



Avian Rehabilitation at Save Our Seabirds



Evan Powers

College Park Scholars – Science & Global Change Program

Biological Sciences: Ecology & Evolution

epowers3@terpmail.umd.edu

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A vet assistant performing a hospital check-in on a new American White Pelican patient.



I am assisting a vet in the examination of a Brown Pelican that had just gotten stitches in order to close an open wound. This Brown Pelican made a full recovery from an infected fishhook wound on its wing (yay!).



I am administering food and liquid supplements to a nestling Brown Thrasher.

Introduction

Save Our Seabirds is a non-profit avian hospital & sanctuary in Sarasota, Florida that focuses on the rehabilitation and release of sick or injured seabirds. Nearly 1000 avian patients make their way through the SOS hospital each year, and those that are deemed unreleasable join the 200+ residents that are cared for in the SOS sanctuary. SOS thrives to promote conservation and public education. I was an intern for SOS during the summer of 2022.

Issues Threatening Seabird Health

Fishhooks are one of the main causes of seabird injury. Seabirds often flock around fishing piers, snagging or ingesting fishhooks in the process. About 40% of all avian patients undergoing rehabilitation will fully recover and be released back into the wild. The remaining 60% are either housed in a sanctuary, humanly euthanized, or DOA.

Common Causes of Injury/Sickness:

- Fishhooks
- Impact with cars or windows
- Ingestion of rodenticides
 - Cat or dog attacks
- Exposure to HABs
- Avian Influenza

Activities

Hospital work included diet preparation, cage cleaning, and assisting vets in medical procedures such as administering medication, physical therapy, surgery, or euthanasia. I also conducted necropsies on deceased avian patients. Sanctuary work included cleaning enclosures, enrichment, and feeding. I worked with nearly 50 bird species, and was trained to handle and release Pelicans, Owls, Hawks, Songbirds, Waterfowl, and other large seabirds.



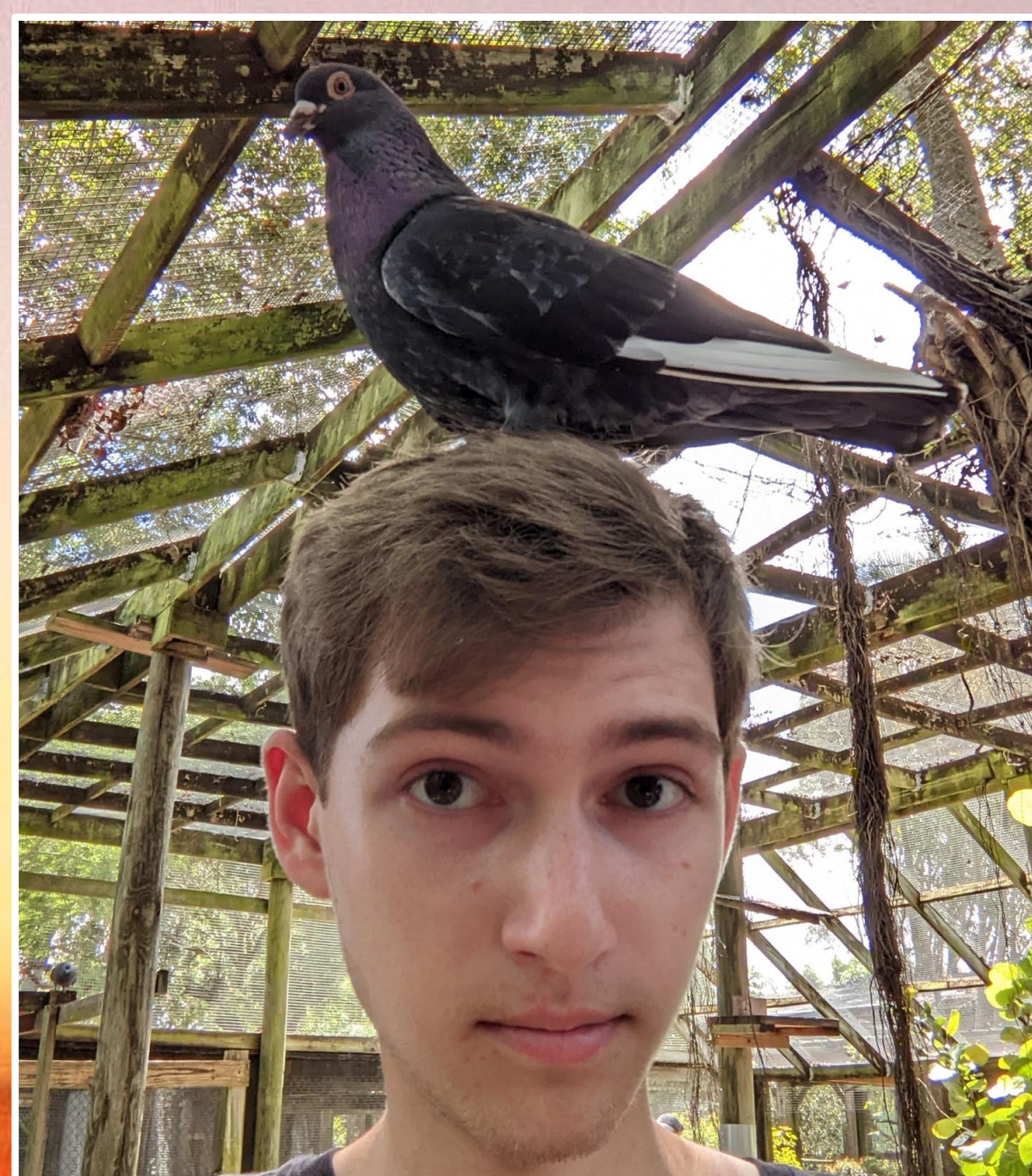
This Royal Tern was impaled by a fishhook, creating a wound that became infected and necrotic. The fishhook was successfully removed by SOS veterinarians and the Tern made a full recovery. After about 2 months of rehabilitation, the Tern was released back into the wild.



SOS houses species with a wide range of diets, such as carnivores, piscivores, insectivores, and omnivores. Because of this, diet preparation for all 200+ residents and hospital patients requires a variety of ingredients such as fish, eggs, veggies, fruits, mice, and insects.

Lasting Impact

My time at Save Our Seabirds has helped solidify my interests in coastal & marine conservation. The skills and relationships that I built have exposed me to a plethora of opportunities, such as undergraduate research or conservation internships. Everywhere I go, I appreciate and admire the birds that fly by or sing in the distance. I learned that I enjoy working in the field and getting hands-on experience, and I feel proud to have contributed to such an incredible conservation effort. My summer at SOS was truly unforgettable, and I look forward to future internship experiences.



Me and my best friend Piegion, the Rock Pigeon. As an invasive species who entered the hospital, SOS cannot legally release him, so Piegion is happily cared for in the SOS sanctuary.

Site Information

Name of Site: Save Our Seabirds

Address: 1708 Ken Thompson Pkwy, Sarasota, FL 34236

Supervisor: Dr. Maria Passarelli, VMD

Mission: Save Our Seabirds is committed to the rescue and rehabilitation of sick and injured birds with the goal of releasing them back to their natural habitats.

Website: <https://www.saveourseabirds.org>

Future Work

I plan to contribute to future marine conservation efforts. In a world threatened by anthropomorphic climate change, the health of marine ecosystems is integral to the persistence of our species. To achieve this goal, this summer I will be researching sea turtles as an intern for Mote Marine Laboratory & Aquarium.

Acknowledgments

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