



California Wildlife Center

Patient of the Week

July 11, 2025

The Overcoming Opossum

Since joining CWC less than a month ago, Dr. Lauren Michaels has quickly become an asset to the team, enhancing patient care with her expertise and energy. One of her most recent patients is a juvenile Virginia Opossum. The patient presented with proptosis of the left eye (protrusion of the eyeball), a laceration over the nasal bridge, and several minor lacerations across the back. The opossum was lethargic, infested with fleas and had an overall poor body condition. Based on her injuries, Dr. Michaels suspects the patient was likely a victim of an animal attack.



Patient after first surgery.

Upon admittance, the patient was given subcutaneous fluids, pain and anti-inflammatory medications, antibiotics, and topical flea medications. Once stabilized, Dr. Michaels made the decision to operate, in an effort to save the eye. Opossums can live successfully with one eye, but the care team felt that attempting to save the injured eye was worth the effort. The surgery performed is called a tarsorrhaphy, which involves placing the globe back into the eye socket, and suturing the eyelid closed, which allows time for the eye muscles to heal, without it drying out.

The surgery was successful, but a few days later, the opossum disturbed the surgical site, causing the sutures to come out prematurely which compromised the globe. This underscores the challenges of caring for wildlife. Unlike with domestic dogs and cats, applying an E-collar or other protective barrier is often less feasible or well-tolerated.

Given that the globe was no longer viable, Dr. Michaels elected to schedule enucleation surgery which would remove her globe completely. The surgery was a success! The patient is recuperating well and is continuing a regime of pain medications, anti-inflammatories, fluids, and antibiotics. Despite the initial setback, she is now flea-free, eating successfully and has almost tripled in weight!



Dr. Michaels operated on the opossum's left eye.

Thanks to Dr. Michaels, this Virginia Opossum now has a good prognosis. We look forward to continuing her rehabilitation and ultimately seeing her safely released.

If you enjoyed this patient's story and want to support Dr. Michael's expertise in treating wild patients like the Virginia Opossum featured here, please consider donating. With your support, we can ensure that every wild life we rescue has the best possible chance to heal, grow, and return home.



Juvenile Virginia Opossum is recovering well after final surgery.