



Wild Times

Summer 2019

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

The Many Species of Orphan Care

By Cambria Wells, Wildlife Technician

The rest of the world might have four seasons, but wildlife rehabilitation has even more. Busy season at California Wildlife Center begins with the opening of the Orphan Care Unit when squirrel kits, opossum joeys, and dove squabs begin to trickle in. We never know when the moment will strike, but it's not long before everything changes again.

At the end of May, we've settled firmly into baby bird season, with a wide variety of species residing in Orphan Care and others moving into outdoor enclosures to strengthen their flight and condition for release. Our first songbirds are Northern Mockingbirds, California Towhees, House Finches, and Lesser Goldfinches, common backyard birds here in Southern California that quickly run into trouble with tree trimmers, outdoor cats, and windy day accidents. Next, we begin to see American Crows and Common Ravens, favorites of many CWC volunteers. After these familiar visitors arrive, we can never predict which other species will come in.

In 2017, the Orphan Care Unit was overwhelmed with a flood of young Northern Mockingbirds. In 2018, we provided supportive care to a large number of House Finches. Thus far, 2019 appears to be the season of variety. Orphan Care has already treated a number of species such as the Oak Titmouse, Western Bluebird, Bullock's Oriole, Dark-eyed Junco, Black-headed Grosbeak, and more. Each of these species requires different care, from the unique nesting needs of Cliff Swallows and Wrens to the particular eating habits of Towhees and Bushtits. Some also enter into care with gastrointestinal parasites or wounds which require medical treatment. Volunteers and staff work each day to provide these birds the nutrition and stimulation they require, rapidly adapting to changing circumstances and patients.

Over one weekend, the Orphan Care room can change completely, and your favorite patient can go from a nestling to a fledgling seemingly right before your eyes. In the two weeks a patient spends conditioning for release in an outdoor enclosure, they become completely independent, and their releases are a bittersweet victory. As each round of young animals moves on, we turn to the next, and alter care to meet their needs again. The precious privilege of being involved in the early life of orphaned wildlife is only outweighed by knowing release means they'll have a chance to raise their own young someday, in the wild, where they belong.



Bushtit Fledgling
Photo by Brittany Moser



California Towhee Fledgling
Photo by Brittany Moser



Oak Titmouse and Western
Bluebird Fledglings
Photo by Cambria Wells



Black-Headed Grosbeak
Photo by Cambria Wells

Inside: Treating a Red Shouldered Hawk, CWC Cares for Its First Fawn of the Year, A Crabby Seal, & more!

Red-Shouldered Hawk with Anticoagulant Rodenticide Toxicosis

By Dr. Stephany Lewis, Veterinarian

This winter, CWC admitted an adult male Red-Shouldered Hawk after he was found on the ground in Santa Monica, too weak to fly. On physical examination his only injury was a very small laceration on his toe, only about 5 mm in length, yet his feathers were completely soaked with blood and the laceration was actively bleeding. The mucous membranes in his mouth were pale white, and he was so weak that he couldn't stand, wouldn't open his eyes, and was barely responsive to external stimuli. A small amount of blood was collected from the bird for some basic bloodwork. He was found to be severely anemic, with 5 times less red blood cells than normal.

Sadly, those of us working in wildlife rehabilitation know that there is only one thing that could cause these clinical signs in a bird of prey. This bird was suffering from anticoagulant rodenticide toxicosis. Anticoagulant rodenticides are rat poisons that cause death to rodents by preventing their ability to clot their blood. Non-target species, such as Hawks, Owls, Bobcats, Coyotes, and Mountain Lions are exposed to these compounds by ingesting the rodents that have eaten these poisons. The poisons do not kill the rodents immediately, but rather slowly weaken them and make them easier prey. Some of these compounds, such as brodifacoum, difethialone, and bromadiolone, are known as "second generation anticoagulant rodenticides". These compounds were invented in the 1970's in response to rodents becoming resistant to the "first generation" compounds, such as warfarin. One of the differences between the first and second generation rodenticides is also what makes the second generation compounds so much more dangerous for wildlife; they last for a very long time in the body. This means that non-target wildlife species can ingest multiple small doses over long periods of time, until they build up levels high enough that they are no longer able to clot their blood. This has disastrous consequences. Animals can bleed into their lungs, causing severe distress, as well as into their brains, eyes, joints, and muscles, causing severe pain and permanent disabilities. Or, like our Red-Shouldered Hawk patient, they can lose all of their blood through what should be an inconsequential wound. Additionally, Bobcats and Mountain Lions are believed to suffer deleterious impact to their immune systems due to chronic exposure to these poisons, making them more susceptible to illness and death from infectious diseases such as mange.



Red-Shouldered Hawk
Photo by Johanna Molina

Luckily for our Red-Shouldered Hawk patient, there is an antidote to these poisons, and it is just a simple vitamin, vitamin K. This treatment needs to be given daily for four weeks. Additionally, he received fluid therapy for the first week (a blood transfusion would be the preferred treatment but is unfortunately not an option for our unique patients). This bird actually had a catheter placed into a bone in his wing to quickly replenish blood volume and blood pressure after such drastic blood loss.

Forty-three days after he arrived, our Red-Shouldered Hawk had normal bloodwork, was well-conditioned, flying beautifully in one of our flight pens, and ready to be released! This was a wonderful outcome for this patient, but sadly most of the rodenticide victims who come to us are not as lucky. Because they arrive very late in the course of their illness, the majority of them pass away in the first 24 hours, before our vitamin K therapy has had time to work. Every patient who passes away due to rat poison is submitted for examination by biologists at the California Department of Fish and Wildlife to confirm the cause of death and aid

research proving how damaging these poisons are to our native wildlife. The exposure frequency of wildlife to these compounds continues to be astounding, despite previous legislation made to limit their use. Scientists continue to detect these compounds in anywhere from 79 to 100% of animals tested, and in many cases 3 - 6 different compounds are detected in the same individual.

Anticoagulant rodenticides pose a substantial and far-reaching threat to wildlife and ecosystem health. A California bill, AB1788, has reached state senate, and if passed will greatly restrict use of these poisons in our state. CWC is so grateful for everyone who has been working tirelessly to get this bill passed, and we hope you join us in urging your senator to pass this important legislation! Our wildlife deserves poison-free food!

A Crabby Seal

By Heather Henderson, Stranding Coordinator

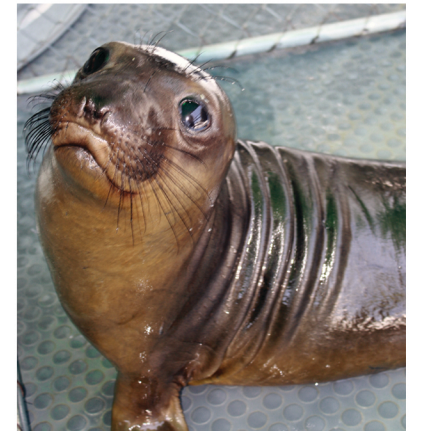
On April 24th we received a report of an Elephant Seal pup (patient #19-097) under a house on Carbon Beach. When the rescue team arrived, it was determined that she needed to come in for care because her face, particularly the nose and mouth, was severely swollen. No obvious signs of injuries or trauma were found during the intake examination. We suspected an allergic reaction to eating toxic red crab.

Our suspicion was confirmed when we flushed her stomach with water and crab parts came back up the feed tube. As a result of communication and shared information throughout the West Coast Marine Mammal Stranding Network, we knew that large quantities of these crab parts lodged in the stomach could continue to cause trouble for the Elephant Seal – even result in death. This season, most of the Elephant Seals arriving at CWC have had a small quantity of crab parts in their stomach. However, #19-097 presented with an extremely large quantity.

During the first two weeks in care, her stomach was flushed prior to each tube feed, in order to remove the crab parts, and medication was prescribed to address the reaction. We also delayed introducing whole food in order to prevent overfilling or distending the stomach. In addition to any reaction that a patient may experience, the crab parts do not pass through the GI tract quickly and may cause overfilling of the stomach, partially blocking digestion. In extreme cases, the sharp parts can even tear the lining when able to pass.



Elephant Seal 97 Before treatment
Photo by Dr. Stephany Lewis



Elephant Seal 97 After treatment
Photo by Heather Henderson

Was our approach successful? YES! Currently she weighs 60 kg and her attitude is bright. Now able to swim down and "catch" fish competitively in the rehab pool, #97's road to recovery is progressing well. This Elephant Seal pup patient should find herself back in the ocean by the summer solstice.

Introduction to Jodi Regan

By Jennifer Brent, Executive Director

We are happy to welcome Jodi Regan who joined the CWC staff as our new Volunteer and Outreach Manager at the end of May. Previously Jodi was Volunteer and Outreach Coordinator for the Simi Valley Library and served as a Volunteer Coordinator for other local groups. While she is new to working with animals, she has a passion for people and a commitment to giving back. In fact, she continues to volunteer with the Las Virgenes Scouting Alumni Association, Angel City Sports and Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District.

Jodi is a lifelong Angeleno and huge Dodgers fan. In fact, she doesn't make plans for the month of October because she's certain she'll be watching them compete in the playoffs and World Series. She's coached her son into being a Dodger fan too. Jodi's favorite player is Steve Garvey who sparked her love of the sport.

Jodi lives with her husband and mini Aussie in Agoura Hills.



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CWC Cares for Its First Fawn of the Year

By Cori Carlson, Administrative Assistant

California Wildlife Center took in its first Mule Deer fawn of the year on May 2. As of writing this, we're caring for two. That timing is fairly typical since Mule Deer are born from April to June. They are nursed by their mothers throughout the summer and weaned in the fall.

CWC is the only facility authorized to care for orphaned or abandoned fawns in Los Angeles County. Last year, we admitted 11.

Native to California, this Deer got its name because of its large ears that look a bit like they belong on a mule.

They can be found throughout the western United States. When they're first born, their backs are dotted with white spots, a bit of camouflage to help protect the newborns.

When they first come to us, the young fawns are kept in a heated room with a hay-covered floor and are bottle-fed a specialized formula containing goat milk. We greatly limit the number of people who come into contact with Deer in our care. Only our veterinarian, wildlife technicians, and trained interns and volunteers care for our fawns. The young Deer can habituate to humans very easily, so it's important they don't get too exposed to us while they're here. For this reason, we have installed cameras in the Deer enclosures to monitor them and limit our face-to-face interactions. There is nothing like seeing an adorable wobbly young fawn.

As they gain weight and grow, they move into a small outdoor enclosure and learn to eat on their own. Mule Deer are herbivores and eat a variety of fresh green leaves, twigs, shrubs, various grasses and berries. Toward the end of their stay, they move into a large field-like enclosure until they are ready to be released, which typically happens in the fall.

In the wild, fawns may appear to spend a lot of time on their own. But that's one of the ways their mothers try to keep them safe. Fawns are often left alone, allowing them to hide until they're big enough to outrun predators. Their mothers usually are close by and will come back to nurse them but are keeping their distance to protect their fawns.

If you find a fawn that appears abandoned, sick, injured or in distress, please call your local wildlife rehabilitator or CWC at (310) 458-9453 before you approach.



First Mule Deer Patient of the Year
Photo by Cambria Wells