



Wild Times

Summer 2021

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

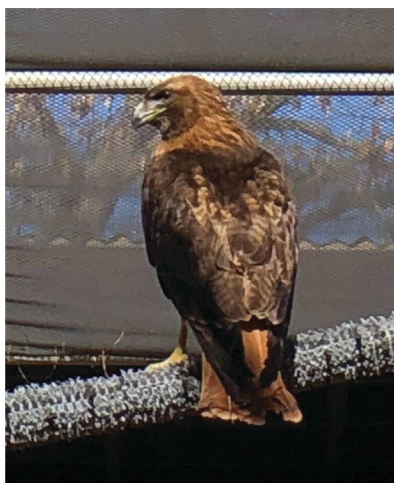
Fixing a Fierce Fighter's Feet

By Dr. Guthrum Purdin, DVM

A few months ago, Red-tailed Hawk 21-233 arrived at the California Wildlife Center from Malibu with very little history. All the techs in ICU knew at first was that he was injured. What they found on examination was a bird with some wounds on his chest, some broken feathers and, much more concerning, feet that were in terrible condition. There were multiple deep, painful lesions on the bottoms of the feet, skin and scales dark with infection and necrosis extending out onto the digits towards the talons. Lab tests showed elevated white blood cells, indicating a significant immune response; plus there were parasites living in his GI tract, stealing nutrition from whatever food he was given and damaging the intestinal lining.

Hawks live by the health of their feet. It's the talons that catch their prey and help protect them against enemies. If a hawk's feet are too damaged or infected, they can't survive. What caused 233's injuries can't be known for certain, but it's suspected they may have occurred in a fight with another hawk. During conflict, they may wrestle with each other, grabbing each other's feet and chests. This would explain the deep cuts and gouges, because hawk talons are sharp and very, very strong. The wounds, whatever caused them, then became infected and the parasites, responding to a weakened immune system, could then proliferate.

Initial critical care treatments were started. By early the next day, 233 was depressed and unable to stand, which is when I first saw him. After examining the bird, despite his then poor condition, I felt he had a reasonable chance to recover and be returned to the wild, so I reviewed and expanded his treatment plan. This would evolve over time, including soaking the feet periodically in a particular veterinary disinfectant (cleaning away a lot of the black, crusty, infected, and dead tissue), foot dressings, antibiotics that were both systemic and could penetrate deep tissues not well supplied by the circulatory system, and medication for pain and inflammation. He was also treated for his GI parasite freeloaders. Patients like this are given nutrition in both liquid and solid form until they're back to self-feeding.



Red-tailed Hawk during physical therapy
Photo by Dr. Guthrum Purdin

By late afternoon of that second day, 233 was back to standing and, more surprisingly, able to get up on a perch, resting comfortably. In fact, this was the beginning of what makes this bird a patient that I'll always remember. CWC gets a lot of raptors each year. Just looking at Red-tails, there were 69 in 2020 and 85 in 2019. But 233 turned out to be a special bird. Once standing, he proved to be very fierce, indeed! He did not like being caught up for his treatments and fought hard against his caregivers. Only the most experienced raptor handlers could safely get him out of his enclosure. Treating his feet could be challenging, he would snap his taloned claws shut like a bear-trap during dressing changes. He was a real fighter!

After several weeks, once the worst of the injuries were resolved, we switched to a once-every-three-days medication to reduce handling. Thus, reducing stress for 233...and for his handlers! Finally, it was aviary time for this tough bird. Flight at first was weak, only getting about 3 feet off the ground on his initial attempt. *(continued on page 2)*

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Inside: Feathers, Flippers and Fur Goes Virtual, Seal Pup's Remarkable Recovery, A 2nd Chance for Orphaned Squirrels



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(continued from page 1)

Allowed to rest quietly in his new, bigger flight space, after a few days, staff and volunteers would go into the aviary daily to encourage 233 to do his physical therapy, flying from one end of the aviary to the other. This was easy for 233, since wherever people were, he did not want to be. Hawk 233 was wild to the core! Gradually, he flew better and better. A companion, a juvenile Red-tail, was introduced to aviary (they were closely monitored to make sure they got along and would not fight). During PT sessions, 233 easily out flew the youngster.

Then the great day came. On recheck exam, after weeks off meds, his original injuries were all definitely healed and in the past. I spent some time observing 233 in the largest aviary and found he could fly with the best. Just a few days after that, after about 2½ months in care, this memorable hawk was released back into the Malibu sky. What an amazing patient!

Seal Pup's Remarkable Recovery

By Heather Henderson, Marine Mammal Program Manager

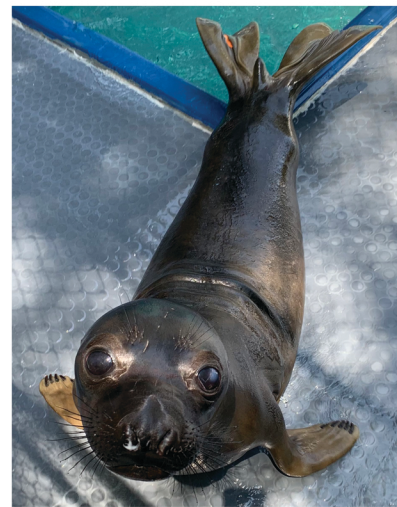
On March 25, 2021 the Marine Mammal team headed to Leo Carrillo beach in Malibu following the report of a sickly Northern Elephant Seal pup. The reporting party first spotted the animal as the sun was setting the night prior and was so concerned about the animal that he returned the next morning to find the pup in the same place high up on the beach rocks. When our rescue team arrived, they found a severely dehydrated, malnourished and injured three-month-old female Northern Elephant Seal pup. She had tar patches over approximately 10% of her body, a bloody muzzle, and an injured left eye.

During the injured Elephant seal's intake exam, she weighed 35kg (approximately birth weight) although she was three months old. Along with an overall poor body condition, the highest concern was lack of movement of the inner left eyelid, which functions to remove surface debris from the eye. Additionally, the eye coloration was severely cloudy with a red hue deep in the tissue base, which could have represented an infection behind the eye. If uncontrolled, there is a risk of infection spreading throughout the body. In cases like these, removal of the eye is a consideration if we were not able to control the spread of the infection. Northern Elephant Seals forage both by sight and feel. Particularly at depth, these extremely sensitive vibrissae (whiskers) sense remote movements in the water and take over for vision while foraging, so while two perfect eyes are best, the seals can be successful with only one.

After three-weeks in care, our patient had responded so well to medical and nutritional care that we were able to discontinue antibiotic treatments and move her into a pool to work on self-feeding whole herring. Now after two months of supportive care, she has mastered eating underwater, is approaching a healthy release weight, and most exciting, the left eye infection resolved leaving only a small corneal scar with regained vision. Elephant seal pup #21-041 should return to her ocean home in early June!



Elephant Seal pup before (above) and after (below)
Photo by Annika Galloway



Feathers, Flippers and Fur Goes Virtual

By Jennifer Brent, Executive Director

Some of you might remember our Feathers Flippers and Fur Picnic at King Gillette Ranch back in 2019. It was our second year and a success—bringing together like-minded animal-loving folks and raising money for California Wildlife Center. We were planning to make that an annual event as 2020 took a different turn and like many other groups, we had to cancel our outdoor gathering during the pandemic. Throughout 2020 we were looking forward to a return to normalcy and our event in 2021. However, in Spring, California still had many restrictions that precluded a group of non-family members to come together.

Instead we opted to hold our first ever digital fundraiser on April 17th. During the preceding week we had an online silent auction with donated items. And what a wonderful assortment! Our volunteers and supporters were able to gather some truly amazing items. We had an Epiphone guitar signed by Slash (of Guns and Roses), earrings from Kendall Conrad, a painting by Incubus singer Brandon Boyd, a weekend in Mammoth, VIP tickets to his comedy club and meet and greet with Brad Garrett, packages from Patagonia, gorgeous diamond jewelry, fabulous original art, and access to YogaWorks and Box 'n' Burn. We auctioned gift cards to Neptune's Net, Nobu, V's Restaurant, Gelson's, ALC, Alexis Smart Flowers, Heather Taylor Home, and Pizzana among others. All of the auction items were donated so that 100% of the proceeds from the auction are dedicated to helping our wild patients.

We had three amazing sponsors to underwrite our event—John Paul Mitchell Systems, makers of fine haircare that has been cruelty-free for 40+ years. JPMS sources sustainable plants and natural ingredients for their tremendous range of human and pet products. Quigley-Simpson is a local advertising and marketing company that has become a powerhouse in the industry and supported California Wildlife Center throughout. In fact, they designed the current logo for CWC pro bono. Common Good Advisors is a nonprofit advisory group who walk the walk and talk the talk—authenticity is in their DNA and we benefit greatly from their help.

At the end of the day, the event was a success and we earned more than our initial goal. All of this would not have been possible without the amazing volunteers who assisted our staff—Angela Heine, Board member Dr Lisa Newell, Gail Hagopian, Corby Sandberg and Apryl Boyle.

But most of all, we have to thank every single person who tuned into the show (still visible on our YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram) and who bid on our auction throughout! Thank you for supporting wildlife!



Some of our famous fans:
Top L to R: Brad Garrett, Cindy Crawford, Brooke Burke, Bottom L to R: Brandon Boyd, Sheila Kuehl, Alicia Silverstone

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A Second Chance for Orphaned Squirrels

By Cori Carlson, Administrative Assistant

Every spring, California Wildlife Center takes in orphaned baby squirrels, some just weeks old. Many people associate baby squirrels with those who live in trees. We also receive young California Ground Squirrels. We have admitted 39 so far this year. You can recognize them by the gray and brown fur on their backs with specks of lighter gray mixed in. These squirrels can be found living in farmlands, fields, chaparral, grasslands, cities and suburbs from central Washington state south to Baja, California. When these young squirrels arrive at CWC, they start off in our Orphan Care Unit.



California Ground squirrel orphan in care
Photo by Jennifer Brent

The infant squirrels are initially fed a specialized formula using a syringe. When they graduate to eating solid food, they receive a variety of vegetables, fruits and nuts similar to their diet in the wild. At CWC their main diet includes lettuce, zucchini and monkey biscuits (a crunchy bite chock-full of protein and vitamins). They also receive sunflower seeds, nuts, occasionally pieces of corn on the cob and fruit.

Some of the predators of the California Ground Squirrel include raptors, raccoons, foxes, coyotes, bobcats, gopher snakes and rattlesnakes. While the adult ground squirrels are resistant to rattlesnake venom, the young ones are not. Snakes will sometimes enter burrows at night while they are sleeping. The female squirrels are very protective of their young. The clever squirrels have figured out that if they chew on rattlesnake skin and lick their bodies and the bodies of their young, they will smell like snakes and make it difficult for the snakes to find them.

As their name implies, California Ground Squirrels live in burrows they dig in the ground that can range from 5 feet to 35 feet long. Sometimes these squirrels live alone, while other burrows house multiple squirrels and their babies. Our technicians provide the squirrels with make-shift burrows to sleep in using a tissue box or plastic igloo. Each group at CWC is made up of 4-6 squirrels. These groups remain together until they are old enough to return to the wild.