



California Wildlife Center

Patient of the Week

March 10, 2023



Patient in large flight aviary

Cooper's Hawks: Small but Mighty Raptors

Here at CWC we see almost 300 hawks come through our doors each year. Red-tailed Hawks are the most common species we work with, but a close second are Cooper's Hawks. Cooper's Hawks are a small but mighty bird of prey (about the size of a crow), found across North America from southern Canada to northern Mexico. They are adaptable birds and can reside in a variety of habitats including forests, suburbs, and parks.

Cooper's Hawks are agile hunters and feed mostly on birds. They use speed, agility, and stealth which allows them to catch their prey in mid-air. When hunting, Cooper's Hawks will typically perch in a high location, such as a tree branch or tall shrub, and scan the surrounding area for prey. Once they spot a potential target, they will fly low and fast through trees and shrubs to

surprise their prey. Their short, rounded wings and a long, narrow tails help them navigate through dense vegetation with great speed and precision.

We recently received an injured adult male Cooper's Hawk from Canoga Park who was transported to CWC from one of the local animal control agencies. Upon intake, hospital staff noticed he was thin, dehydrated, and suffering from a broken bone near the chest, a broken left clavicle, and blood in the mouth. Although we do not know the exact cause of the injuries, we suspect that the hawk flew into a window while chasing his prey.

Once at CWC, the Cooper's Hawk received anti-inflammatories and pain medication. He was confined to a small enclosure for two weeks to give his bones time to heal. After two weeks we test flew the hawk in one of our large aviaries, and he was only able to get about three feet of lift. Since the Cooper's Hawk needed more time to recover before being given access to a large enclosure, he was placed in one of our raptor mews for an additional week. Raptor mews are small outdoor enclosures which prevent birds of prey from flying but enables them to become acclimated to the weather and provides them with a more natural environment. After one week in the raptor mew, the Cooper's Hawk was once again test flown in a large aviary. During this test flight he flew from the ground to the highest perch in the enclosure, and then proceeded to make laps around the aviary. At this point he was ready to stay in the large aviary for the duration of his rehabilitation process. The Cooper's Hawk is continuing to improve and is currently being exercised once a day. He has a good prognosis for release and we hope that he will return to his territory within a week.



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If you find an injured Cooper's Hawk, gently throw a lightweight towel over the bird. Place a box with airholes on its side, close to the hawk. Use a broom to gently push the bird/towel combo into the box, slowly tilt it upright, and then seal the box. Once the animal is safely contained, contact your local wildlife rehabilitation center for next steps.

You can do even more to help wildlife by donating at cawildlife.org!