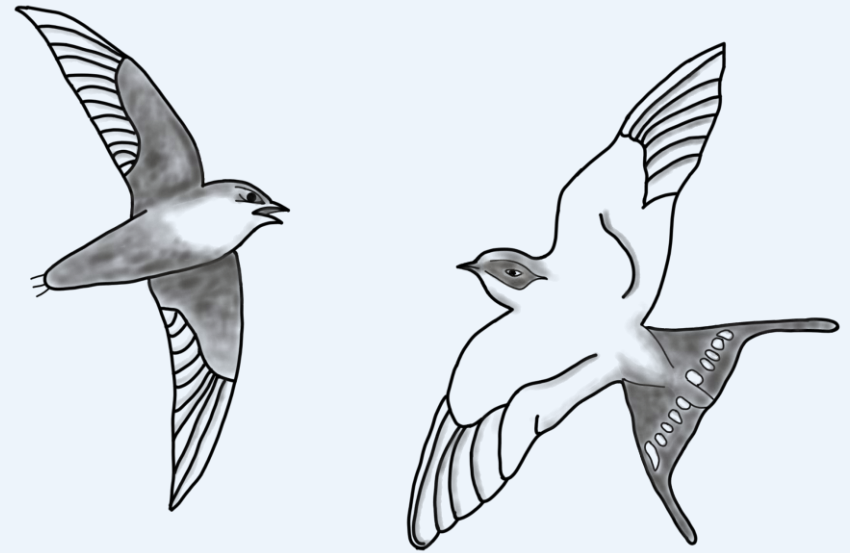


# Flight Plan Rehab



Bird's Foot Violet  
Marc's Hillside Gardens



## Gazette

May 2026

## Since you last heard from us . . .



There were a few early spring set-backs, but the ground soon had some signs of the new season!



Most of our regular clients are migratory species that are elsewhere in the winter months. But we did take occasional other birds that needed help, including a few American Goldfinches with [mycoplasmal conjunctivitis](#) (aka “Finch Eye”), a disease that can be treated with systemic and topical antibiotics.



The Baltimore Oriole we told you about in our [2025 Retrospective](#), our last admission of the past calendar year, successfully overwintered in our Sunroom. As the days grew longer, she began to molt, and in April, could be heard softly singing (*story continues on next page*).



## Oriole Released!

We monitored oriole migration on eBird, and when birds began to be posted in Maine, we moved her from the Sunroom to our outdoor Flight Cage on April 27. Her rescuer, Karen, let us know on May 7 that a female oriole had appeared in her yard. A male was there the next day!

A good weather window opened on May 11; Karen let the bird go in the yard from which she had been rescued the previous December. She flew straight into a tall tree, after which she was difficult to discern. But the next day, Karen saw three orioles, a male and two females, at the feeding station. One of the females tended to perch in the same spot previously favored by the rescued bird.

We had no way of knowing whether Karen's yard had been her breeding territory or had been where she'd "run out of gas" the previous December, but we had faith that she would find her way to wherever she wanted to be.

# New Songbird Habitat!

The site for the cage planned for chickadees and other small songbirds had been staked out last fall, before winter set in.

Once the snow was gone and the ground firmed up, Marc reset and leveled the support blocks . . .



. . . and the structure was delivered on April 23!



## Songbird Habitat, cont'd.

But the structure wasn't ready for occupancy! Designed and built for casual human use, it now had to be made bird-friendly and mouse-proof!



Terry's experience was put to good use in achieving these goals, with Marc pitching in.



Once the ceiling was in place, the next step was covering the open sections

of wall with vinyl-coated welded wire outside and knotless netting inside. Then the floor decking was layered with hardware cloth, landscape fabric, and sand.



After just a few more finishing touches, it was ready for birds!

## Baby Season 2026 Begins!

Once the oriole was outdoors in the Flight Cage, we broke down, deep cleaned, and refurbished the Sunroom. Meanwhile, we'd ordered live and dried insects plus other foods, organized and augmented our first-aid supplies, assembled our Away Teams, and scheduled our on-site volunteers. We were ready when it began for us on May 13!

Our first nestling was an American Robin, the only occupant of a shrub nest that had been discretely monitored by a diligent Rockport homeowner. When she found the bird on



the ground under the shrub that morning, there were no adults to be seen, and the nestling was cold and unmoving – apparently dead. But when she picked it up to remove it, it was alive, though barely!

The rescuer brought the nestling indoors, provided warmth, made contact with us, met Marc in Belfast, and the rest was soon history.

*(Story continues on p. 8.)*

# Orphaned Starlings



The next day, we received a call from a roofing company. Workers had found a nest of baby birds in a cavity under the eaves that was about to be closed off by the building's new roof. When the office manager told us the babies had big yellow mouths, we knew they had to be European Starlings.

They are not a species in which we specialize, but we were happy to help. When Deb picked them up, the worker who'd rescued them said they'd tried other rehabbers, but no one else was available when the nest had to be removed.

A few days later, these youngsters provided an opportunity for an Away Team volunteer to practice some emergency care.





## First Robin, cont'd.

Meanwhile, the little robin was growing up, though remaining mostly alone in her nest. When a second clutch of starlings arrived, we put their nest in her habitat, and a short while later, she left her nest and crawled in with them! It didn't last long though – she was too old to be keeping company with much younger babies. She soon returned to her own nest.



A few days later, she fledged into a larger space with room for flight excursions, and not long after that, she was joined by another young robin with limited mobility due to a leg fracture.



They soon became foster siblings!

## A Mystery Hatchling

On May 20, our friends at [Misfits Rehab](#) sent us a tiny hatchling. They had texted the photo to the right, taken with a finger nearby for size reference. The dark color of the down immediately ruled out some species, but we wouldn't see the red mouth color for more clues until later.



Misfits Rehab

To provide the benefits of snuggle buddies, we housed the tiny newcomer with two hatchling robins that, although much larger, were about the same age.



The robins grew more slowly though, and in a few more days, the tiny bird had left their nest.



The species reveal:



Chipping Sparrow!

# Painted Turtles!



Turtles were on the move this month! We've taken in four car-hit Eastern Painted Turtles so far, three of which are shown here.

The two above are males, and the one to the right (#2) is female.



These turtles all have minor shell cracks that have been stabilized. Release prospects are excellent!

## Eastern Bluebirds

A clutch of bluebirds had been orphaned in South Paris; first, the mom had gone missing, and a short while later, the dad was found dead in the road. The property owner needed assistance to remove the nest box from its pole, so Deb, our Admissions Coordinator, was quickly dispatched. Deb was able to open the box, safely remove the nestlings, and deliver them to us. They settled right into a cubby, as shown above.

*(In case you hadn't already noticed, the bird with its wings spread and its rear end toward the camera is about to poop!)*



A few days later, they left the cubby and were soon actively exploring a 30" mesh habitat. From there, they fledged into the Sunroom on May 30.

## Starlings, cont'd.

The starlings continued to grow and grow!  
But they remained relentlessly expectant of  
hand feeding.



At the risk of being  
anthropomorphic,  
we imagined their  
attitude as . . .



Just because we have  
our big bird feathers  
does NOT mean that we  
should be expected  
to feed ourselves!



As this issue goes to our website, they  
are in an outside flight cage, testing  
their wings, and learning the advantage  
of eating whenever they want to!

## Help Appreciated!

Assistance with care-giving and transporting this month were provided by Deb Huard, Sue Stone, and Julie Vaillancourt.

As always, we are grateful for the collaboration of our colleagues and the support of our MDIFW Regional Biologist, Keel Kemper.

For whatever reasons, our May 2026 bird admissions were roughly triple those of May 2025! Well accustomed to expecting the unexpected, we have been both able and glad to help any songbirds that could not receive assistance elsewhere.



Terry Heitz designed and installed finishing touches to our new songbird habitat.



We extend special thanks to folks contributing funding in support of these efforts!

## What's Up Next at Flight Plan?

So far this year, our admissions have mostly comprised species that remain in Maine year-round. They are early breeders, but, as May turns to June, the nestlings being raised here have not yet finished growing up. Release updates will have to wait for next month!

Breeding season for the migratory insectivore species in which we specialize is just beginning, so we'll have more to say about swallows and flycatchers in June!



Until next  
time,

Diane  
& Marc

Meanwhile, though, we did admit a clutch of Eastern Phoebes on May 28!

