



Wild Times

Dedicated to the rescue, rehabilitation and release of Southern California's sick, injured and orphaned wildlife

A Red-Tailed Hawk Flies Free After Bone Fracture

By Dr. Stephany Lewis, DVM

This adult male Red-Tailed Hawk came to us from West Hollywood on February 10th. He was found in the street, unable to fly, most likely after having been hit by a car. Just like every patient in our care, he received a full physical exam, and radiographs (x-rays) were taken. He was found to have some mild trauma to his left eye, as well as a fractured left coracoid bone, a bone in the shoulder of birds that helps stabilize the shoulder while in flight. When this bone is fractured, birds are unable to get any lift, and thus are left unable to fly. Luckily for this Hawk, this bone usually heals very well without surgery.

We bandaged the bird's wing to his body for about three weeks, so that the bone could become stable enough to heal. He received pain and anti-inflammatory medications during his treatment, as well as physical therapy to stretch the wing. After time spent in our flight pens, becoming stronger on his own, his flight was deemed strong enough for release. Our patient was brought to a park close to the location he was found and took flight straight out of his box—right into the treetops!



This Red-Tailed Hawk suffered a coracoid fracture after being hit by a car
Photo by Heather Patrice Brown



Johanna Molina, Wildlife Technician, places a wing and body wrap to allow the bone to heal
Photo by Heather Patrice Brown



Electrolytes prevent dehydration
Photo by Heather Patrice Brown



The Red-Tailed Hawk flew off upon release
Photo by Luke Stebick

Inside: When Birds Collide with Windows, Busy Season for Elephant Seals, Scout Projects help CWC Patients, Orphan Care Unit Update & more

Scout Projects Help CWC Patients

by Denys Hemen and Alyssa Schlange

California Wildlife Center is always growing and as our patient load increases, so does our enclosure usage. In this 20th year of operation, some of our older enclosures are beginning to deteriorate. Through experience and sharing knowledge with other rehabbers, we strive to improve enclosures wherever possible. That is where the Eagle Scouts and Boy Scouts come in! So far this year, we have been fortunate to have had three scouts build new animal housing for us.

Evan Johnson from troop 745 (Westlake Village) and Noah Fonck from Boy Scout Troop 117 (Brentwood) built new Opossum enclosures for CWC. These new two-story Opossum "townhouses" replaced some of our older enclosures that were starting to show their age. Each enclosure can be divided in half so we can accommodate more young orphaned Opossums that we typically see in the springtime. The center divider can slide open and comfortably house a large adult, if need be. CWC currently has over 60 Virginia Opossums in care so these enclosures are greatly needed!



Boy Scouts work on an enclosure for CWC patients
Photo by Frank Johnson

Jason Leow, a member of the local Boy Scout Troop 224 (Malibu), has built much-needed fledgling Mockingbird aviaries. Each year CWC houses more than 100 orphaned Northern Mockingbirds. You can hear them in the morning and afternoon, practicing their many calls that sometimes mimic car alarms and sirens. The three new smaller aviaries will allow many orphaned Mockingbirds outside housing that will give them room to stretch their wings while continuing to be hand-fed by our staff every hour, shortening the time it takes for them to go to the larger aviary and then on to release.

The Boy Scouts are not the only scouts who have helped CWC this year. Girl Scout Skye Wilson of Girl Scout Troop 2626 (Calabasas) wanted to combine her love for art and animals when she set out to earn her Gold Award. For her project she made wood-cut enclosure signs for the center to help volunteers navigate their way through the Center. She also hosted a CWC outreach event, where she invited Daisy Girl Scouts from Calabasas to learn how they could help our native wildlife and what to do if they find an injured or orphaned animal.

CWC would like to thank these resourceful scouts and their teams for all the hard work they have put into these projects. They did a fantastic job! The staff at CWC and our wild patients greatly appreciate it.

It's Busy Season for Elephant Seals

by Heather Henderson, Stranding Coordinator

Each March to May, newly weaned Northern Elephant Seal pups haul out along our coastline, many in need of assistance to thrive. As rehabbers, we don't know how many to expect, or in what condition the pups will arrive.

This year, the stranding season in Malibu started a week later than usual, with the first patient arriving on March 5th; naturally, we wondered whether 2018 was going to be a slow season for elephant seal rescues. By the following week it was clear this was not to be, as reports from the public streamed in. To date, our marine mammal team has responded to 50 stranded Elephant Seal pups.



Elephant Seals are rehabilitated at CWC
Photo by Heather Patrice Brown

Elephant Seals are abruptly weaned after nursing for only one short month. During this month, the pup will more than triple in size, generally weighing between 200-300 pounds when weaned. This rapid growth is due to the high fat content (up to 55%) of the Elephant Seal mother's milk. Once on their own, the pups rely entirely on instinct, having learned none of the skills they will need for survival from their mother. As they head out into the Pacific Ocean, their time will mostly be spent swimming and foraging.

If Elephant Seal pups fail to thrive on their own in the ocean, they may beach themselves. The majority of Elephant Seal calls we respond to are beached, malnourished pups. Many have diminished to, or below, the average birth weight. The most extremely malnourished patient so far this season was rescued at just 55 pounds. Additionally, they may present with pre-existing injuries such as cookie cutter shark bites, stingray barb punctures, internal parasitic infections, and surface abrasions.

If you find a stranded seal, call your local marine mammal rescue center, and give the animal plenty of space. Keep people and dogs at least 50 feet away. Avoid pushing the animal back in the water or dousing her with water as this will further harm a debilitated seal. By following these guidelines, you improve the seal's chance of survival and keep both humans and animals safe!

CWC Rescue Hotline: (310) 458-9453, option 1 for Marine Mammals



Elephant Seal pups have been stranding on Malibu beaches
Photo by Elizabeth Jimenez

Orphan Care Unit Update

by Jennifer Guess, Senior Wildlife Technician

It's finally spring, and the Orphan Care Unit (OCU) at California Wildlife Center is up and running! The doors officially opened for the season on March 15th. Of course, nature had its own plans. The first orphaned patient California Wildlife Center received in 2018 was a nestling Band-Tailed Pigeon on January 25th. Between then and March 15th, CWC received 95 orphaned animals who were treated in the Intensive Care Unit until OCU opened for the season. Forty-six of those young patients were Eastern Fox Squirrels being cared for under the supervision of our homecare rehabber Glenn Ellis. Besides orphaned Eastern Fox Squirrels, CWC received 22 Mourning Doves, 13 Band-Tailed Pigeons, nine Virginia Opossums, and five Hummingbirds.



Fledgling birds like this Northern Mockingbird learn to fly from the ground
Photo by Jamie Pelayo

As of this writing, the OCU has taken in over 275 young patients. Our dedicated team of volunteers, staff, and our Homecare Network have been looking after more than 105 Eastern Fox Squirrels, 75 Virginia Opossums, and 90 baby birds including House Finches, Lesser Goldfinches, Northern Mockingbirds, Hummingbirds, Mourning Doves, and time progresses, the mammals in OCU will slowly transition into outdoor enclosures preparing for release. We will see a major influx of injured and orphaned baby birds.

If you find a young animal the first thing you'll want to do is look from afar to see if it has any obvious injuries. If you notice an injury, prepare a box with an absorbent towel at the bottom, and gently contain the injured animal. Contact the hospital at (310) 458-9453 to get further instructions. If you find a young uninjured animal you believe might be orphaned, contact the hospital as soon as possible to get instructions on whether the animal should be contained and brought into our Orphan Care Unit. It is very common for many species of birds to spend anywhere from 3-7 days on the ground learning how to fly. This is called the fledgling stage. Many people mistake these fledgling birds for orphans, but in reality the parent is still caring for them while they are on the ground. Unfortunately a lot of young animals are orphaned from tree trimming incidents. The best way you can help young animals is to wait until December to trim your trees!



Orphaned Fox Squirrels need to be fed frequently
Photo by Anne Slattery

CWC Welcomes Dr. Stephany Lewis, DVM

by Jennifer Brent, Executive Director



Dr. Stephany Lewis, DVM

This March, CWC was thrilled to welcome our new veterinarian, Stephany Lewis, DVM. She moved from New York to join us as a full-time year-round addition to our staff. After a thorough nationwide search, Dr. Duane Tom and I agreed that she was an outstanding candidate, and we are excited to have her join the team to make her mark.

Stephany's most recent position was in private practice on Long Island, with a focus on exotics and avians. In the past she has worked with many of the same animals as we see here at CWC, including marine mammals, and she is looking forward to a change in Coasts.

While an undergrad at University of Pennsylvania, Stephany thought she would become an equine vet-- when an internship before vet school changed her path and brought her to Tufts, with its renowned wildlife medicine program. Stephany's passion is pain management for wildlife and ensuring that patients do not suffer while under our care. "Wildlife medicine feels very meaningful to me, as an opportunity to undo some of the terrible things that we humans do. Wild animals need more veterinarians to advocate and take care of them."

When not at work, Stephany rides dressage and hikes with her laboratory rescue beagle, Alice. Her favorite species include the Red-tailed Hawk and Porcupines (which she had the opportunity to work with elsewhere). And her position at CWC gives her great satisfaction. "This is my dream job!" she says.

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- Animal Fact Sheet
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- Plush Animal (additional purchase)

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cawildlife.org/ways-to-support-us/

Leave a Legacy for Wildlife

Consider California Wildlife Center in your Estate Planning

Call Heather in the Development Office for more information
(310) 458-9453, ext. 101

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When Birds Collide with Windows

By Denys Hemen, Hospital Manager

It's a sight—and sound—sure to startle anyone who is a witness: you look up to see a bird hit your window, and immediately run outside to check on the welfare of the unfortunate creature. An estimated billion birds die from window strikes annually in the U.S. alone. Along with attacks by outdoor cats, window strikes are among the leading causes of the steep population decline seen in almost every species of songbird.

Birds collide with windows because they do not see them as solid structures and try to fly through them. Even small windows can be a problem because birds often look for narrow escape routes when being chased by predators. A bird may also fly into glass because a building's surrounding vegetation is reflected onto the surface of the windows, or there is vegetation inside that the bird can see and attempts to fly to it. Glass walls installed around properties and on balconies are especially troublesome for birds.

California Wildlife Center receives dozens of birds each year with eye, head, and shoulder trauma from window collisions. Although the cause for much of this trauma is unknown, there were 65 patients last year brought to CWC because a rescuer had seen or heard the window strike. Not all birds are fortunate to recover from window strikes. Most are taken by predators while in a stunned state, and others may stumble off and perish while hidden from view.

If you have windows that birds are drawn to, there are a few options to prevent collisions. By far the easiest remedy available is bird tape. This reflective tape gives the window an appearance that resembles a solid structure. Other options available are "bird-proof" glass and adhesive films that can be applied to give the window the appearance of impermeability. Please remember always to keep bird feeders away from your windows.

If you witness a bird striking a window, there are a few things you can do to help. Quickly find a box suitable for the bird's size that can be closed. Place something soft in the bottom, such as an old t-shirt or a towel, and puncture the box several times to provide adequate ventilation. Gently pick up the bird using your hands and quickly place the bird in the box, closing it immediately. If it is a larger bird, you may cover it with a towel when you pick it up to aid in its capture and to protect you from a bite. For birds of prey, such as hawks or owls, never attempt to pick them up with bare hands. Turn your box sideways and try to push the bird into the box using a broom or similar tool. For larger birds or birds of prey, keep the bird somewhere dark and quiet and call CWC at 310-458-WILD. If it is a small songbird that struck your window, you can bring the bird inside to a quiet dark room for two hours. After that time, go outside and open the box. Sometimes the bird is only stunned and needs a little time to recuperate in a safe place. In this case, the lucky bird will fly out of the box and your work is done! If the bird is unable to fly or stand after this time, please contact CWC immediately.



Western Scrub Jays are often victims of window strikes
Photo by Alyssa Schlange