



WildTimes

Fall 2018

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

Meet Patient 1311: A Comprehensive Care Success

by Jennifer Brent, Executive Director

You have heard their calls and seen them soaring high above the oak forest here in Southern California. These hawks are common across North America, though those found in California tend to be redder than elsewhere.

It's only seven months into 2018, and it seems likely that the year is going to bring us an unprecedented number of Red-shouldered Hawks. So far, we have seen 12 of these majestic patients, in comparison to the last two years' numbers of 15 and 17 admissions.

On May 7, Patient 1311, a Red-shouldered Hawk unable to fly, was recovered—literally—on Van Nuys Boulevard in Pacoima and brought to the East Valley Animal Care Center, where one of our volunteers picked her up. Upon arrival, staff veterinarian Dr. Stephany Lewis determined that the bird had suffered a left midshaft major and minor carpometacarpal fracture (in humans, a break near the wrist, where it meets the hand on the thumb side). At just 436 grams (slightly less than one pound), she was also underweight.

The next day, she was given pain medication and splinted. A few days later, she was anesthetized so that the area could be cleaned and the broken bones pinned, and she was given more analgesics and antibiotics. On CWC's use of pharmacology in birds, Dr. Lewis states, "Our avian patients are placed on many of the same medications that are prescribed to dogs, cats, or even humans. Due to the physiology of birds and their much higher metabolic rate, often the doses are quite different. Dosing medications, particularly pain medications, for the number of species we see here can be a real challenge. This is an active area of study, so we are always trying to stay on top of the latest research."

In wildlife medicine, we are often called upon to anesthetize animals for exams, because of the incredible stress they experience and for the safety of the handler performing the requisite intensive palpating. A week after pinning, Director of Animal Care Dr. Duane Tom again anesthetized Patient 1311 for an exam to ensure that the pins were still in place. Three weeks later, because of excellent progress, Dr. Tom again anesthetized her to remove the pins. The wing was then wrapped to continue healing. *(continued on page 2)*



The Red-shouldered Hawk practices her flying
Photos by Paul Simon Needham

Inside: Innovative Treatment Options for California Sea Lions with Eye Injuries, The Lesson of the Lost Gull, Mourning Doves & more

(Patient 1311 Continued) The Red-shouldered Hawk continued to recover well, showing good appetite and range of motion. The vets decided that she was ready to move to a lower enclosure that allows for more space and freedom, to begin physical therapy and desensitization to humans. The wing wrap was removed, and she was transferred to a lower enclosure on June 21. There Hawk 1311 was soon seen to fly on her own for the first time since being in our care. Her initial flights showed that she was able to gain good height but was somewhat crooked in flight.

On July 13, Diana Mullen, a highly-experienced volunteer who assists us by creancing injured birds, took her out for a test flight. Creancing involves attaching leather straps (jesses) to the bird's lower legs and then attaching these jesses to a line up to 300 feet in length. Though tethered to the handler, the bird is still able to gain altitude, bank, and land on her own. For birds who have been with us for an extended period of time, these flights prove invaluable to progress, determining any muscle atrophy as well as serving as an assessment of the ability to thrive once released. On her first test, Hawk 1311 flew three times with great symmetry, which boded an excellent prognosis. The next day, Diana again flew her; she continued to make excellent progress.

Because of some damage to the feathers during surgery and while the wing wrap was in place, Hawk 1311 became a candidate for imping, the surgical replacement of damaged or missing feathers with healthy ones; this allows for release while new feathers grow in.

While all these measures taken together might seem rather extreme, they are fairly standard for a raptor that comes to California Wildlife Center with an injury of this type. In our years of experience, we have learned that comprehensive care from exams, surgery, rehabilitation and physical therapy ensures the best chance of a successful return to the wild.

Innovative Treatment Options for California Sea Lions with Eye Injuries

by Stephany Lewis, DVM, Veterinarian

This summer, CWC's marine mammal team received several California sea lions with eye trauma, a common injury, and it is not uncommon for us to treat several pinnipeds with corneal ulcers and other corneal injuries. Therapy includes topical antibiotics (applied directly to the eye) and, occasionally, oral antibiotics and analgesics.

As you might imagine, our pinniped patients get large and "ornery" rather quickly, so applying topical medications to their eyes every day, multiple times per day, becomes quite challenging! To help alleviate our patients' stress (and the stress of our marine mammal staff and volunteers!) we decided to try a novel treatment technique, first used with pinnipeds by the Marine Mammal Center in Sausalito, CA, which involves injecting an antibiotic-impregnated gel into the conjunctiva (tissue around the eye).

To implement this technique, we sedated our patients using a combination of injectable sedatives and an inhalant anesthetic. Then we injected a small amount of a thermodynamic antibiotic-impregnated poloxamer gel into the animal's conjunctiva—and it's not an easy procedure: the conjunctiva is very thin and very close to the eyeball! The refrigerated injectable is a liquid; it gels once it reaches body temperature.

Over the following couple of weeks, the gel slowly releases the antibiotics onto the animal's cornea, serving the same function as a daily application of topical antibiotics. Results were promising on all four animals treated, and we will likely apply this technique again in subsequent seasons.



The Sea Lions were sedated for the procedure
Photo by Heather Henderson



The gel is injected into the conjunctiva
Photo by Stephany Lewis



New Logo!

California Wildlife Center has a new logo! This beautiful logo was designed by Art Directors, Iham Budihartono and Gary Palmer at advertising agency Quigley Simpson in honor of CWC's 20th Anniversary

Join the Conservation Circle!

Become a part of something special and help support sick, injured and orphaned wildlife. Conservation Circle Members receive invitations to exclusive donor events, behind-the-scenes opportunities, and more! Find out more and join today at cawildlife.org/ways-to-support-us/conservation-circle/

The Lesson of the Lost Gull

by Corby Sandberg, Volunteer

I was almost home from my volunteer shift at California Wildlife Center when, to my surprise, in the middle of a busy road in full-on five o'clock traffic, I saw a Gull walking around, seemingly lost. Instantly I pulled off the road, stopped my car, and ran over in an effort to keep the bird from being hit. I waved my hands to get him off the road, and he moved to the sidewalk, temporarily safe from the danger of passing cars.



CWC cares for around 100 Gulls every year
Photo by Jamie Pelayo

One of my volunteer tasks at CWC is answering the phone and talking callers through this sort of situation. I request a photo of the animal to be texted to our hospital staff cell phone and, if they are a species we are authorized to treat, I ask the caller to bring it to us. I always tell people to try not to get too caught up in the animal's predicament that they unwittingly place themselves in danger. So many variables, but protocol nonetheless. Now, I found myself following my own advice!

Waving all the traffic to go around me (thankfully, no one was honking at me), I observed this seemingly confused and docile creature. He was a beautiful bird, but sadly so very much out of his domain: high up above, circling round and round with its skymates, circling, circling.... I knew something had to be very wrong.

It's best not to remove wild animals from their environment unless absolutely necessary. That's another reason we ask people to call us before coming by. Every year, we see many young "rescues" brought to us by well-meaning members of the public. Inadvertently, they separate mothers from babies and, sadly, such rescues may spell doom. But, because of my CWC experience, this was clearly not the case. I keep a cardboard animal carrier and a towel for unfortunate events such as this and, after much observation and careful thought, wrapped the Gull in the towel and put him in the carrier. The bird remained docile and didn't fight me at all. It seemed too easy.

I drove back to CWC, calling to let them know the deal. After I arrived, a kind technician took the bird from my carrier, weighed him, and examined the webbed feet, the wings. She showed me one wing in perfect condition, and then the other, which had been broken at some point, and not healed in a way that allowed for flight. The wing was crooked; this bird never would take to the sky again.

If the Gull had been brought to CWC immediately after its injury, then it is likely our vet could have set the break, allowing for a complete recovery, and then release...to enjoy the sky once again. The bird had showed absolutely no fear. Is it possible that someone rescued it after its accident and kept it—believing "I can save this bird"? And then, is it possible, after the break hardened and seemingly healed, just let it go?

This is my takeaway, the lesson this beautiful, tragic creature taught me: Do not keep wild animals at your house, thinking you can "save" them. Let professionals decide what the correct thing is to do—for the dignity and health of all creatures.

Summer Internship at CWC: So Nice I Did It Twice!

by Beverly Loo, Intern



Intern Beverly Loo tube-feeds an American Crow
Photo by Heather Patrice Brown

California Wildlife Center is one of the most unique organizations you will find if you need a safe place to drop off an injured or orphaned animal for rescue and rehabilitation. This former ranger station is home not only to hundreds of patients per week but also to dozens of volunteers, interns, and staff members who work seven days a week, 365 days a year, to give the best care to our wild neighbors. The difference between CWC and other veterinary hospitals is more than just the type of animals that come into our care, although there is no other place you would be able to see a Striped Skunk, Elephant Seal, and Golden Eagle all in one day! To me, the difference is in the team behind the name.

As a second-time intern, I have had the good fortune of working with an amazing group of volunteers, interns, and staff. We have exceptional volunteers who come on their days off to volunteer their time once a week. We have enthusiastic interns who fly from the East Coast just to experience a summer at the Center. And we have dedicated staff who drive from all over Los Angeles to work at this incredibly rewarding job.

My favorite memories (so far!) at California Wildlife Center are exchanging funny stories with my fellow interns while doing (seemingly endless) laundry, learning to tube-feed a Hawk while being carefully instructed by one of our extremely knowledgeable wildlife technicians, and releasing one of our patients back into the wild after a successful rehabilitation. With all these amazing experiences, it is no wonder why I came back for a second summer at CWC! As a fourth-year college student currently applying to vet school, there is no place I'd rather be than here. Thanks to the great people, this has become one of my favorite places ever to work.

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Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Mourning Doves

by Melissa Hartman, Administrative Assistant



CWC treats many fledgling Mourning Doves
Photo by Jamie Pelayo

So far this year at California Wildlife Center, Mourning Doves are the second most common species seen. Exceeded only by the number of Mallard Ducks admitted, Mourning Doves make up 13% of all our animal patients.

If the world can be divided into those who consider this seemingly ubiquitous bird with its estimated US population of more than 400 million to be too prevalent, too present, too ordinaire to be worth much attention and those who find them interesting, this writer has recently migrated from the

former to the latter group. Not only are they interesting, but also rather charming and even downright funny:

They're Interesting...

The Coooo-OOOOH-woo-woo-woo cry that seems soooo mournful is actually a come-hither mating call made almost always by males.

Weighing in at a measly three to six ounces—get this—Mourning Doves have been clocked at 55 mph! As a figure of comparison, the Northern Flicker, at a similar weight, flies at 23 mph.

Unlike most birds that tend to gulp water and then rotate their heads, using gravity to bring it down their throats, Doves sip water. Their diet, composed mostly of hard, dry seeds, necessitates consumption of significantly greater quantities of water than many other birds. Birds are typically more vulnerable to predators when drinking water. Sipping is thus a form of risk-management.

And Charming...

Mourning doves remain with the same mate all breeding season long, and pairs tend to mate for life.

Mourning Dove dads do their share. On the nest, they incubate from mid-morning to mid-afternoon, while moms take over in the evening, going through the night. Males and females work together to feed their babies.

And Funny!

How the Mourning Dove became a symbol of peace is kind of a head-scratcher. Notice how other birds in the feeder keep their distance? Yep, they know if they get too close, they are in for one HECK of a pounding! Doves crouch low, ready to go the distance, scratching, biting with their beaks, even battering with their wings in a move called...boxing!

The Mourning Dove is a most engaging CWC patient. It's our pleasure to care for them and return them to their wild home!