



# WildTimes

Summer 2020

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

## It's Raining Cats and Ducklings!

By Denys Hemen, Hospital Manager

During the spring and summer, Mallard ducklings seem to fall out of the sky in Los Angeles. California Wildlife Center can receive over 350 of these fuzzballs in a typical year.

Because of human development in their natural habitat, Mallards have taken to nesting in suburban yards where pools are present. Sometimes tragedy will strike. Mom gets hit by a car or a dog scares her off and what are left are up to 12 orphaned babies that need to go to a wildlife rehab center.

In the past, International Bird Rescue (IBR) in San Pedro has graciously taken ducklings that the public has rescued and brought to us. IBR specializes in the rehabilitation of ducks, gulls, pelicans and other birds that spend much of their lives in the water. However, as Safer at Home restrictions have caused IBR and other organizations to reduce staffing, they have paused on taking the hundreds of Mallards that will be brought to CWC this spring and summer. In response, CWC has renovated one of our 128 square foot songbird aviaries to accommodate the ducklings! They are very messy little animals. In place of the usual dirt floor, we built a slanted raised platform inside, complete with plumbing for drainage and waterproof surfacing that can be hosed down each day. The new duck suite also has its own kiddie pool for the ducklings to splash around in as much as they want! When life gives you lemons- make duckling enclosures!



Preparing the new enclosure for patients  
Photo by Denys Hemen



Mallard ducklings in CWC care  
Photo by Denys Hemen



Newborn Mallards have downy feathers  
Photo by Brittany Moser

**Inside:** Help Wildlife Avoid a Sticky Situation, Growing Fast, Covid-19, Northern Elephant Seal Rescue and Rehabilitation ...



# Help Wildlife Avoid a Sticky Situation

By Dr. Stephany Lewis, Veterinarian

Every year, California Wildlife Center receives approximately twenty animals that have been caught in glue traps, or “glue boards.” Some glue traps come as strips or tubes that are hung up to catch flying insects, while others are placed on the ground to catch crawling insects and rodents. Glue traps are used as a method of pest control, but unfortunately, these traps are indiscriminate. CWC most commonly receives small songbirds that have been caught in these traps, but we also see lizards, snakes, small mammals, and even small hawks and owls who have suffered from traps. Most of these animals eat insects and rodents, so these traps end up eliminating the most natural form of pest control!

When an animal gets caught in these traps, sadly their death is not quick and painless. They suffer for hours or even days, as they struggle and slowly die of exhaustion, hunger, and thirst. As they struggle to escape, they will often sustain painful injuries. Bird feathers also become severely damaged and mangled from the glue. If not discovered and freed from the trap quickly and carefully, the animal will die.

If an animal becomes stuck to a glue trap, they always need professional medical treatment. If you find a live animal caught in a glue trap, we do not recommend that you attempt to free the animal yourself. Without proper care and training, it is possible to injure animals even more while attempting to free them. Simply place a box with ventilation over the animal and keep it in a quiet and safe place while you contact your local wildlife rehabilitation center and transport the animal to receive help.

When we receive animals caught in glue, we carefully remove them from the glue with the help of a small amount of oil. In some cases, we may sedate the animal for this process to help alleviate stress and minimize struggle. The animal is then assessed for injuries and feather damage, and provided fluid and nutritional support, as well as pain medications and antibiotics if necessary. We wait several days before removing the remaining glue off their feathers, fur, or scales to ensure that the patient is stabilized before starting this process, because being washed is extremely stressful for a wild animal. For this reason, sedation or anesthesia are typically provided for the patient during the washing process. The glue is removed with a small amount of canola or a soy-based oil. The oil then must be washed off with dish detergent in warm water. The animal is dried and placed in a warm incubator to recover. Once the animal is clean and dry, they are moved to an outdoor enclosure to ensure that they can exercise and fly and can be acclimated prior to release.

There are many ways you can help wildlife avoid this situation! Please never use glue traps, sheets, or boards, and work with a reputable pest control company that does not use glue traps or poisons. A responsible pest control company will focus on natural and humane exclusion and deterrent methods and create a pest management plan that is best for the health of your family, pets, and wildlife. Educating your friends and family about the dangers of inhumane pest control methods is also an easy and important way for everyone to help our wildlife.

## Covid-19 & CWC

By Jennifer Brent, Executive Director

Like everyone in the world, we have been impacted by Coronavirus at California Wildlife Center. While many of its effects have been negative, it has surely shown us how resilient we are, and how much amazing support we have in the community.

We have had to discontinue the use of volunteers as we cannot support social distancing with the numbers of people we usually have on site. Our legions of interns from around the country who join us each summer to learn about wildlife husbandry have been asked to stay home. The extern program, which enables vet school students to work with Dr. Lewis, has been put on indefinite hiatus. However, we have also had some outstanding volunteers who have made us masks at home, who have brought us donations and snacks, created educational videos, and others who are assisting with bringing us animals from the shelters. We enjoy receiving their emails of encouragement and letting us know how much they miss the animals.



A Wren stuck to a glue trap  
Photo by Samantha Orzech



A Cooper's Hawk covered in glue from a trap  
Photo by Stephany Lewis

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We have had five staffers out sick for extended periods, although thankfully none tested COVID-positive. Administrative staff have been working from their homes to minimize the number of people at CWC. For staff that is on site, masks are worn, social distancing is supported and temperatures are taken twice daily for all. We are bleaching all common surfaces three times a day and taking multiple other steps to keep everyone healthy.

Those of us who are here are focused on one thing—helping the patients. We all are doing laundry, preparing diets, mopping floors and feeding the hundreds of animals on site.

We've modified our intake procedures to support social distancing. Members of the public are asked to text all pertinent information rather than speak directly to staff on site. Unfortunately, this has also resulted in a reduction of our income as we often have rescuers offer a donation when they bring us an animal.

With stay-at-home orders, fewer people are outside, and we've also had a decline in the number of overall animals. It's unclear whether that's a result of a reduction in number of animals being injured by people or if they're being injured at the same rate and just not being assisted and brought to us. With many of the local animal shelters closed, we are also receiving fewer injured or ill animals from them. Currently we are -29% intake numbers year to date. Spring and Summer are our busiest times and it's difficult to judge where we will end up for the year. Our marine mammal program has responded to half of the number of calls as in 2019. Our belief is that, with homeowners and lifeguards on site, that this is simply a light year for strandings.

What we are certain of is that California Wildlife Center will endure through this crisis and continue to be here for the animals and residents of Southern California.

## Growing Fast

By Cambria Wells, Wildlife Technician Supervisor

Time in the Orphan Care Unit passes in regular increments marked by the beeping of timers and schedule of tasks. Every thirty minutes, every forty-five, every hour. Twice a day, three times a day. Once a week. The care of orphaned animals at CWC is not performed exclusively in the Orphan Care department but the rhythm of the room is uniquely fast-paced. There's always another hungry mouth, always a new enclosure to clean, and always another baby coming in the door!



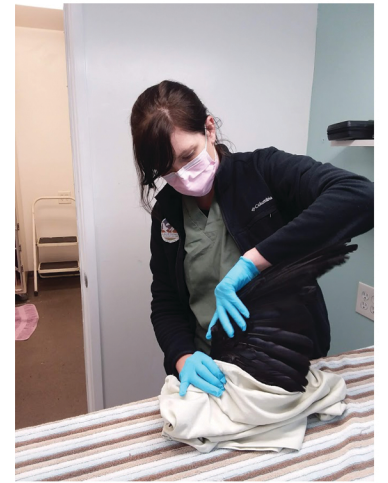
A Northern Mockingbird patient  
Photo by Cambria Wells



A Lesser Goldfinch patient  
Photo by Cambria Wells

Before timers for feedings have started, we begin our day by preparing formulas to feed our seasonally occurring orphaned and injured species. Right now, in late spring and early summer, that consists of an assortment of songbirds and corvids (Crows, Ravens, and Jays). We address our patients in order of their need. We start first with providing formula and clean nests to Hummingbirds, House Finches, and Goldfinches, then split up to feed and clean our insect-eating birds such as Northern Mockingbirds. Finally, we work with our Mourning Doves and Band-tailed Pigeons, cleaning their enclosures and starting their tube-feeding schedules. Throughout this process, we prioritize based on patient age and medical status. A fledgling Crow may not need special care from us for most of the day; a nestling Hummingbird, on the other hand, will need feedings a minimum of every thirty minutes, along with regular bedding changes and fresh formula. Each species and each baby is unique, and providing the best care for them means carefully considering their natural history and individual needs.

Beyond feeding and cleaning there's also a host of other animal care concerns. Many orphaned baby birds at this time of year come in with wounds, parasites, and viral or bacterial infections. Some have developmental problems which require special corrective “shoes” or wraps. All need enrichment in the form of fresh branches, new food items, and opportunities to learn to forage for food on their own. When one baby turns into three, and three turn into thirty, raising orphaned animals becomes a complex and rewarding experience.



Dr. Stephany Lewis examines a Raven while wearing a mask  
Photo by Heather Patrice Brown



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## Northern Elephant Seal Rescue and Rehabilitation during the 2020 Covid Crisis

By Heather Henderson, Marine Program Manager

Springtime is Elephant Seal time along the California coastline. Few things are as predictable as the arrival of newly weaned Northern Elephant Seal pups hauling out each March on our Malibu beaches! While these young marine mammals are relatively large, they strand in a severely malnourished state, 30-50% of the healthy weight for their age (59 – 99 lbs).



One of our Elephant Seal patients  
Photo by Heather Henderson

Each February, anticipation of their arrival builds excitement for staff and volunteers. At CWC, the entire Marine Mammal Program is planned around rehabilitating Elephant Seal pups, from enclosure design to when new team members are recruited. Not even a global pandemic can stop the pups' annual arrival, however it certainly can have an impact.

The Covid-19 Safer at Home ordinance went into effect just as Elephant Seals started to arrive. In response, we decreased the number of people on-site each day to two, compared to ten. Operating at 20% personnel was daunting, but human safety always dictates our approach. We adjusted our rehabilitation procedures and feeding times a little bit, which doesn't impact patient care, but does make it easier for fewer people to care for them.

Thankfully, this has been possible because we have had fewer reports of distressed marine animals this year. Between homeowners and lifeguards, there are still eyes on the beach reporting stranded animals, so we feel confident we are not leaving pups to suffer and that it is actually a lighter year overall. In certain cases, empty beaches have also meant healthy animals have been afforded the luxury of resting and then moving on instead of needing rescue due to harassment by people.

During these past two months, our volunteers have been missed and we eagerly await their return! Thank you for continuing to support rehabilitation efforts at California Wildlife Center. Stay safe.