



# California Wildlife Center

## Patient of the Week

### February 16, 2024

## The Pigeon from Pasadena

As California's only native pigeon, the Band-tailed Pigeon is a treasured wildlife species here in the Golden State. They are the largest pigeon in North America and are typically found in forests or wooded regions along the Pacific coast that migrate towards central California in the fall. These birds have grey feathers, with a white stripe right below their head. Band-tailed pigeons are also the closest living relative to the now extinct Passenger Pigeon. Unlike the Rock Pigeon (an invasive species commonly found in cities), the Band-tailed Pigeon is a native bird who always have yellow legs and feet, whereas the Rock Pigeon's are pink.



The Band-tailed Pigeon from Pasadena.

Our first Band-tailed Pigeon of 2024 was transferred to us from Pasadena Humane in late January. CWC works with a variety of animal shelters and rehabbers across Southern California. Our volunteers pick up animals that are in need of greater support and rehabilitation than their facilities are capable of. Such was the case for this pigeon.

Our new patient is a juvenile in the fledgling stage, which means they are learning how to fly but not yet fully flighted. As a fledgling, they spend their time on the ground flapping their wings as they learn, and often stay in the same location which can make them vulnerable to predators. It's a myth that birds leave the nest by simply soaring out one day—instead, their first "flight" is usually a gentle glide from the nest and they learn to fly from the ground up and as they gain strength and develop muscle.



Left wing missing feathers.

During the patient's initial examination, our wildlife technicians observed an injury to the left wing with missing feathers that also revealed soft down feathers still present. The down feathers indicate that the bird is still young. There was moderate swelling and dark maroon colored bruising found on the injured wing. There was also a nail missing on a digit of the left foot. Our team cleaned the feathers and foot, wrapped them with bandages, and administered an anti-inflammatory medication before letting the patient rest in our ICU. The next morning, the bruising on the wing had turned a deep purple color, which is the second stage of a healing process in bruising. Our technicians continue to clean the wounds and change the bandages every two days.

After three weeks in care, the patient is bright and alert, has a good appetite and is gaining weight.

If you find a bird and are unsure if assistance is needed, please call California Wildlife Center at 310-458-9453 and we will advise the best steps to take.



Wrapping on digit of foot where nail is missing.