



Jennifer Gordon of Carolina Waterfowl Rescue comforts a goose saved from a dried-up lakebed in California.

CAROLINA WATERFOWL RESCUE

INDIAN TRAIL,
NORTH CAROLINA

Duck Dumping

Without the ability to fly or the instincts to forage efficiently, dumped domesticated fowl are easy targets for hungry predators. “It’s kind of where the term ‘sitting duck’ came from,” explains CWC founder Jennifer Gordon.

Birds of a Feather

Around 1,250 domesticated ducks and geese and an equal number of wild avians pass through CWR’s facility each year. They include young wildfowl who were raised by humans and baby songbirds—often picked up by well-intentioned people who don’t realize the babies would be better off put back into the nest. Injured wild birds are patched up and released when they’re ready.

Avian Ambassadors

CWR resident mascots often accompany volunteers to public events and schools, letting people know through their stories about the challenges facing domesticated and wild waterfowl.

A MISSION WITH WINGS

NORTH CAROLINA-BASED GROUP FLIES TO THE RESCUE OF DOMESTICATED AND WILD WATERFOWL // BY ARIANA HUEMER

IT WAS A FRIDAY EVENING when the flood of panicked Facebook requests came in: Dozens of flightless, domesticated geese were stranded and dying on a dried-up lakebed in drought-stricken California. Could Jennifer Gordon and her rescue team help?

By Monday morning Gordon and two other volunteers from Carolina Waterfowl Rescue were on a plane, headed west out of North Carolina. By Tuesday morning, 48 geese and several ducks were on their way to new homes throughout California.

“We knew from the news reports that some of these geese were in really bad shape,” says Gordon. “... We didn’t want to wait around while people talked about it.”

The whirlwind rescue was nothing new for CWR. Ten rescues a week—anywhere from a few abandoned domesticated waterfowl to a dozen—are par for the course, mostly in the Carolinas and Virginia but sometimes extending to other states when local groups need help.

Gordon founded the all-volunteer rescue in 2003 after she learned that alarming numbers of domesticated ducks at her local pond were wind-

ing up injured or dead. “People go [out] around Easter in the spring and they buy ducks and geese ... because they’re cute,” says Gordon. “And then they realize quickly [that] they really can’t be raised in a bathroom, so they end up abandoning them.” Within weeks of being dumped, most domesticated ducks and geese are in precarious condition. Dehydration, emaciation and predator injuries are common.

Gordon had been volunteering at the local raptor rehabilitation center, but for injured or abandoned waterfowl, there was nowhere to go. So Gordon opened her home to a virtual aviary: geese, swans, gulls, chickens, peacocks, pigeons and doves, songbirds and herons. Ten years later, a supporter donated the 11-acre property that is the group’s current home.

“There has never been a time that we have called upon them where they were not able to help,” says HSUS North Carolina state director Kim Alboum, who has worked with CWR on hoarding cases. When CWR’s facilities suffered storm damage earlier this year, The HSUS was happy to return the favor with a \$5,000 grant to cover some of the repair costs.