



California Wildlife Center

Patient of the Week

October 14, 2022



Wrentit shortly after arrival.
Photo by Camryn Romo.



Wrentit before release.
Photo by Denys Hemen.

The Single Wrentit of the Season

By Denys Hemen, Hospital Manager

Join us while we Sing for Songbirds throughout the month of October!

Wrentits are a rare species of songbird we see at California Wildlife Center, receiving only about one per year. This week's patient was brought to us after being caught by a dog. Luckily, the rescuer was able to intervene in time before any major injuries were inflicted. The patient suffered one small wound on the wing but was otherwise in good condition. Our skillful wildlife technicians cleaned the injury then prescribed antibiotics and anti-inflammatory medications for two weeks. Since the Wrentit was a young fledgling when they arrived, we were required to hand feed the bird mealworms and crickets every 45 minutes for 12 hours a day. After a couple of weeks, the Wrentit was eating on their own, so we moved them into an outdoor aviary to build up flight muscles. After a total of 31 days at CWC, this resilient bird was released in Topanga, California to the exact area where they came from.

Wrentits are small tan and grey birds with piercing white eyes, long tail feathers, and weigh about as much as five pennies. They live alongside their lifelong mates in a variety of scrub and forest habitats exclusively along the West Coast. Wrentits are referred to as the "voice of the chaparral" because their song is commonly heard wherever there are woody shrubs and oak trees. The most unique characteristic of this amazing bird is that their natal dispersal distance is the shortest of any bird in North America. They will take up residence after leaving the nest no more than a quarter mile from where they hatched and never leave this area which is why it was so important for CWC to release this bird exactly where they were found.

You can help Wrentits and other songbirds by always monitoring your dog when outside during the spring and early summer months. Most songbird fledglings are flightless and spend a week or so on the ground after leaving the nest. These birds are very vulnerable during this time. Keeping your cats indoors is another way to help our native birds thrive. If you live within the natural range of Wrentits, you can attract them to your yard by planting native plants like manzanitas, ceanothus, sages, and sagebrush in your yard.

If you do find an injured songbird, place them in a box with airholes and keep them in a warm, quiet, dark location, and contact your local wildlife rehabilitation center as soon as possible for advice.