



## SPRING 2024 NEWSLETTER - Celebrating MARS Volunteers

Welcome to this edition of our newsletter. In this issue we are celebrating the committed people who generously give their time to fulfill our mission to help wildlife. MARS is a volunteer-run organization. Volunteers do ... well, almost everything! Thank you for being one of them. And if you are a new or returned member or donor, there's a good chance you are also a volunteer in one way or another. If not, you are supporting these wonderful people.

This newsletter will take you behind the scenes, describing some of the ways volunteers make MARS such a dynamic organization. You have likely heard about people who weave their way into the fabric of an organization and become integral. Well, at last count, MARS has 170 people like that; volunteers who see a need and find a way to fill it, often in very creative ways.

Some of them live some distance away from our wildlife hospital.



**Did you know** we have a volunteer in Alert Bay, on Cormorant Island, who organizes rescues including transportation to MARS and then back to Alert Bay for release? Meet Robin who lives in Alert Bay and has been rescuing everything from hummingbirds to eagles since 2008. *"It takes a team to rescue a bird! I do rescues mainly from Alert Bay but each bird has to get off island so people from other communities chip in to help. Rescuers come from Northern Vancouver Island as far as Sointula, Port McNeill, Port Hardy, and Port Alice."* The process starts with reporting the injured bird, rescuing it, contacting MARS Wildlife Rescue and then finding a person who will transport it to MARS and back again. Thank you so much to Robin and her team for all their efforts to make sure wildlife get help when needed.

**Within the bustling environment of the wildlife hospital**, every moment is an opportunity to make a meaningful impact. From meticulously tending to enclosures and laundry, to ensuring every patient receives their individual medications, treatments, and meals, volunteers are essential for ensuring the comfort and health of our wildlife patients. And all this is done with good humour and camaraderie.



From left to right: Judy, Madeline, Fiona, Elizabeth, Hanna, Tash, Cathy

**Work Experience Volunteers** come from all over the world, living on site and working long hours to provide badly needed help caring for patients. Pictured here are three young people from Canadian Wildlife Federation: Fiona (Ontario), Madeline (Ucluelet) and Mae (Quebec), chatting with Paul, a creative volunteer who has carved out a niche for himself at MARS by raising mealworms to feed to patients. During baby season volunteers are kept very busy dropping these worms into the hungry mouths of baby birds.



## Construction, Maintenance and Landscaping Volunteers



In this photo, Don and Dean are building a drop off box for patients, which can be used during the night when the wildlife hospital is closed. They also work on constructing and maintaining buildings and making items, like very whimsical and attractive bird houses, to sell in the gift shop.

MARS Wildlife Rescue Centre has grown greatly since the property was purchased in 2015 with construction of a wildlife hospital, ambassador bird aviaries, deer, swan, and raccoon recovery enclosures and a large bird recovery flight pen. In addition, there is a welcoming visitor building with a gift shop and display area and a wetland viewing area. Volunteers constructed most of the smaller buildings and maintain all our facilities, roads and grounds.

## Restoring Native Habitat

At time of purchase, the almost 11 acres of MARS property was covered in Scotch Broom, Himalayan blackberry and other invasive species. Enter Jan and Karen who have been working diligently with other volunteers to restore native plants and shrubs, creating beautiful native plant meadows teeming with life. Pictured here are Aaron, Stephanie and Karen establishing a new garden.



Among the very creative contributions by volunteers is this mural on the large billboard near the water tanks. Artist Mary-Anne, is pictured here installing the mural standing between Jane and Callum.

## Education Volunteers



The visitor centre is home for our Education Program. “Wildlife patients can’t tell you their stories but we can”. Volunteer guides lead small groups on indoor and outdoor tours, talking to visitors about how our patients come to harm and encouraging discussion about how we can live harmoniously with wildlife. Candy is beginning a tour of visitors at the “Welcome” update centre.

**Bird handlers** work with our ambassador birds, making educational presentations at schools and public events and for visitors at MARS. Seeing an owl or hawk up close can be an exciting experience. With Marlowe, a Barred Owl, on her glove, Paige is telling a small group at the Visitor Centre about the anatomy of birds, raptor behaviour and habitats and threats to their survival.



## Volunteer raising funds – a crucial link in helping wildlife

Did you know there are volunteers who hand-make items for sale in our Visitor Centre? For instance, Kory hand knits the delightful “owl” toques for both adults and children. They are extremely popular. Cliff and Wendy make our sought-after hummingbird feeder heaters and donate them to MARS.

Dan and Wendy have been volunteers and generous contributors to MARS since meeting Sawyer at an open house that took place many years ago at our old site on Headquarters Road. They make beautiful local art pieces and children’s treasure bags to sell in the gift shop.



## Gift Shop Volunteers



MARS Gift Shop volunteers are a visitor's, and wildlife's, best friend. Not only do they run a busy and profitable store; they answer questions about native species, recommend local tourist sites, and even provide first aid for the unfortunate visitor who gets stung by a wasp. These volunteers raise much-needed funds for patient care, and help people find products that they can use to protect wildlife from harm. Here is Betty unpacking new items for sale in the Gift Shop.



## Trail Maintenance Volunteers



Since 2016, MARS' volunteers have been maintaining trails in local parks under a contract with the Comox Valley Regional District, earning much needed funds for our wildlife hospital, and a great deal of appreciation from local residents. Pictured here, in this 2023 photo, from left to right: Callum, Marc, Chuck, Ted and Brian, leader and volunteer organizer. Absent are Terri and Debbie.

**Volunteer Board Members** are responsible for the operational and financial management of MARS and for making sure that our Society fulfills its constitutional and legal mandates. That's a big job but, individually, they also do a lot more. Some examples: manage the Facebook page; design and build enclosures; make presentations with educational birds; look after the grounds, roads and security; and share stories about patients in the wildlife hospital and how they came to need our help.



First Row: Lynda, Nicole, Warren.  
Second Row, from left to right: John,  
Therisa, Linda, Ginny, Pearl, David.  
Darlene was absent when this photo was taken.

If you are interested in offering your time and skills to help wildlife, go to our website at [marswildliferescue.com](http://marswildliferescue.com) and click "Get Involved".

Thank you to all the generous volunteers and supporters who over the years have contributed so much to MARS and continue to make this such an amazing organization. As our President and chief volunteer Warren says: "Together we are MARS".

## MARS Mission

To conserve and protect native wildlife and its natural habitat through education and rehabilitation.