152
 - Birds 605

■ Amphibians ■ Reptiles ■ Mammals ■ Birds



For a complete list of MARS patients to date, go to our website:
www.marswildliferescue.com.

The second question often asked of us is:
How does MARS support itself?

MARS Vice President Pearl McKenzie has provided a breakdown of where the funding to operate comes from.

MARS has an annual operating budget of about \$520,000. This is a relatively small amount given the number of wildlife patients and scope of our educational work. We are able to keep costs down because of support from our community. For example, when we ask for donations of food for our patients, there is an outpouring of support: local gardeners donate produce, farmers bring eggs, fishers donate fish, other supporters pick wild berries, and local businesses donate services and products. In addition, our staffing costs are relatively low because volunteers play such a critical role.

On any given day, MARS has about 200 active volunteers providing care for wildlife patients, donating their time and vehicles to transport patients over a huge geographical area, constructing and maintaining enclosures, creating displays and exhibits, providing guided tours for visitors, staffing the gift shop, helping to raise funds and making educational presentations with our ambassador birds. Volunteers also create and maintain native plant gardens, manage our website and social media and produce this newsletter you are reading.

Our core operating grants come from the Comox Valley Regional District, the Strathcona Regional District and the Province of BC (Community Gaming Fund). This year these grants totalled almost \$100,000.

Our thriving Visitor Centre/Gift Shop brought in \$119,000 last year. Other income comes from leasing out a portion of our property to the Merville Fire Hall and volunteers who earn funds by maintaining trails in four regional parks. Local service clubs and foundations give us money for short term projects or to help with our expenses. During the past year generous individuals have donated funds to complete the hospital expansion, extend the raccoon enclosure, purchase equipment for the hospital and build our new state of the art fawn ICU.

Membership fees and bottle returns are now bringing in \$16,000 every year. Raffle ticket sales (and the generous companies that give us these prizes) contribute about \$50,000. We apply to the federal government for summer grants to hire students during our busiest season. And, in the last few years, MARS has been the fortunate beneficiary of people who remembered us in their wills.

But what really raises our spirits and keeps us going are the donations, mostly in small amounts, that last year added up to \$240,000. This includes 105 monthly donors contributing \$38,000 annually. It is important to note that this regular income also gives us a little more security when planning and making budgets.

Our supporters are people who want to help wildlife. Many are children who donate their birthday money (**like Ava and Jasper**) or raise funds by, for instance, setting up lemonade stands or selling painted rocks and seashells.



Our community is an active and indispensable partner in the work that we do. Please check out our website, sign up for a tour or just simply come out to the visitor centre on a weekend. This will give us an opportunity to thank you in person.



One of our volunteers, Glenda asked:
What happens at MARS over the winter?

The Visitor Centre is open year round 10am to 3pm, Friday to Sunday, and tours can be **booked online** for these days from 10am to 2pm. The only thing that will keep us from being there is if we can't get in due to snow, but otherwise feel free to come and see us!

October is Bat Appreciation Month, and we have lots of exciting things planned to support this.

As you saw in Megan's list of patients, this year we have seen more bats at the Rescue Centre than we've ever seen before! Come to the Visitor Centre and see if you can find the roosting bats. If you find all the bats, you take home a special Bat Sticker!

On October 29th, Tim Ennis, Coordinator of the North Island BC Community Bat Program will be on site for a presentation of the importance of bats. You must reserve your seat, and tickets are available by donation through the MARS website at www.marswildliferescue.com.

October 1st is also the first day of our Winter Raffle which runs until December 21st. Purchase your ticket for the chance to win prizes with a total value of \$6,850.00!

Gift of Flight donated by Westjet. Two round trip tickets anywhere they fly.
 Prowling Wildcat bronze statue - Anonymous Donor
 2 nights Storm Watching at the Cox Bay Beach Resort in Tofino, donated by Deb Sundberg and Brad Piercy
 Handmade glass pendant and earring set donated by Wendy Adams of Creative Spirit Glass Beads Studio
 Tickets are one for \$10, 4 for \$20, 20 for \$50, and 100 for \$100. To purchase your tickets, go to <https://www.rafflebox.ca/raffle/mars>.

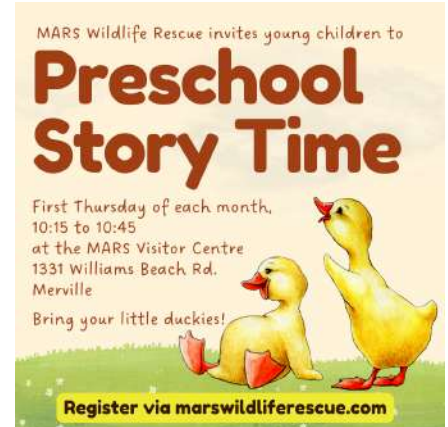


We also offer a **Preschool Story Time!**

On the first Thursday of each month, MARS Volunteer Ginny provides interactive storytelling featuring activities like scarf play, magnetic stories, and page turning books.

Our friendly staff will ensure a safe and engaging environment for all attendees. Accessible washrooms with Change tables on site. Join us and let the adventure begin!

Please reserve your spot via marswildliferescue.com.
Look for the duckies!



The Christmas Craft Fair is scheduled for November 15th to December 22nd!

Various local artisans set up their tables in our Visitor Centre, and donate a portion of their proceeds to MARS. Come out to find some wonderful ideas for Christmas gifts, and help to support MARS at the same time!



If you have a question that you've been wanting to ask MARS, please email info@marswildliferescue.com, and we will provide an answer in an upcoming newsletter.

If you are interested in offering your time and skills to help wildlife, go to our website at marswildliferescue.com and click "Get Involved".

Thank you to all the generous volunteers and supporters who over the years have contributed so much to MARS and continue to make this such an amazing organization. As our President and chief volunteer Warren says: "Together we are MARS".

MARS Mission

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