



September 2, 2015

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Seabirds Are Overwhelming International Bird Rescue's San Francisco Bay Center

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Hundreds of weak, starving Common Murres filling center in Fairfield straining non-profit's resources

International Bird Rescue's San Francisco Bay Center has been hit by an uncommon wave of Common Murres—more than 150 of them in August. The majority of these seabirds are young, malnourished chicks, exhausted and unable to maintain their body temperature.

To help in the quest to save the lives of these numerous vulnerable and needy seabird patients, IBR is asking for support from the bird-appreciating public.

“This is an unusually large post-breeding event and is severely straining our bird center resources,” said Michelle Bellizzi, manager of IBR's San Francisco Bay Center. “We hope the public will help by donating to care for these birds.”



Murre is pronounced “muhr”

At our already busy center, the murre patients are taking over — especially in the outdoor deep water pools. The number of murres this year is exceptional —

especially since IBR rarely sees more than 10 of these bird species in **one month** during the summer. **See** Live BirdCam: <http://bird-rescue.org/birdcam/birdcam-1.aspx>

To most people, the Common Murre (*Uria aalge*) looks very much like a small penguin; in fact, the public often reports seeing “little penguins” stranded on the Bay area beaches when, in fact, they’re seeing murre. In contrast to Penguins, which are flightless and live in southern oceans, Common Murres are diving seabirds that can fly, and that breed and feed widely along the Pacific Coast from central California to Alaska.

Except when nesting, which they do on rocky cliffs, murre spend their lives in and on the water and are nothing less than super-divers—essentially “flying” through water by using their wings to propel themselves and diving in excess of 200 feet below the surface to forage.

As for what’s at the root of this huge influx of ailing Common Murres, no one knows for sure. Some scientists surmise that as waters warm along the California coast, diving birds starve as fish go deeper to reach cooler waters, putting themselves out of the birds’ reach. This summer Northern California coastal waters have seen an increase of 5 to 10 degrees above historical averages.

Whatever the issue, what’s happening to these seabirds is important, since Common Murres have served as a key indicator species for ocean conservation for many years, and their numbers have been trending downwards with documented changes in fish stocks, chronic oil spills, and interactions with humans.

Even in the best of times, IBR relies on public support to treat and feed ill and injured seabirds each year—more than 5,000 patients are cared for annually at IBR’s two California centers.

Right now, Common Murres needing life-saving care are proving extra-challenging and are truly testing IBR’s resources. Donations are greatly needed and greatly appreciated. The public can donate via a symbolic “adoption” of a murre at <http://bird-rescue.org/adopt-murre>

About International Bird Rescue: International Bird Rescue (IBR) has been helping seabirds and other aquatic birds around the world since 1971. Our team of specialists operates two year-round aquatic bird rehabilitation centers in California. It relies on public support to care for more than 5,000 birds each year. IBR is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

Learn more at birdrescue.org