



California Wildlife Center

Patient of the Week

January 1, 2026

The Long Road Back to the Sky



Dr. Michaels placing pins at fracture site.



Red-tailed Hawk patient after surgery.

While most of our patients come from Los Angeles and Ventura Counties, we occasionally admit patients from other areas who need specialized care. This was the case for a juvenile Red-tailed Hawk brought to us from San Luis Obispo County. Although the bird had recovered from an earlier wing injury, she arrived needing care for a fractured lower leg.

At first, the patient did not put any weight on her leg. When examined, the patient's left tibiotarsus (lower leg, shin area) was very swollen, warm, and tender. Medications were administered, and a temporary splint was applied using padding, a cardboard support, and specialized tape. The patient was placed back in her enclosure with a U-shaped support and scheduled for surgery.

During surgery, pins were placed at the fracture site to stabilize the bone and support proper healing. The procedure was successful and now the patient is in the recovery phase, being closely monitored by our medical staff.

During a recent exam, our team observed that the hawk is placing more weight on her left foot, a sign that she may be regaining strength. The swelling in the limb has also gone down significantly.

The patient has a long journey ahead of her, but we are hopeful she will continue to heal and soar once again.