



California Wildlife Center

Patient of the Week

December 9, 2022



Allen's Hummingbird being assist fed



Patient in his enclosure

A Stunning Allen's Hummingbird

Allen's Hummingbirds are a common sight in flowering gardens and at hummingbird feeders throughout Southern California. In fact, of the 380 hummingbirds we have admitted so far in 2022, 287 of them have been Allen's Hummingbirds. In the spring and summer, these birds can be found in the western regions of California and the coast of Southern Oregon. Most of the population migrates to Central Mexico for the winter, but some individuals will reside in Southern California year-round.

Just recently we admitted a year-round hummingbird resident to our facility. The adult male Allen's Hummingbird was found in Encino, sitting on the ground and unable to fly. Although the bird was not next to a window, his injuries were consistent with previous patients who had collided with a pane of glass. Upon examination technicians noticed that the bird had mild trauma near his right eye, was unable to fully stand, and was intermittently using his wings to balance on the ground. He was able to make short flights, but tired extremely quickly. Technicians also noticed that the hummingbird had one throat feather that was pulled out and stuck to the patient's bill.

The hummingbird was stabilized and prescribed anti-inflammatories to help with the swelling around the right eye and his neurological issues. We also provided a formula that mimics the nutritional makeup of his natural diet. Many people are under the false impression that hummingbirds only eat simple sugars. Although a large portion of an adult hummingbird's caloric intake comes from sugars, they also need a complex mix of carbohydrates, proteins, fiber, fats, vitamins, and minerals.

After 24 hours of care the patient started to show remarkable improvement. His flight was much stronger, and he even flew out of his small enclosure and around the room when staff opened the enclosure to give him fresh formula. No asymmetry was seen in his wings, but he still had mild weakness in his legs. For the time being, the patient is continuing to improve in our ICU, and we are hopeful that he will be ready for an outdoor enclosure soon.

More than any other species, it is critical that hummingbirds do not have any deficits when they are moved into an outdoor enclosure. If a hummingbird is transitioned into a larger space too soon, they can easily exhaust themselves while flying around and eventually end up on the ground without easy access to food. They need to eat almost constantly to keep up with their fast metabolism (which is 77 times faster than a human's). Each day they consume about 50 percent of their body weight in high caloric food in order to maintain a normal body condition.



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You can help hummingbirds (and other pollinators) by replacing ornamental plants with flowering plants native to the area. Here in Southern California, the Scarlet Bugler (*Penstemon centranthifolius*) is a favorite amongst hummingbirds. This showy plant reaches up to four feet high and blooms bright red tubular flowers from April through July. It can withstand temperatures as low as 30 degrees Fahrenheit in the winter, and as high as 96 degrees Fahrenheit in the summer. Scarlet Buglers grow best with full sun in well-draining soil, and they are drought tolerant once established.

If you'd like to help even more wildlife, you can donate by visiting cawildlife.org!