

# THE GROWLER

Issue 1, April 22, 2024

GROWLS (Gabriola Rescue of Wildlife Society) monthly newsletter



Dear GROWLS members and supporters

Welcome to the inaugural edition of The GROWLER. This little newsletter is our effort to connect with our supporters and share some of the stories that evolve through our interactions with wildlife.

This issue includes:

- GROWLS news for April, 2024/new dispatch system
- Nesting season has begun!
- List of calls/case studies in March-mid April
- Article b Dr. Helen Schwantje DVM & wildlife health fact sheet
- DEAR GABBY - help column for local wildlife issues
- EVENTS
- Baby Bird Tips - what to do if you find a baby bird
- Dark Skies.org contact info regarding light pollution

Please help us make The GROWLER a success. We encourage everyone in our community to submit interesting articles and photographs relating to our local wildlife. Send submissions to [info@growls.ca](mailto:info@growls.ca) Anything received by the second Wednesday of the month will be considered for inclusion in the next edition.

We believe that people, as the largest invasive species on the island, must take greater responsibility for protecting the homes and habitat of the wild creatures who share our island. We are all Gabriolans.

*Happy Earth Day from all of us at GROWLS*



## **GROWLS NEWS**

APRIL 9 - GROWLS received its first call of the 2024 season regarding a ground nesting bird near the beach at the North end of the island. A GROWLS volunteer took out a sign and a cone to alert walkers of the nest and it is being monitored by a neighbour. The birds have been identified as killdeers.



The next few months are EXTREMELY critical for the well being of our wildlife as babies are the most vulnerable.

Please be a responsible dog owner and tell all your dog and cat friends!





## A NEW DISPATCHING SYSTEM FOR GROWLS

We are going to be implementing a new dispatching system to contact volunteers that will hopefully be an improved mode of keeping all potential dispatchers and rescuers in contact. Please bear with us and let us know if you would like to participate this year as a rescuer or transporter of Gabriola wildlife to one of the rehab centers or local veterinarians. Travel costs are reimbursed.



## CASE STUDIES

March 1 to April 17

### April, 9, 2024

A raven with a broken wing was found wandering the island in mid April. Despite its injuries, it managed to make its way from the Tunnel to Chernoff Drive before it was caught by GROWLS volunteers and transported to North Island Wildlife for assessment. An X-ray revealed that, not only had the raven been living so long with a broken wing that it had become badly emaciated, but that it had also been shot. The pellets showed clearly on the X-rays as white dots embedded in the wing and the stomach. As the X-rays showed that the shooting had likely taken place after the wing was broken, it's possible that someone may have tried to end the bird's suffering. If so, its condition was only made worse. The raven had to be euthanized.



April 9, 2024. X-ray. Injured Raven taken to North Island Rescue of Wildlife, Errington.

During the month of March, GROWLS was asked for help in dealing with three stray dogs and a dead sea lion. While we try our best wherever animals are concerned, we refer these calls to other agencies.

**For stray dogs:**

Gabriola PetFind at 2250-247-8654.

**For dead sea lions:** BC Marine Mammal

Response Network at 1-800-465-4336.

Other calls concerned a dead bat on March 11, which we collected for transport to the BC Ministry of Environment, a duck under attack by eagles on March 11, and a bird that flew into a window on March 31.

In the first part of April we received 13 calls concerning a raven, an otter, a killdeer, a pet donkey, an owl, a beaver, and others. These will be covered in more detail in the next edition of the newsletter.





Photo credit: Corinne Flaws



Photo credit- Corinne Flaws

We welcome articles pertinent to Gabriola wildlife

***Killing our wildlife with kindness & what can be done about it***

Article by Dr. Helen Schwantje, DVM  
& wildlife health fact sheet

Keep wildlife wild – it is BC policy and it makes sense. When humans provide food to wild animals it changes their “wildness”, no matter what species is being fed. There are justifiable reasons to feed wild animals, such as to attract them for capture, but these situations are rare. The consequences of feeding a wild animal unnatural types and amounts of feed can range from mildly irritating behaviour to catastrophic health issues, so understanding the reasons behind this policy is important. The following guidance is specific to ungulates (hoofed mammals) such as deer, elk, or bighorn sheep but the principle of keeping wildlife wild apply to all wild animals...

*To read more and find out what you can do please click the following link*

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/plants-animals-and-ecosystems/wildlife-wildlife-habitat/staying-safe-around-wildlife/ungulate-feeding-june8th.pdf>

## *DEAR GABBY*

Dear Gabby,

We think we have an otter living under our shed. There is a strong stench and a bit of furtive scraping coming from there.

I understand that this is the nesting and birthing time for otters. We want to wait until it's over, then we'll block off the space under the shed with wire mesh.

For now, I'm wondering what is the best method of flushing out an otter?

Thanks,

Desperate on Gabriola



Photo credit - Iain Lawrence

Dear Desperate:

Kudos to you for wanting to wait until the birthing season is over before evicting your otter. The worst thing you could do just now is leave a mother otter locked out of her home, and her babies trapped inside it.

When you know the otter is not under your shed you can try putting a light in the dark place or leaving a radio playing loudly under the building. But that is likely to work only temporarily. As you noted, blocking access is the only way to ensure the otter doesn't return once you've got her out. Along with physical barriers, a low-voltage electric fence is an excellent deterrent. The type made for raccoons and other small animals is the best to use for otters.

Good luck,

Gabby

If you have a wildlife question for Dear Gabby, That you think may benefit other Gabriolans please submit to [info@growls.ca](mailto:info@growls.ca)

FOR FUTURE ISSUES we would like to include

A column similar to **Smiles and Snarls** in The Sounder but with a GROWLS focus;





## Events

### APRIL 22, EARTH DAY

Earth Day Celebratory parade begins @12:45pm from the school through the Village and back to the Commons, and then a concert by **Luke Wallace** (<https://www.lukewallacemusic.com/>).

### WASTELAND: \*\*\*\*THE MOVIE \*\*\*\*

**Community Hall** 2pm & 7pm  
Register [donsflicks@gmail.com](mailto:donsflicks@gmail.com)  
admission by donation

### MAY 11 GROWLS INFO TABLE

at **North End Firehall Public OPEN HOUSE**  
Volunteers needed, please call Liz  
250-247-7415

### OCTOBER, 2024 Date TBA

### THE MARINE DETECTIVE

Special event planned in partnership with Gabriola Stream Keepers to host a talk by internationally recognized marine photographer, Jacki Hilderling, better known as 'THE MARINE DETECTIVE'.

Photo credit- Corrine Flaws



## **Baby Bird Tips**

### **What to do if you find a baby bird in distress**

#### **If a nestling is out of its nest:**

If the bird is cold to the touch, hold it gently in your hands until it is warm. Then replace it in the nest. The mother will still look after it. **DO NOT FEED THE BABY!**

#### **If both the nestling and the nest are down:**

Tie the nest back in the tree, in about the same place if possible. Use heavy twine because birds can get entangled in thin string. If the nest is torn apart, build a new one out of a margarine tub or similar container. Make drainage holes in the bottom and line the container with dryer lint, DRY leaves, or shredded paper towel. Do not use grass, mud or cotton. Use heavy twine to tie the container securely in the tree. Watch from a distance. If the parent birds have not returned within two hours, call GROWLS.

#### **If you see a fledgling on the ground without its parent:**

Fledglings are baby birds old enough to grow feathers but still too young to fly. Baby birds often fledge, or jump from the nest, a few days before they can fly. The parents will continue to care for them on the ground until the babies can fly. Leave fledglings alone unless they appear to be injured or sick. Keep children and animals away. If someone had already picked up the fledgling, put in a bush or low branch of a tree near where it was found. If the parents are not back within four to six hours, call GROWLS.

#### **If you see an orphaned or precocial baby with no parent nearby:**

If the bird is running around the yard, leave it alone and keep children and animals away. The parent bird is likely nearby. If the baby has wandered into a building and is separated from



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|  | <p>its parents, put it outside and watch from a distance for the parents to come. If the baby appears weak or sick, call GROWLS.</p> <p><b>The GROWLS phone number is<br/>250-714-7101</b></p> |
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**“Knowing that you love the earth changes you, activates you to defend and protect and celebrate. But when you feel that the earth loves you in return, that feeling transforms the relationship from a one-way street into a sacred bond.” — Robin Wall Kimmerer, Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants**

Thank you to our contributors, Mark, Iain, Dar & Corinne who helped with this first issue. If you would like to be part of The GROWLER newsletter committee please contact Liz 250 247 8805 or Dar 250 616 7415