



# California Wildlife Center

## Patient of the Week

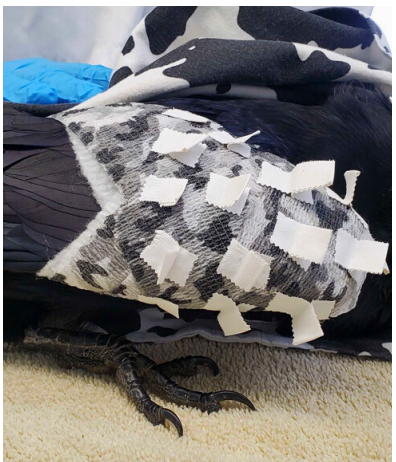
### October 28, 2022



Radiograph of broken right wing



Raven after splint was applied



Raven splint with "distraction tabs"

## The Largest Songbird

The word "songbird" often conjures up an image of a small delicate bird singing a beautiful melody, but scientifically this term has a more specific meaning. Songbirds belong to a suborder of birds called Passeri, which includes over 4,000 species within the order Passeriformes. Passeri are grouped for their ability to masterfully control a specialized vocal organ called a syrinx. Most birds use a syrinx to vocalize, but songbirds have additional muscles that enable them to have better control over the organ. These animals also are unique in the way they learn songs. Other birds have a handful of calls that they instinctually vocalize. Songbirds, on the other hand, learn their songs from listening to older birds of their species. They are born with a basic idea of how to vocalize but will learn various calls as they grow. Some species only have a small window of opportunity to learn their songs, while others will continue to add to their repertoire throughout their lives.

It is a surprise to many people that Common Ravens are technically songbirds. Weighing up to four pounds and with an almost five-foot long wingspan, these birds are the largest of the suborder Passeri. They can be found in every climate, except the rainforest, and are one of the few animals that can live in the arctic all year round. Ravens have between 15 to 30 sounds which they use to communicate. They can mimic other birds, and when raised in captivity ravens have been taught to copy human speech.

Here at CWC we care for more than 75 Common Ravens each year. The vast majority of these patients are brought to our facility as nestlings and fledglings. The injured adults that come through our doors tend to suffer from trauma after being hit by a car. This was potentially the case for a raven that was recently admitted. The patient was picked up by the South Los Angeles Animal Care Center from the Baldwin Hills area of Los Angeles, and a CWC volunteer transported the bird to our facility for care. Technicians noticed that the raven was thin, dehydrated, and suffering from a broken bone in their right wing. The raven was given antibiotics, anti-inflammatories, and heavy-duty pain medications.

Radiographs (x-rays) were taken of the injured wing, and hospital staff were able to see that the broken bone was well aligned. A padded splint was placed on the wing and wrapped into place, to make sure that the bone



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would be able to heal in a natural position. The Common Raven was not very tolerant of the wrap, and immediately started to pick at the splint. Technicians applied “distraction tabs” to the wrap, so that the patient would be able to pick and pull at the tabs without causing any damage to the splint.

Birds heal relatively quickly, and we are hopeful that within a few weeks we will be able to remove the splint and the raven will be able to be moved into a small enclosure outdoors to continue their rehabilitation. If you find an injured raven, place them in a box with airholes and contact your local rehabilitation center. If you want to do even more to help songbirds of all sizes, click on the banner above and donate today!