



California Wildlife Center

Patient of the Week

September 26, 2025

A Sticky Situation: Great Horned Owl



Past Great Horned Owl patient stuck to glue traps.

Glue traps are often seen as a solution to a pest problem, but they usually cause issues for animals beyond their targeted audience. One of our patients, an adult female Great Horned Owl, is one such animal that fell victim to one of these traps.

The patient was admitted from Topanga Canyon covered in glue. The sticky substance was adhered to the feathers located on her wings, feet and head. CWC staff worked to remove as much glue as possible, particularly around the face so that the animal could eat properly. Despite this patient being covered in glue, she was bright and alert and able to feed herself. The team found no other abnormalities or injuries. She was started on a course of fluid therapy as well as anti-inflammatory medication.

Depending on the extent of contamination, some glue-covered birds are transferred to International Bird Rescue (IBR), who are specially equipped to handle intensive cleaning.



Owl patients spend time in outdoor aviaries to strengthen their flight muscles before being released.

Great Horned Owls have excellent hearing and eyesight that they use to adeptly hunt at night. They have large yellow eyes and huge pupils that make seeing in the dark one of their masterful skills. Interestingly, their eyes don't move, instead their heads can swivel 180 degrees. They feed mostly on mammalian and avian prey; they can catch animals as large as a skunk and will even hunt other raptors! The Great Horned Owl gets their name from their unique feather tufts on top of their head that look like horns.

The patient was thoroughly cleaned and then transported back to CWC to continue her rehabilitation. She was bright, alert, and full of spirit. With good posture and beautifully restored feathers, she was ready for a test flight in one of our outdoor enclosures. She immediately flew to the top, a promising sign. Over the next week or two, she'll remain outside so our team can monitor her progress as she reacclimates to the outdoors and strengthens her flight muscles. Once ready, she'll be carefully assessed for release.

We hope this patient's story helps raise awareness about the unintended impacts of glue traps, which can harm both target and non-target animals.