



GEORGE, THE RING-BILLED GULL

The call came from the U.S. Park Police in downtown Washington, DC on October 8, 1996. A Ring-Billed Gull had become tangled in a kite string and was hanging from the top of the Washington Monument. Leaning out the windows at the top of the Monument, the Park Service had managed to cut a string and the gull plunged toward earth. It stopped short, however, and a basket truck was called in to reach the bird. Once safe in hand, Sharon Mack, of the Park Service, drove the bird to Second Chance.



Despite his ordeal, "George" had not suffered any broken bones. His left "hand" had been scraped up and there was a deep diagonal wound around the middle of the wing that was bleeding profusely. We were able to stitch up the injury and carefully wrapped the wing. George was a model patient and, after a couple of weeks, we unwrapped his wing. A little exercise in a flight cage and the bird would be good to go. One minor problem: it was November and we were entering the cold winter months. George had spent a month indoors and it hardly seemed fair to toss him back out. We would have to keep him through the winter and try to release him when spring arrived.

Once the weather warmed, we placed George and a couple of other gulls in our large outdoor cage. It did not take long before the gulls were flying, at least as much as was possible, given the confines of their pen. The next problem was finding a suitable release site. Although the County landfill had plenty of gulls, that hardly seemed an appropriate habitat. Finally, on June 20, 1997, arrangements were made to have one of our volunteers take George and others to the Tridelphia Reservoir and send them back to the wild. We hope George and his friends enjoy their new home and can avoid future encounters with kites and fishing line.

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