



California Wildlife Center

Patient of the Week

April 25, 2025

The Tiniest in the World - Hummingbirds

Hummingbirds are the smallest birds in the world and are frequent patients at California Wildlife Center. We receive mostly Allen's and Anna's Hummingbirds, but there are 366 recognized species of hummingbirds worldwide! We currently have 12 hummingbirds onsite. Two of these patients are nestling Allen's Hummingbirds that were found abandoned in the Agoura Hills area and are currently receiving care in our NICU (Neonatal Intensive Care Unit).



Nestling Allen's Hummingbirds
in make-shift nest.

Allen's Hummingbirds feature striking orange-red throats, vibrant green backs, and copper hues throughout their body. This species has two subspecies- one winters in Mexico and migrates from Southern California to Oregon; the other is slightly larger and tends to stay around Southern California. Allen's Hummingbirds can be seen zipping from flower to flower eating nectar and also frequent sugar water feeders in backyards. It is a long-held belief that hummingbirds prefer red flowers, but that is not totally true. Their eyes see shades of red and yellow more vibrantly than other colors, which is why they often gravitate towards flowers in this color range. However, hummingbirds will actually search for the flowers with the most nutritious nectar source, regardless of color.

The two Allen's Hummingbird nestlings are currently being cared for by our dedicated NICU staff and volunteers. At this early stage, they are kept in an incubator to help maintain their body temperature until they're able to regulate it on their own.

Caring for hummingbirds is no easy task, as they have rapid metabolisms that require constant nutrition to maintain energy and ensure their survival. In the wild, mother hummingbirds will leave their nest up to 200 times a day to find food for their young, who require food every 30 minutes. Our NICU team follows this schedule, keeping timers and strict schedules to ensure the nestlings are fed at appropriate times.

After two weeks in the incubator, these tiny patients are nearly ready to transition into an intermediate enclosure. There, our staff will provide enrichment like perches, plants to explore, and red-tipped syringes filled with food—encouraging them to start feeding on their own. These steps help support their development and prepare them for life in the wild.

Immediately contact your local wildlife rehabilitator if you find a hummingbird that you suspect is injured or orphaned. Hummingbirds are one of the only species we recommend you offer food to if you find one that is in need of help. Providing sustenance to these animals, before you can bring them to a permitted wildlife rehabilitator, can be the difference between life and death. Please refer to our Animal Profiles page [HERE](#) for more information.