

DISNEY HONORS WILDLIFE GROUP FOR ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN, CONSERVATION

By Joe Nelson
The News

Awards and recognition are almost synonymous with the Laguna Niguel Pacific Wildlife Group, which took home \$5,000 in cash and a trophy at the Disney Community Service Awards ceremony Sept. 17.

It was the group's sixth award from Disney in the category of environmental concern and conservation. "It's very rewarding to see that someone recognized what we do," said the group's executive director Linda Evans.

Each year for the past 41 years, Disney has held its community service awards ceremony at the Disneyland Hotel. This year, \$400,000 was awarded to 45 Orange County service organizations.

The wildlife group also has received an award by the Los Angeles Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and, last year, received a recognition award from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, a faction of the state Department of the Interior.

In existence since 1984, the volunteer organization's projects, fund-raisers and other matters of business are conducted from Evans home-based office. The organization also leases a wing of the Irvine Animal Care Center, where the group cares for 2,000 animals in distress each year. They see everything from tiny hummingbirds to the American White Pelican, the largest bird in North America, rivaled only by the Condor.

The organization's primary focus the past three years has been saving the pelicans plagued by botulism from the Salton Sea.

Experts continue to investigate what the source of the botulism is, which also is present in the fish. Evans said whenever temperatures rise, the botulism returns.

In 1997, the LNPWG took in more than 1,200 pelicans. The organization suffered a financial crunch after the Department of Fish and Game's tight budget couldn't accommodate the group's pelican efforts.

Senator Diane Feinstein, long an environmental and wildlife advocate, facilitated the LNPWG's financial issue by earmarking funds for the organization.

"It's great that people consider what we do to be a valuable service," said Evans.

To report animals in distress to the Pacific Wildlife Group, call (949) 831-1178.

If you wish to volunteer your time and services to the Pacific Wildlife Group, call (949) 440-6247.