



California Wildlife Center

Patient of the Week

July 17, 2026

Patient of the Week - A Safe Stay Before Release

Earlier this month an adult male Virginia Opossum was admitted with road rash and a possible pelvic fracture. It is not often that we receive older adult opossums. In the wild, Virginia Opossums typically have a lifespan of about 3 years, and this patient is estimated to be close to that age.

During his initial examination, the team found areas of hair loss, significant road rash, and hunching at the hips. After cleaning his wounds and starting him on antibiotics and pain medication, they took radiographs to get a more thorough look. The images revealed several older fractures, including breaks in the left radius and ulna, the left elbow, and a vertebra. They also confirmed there was no pelvic fracture, suggesting the earlier concern was likely due to the animal's positioning during a previous exam rather than a true injury.

The fractures appear to be healing well, and the patient continues to have a strong appetite. He was recently moved to an outdoor enclosure, an important next step in his rehabilitation as he builds strength in preparation for release.

While older opossums are uncommon patients, younger ones keep our team busy. In fact, so far this year, we have admitted 373 Virginia Opossums, with the majority arriving as NICU patients. These tiny patients require dedicated care from sunup to sundown until they can self-feed and reach an appropriate weight. At that point, they move to an outdoor enclosure, where they begin acclimating to the natural world.

We recently built two new outdoor opossum hutches, aptly named Marsupial Motels, where patients can safely acclimate before their release back into the wild. By sponsoring a Marsupial Motel, you'll have the opportunity to name one of these spaces while providing a safe haven for hundreds of Virginia opossums for years to come. If you are interested in this opportunity, please email Tayler at tlackey@cawildlife.org for more information.



Virginia Opossum patient.