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HERON RELEASE WILL CAP A SEASON OF SUCCESSFUL BIRD RESCUES – FRIDAY AUGUST 19

GOLDEN GATE AUDUBON, INTERNATIONAL BIRD RESCUE, AND OAKLAND ZOO WORKING TOGETHER FOR WILD BIRD CONSERVATION

OAKLAND, AUGUST 19, 2016 – Nearly two dozen young herons from downtown Oakland are alive and thriving along the Bay shoreline today -- thanks to an unprecedented three-way partnership between Golden Gate Audubon Society, International Bird Rescue, and Oakland Zoo.

To celebrate this success and mark the end of heron nesting season, the groups will release eight rehabilitated herons and egrets from urban rookeries at 11:30 a.m. on Friday August 19 at Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline.

A total of 21 juvenile herons were successfully rescued from certain death on the streets of Oakland this spring and summer by the new three-way partnership between GGAS, the Zoo, and Bird Rescue.

“Conservation is a team sport, and this heart-warming example proves it,” said Golden Gate Audubon Executive Director Cindy Margulis. “All three organizations shared a common commitment to saving these birds, and by working together we made this uplifting occasion possible.”

DIRECTIONS: *The release will take place near the second parking lot along the MLK Shoreline park entry road off of Swan Way. Enter the park from Swan Way (off of Doolittle Drive), then drive about 1/3 mile until just after the road veers sharply. Google Maps location: <https://goo.gl/maps/MHPV1wxv8Zn> . The release will take place at 11:30 sharp so please plan to arrive 10-15 minutes BEFORE then.*

Over 145 pairs of Black-crowned Night-Herons and Snowy Egrets build nests in the leafy ficus trees over the sidewalks and busy streets of downtown Oakland. The downtown Oakland rookery draws birds in, but is not an ideal habitat due to the dangers of its urban setting. Young, not-quite-fledged birds face injury and death when they fall from the trees onto cement slabs or into traffic.

This spring, GGAS convened a three-way partnership with the Zoo and Bird Rescue to save the lives of these young herons. Two dozen GGAS volunteer docents monitored the trees and watched for fallen birds. Oakland Zoo staff transported the rescued birds to the Zoo where their veterinary experts pro-



vided triage care; then Bird Rescue rehabilitated them, returned them to health, and coordinated their release back into the wild.

On Friday, five Snowy Egrets and three Black-crowned Night-Herons will be released at MLK Shoreline, with volunteers and staff from all three organizations cheering them on. (These individual birds were rescued from other urban rookeries, not Oakland, but are the same species and cohort as the Oakland birds, which were released into the wild earlier this summer.)

"I'm thrilled for the success of this amazing program and what it has done for this truly unique and special species of heron, native to our area," said Dr. Karen Emanuelson, Director of the Oakland Zoo Veterinary Hospital. "It's been wonderful to see so many groups including GGAS, Bird Rescue and Oakland Zoo, volunteers and members of the community come together to return these birds to the wild."

Bird Rescue was busy this spring and summer with lots of juvenile herons and egrets in care. This is largely due to urban rookeries like the one in Oakland, which are not ideal locations for young birds that routinely fall from the trees. In a more natural setting, chicks that fall from the nest find a softer and safer landing on soil or brush, and can use surrounding vegetation to climb back up to the nest. Not so for birds in city settings, which face broken bones from the harsh landing on cement and then the dangers of passing cars, exposure, and starvation.

"With the cooperation of Golden Gate Audubon and Oakland Zoo, International Bird Rescue has had a much better chance of helping these fallen heron and egret chicks," said Bird Rescue Executive Director J.D. Bergeron. "Community cooperation like this is rare and special and ensures better outcomes for these baby birds. And the work is not over! We must remain vigilant partners with the community for the sake of these urban birds with the ultimate goal of encouraging this rookery to move to a safer location."

In addition to the rescues, GGAS mounted a campaign to educate the public about the Oakland herons through guided field trips to view the rookery, educational posters in both English and Chinese, and an Eco-Art Flash Mob in which two dozen artists decorated the sidewalks around the colony with colorful chalk images of herons and egrets.

Although this week's release marks the end of the 2016 nesting season, the work is not over. Bird Rescue cares for more than 6,000 injured water birds throughout the year, while GGAS and the Zoo work year-round to educate the public about wildlife and conservation.

All three organizations welcome volunteers! To get involved, see:

Golden Gate Audubon – www.goldengateaudubon.org

International Bird Rescue – www.bird-rescue.org

Oakland Zoo -- www.oaklandzoo.org



ABOUT INTERNATIONAL BIRD RESCUE

For 45 years, International Bird Rescue has been a global leader in responding to man-made disasters affecting wildlife, such as oil spills and marine debris. In addition to a fully-equipped emergency response center in Alaska, Bird Rescue runs two world-class wildlife centers in California which care for more than 5,000 animals each year, including pelicans, herons, shorebirds, and other aquatic species. This is made possible by over 60,000 volunteer hours kindly provided by a diverse group of retirees, nurses, veterinary students, and others. To date, their response teams have led rescue efforts in more than 200 spills across six continents. Visit www.Bird-Rescue.org to learn more.

ABOUT GOLDEN GATE AUDUBON SOCIETY

Golden Gate Audubon Society has been inspiring people to protect Bay Area birds since 1917. GGAS mobilizes over 2,500 volunteers to restore habitat for wildlife, educate youth and adults about Bay Area birds, and advocate on behalf of birds and wildlife. We offer over 160 free bird walks each year, along with classes, guest speakers, and many volunteer opportunities. Our award-winning Eco-Education program provides hands-on nature education to over 650 children from low-income public elementary schools each year in Richmond, Oakland, and San Francisco. Visit www.goldengateaudubon.org to learn more.

ABOUT OAKLAND ZOO:

The [Bay Area's award-winning Oakland Zoo](#) is home to more than 660 native and exotic animals. The Zoo offers many educational programs and kid's activities perfect for science field trips, family day trips and exciting birthday parties. Oakland Zoo is dedicated to the humane treatment of animals and wildlife conservation onsite and worldwide; with 25¢ from each ticket donated to support conservation partners and programs around the world. [The California Trail](#), a transformational project that more than doubles our size, opens in 2018, and will further our commitment to animal care, education, and conservation with a focus on this state's remarkable native wildlife. Nestled in the Oakland Hills, in 500-acre Knowland Park, the Zoo is located at 9777 Golf Links Road, off Highway 580. The East Bay Zoological Society (Oakland Zoo) is a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization supported in part by members, contributions, the City of Oakland and the East Bay Regional Parks.

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