



California Wildlife Center

Patient of the Week

March 31, 2023



Nestling Allen's Hummingbird



Patient in their enclosure

The Early Birds in our Orphan Care Unit

Here at CWC we experience the seasons in a unique way. Since many wild animals have evolved to reproduce during certain times of the year, we can prepare for specific types of orphaned animals based on the month. In general, we know to expect an influx of young mammals in February and March. By April and May our Orphan Care Unit (OCU) will be filled with a variety of avian species in need of help, and then the fall months will bring a second wave of baby mammals. There are some exceptions to this pattern though. One young avian species that we anticipate coming through our doors early in the year is the Allen's Hummingbird.

In Southern California the mating season for Allen's Hummingbirds can start as early as December. During this time, the male hummingbird will display their colorful plumage and perform acrobatic courtships to attract a female. Once a pair has formed, the male will mate with the female and then move on to mate with other females in the area. After copulation the female hummingbird will construct a nest and lay her eggs, which she will incubate and care for on her own.

Allen's Hummingbirds prefer to nest in trees and shrubs, usually at a height of three to ten feet above the ground. They tend to choose sites with good coverage and protection from predators. Nests are constructed using a variety of materials, including plant down, lichen, and spider webs. The items are woven together to form a compact cup shape, about the size of half a ping pong ball. The nests are typically attached to a flexible branch using spider silk. This allows the nest to sway in the wind and helps to prevent it

from being knocked down.

Female Allen's Hummingbirds will lay two eggs, one at a time, spaced a few days apart. The eggs are incubated for a period of 14 to 18 days. During this time the mother will sit on the nest for extended periods of time, only leaving briefly to feed. After the eggs hatch, the female will continue to care for the chicks on her own. Young hummingbirds are born blind, immobile, and without any natal down. The mother will continue to sit on the nest at night until her offspring have grown feathers and are able to thermoregulate on their own. Once the young birds are feathered, the female will swoop in to feed them but will no longer spend extended periods of time at the nest. This is done to draw as little attention as possible to her vulnerable offspring. Once the young hummingbirds are about three weeks old, they will leave the nest and spend about a week



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learning how to fly from the ground up. During this time the mother will continue to care for her young, until they are able to survive on their own in the wild.

Each year we receive hundreds of phone calls from concerned members of the public about baby Allen's Hummingbirds. Since hummingbirds sometimes nest early in the year, their offspring can fall victim to harsh winter weather. This was the case for two nestling Allen's Hummingbirds who are currently being cared for in OCU. Both young patients came to CWC after falling out of their nests during windy conditions. Unfortunately, neither of the hummingbirds were able to be re-nested. The finders transported the young animals to CWC where they will receive care until they are old enough to be returned to the wild.

If you suspect a nest of hummingbirds has been abandoned, contact your local wildlife rehabilitation center as soon as possible for advice. Do not remove the babies or the nest unless instructed to do so by a professional. Many times, people will incorrectly assume that the babies are orphaned when the mother is still caring for them. The presence of people around will deter mothers from feeding their young and when they do feed them, it is done quickly and efficiently in an effort to elude predators.

You can do even more to help wild animals in need by donating at cawildlife.org!