



WildTimes

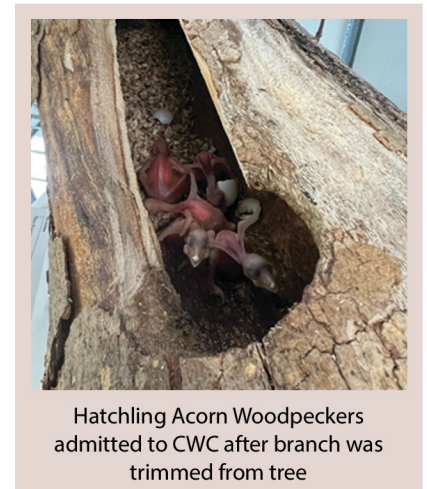
Winter 2023

Dedicated to the rescue, rehabilitation and release of Southern California's sick, injured and orphaned wildlife

When to Leaf Trees Alone

By Jenn Guess, Hospital Manager

Trees are essential to our environment in many ways. They absorb and store carbon dioxide, which helps mitigate climate change by reducing greenhouse gases, and are a primary source of oxygen production. Roots help bind the soil preventing erosion, and some varieties of trees even improve soil by making it more fertile for plant growth. One of the most important aspects of trees is their role in supporting wildlife by providing habitat, food, shelter, and nesting sites for a wide variety of species. For example, Acorn Woodpeckers excavate nesting cavities in trees to raise their young and reuse these nest holes for many years. Western Gray Squirrels build compact ball-shaped nests on sturdy branches high in the trees, typically in the canopy. Hummingbirds are known for their tiny and intricate nests made from plant material and spider webs. These golf ball sized creations can be found in well-concealed spots in trees and shrubs.



Hatchling Acorn Woodpeckers admitted to CWC after branch was trimmed from tree

At CWC we recommend planting native plants to help support wildlife in your neighborhood. In the wild, vegetation is only limited by resources and each species' genetics. When trees grow near human development, trimming and maintenance is often needed to keep plants healthy and man made structures safe.

Tree trimming serves several vital purposes, making it an essential aspect of tree care. It removes excessive dead branches, allowing the tree to allocate nutrients towards growth. Trimming also removes diseased limbs, which prevents the spread of infection and promotes overall tree health. Overgrown branches can also pose a significant risk to people and property, but regular trimming ensures that branches do not grow too close to buildings, power lines, or roadways.

Selecting the appropriate time of year to trim trees is critical for protecting native wildlife. Here at CWC we often see the detrimental aftermath of tree trimming gone wrong. Each spring, summer, and fall we admit hundreds of orphaned animals due to people cutting down and/or destroying nests. Tree trimmers can also permanently scare away bird parents if they disturb or linger around a nest for too long. December is the ideal month to trim because many tree species are dormant, they lack leaves allowing for a clearer view of the tree's structure, and it is the time of year in which it is least likely to disturb an active nest. *(continued on page 2)*



Tree squirrel nest in tree



Anna's Hummingbird nest in a tree

Newsletter Sponsored by:

Inside: Marine Mammal Off Season, Outstanding Outreaches, The Underground Owl



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Most birds tend to nest between February and August, although some species like hummingbirds, doves, and pigeons have been known to nest year-round in Southern California. Tree squirrels can mate twice a year and usually have active nests between January through April and July through October. Historically these time frames were more consistent but shifts in climate conditions have made these nesting periods slightly unpredictable.

Before starting a tree trimming project, it is always advisable to consult a local wildlife expert, arborist, and/or conservation organization to understand the specific needs of the wildlife in the area. Prior to trimming, inspect the tree carefully for active nests. Young animals will often become quiet and stay still if they feel threatened, so using binoculars to examine each branch for movement or activity can be helpful. Look on the ground below the tree for a collection of fresh bird droppings. This can signal that a nest above might be inhabited. If possible, trim branches by hand so it is easier to see up close what is being removed. Only trim branches that are necessary for safety and tree health and leave as much natural habitat as possible, including cavities and foliage. Dead branches also provide important habitats for a number of insect and bird species. Consider leaving some deadwood on trees if it does not pose a safety risk.

Through responsible tree trimming, it is possible to safely enjoy healthy plants while simultaneously protecting the habitats that so many wild animals need in order to thrive in the wild.

Marine Mammal Off Season

By Heather Henderson, Marine Mammal Program Manager

Marine mammal strandings have a somewhat predictable pattern – spring and summer are extremely busy! A sharp bell curve of activity to be precise. Winter and fall months are generally slower seasons, as we respond to the rhythms of nature and the birthing calendar of our native species. There are fewer rescue calls received during the fall months in SoCal, and we close for rehabilitation during the winter. We are often asked, “what do you do when there are no patients on-site?” The reply – reflect, improve, and prepare for the next busy stranding season.

Once the enclosures are empty, annual maintenance becomes top priority. The marine mammal staff and volunteers stay busy rebuilding, repairing, deep cleaning, training, and doing quality control on data entry. The most intense aspect of repairing revolves around performing safety checks in every nook of the enclosures, carriers, and rescue gear so that we may be prepared for the busy months.



Exam Room Painting



Kevin Fixes the Wall



Rick Prepping Floor



Joanna Paints

2023 did not follow the usual normal pattern of ramping down during June and July. On the contrary, due to the Domoic Acid Crisis experienced by California sea lions during the summer months, patients were kept in-house through mid-September. It was wonderful to have the opportunity to assist dozens of additional patients, but it abbreviated the time available to complete off season projects and repairs.

Projects include laying new flooring, freshening up and protecting the areas with a coat of paint, and replacing all the valves throughout the marine mammal enclosures and pool filtration system. In addition to performing necessary repairs, project season is a time for our crews to meet new volunteers and forge new friendships.

The volunteer family at California Wildlife Center is comprised of an amazing and diversely talented group of people. It is easy to see why they choose to be involved when beautiful seals and sea lions are around, but the true expression of their commitment shines during the fall, when this devoted team is focused on improving our facility in order to be ready to offer the best care possible to stranded marine mammals in Malibu.



Outstanding Outreaches

By Jasmine Regalado, Volunteer Coordinator

This season California Wildlife Center participated in 14 outreach events! These were a combination of educational presentations for schools and clubs, partnering with other non-profits, and hosting educational and interactive booths at events open to the public. As CWC is not open to the public or able to provide tours to school groups or camps, one of the most effective ways that we can increase exposure for the organization is to be present in the communities that we serve.

These in-person educational booths have fun animal related activities for children but also real feathers from previous patients, skull replicas of marine mammals, and cast moldings of the footprints of terrestrial mammals. For many folks, this is their first time seeing any of these items and being able to physically touch or hold them. For children and adults alike, the excitement and awe are unparalleled when they feel the softness of a Great Horned Owl Feather, see the vibrant rust color of the Red-Tailed Hawk tail feathers, compare their hands to the paw prints of a coyote or skunk, or hold a replica skull of an adult California Sea Lion or Bottlenose Dolphin for the first time. The more exposure and education the public has to these magnificent native species, the more likely they are to care about their wellbeing in the future and become their advocate.

In 2023 alone CWC has participated in events in Agoura Hills, Chatsworth, Simi Valley, Macarthur Park, Calabasas, Lake Balboa, Sherman Oaks, Glendora, Malibu, Thousand Oaks, Watts, and Burbank. This is only a fraction of the myriad of communities and smaller neighborhoods that comprise L.A. County, but these are 11 more cities with people who may not have known about CWC prior to the event they attended. The people we contacted are now equipped with more knowledge on California native animal species and can share that information and knowledge with others in the community. In total our outreach education and activities reached 1400 people.

We look forward to being able to reach even more members of the community in 2024!



Staff & Volunteers at Outreach event



Outreach setup



Volunteer Coordinator, Jasmine at Outreach event

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Winter Wild Times – The Underground Owl

By Cori Carlson, Administrative Coordinator

Burrowing Owls, as their name implies, mostly live in underground burrows dug by other animals such as ground squirrels or gophers. These small brown and white owls have long legs and yellow eyes. While CWC has admitted eighty owls so far this year, only two have been Burrowing Owls.

In mid-October, a finder brought in an injured Burrowing Owl who was suffering from head trauma. When initially admitted, the owl was lethargic, unresponsive to visual stimuli, moderately dehydrated and had a poor appetite. After three days with fluids, anti-inflammatories and pain medication, the patient began to appear brighter, perching and eating on their own. When the hospital staff performed additional tests, they found the owl was experiencing temporary blindness as a result of the head trauma. Over the next week, the patient's condition improved with medication and cage rest.

While most owl species hunt at night, the Burrowing Owl hunts during the day and night. They live in open areas with minimal vegetation and are most often found on the ground or on low branches where they do most of their hunting. Their diet includes insects, lizards, small birds and rodents.

After 12 days in care, the patient was moved to an outdoor enclosure and immediately flew to the highest perch. The owl then flew a few laps around the enclosure. This remarkable Burrowing Owl will continue to be monitored outside for about two weeks while they strengthen their flight muscles before returning to the wild.



Burrowing Owls