



California Wildlife Center

Patient of the Week

September 22nd, 2023

Allen's Hummingbird



Patient at intake.



Adult male Allen's Hummingbird.

An Allen's Hummingbird was found on the ground in Beverly Hills last week. During his intake exam, our technicians noticed the bird was mildly dehydrated, quiet, and unable to fly. They also observed a sticky honey-type substance on his beak and wing feathers which they suspect was due to being fed before arriving at CWC. This is the beginning of mating season for hummingbirds. Males are territorial over their feeding and mating grounds so the younger birds can have a harder time finding enough food. Hummingbirds consume about 50 percent of their body weight every day to maintain a normal body condition. If they are not able to get enough food, they can go downhill quickly. Our technicians suspect this is what happened with this Allen's Hummingbird.

Our team gave the patient hummingbird formula and placed him in a small indoor enclosure to reduce his stress before starting any treatment. The following day, the hummingbird was not eating much on his own, so our technicians continued to hand feed him hummingbird formula. He was then given a cotton swab bath to remove the sticky substance and was placed in an incubator to help dry and warm him. Over the next couple of days, the patient's appetite improved. After four days in care, the hummingbird was flying around his indoor enclosure.

Our technicians felt he was ready for a test flight in one of the outdoor aviaries. It is important not to move a hummingbird into an outdoor enclosure until they are ready because they can tire themselves out and not be able to fly to get their food. This patient immediately flew around the aviary multiple times before landing and began vocalizing with another bird in the enclosure. Our technicians will regularly monitor these patients and they will hopefully be ready to be released in the next week or two.

You can spot a male Allen's Hummingbird because of his copper or rust colored tail, face, and belly. They also have an orange-red throat. The top of their heads and backs are green. These birds are found in coastal forests, chaparral, and brush along the West Coast from Oregon to Southern California. Both males and females chase away other hummingbirds from the area where they feed. Males also defend the area they choose to perch and court females during mating season. While you will mostly see this species flying from flower to flower feeding on nectar, they also catch insects. If you listen carefully, you can hear the buzzing sound their wings make as they zip around.

You can help hummingbirds by planting native flowering plants in your yard.