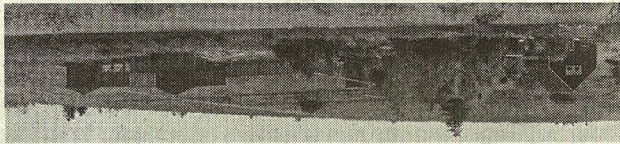


# Wildlife Notebook

by Ray MacLeod



## A Pelican Named Ralph and Other Stories

I really can't get out of my head (and believe me, I've tried!) the image of noted wildlife rescuer Hope Swinimer with a blanket draped over her arm begging entrance to Dartmouth's home of "adult entertainment", Ralph's Place. That has been one of several enduring images from Hope for Wildlife in the four weeks following their late-August Open House, a time of year when things usually mellow out and slow down. Not this year, however. Strange and uncommon events kept Hope for Wildlife in the news across Canada and around the world.

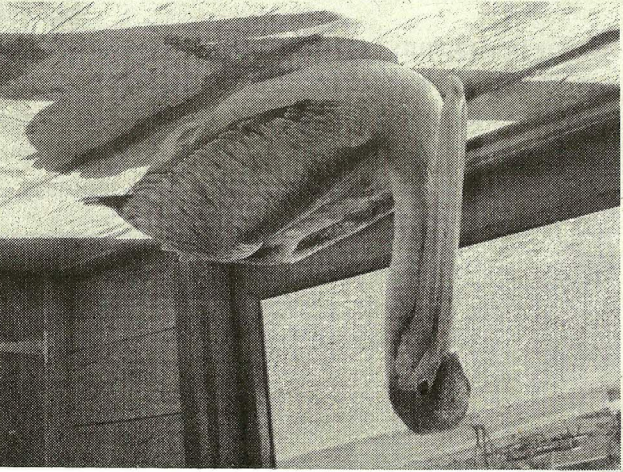
First there was a seagull who decided to impale himself on the lightning rod of a downtown Halifax church. He was up there for two days before the fire department helped him down. Pictures from that event went everywhere, including news services in Europe and India. The media focus was so tunnel-visioned on the gull story that they almost missed the Department of Natural Resources nabbing people trying to sell a fawn on the internet as a house pet. Both the gull and the deer ended up at Swinimer's Seaforth farm, and with them came a wave of media attention.

The dust had barely settled around those incidents when hurricane Earl swept in, bringing with it many surprises. Newborn squirrels, raccoons, and song birds began showing up, just when Hope for Wildlife was releasing akin foundlings from last spring. What followed them was not pretty. More than one hundred birds, some merely needing food and a place to rest but others smashed by the gales, started to pour into the Seaforth facility, and many were deep-sea birds of unusual kinds. Two were Royal Terns, a species that summers in Florida and the West Indies and should have been heading for Argentina and Africa for the winter months. Neither survived. There were many Storm Petrels, another bird rarely seen by land folk, and most of them made it.

As this mass of birds was being sorted out, the Department of Natural Resources got itself into the news again. Using undercover agents, plus sea and air transport, DNR raided Tancock Island in Mahone Bay to rescue a captive deer. The three year old doe was crated and air-lifted off Tancock, then trucked to Hope for Wildlife. She was placed in a deer enclosure full of orphaned fawns and became an instant celebrity.

That same day, Hope Swinimer was sitting in her office at the Dartmouth Veterinary Hospital when someone rushed in to tell her there was a pelican on Main Street in front of Ralph's Place. Pelican sightings in Nova Scotia are on the rare side, so it took a few more reports before she felt this one deserved checking out. Since the sitting was only two buildings away from her office, she decided to go herself, and quickly met witnesses who said the bird had left Ralph's parking lot but now was up on the building's roof. Without really considering the ramifications, Swinimer took her capture blanket, swung open the front door of Ralph's Place, and asked to go up to the roof. A startled clerk denied her and called for the manager. Patrons began to stare and Swinimer quickly became aware of her situation and what pub people must be thinking of this strange woman with a blanket trying to talk her way into an adult entertainment facility, claiming to be looking for a lost pelican.

Thankfully, someone outside called to her that the bird had tracking it to the parking lot of McDonald's next door. Swinimer was able to identify it as a Brown Pelican, a bird that lived from the Carolinas southward, and knew it was another guest courtesy of Earl, but before she could act, the bird flew to the top of the Dartmouth Veterinary Clinic, then to Burger King where it began mooching fries and hamburgers, and causing traffic problems. It fled when she approached, but this time showed just how weak storm travel had made it by slamming into the glass front of a nearby building and



stunning itself. Swinimer made the capture and took her new guest, now known as Ralph - for obvious reasons, to Seaforth for rehabilitation. Meanwhile, media were once again all over her for the story, including a live interview on CBC Radio's Information Morning. Host Don Connolly tried to sum up the adventure. "Going from Ralph's to McDonald's, to Burger King, and then knocking himself out. Sounds like a Saturday night, doesn't it?" he suggested. "Sounds like a bad Saturday night"

It was definitely not a normal month at Hope for Wildlife.

## PORTERS LAKE RECREATION CENTRE NEEDS YOU!

We are currently accepting applications for Volunteer Board Members for a new Management Board to manage the operations of the Porters Lake Recreation Centre (PLRC). The centre will be built as an enhancement to the new Porters Lake Elementary School and will be open September 2011.

### Who can apply to be a PLRC Board Member?

The PLRC Steering Committee is seeking 9 citizens who live in the Greater Porters Lake and surrounding area. The following attributes are being sought (for a complete list please see the recruitment package):

- Involved in various aspects of volunteer service
- Knowledge of the community
- Knowledge of/interest in recreation, sport & cultural activities
- Committed to the benefits of recreation
- Valuing diversity & being open-minded

### What would be the time commitment for the new Board Members?

Approximately 18 - 24 months, 10 hours of work per month (including evening meetings) starting January, 2011. The new Board will begin managing operations of the Centre in September 2011.