



California Wildlife Center

Patient of the Week

June 24, 2022



Photo by Jenn Guess



Photo by Britt Moser

A Hawk Takes Steps Towards Recovery

CWC answers over 30,000 phone calls every year from concerned members of the public about potential wildlife emergencies. Hospital staff assess each case to determine if there is a need for rehabilitation, and if needed we often depend on members of the public to transport injured, orphaned, or sick animals to our facility. We are grateful that in the vast majority of cases the finders are able to take time out of their day to drive to our location in the Santa Monica Mountains, but not every animal is able to be helped by the public. There are certain species that are unsafe for people to handle without proper training, and there are times where it is impossible for the finder to transport the animal. In these situations, we rely on government funded animal care and control organizations to respond to the emergency and contain the animal.

CWC is fortunate to have a great working relationship with these local animal service agencies. We are in communication with them daily to determine if they have wildlife at their facilities. Our dedicated network of volunteers is willing to drive to shelters to pick up animals and bring them back to our location. Transporting wildlife to CWC as soon as possible is critical during the rehabilitation process. Many Animal Control Officers are well aware of this fact and will go out of their way to drive wildlife directly to CWC. This was the case for an injured male Red-shouldered Hawk.

On the evening of June 4th Los Angeles City Animal Control Officer Navarro received a call about a hawk laying on the ground outside of an apartment building. He quickly responded and when he arrived Navarro saw that the Red-shouldered Hawk was lethargic and unable to stand. He contained the injured animal, placed them in a warm, quiet, and dark location, and contacted CWC. Since it was late in the evening, Navarro kept the hawk safe overnight and transported him to our facility the next morning.

The Red-shouldered Hawk was quickly assessed by hospital staff. He was thin, dehydrated, and suffering from head trauma. It is unknown what caused the trauma, but it is possible that he hit a window. Fortunately, he did not have any broken bones or open wounds. The patient was administered fluids, pain medication and anti-inflammatories. Within a day the hawk started to show improvement and although weak, he was able to stand and ambulate around his enclosure.



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After a week of cage rest in the ICU, the patient was moved to a small outdoor enclosure. He still received medications daily, but the more natural environment greatly reduced his stress level. Every human interaction with a wild animal, whether it is physical touch, human voices/noises, or unfamiliar smells, increases the stress of our patients. Assessing when an animal can be moved to an outdoor enclosure is an important aspect of wildlife rehabilitation. Staff is currently evaluating the hawk's flight every three days. He continues to show improvement and we are hopeful that the patient will be ready for a large outdoor aviary within a week.

CWC receives about 25 Red-shouldered Hawks every year, the majority being admitted as injured adults. These hawks mostly reside in woodland areas but occasionally can be seen in open spaces. They have a varied diet of small mammals, amphibians, reptiles, and birds. Red-shouldered Hawks have a loud, high-pitched "kee-aah" call which is often repeated, and these birds are thought to be the most vocal of all American hawks.

If you find an injured hawk, you can attempt to contain the animal by gently tossing a large pillowcase or a light towel over the bird. Using a broom or a pole, gently push the bird/towel combination into a cardboard box with air holes that is turned on its side. Slowly tilt the box upright, seal with tape, and contact your local wildlife rehabilitation as soon as possible for next steps.