

~ Life in LAMORINDA ~

Local woman helps rescue wildlife after oil spill



Photo provided

Moraga resident Jean Yim, seen here gavaging a Western Grebe with specially prepared fluids and nutritional support after the pipeline oil spill off Huntington Beach in early October.

By Sora O'Doherty

When in early October thousands of barrels of crude oil were released from a pipeline into the Pacific Ocean about five miles off the coast of Huntington Beach in Orange County, the Oiled Wildlife Care Network (OWCN) called up volunteers and staff to come to the site to save wildlife endangered by the oil spill. Moraga resident Jean Yim was called up as a field stabilization supervisor and traveled south on Oct. 6 to help. When she ar-

rived, she found a lot of people already hard at work looking for animals on the beaches and in the wetlands.

Yim was there to help stabilize any animals that were found and brought to the field stabilization group, which was located across the street from the beach at the Wetland and Wildlife Care Center, a member organization of OWCN.

She and her team worked 14-hour days, from sunrise to sunset, for just over a week. When she left, someone else took over her position. During the incident, 34 live birds were

brought in and 22 were able to be released. Unfortunately, there were also 82 dead birds found, including cormorants, many types of grebes, gulls and others. Six dead mammals were also retrieved, as well as one live whale dolphin. The live birds included snowy plovers, western grebes, gulls, sanderlings and a brown pelican, among others.

"It was an incredible experience to work with so many trained colleagues who have a deep passion for the welfare of animals," Yim said, "and it was incredible to see the outpouring of response from the community in the area." Yim described the support for the wildlife workers from the local community affected by the spill. OWCN workers were inundated with food for the staff, who could select from a room full of donated items if they felt hungry.

Yim started as a volunteer with the Lindsay Wildlife Experience in 1999 and became part of the staff a couple of years ago. She is currently the wildlife rehabilitation coordinator for the nonprofit. She started with OWCN during the Cosco Boushan spill in the San Francisco Bay. Although that spill happened at approximately the same time of year, in early November 2007, it had a more devastating result for wildlife. More than 6,800 dead birds were documented from that incident.

OWCN is a statewide collective of trained wildlife care providers, regulatory agencies, academic institutions and wildlife organizations working to rescue and rehabilitate oiled wildlife in California. Their mandate has been expanded to include not only marine incidents, but also in-

land incidents. For each incident there is a legal process to identify who the responsible party is. That party then has to pay for the cleanup. To date, the OWCN has responded to more than 75 spills throughout California and cared for more than 10,000 oiled birds, mammals and reptiles/amphibians. They have also provided essential support nationally and internationally for large-scale emergencies, including the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, the M/V Rena spill in New Zealand, and the Prestige spill in Spain.

From her experience

working for OWCN, Yim says, "One of the things I'm really impressed with is how well OWCN responds to oil spills." Yim explained that their process is to always improve upon the lessons they learn, and remarked upon how agile OWCN is at making improvements so they can better help wildlife in the future.

You can learn more about OWCN at <https://owcn.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/about>

Editor's note: in the interest of transparency, it should be noted that Yim is this reporter's daughter-in-law.

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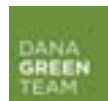


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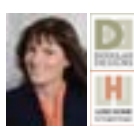


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