



# California Wildlife Center

## Patient of the Week

**March 13, 2026**

### Hope Starts Here!

Baby season has begun, and our NICU (Neonatal Intensive Care Unit) is officially open and ready to welcome the many orphaned, injured or sick wildlife patients who will need care in the months ahead. Created to support the annual influx of newborn animals arriving at CWC this time of year, the NICU provides specialized care for patients who are too young to survive without their parents. These tiny arrivals require constant feeding and monitoring to help them safely navigate this critical stage of development. This high-volume department may have upwards of 200 young animals to care for at any given time!



Young hummingbird patient in handknit nest.

Caring for that many fragile patients takes an incredible team. Our dedicated staff, interns, and volunteers work from sunup to sundown providing the intensive support these animals need. Many require 24-hour heat therapy and specialized formulas that must be fed at frequent, carefully timed intervals. Their care also involves constant monitoring and detailed recordkeeping, along with the daily work of cleaning, preparing diets, enrichment and maintaining safe, sanitary enclosures.

Many of the patients we admit to NICU stay longer than the adult animals treated in our ICU. Because they are still developing, they are typically released only after reaching key milestones, including the ability to self-feed, achieving a healthy weight, and meeting other species-specific developmental benchmarks.

We are currently caring for 16 hummingbirds (ranging from hatchlings to fledglings), 11 Mourning Doves, a Band-tailed Pigeon, 19 Eastern Fox Squirrels and 5 Virginia Opossums. And this is just the beginning. These numbers will grow as the season continues and more tiny patients arrive.



Group of young Eastern Fox Squirrels.

Keep an eye out for our Baby Shower Registry, coming in the next few months, to help support the many orphaned, injured or sick wildlife patients we'll care for in our NICU between now and November!