

WILDLIFE REHABILITATION VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

Thank you for your interest in volunteering at the California Wildlife Center. California Wildlife Center is a federally recognized 501(c) 3 non-profit organization. We work in concert with other licensed wildlife care and emergency response groups to ensure the best possible care for our wild patients. We are a member of the California Council for Wildlife Rehabilitators, the National Wildlife Rehabilitation Association and the International Wildlife Rehabilitation Council.



Volunteers are an indispensable part of our organization. Not only do we need your assistance in the care of thousands of wildlife patients, we also need help with facility maintenance, pen construction, landscaping, rescue and transport of injured animals to and from our facility, fundraising, grant writing, and other administrative tasks.

Volunteers may be asked to help out at a booth during special events or assist at fundraising parties or benefits. Each and every task is essential to the ongoing operation of CWC and our volunteers are greatly appreciated for their time, energy and commitment.

MARINE MAMMAL RESPONSE AND REHABILITATION

California Wildlife Center is one of the only organizations in southern California to offer marine mammal response as well as rehabilitation services. The Marine Program volunteers assist in the rescue of seals, sea lions, dolphins and whales. Volunteers also assist in the rehabilitation of Northern Elephant Seal and California Sea Lion pups that are typically rescued during the spring months of each year. Requirements to volunteer in the Marine Program are the same as general requirements for CWC volunteers (see below).

VOLUNTEER REQUIREMENTS

AGE REQUIREMENTS

You must be at least 18 years of age to work directly with the animals. Children under the age of 18 are not permitted to volunteer at the Center due to liability issues.

TIME COMMITMENT

Volunteering at California Wildlife Center requires a 6-month minimum commitment. During that time, volunteers are required to provide at least 16 hours of service a month working a minimum of one 4-hour shift per week, preferably on the same shift times each week. Individuals who are unable to commit to this minimum monthly/hourly requirement are not eligible to participate in CWC's Wildlife Rehabilitation Volunteer program.

Animal Care shifts are divided into three 4-hour shifts:

Morning: 8a.m. – 12 p.m.

Afternoon: 12 p.m. – 4p.m.

Evening: 4p.m. – 8 p.m. (or until last feedings are completed)

TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

All volunteers are required to attend Basic Orientation and at least one one-on-one shift with a supervisor.

Additional advanced training classes will be required for those participating in Marine Mammal Response, as well as for those interested in working in the Orphan Care Unit.

PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

Wildlife Hospital Volunteers must be able to lift and carry up to 20 lbs. (Marine Mammal Volunteers up to 50 lbs.), navigate uneven surfaces, climb stairs and hills, and generally perform physically strenuous activities for moderate intervals of time with exposure to temperature extremes. Volunteers should have no known serious health issues.

VACCINATIONS

Volunteers are recommended to have a current tetanus vaccination. The vaccine is good for 10 years. Booster injections can be obtained from your family physician, Public Health Clinics and most Urgent Care Centers.

Any volunteer wishing to work with rabies vector species (bats, skunks, raccoons, fox and coyote), and ONLY those volunteers, must have a current rabies pre-exposure vaccine. This vaccine can be obtained from your personal physician or a travel clinic in a series of 3 injections. This vaccine is relatively costly at a price of approx. \$400 per injection.

ZOONOTIC DISEASE

Zoonotic diseases are diseases that can be transmitted from animals to humans. Anyone who works with animals needs to be aware of the diseases that may be a potential health risk. Many wildlife species can be asymptomatic carriers of disease, meaning they will show no outward signs of illness.

While all humans can be potentially infected, certain individuals are at greater risk of illness due to age and immunity status. The following groups of people would be considered high risk for contracting zoonotic disease:

- Children/elderly
- HIV positive individuals
- Cancer patients or those on immunosuppressive drugs
- Individuals who have undergone a splenectomy
- Individuals suffering from chronic disease (kidney, liver, heart)
- Diabetics
- Individuals on hemodialysis

Individuals who fit into one of these categories are strongly encouraged not to have direct contact with wildlife.

MISSION AND PHILOSOPHY

Our mission is to provide medical and rehabilitative care to sick, injured and orphaned native wildlife, to provide them with the best chance for return back into the wild. We also promote the protection of habitat and the environment through research, educational programs and community outreach efforts.

To better understand our philosophy, it is important to understand what it means to rehabilitate a wild animal.

- Wildlife rehabilitation is the process whereby sick, injured, or orphaned wild animals are provided medical and nutritional support until they can be safely returned to the wild.
- Typically, it is collaboration between rehabilitators, who are knowledgeable and skilled with the various wild species, and veterinarians interested in treating wildlife.
- The goal of all wildlife rehabilitators should be to provide the best care possible without jeopardizing the wildness of the animal.

When working with wildlife, it is important to keep things in perspective and realize that these creatures are very different from our domestic dogs, cats, or pet birds. We aren't here to befriend or tame them. We are here to treat each animal with the respect it deserves as a wild being. The rehabilitation process at California Wildlife Center promotes the health and well-being of the animal without infringing on its natural behavior.

It is important to understand that CWC is neither a petting zoo nor a sanctuary for non-releasable animals. The animals that we care for must have the skills necessary to survive in the wild. They must be able to function at peak performance. They must possess a healthy wariness of human beings, dogs, and cats. Those involved in wildlife rehabilitation realize that not every animal can be saved, nor should we be attempting to save every animal if it cannot thrive in the wild. Unlike wild animals, domestic animals can maintain a good quality of life if disabled because they have their human companions to watch over them and they enjoy the company of people.

There is a cycle to all life and death is a natural part of that cycle. The majority of animals that come to a rehabilitation center would certainly die and enter the food chain without human involvement. Our job is to assist those animals that we can help and return them to a normal life and end the suffering of those that can no longer survive in the wild. It would be inhumane to release an animal that would starve to death or not be capable of normal function.

Animals that are deemed non-releasable will be humanely euthanized at CWC. Animal Care Staff makes all euthanasia decisions. We are required to comply with this policy as part of our permit agreement. As a volunteer, you are not required to be present when an animal is euthanized, but you should be aware that this is part of wildlife rehabilitation. That being said, you are always welcome to inquire with the staff as to why an animal is not releasable.

HISTORY OF CALIFORNIA WILDLIFE CENTER

California Wildlife Center was founded in 1998 by a dedicated group of volunteers committed to ensuring that our wild neighbors receive a second chance at life. We are currently located on a secluded parcel of government-owned land in the Santa Monica Mountains. The facility was originally a private home but later served as a ranger station for

California State Parks. When the State Park service moved off site, the California Wildlife Center was allowed right of entry the facility. After some major renovations to make the center operational, the doors were opened to take in wildlife patients.

By the summer of 2001, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife had granted CWC a permit to rehabilitate fawns. We are now the only facility in southern California with facilities for rehabilitating these animals. In 2002, CWC become one of only four facilities in southern California designated to rehabilitate coyotes.

With an ever-increasing caseload, we outgrew our tiny clinic, so plans were made to convert our garage to provide additional animal care space. In 2005, with a grant from the Wendy P. McCaw Foundation, we were able to build our Intensive Care Unit (ICU) on that site. Our surgical suite with x-ray capabilities became a reality in 2007 with a grant from the Ahmanson Fund.

With the ever-increasing volume of young orphaned animals cared for each year, our original hospital was re- vamped in 2008 to provide more effective space for rehabilitating these delicate patients.

Our Marine Mammal Rescue program was implemented in 2004 with the help of the federal John H. Prescott Grant. We directly serve the City of Malibu. Our Response Team staff and volunteers provide medical assessment to over 300 sick and injured marine mammals every year. Our on-site Marine Mammal Rehabilitation Facility for Elephant Seals was built in 2013 and then completely rehauled in 2017 with a grant from the Leonardo di Caprio Foundation, and it is equipped to take up to 15 Elephant Seals or 25 Sea Lion pups at a time. The facility is outfitted with in-and-above-ground pools which allow seal pups to learn and practice fish consumption.

All of our services are offered at no cost to the public. CWC receives no state or federal funding. CWC has cared for over 52,000 animals since 1998.

This is an exciting time to be joining our organization. We look forward to your support.