



California Wildlife Center

Patient of the Week

November 21, 2025

Keeping An Eye On Recovery

A Great Horned Owl was admitted from Encino in October. Upon arrival, the owl was observed to have a corneal ulcer with abnormal swelling of their right eye, resulting in an involuntary closing and opening of the eye. The patient also appeared to have an injury on their left foot. The patient was promptly put on antibiotics, pain medications, and was provided with fluid therapy.



Ophthalmologist examines both of the owl's eyes.

After weeks of wound care for the foot, the injury slowly began to heal; however, despite treatment and regular medicated eye flushes, the corneal ulcer continued to worsen. Dr. Michaels consulted Veterinary Eye Care in Calabasas regarding the case, and it was recommended that the patient undergo diamond burr debridement and temporary tarsorrhaphy. This is a procedure where the corneal surface is smoothed and cleaned, which stimulates tissue growth and healing. Once the debridement was complete, the eyelid would be temporarily sutured closed to encourage the cornea to heal without external threats. A portion of the eyelid was intentionally left unsutured so the medical team could continue administering topical medication daily.

Great Horned Owls have excellent vision and hearing; they rely on both of these senses to stealthily hunt at night. Their large round yellow eyes don't move in their sockets. Instead, their necks do the heavy lifting, with the ability to swivel more than 180 degrees in any direction.



The pressure being checked in the surgical eye.

The Great Horned Owl patient was recently seen again by the ophthalmologist for a postoperative exam. The veterinarian noted some positive regrowth of the corneal layer since the procedure. The ophthalmologist and our veterinarian will continue treating and carefully monitoring the patient's progress. The owl's foot injury is also showing signs of improvement and will continue to be treated. The medical team remains hopeful about the patient's continued recovery and eventual release!