



California Wildlife Center

Patient of the Week

June 9, 2023



House Finches arrived with an unhatched egg.

Wild Life, Wild Land

In 1923, the population of Los Angeles County was about 936,000 people. Flash forward to today when our county holds 9.83 MILLION people—more than ten times as many! The additional cars, housing, and retail development have had a tremendous impact on our environment and the animals. Previously sparsely inhabited spaces now hold strip malls and highway intersections. However, we can try to restore and preserve wildlife and the spaces in which they live.

Whether you live in a house or an apartment, below are three simple steps you can take to preserve your slice of land for wild life.

1. Trim trees in the fall: Every day we receive baby birds whose nests have been cut down during tree or bush clearing. Not only is this a violation of the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act (in 1923, the population of Los Angeles County was about 936,000 people. Flash forward to today when our county holds 9.83 MILLION people—more than ten times as many! The additional cars, housing, and retail development have had a tremendous impact on our environment and the animals. Previously sparsely inhabited spaces now hold strip malls and highway intersections. However, we can try to restore and preserve wildlife and the spaces in which they live.
2. Plant native: To attract native fauna, plant native flora! Visit Theodore Payne or your local water district's website to find resources and locate plants that are both suited to our climate and will encourage birds, butterflies, bees, and other wild animals to visit your yard. Any size plot of land or pot can house a complex ecosystem of life. Bugs attract insectivores, flowers bring hummingbirds and bees, native berries may entice Mule deer! At CWC we have an enormous Toyon tree which beckons to migrating Cedar waxwings each year and our amazing Coast live oaks provide homes to native Western Gray Squirrels.

The photos above show entire nests that were brought to us with just hatched birds inside, some of which arrived with unhatched eggs. Bird nests can be tiny (hummingbirds' are the same size as half a Clementine orange) and are built to blend so you will not be able to see them when trimming trees. Other birds build their nests in the hollows of trees, so would be invisible to most people. The parents will fly away when the chainsaws arrive, but their helpless young cannot and can quickly perish without proper care and appropriate nutrition.



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3. Use defensive plants instead of rodenticide: No one wants rodents in their home (unless it's a pet!) and the best way to deal with them is to PREVENT them instead of killing them. That means sealing your home so that errant mice, rats, raccoons, skunks etc are not tempted to shelter under your roof. Close off entry points to stop the problem before it starts. There are also plants whose smell and taste repel unwanted guests—Sage is great on pasta and also deters pests. Mint, lemongrass, lavender, geraniums, rosemary, marigolds, tomatoes—all of these plants have been shown to keep rodents away!

Together we can create pockets of wild land for wildlife!