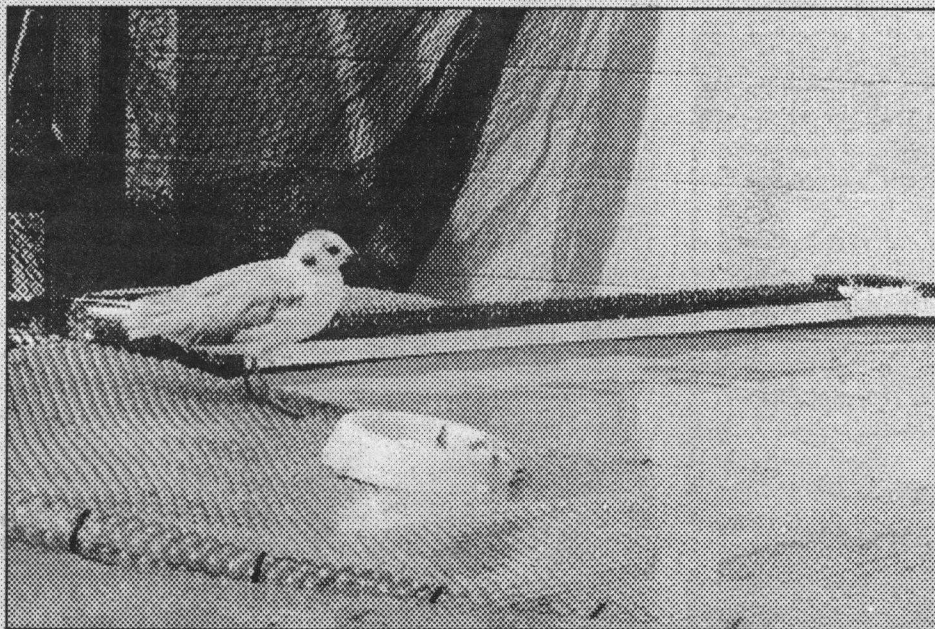


COVER STORY

Saving Bambi & Co.



Native Animal Rescue workers try to warn the public against attempts to raise wild animals as pets. People who rescue babies often call about the care and feeding of a particular creature and are reluctant to give them up. What they don't realize is the difficulty in providing for specialized diets, and the potential harm that might result from their intended act of kindness.

NAR stresses that the best way to save a creature that is orphaned or injured is to bring it under the care of their trained staff.

Moak-Kean talks about wildlife babies as she stands in front of an incubator. Inside is the egg of a red-tail hawk.

"A hawk was attacked by a golden eagle on westside Santa Cruz," she said. "A woman watching in the last torrential downpour saw it happen. The hawk was too close to the hunting grounds or nesting area of a pair of eagles, and it was attacked by one in the sky. The hawk plummeted 20 feet to the ground. It was a real disaster. She brought it in to us with all kinds of injuries — swollen legs and punctured talons."

Both Moak-Kean and staff member Jason Fastenau have extensive experience working with raptors. They cleaned the bird up, called a local vet

and decided that in a few days it would be a good candidate for release.

"We thought we could get her into a mews (raptor aviary) this week, when lo and behold — she laid an egg. I've called wildlife centers up and down the coast, and no where has this happened

before that anyone knows. It's very exciting."

They expected a candling machine to arrive by the end of the week. If the egg is fertile, they'll try and hatch it.

But what then? How does NAR handle the raising of little creatures? What

do they do when they start to become pets?

Walking outside, the director points out the cages donated by the SPCA, and a small pool that's used for all the birds. Right now, there's only one — a Bonaparte gull with a broken wing.

"He's doing pretty good except that he doesn't have good wing work going on here," she mentioned. "We're doing wing extensions now — you know, physical therapy, five or six times a day."

The bird moves as far over as it can get.

"It wants to get away, because we're quite disgusting," she laughed. "And that's what we want him to do. If they get too tame, we spritz them with water and make a bunch of noise, so they'll continue to be afraid."

If they aren't scared of humans, the animals become easy targets and all too often will be killed. That's why NAR workers have to be able to cuddle and nurture young wildlife, and then turn around and make the creature hate them.

In caring for wildlife, NAR tries to give the same foods in captivity that it would likely find in the wild. Sometimes a foster parent has to feed "unnatural foods" to one that is sick, but as soon as possible the diet will be changed to what is natural. □