



California Wildlife Center

Patient of the Week

September 29th, 2023

Western Tanager



Western Tanager patient.



Adult male Allen's Hummingbird.

At CWC, we accept about 4,000 injured, orphaned, and sick wild patients every year. The vast majority of these animals are brought to our facility by caring members of the public. Sometimes rescuers are not able to transport injured wildlife directly to a wildlife rehabilitation center and instead take them to their closest animal shelter. We work closely with the Los Angeles City shelter system and have a team of dedicated volunteers who donate their time to pick up wildlife from the shelters and bring them to CWC.

This was the case for a Western Tanager who was admitted this week after being brought to us by a CWC transport volunteer from the South Los Angeles Animal Care Center. During the intake exam, our technicians observed that the bird's balance was slightly off, there was bruising along her keel (the breastbone area), and she was emaciated. Often when a bird is having neurological issues or is unable to keep their balance it is most likely that there has been some type of head trauma. In this case, our technicians suspected that the patient had flown into a window.

Initially, the Western Tanager received fluids, pain medication, anti-inflammatories and was placed in a small indoor enclosure for cage rest. The patient was not eating on her own, so our technicians started hand-

feeding her insects. During the feeds, our staff observed the Western Tanager was targeting better with her right eye and had a deficit with the left eye. A second exam showed some swelling behind the bird's left eye, most likely caused by the head trauma. Additional diagnostic testing was performed, and an underlying gastrointestinal issue was also found, so antibiotic, anti-parasitic, and antifungal medications were added to the treatment plan. The visual deficit along with her GI issues explains the patient's current poor body condition. While the patient is continuing to be closely monitored, our staff have observed improvements with her mentation and eating. We are hoping with additional cage rest, supportive care and medications, this Western Tanager will continue to improve.

While the adult male Western Tanager is known for their bright yellow body, black wings and bright reddish heads, the females have a more subtle yellow colored body with black wings. Some of these birds remain in Southern California year-round, while others migrate from as far north as the Northwest Territories of Canada to South America for the winter. They live in wooded or shrub areas. These birds mostly eat insects, but also supplement their diet with berries, especially during the winter.



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Each year CWC admits many birds who have flown into windows – many of whom that do not survive. Birds' eyes are very different than human eyes and they are unable to distinguish that a window is a solid object and fly into them. One easy way to help prevent window strikes is to place strips of frosted tape or decals about two to four inches apart on your windows and sliding glass doors. If you find a bird that has hit a window, please contact your local wildlife rehabilitation facility for advice.