

Reporter rescues injured pigeon on Longboat Key

An afternoon in Quick Point Nature Preserve led to transporting a bird to Save Our Seabird's hospital.

By [Carter Weinhofer](#) | 5:00 a.m. February 20, 2024

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Taking pictures at Quick Point Nature Preserve was a pretty ideal assignment for a Friday afternoon. But sometimes nature has other plans.

When I got to the preserve, I noticed a pigeon standing still in the middle of the parking lot near the entrance.

As I drove past it, it didn't move. That was automatically alarming, since every other pigeon I've encountered at least tries to scurry away when something comes too close.

I parked, got out of my car and walked over to the pigeon. Again, when I got close to it, it mostly stayed put, aside from a slight pivot.

Something seemed off. I took a picture of it and sent it to my girlfriend, Abby. In St. Petersburg, she volunteers with a wildlife rescue organization called Birds in Helping Hands.

While I waited for her to respond, I went on with my assignment. I decided that if it was still in the same place by the time I was ready to leave, I would take action.

I spent about a half an hour in the preserve, taking pictures of the new signage installed by the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program. And I spent some time just exploring the preserve — a true hidden gem of Longboat Key.

By the time I was walking back to my car, Abby responded and suggested I try to pick it up.

Before trying to grab it, I got as close as I could to inspect it. From what I could see, the pigeon's eyes were kind of crusted shut, possibly from an infection.



The pigeon's eyes appeared to be in bad shape.

Photo by Carter Weinhofer

I called Abby and sent her more pictures while I took inventory of my trunk. Some old CDs, a beach towel, my rugby cleats and a DoorDash food transport bag from my college days.

Abby suggested I could take it to a rehabber she knows in Bradenton. But at 3 p.m. on a Friday, that drive would have been at least an hour.

Then we realized I could take it to Save Our Seabirds. Only a three-minute drive from Quick Point Nature Preserve.

Perfect.

She hung up with me and called Save Our Seabirds to make sure they would take the pigeon, giving them information about its location and injuries.

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Then it was my time to grab it.

This was my first time trying to rescue a bird by myself. I helped Abby with a couple rescues in the past — an anhinga trapped in barbed wire was the worst — but never alone.

I tried at first to grab it with the towel, but to my surprise the pigeon did have some energy in it. It couldn't fly away, but it scurried quickly.

This method proved unsuccessful a couple more times.

Abby instructed that the best way to catch it was to lightly toss the towel on top of the bird and then wrap my hands around it. Two or three attempts at that did the trick.

She then confirmed that Save Our Seabirds was willing to take it, and SOS was waiting for my arrival.

I carefully put the pigeon into the DoorDash delivery bag and zipped it just halfway for the short ride down the road.

But the bird wasn't going anywhere. It was "calm," which really meant it was likely too injured or emaciated to act.

I got lucky with a green light turning onto Ken Thompson Parkway, and carefully made my way down the road to the back entrance of Save Our Seabirds.

When I got there, I handed the pigeon off to one of the workers who was waiting for me.

For now, the status of the pigeon is unknown, but it's in the capable hands of Save Our Seabird's team.



The pigeon was secure in the delivery bag, ready for the short ride to Save Our Seabirds.

Photo by Carter Weinhofer



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Carter Weinhofer is the Longboat Key news reporter for the Observer. Originally from a small town in Pennsylvania, he moved to St. Petersburg to attend Eckerd College until graduating in 2023. During his entire undergraduate career, he worked at the student newspaper, The Current, holding positions from science reporter to editor-in-chief.

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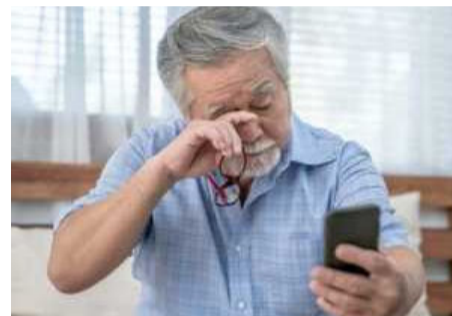
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