



WildTimes

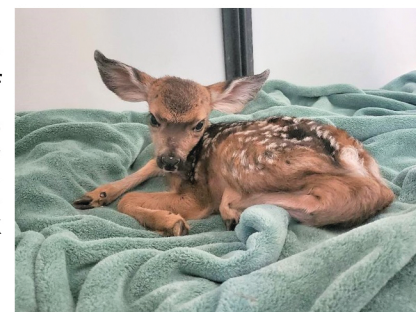
Fall 2022

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

Keep Them Wild

By Brittany Moser, Wildlife Technician

Mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*) are named for their large mule-like ears that can rotate and move toward sounds like little satellite dishes detecting precise locations of sounds to escape danger. They flee with high jumps, leaping and landing on all four legs. Mule deer are spread across the Western United States and are native to California. They are herbivores, typically consuming 90% of their diet from shrubs, leaves, and occasionally berries and acorns. These herd animals are commonly found in an oak woodland or hillside terrain habitation and are most active around dawn and dusk.



One-week-old Mule Deer fawn

California Wildlife Center is the only facility authorized to care for orphaned, sick, or injured mule deer fawns in Los Angeles County. Fawns are born in late spring through mid-Summer when a female doe gives birth to one or two fawns. They are born covered in spots and scentless in order to remain camouflaged and spend most of their day hiding from predators while their mother is out foraging for food. Fawns typically stay near their mothers and continue to nurse throughout their first year of life. In the Spring, we receive many calls about fawns that are all alone, however, in most cases they don't need to be rescued as the finder is not aware that the mother is simply grazing nearby, and the fawn is not abandoned.

We currently have six mule deer fawns in our care. One patient from Lompoc was found abandoned near a quarry, stuck in mud and unable to move for two long days. That fawn arrived malnourished, lethargic, and suffering from a respiratory infection. Another fawn was found along a bike path, calling out desperately next to their deceased mother, and a few were found wandering alone.

When a new fawn arrives, we move them into a quiet warm area to allow time to acclimate from the stress of transport before performing a thorough exam. During the exam we keep their eyes covered to minimize stress since they are susceptible to capture myopathy and may easily die from stress. During their first two days, we provide supplemental fluids and colostrum. Colostrum is the doe's first milk - high in protein, nutrient dense and full of antibodies that help protect the fawn from contracting disease during their first week of life. They are also initially given goat milk, as it closely resembles their natural milk composition. New fawns are quarantined in a separate area for at least one week while we run fecal exams and treat any illnesses or injuries before combining with our other fawns in order to prevent the spread of disease.



Four-week-old Mule Deer fawn

We limit human interaction while working with the deer by wearing camouflage hooded ponchos and observing them using installed cameras throughout their enclosure. The restricted contact is important when raising young fawns to cultivate their wild instincts and natural fear of humans. New fawns are bottle fed and quickly learn to drink off a bottle rack. This decreases human contact during feeding and prevents an association with food and people.

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Once rack trained, they are moved to a larger outdoor enclosed area with other fawns where we provide fresh foliage, a specialized dry diet, and water. We use secret latch doors and chutes while feeding the fawns in order to limit interaction with them.

The Lompoc fawn has fully recovered and currently in this enclosure with other fawns happily prancing around snacking on rose petals and grape leaves, their favorite! When the fawns are old enough, we will open a gate that leads to an outdoor enclosure that resembles their natural habitat. Mule deer fawns are released on site in the beautiful Santa Monica mountains. We supply them with fresh food and water for a period of time while they acclimate to their new wild life.

An Elephant Seal's Recovery from Stingray Barbs

By Heather Henderson, Marine Program Manager

On the afternoon of May 11th, patient #22-078 hauled out on Broad Beach in Malibu. Weighing 103 lbs. and measuring just over five feet long, few people might think to call the CWC Marine Mammal Rescue Team out for a wellness check. Fortunately for this four-month-old Northern Elephant Seal pup, a concerned member of the public did just that. When we arrived on the scene, the pup was resting face down near the waters' edge. Initially he appeared to be a little underweight, but otherwise in fine shape, however something seemed off.

Upon closer examination, the team noticed facial swelling (particularly of the chin and muzzle) as well as moderate dehydration. We elected to pick up the pup and bring him to the center for care. During the intake examination, a stingray barb was discovered at the puncture site on the right lower chin. Once the two-inch-long barb was removed, the area was cleaned, and antibiotics and anti-inflammatory medications were prescribed. The elephant seal was also given supportive fluid therapy. The patient's stomach was flushed to rule out ingestion of additional foreign substances and fortunately none were discovered.

The elephant seal was improving, but there was persistent swelling on the right side of his muzzle. One of the vibrissae (whisker) follicle endings looked to be infected. The culprit – a second stingray barb! Once removed, the tissue resumed a normal appearance and the vibrissae remained intact. Elephant seals have the most sensitive vibrissae of any animal due to the high number of nerve endings. This adaptation assists with effective prey detection at depth, thus defects in the nerve endings can have an adverse effect on their ability to locate sufficient food. Occasionally we see young elephant seals that encounter stingrays while learning to forage along the sandy ocean floor.

After a week of treatment, the facial swelling began to recede, and patient #22-078 showed an interest in fish. Upon arrival, the Marine Mammal Team had been feeding him a blended liquid nutritional feed. As he recovered, we enlarged his diet to include whole herring.



At pre-release Evaluation on 7/6/22

Pup #22-078 had a pre-release examination on July 5th - the puncture sites were fully healed, body condition was good, and his skin and fur coat were beautiful. This patient was gaining weight daily (an average of one kg/day) and was a robust 200 lbs. (double his intake weight) when he was released back to the Pacific Ocean in mid-July.

The simple act of noticing an ailing animal and taking the time to report them to us gave this seal a chance to heal and thrive. Thank you for caring about wildlife!



During intake Examination on 5/11/22

Two California Scrub-Jays Get a Second Chance

By Kristen Kanatzar, Wildlife Technician

The Orphan Care Unit (OCU) is dedicated to the care of young, orphaned wildlife such as squirrels and finches. As they are found along the West Coast of the US, Canada, and Mexico, another species we care for in the OCU are nestling and juvenile California Scrub-Jays. One of our recent patients was a nestling scrub-jay that had most likely fallen out of their nest. On intake we found the bird to be in good health overall but with a head tilt. Head tilts are usually a sign of neurological damage and brain swelling. Although the exact cause of the injury was unknown, the patient most likely hit their head on a hard surface when they tumbled from the nest. We prescribed anti-inflammatories to help reduce the suspected swelling of the brain. These medications also provided the young bird with pain relief. The patient quickly started to improve, and within ten days the juvenile scrub-jay was no longer showing any signs of trauma. OCU continued to provide supportive care until they were old enough to survive on their own. After five weeks in care, the healthy bird was released back into the wild.

Juveniles scrub-jays are mostly gray in color with sections of blue on their tails and wings. They are significantly fluffier than adults as they still have their downy feathers that help keep them warm. As they get older, they shed these downy feathers, and they sleek down into their new adult plumage with the distinctive bright blue colors.



Juvenile California Scrub-Jay

Another California Scrub-Jay who recently came through our doors was suspected to have been caught in a glue trap. The fledgling bird was cared for in OCU, where they were stabilized before being cleaned. Technicians carefully removed the glue contamination with specialized solvents and warm soapy water. The washing process can be extremely stressful on wild animals, so technicians were only able to clean small portions of the feathers at a time. After about a week the scrub-jay was completely free of contaminations and was soon moved into an outdoor aviary. One month after being admitted to our facility, the California Scrub-Jay was ready for release.

Scrub-jays tend to live in coastal woodlands but can often be seen in urban areas and in people's backyards. They are omnivores that tend to scavenge for food including fruits, insects, nuts, seeds, and small animals such as lizards and other hatchling birds. Being part of the corvid family, which includes crows and ravens, scrub-jays are highly intelligent and can often have a sneaky side.

We will frequently catch them in their enclosures playfully tossing mealworms around and helping feed each other. They will also take some of their food and attempt to hide it within the enclosure much like they would in the wild.

These two young birds were fortunate to make it to our facility. Through the hard work and dedication of the OCU staff and volunteers, these California Scrub-Jays got a second chance at life!

Contributors

Brittany Moser
Heather Henderson
Kristen Kanatzar
Cori Carlson

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California Wildlife Center
P.O. Box 2022
Malibu, CA 90265
Emergency Hotline: 310-458-WILD
Fax: 818-222-2685
Email: admin@cawildlife.org
www.cawildlife.org



P.O. Box 2022 Malibu, CA 90265

The Winter Royals

By Cori Carlson, Administrative Coordinator

White-crowned Sparrows are one of the many migrating bird species we see each year at California Wildlife Center. On average, we admit 10 of the large gray sparrows each year. As adults they are easily identified by the black-and-white stripes on their head and their pale pink or yellow beaks. These birds most often come to our facility after being caught by a cat or striking a window.



Adult White-crowned Sparrow

These sparrows tend to be generalists when finding a place to live. They are commonly seen in brushy areas and also in open grasslands. The birds migrate each year, living in the mountains during the summer and flying to the southwest lowlands in the winter. They start their migration south in September and return back north around April. At California Wildlife Center, we usually see the sparrow patients between October and May.

You will often see White-crowned Sparrows in flocks foraging on the ground near bushes and trees for safety. When you hear rustling on the ground it may be a White-crowned Sparrow scratching to find food. Similar to Towhee species, the White-crowned Sparrows can be heard rustling around on the ground, often called, "double-scratching." They quickly hop backwards to flip over leaves and then pounce to catch insects.

While in care at CWC, our wildlife technicians provide the birds with enrichment, activities designed to mimic their wild environment. Some of the ways we do this is by adding familiar foliage to their enclosures and skewering a variety of berries on the branches to imitate how they forage. These birds eat a variety of seeds, insects and berries in the wild. At CWC, their diet consists of mealworms, a special Songbird mix and berries.

It has been said that the White-crowned Sparrows return to the same area each year so if you are lucky you might see the same birds year after year.