



A Day at the Wildlife Care Network

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Photos of Baby opossum and songbirds by Rebecca Gaal, photo of owl provided by Santa Barbara Wildlife Care Network

Tuesday, 7 AM

The Santa Barbara Wildlife Care Network (SBWCN) helpline is already ringing off the hook. Three young kids and their father have found an injured seabird on the beach in Summerland. A western tanager hit a window downtown. A baby opossum is caught in a snap trap.

A volunteer guides the callers through the next steps. "Carefully place the animal in a box. Keep it warm, dark, and quiet. Do not peek. Bring the animal to the Wildlife Care Center as quickly as you can."

At around 8 am, the seabird arrives in a box lined with the man's shirt. The three kids excitedly tell volunteers about the rescue. A brown truck with the western tanager pulls up. Then, the opossum. These are patients #3998, 3999, and 4000 of the year. They are three of 235 total patients receiving care at the Wildlife Care Center now.

While all this is going on, a hummingbird in the incubator is fed nectar every half hour from 7am to 7pm. An American Kestrel that was struck by a car a few days ago gets a dose of pain medication and some breakfast. Fifteen raccoons devour donated avocados. The pelicans enjoy their morning herring. Staff and volunteers prep diets in the food shed and rush around the Center to make sure every animal is taken care of. This work happens every morning, 365 days a year at the Wildlife Care Center.

SBWCN's mission is to rescue, rehabilitate, and release animals in need back to the wild. Just recently a gray fox was released back to her territory near San Marcos Road. A great horned owl flew free in Buellton after spending 38

days recovering from surgery to repair his fractured wing. Three Brandt's cormorants returned to the ocean waves at Haskell's Beach after recovering from injuries related to dog attacks. There are hundreds more stories like these.

We are happy to give them a second chance, but we wish they did not have to come to the Wildlife Care Center in the first place. Poison, car strikes, predator attacks, and fishing hooks cause dozens of animals to end up in our care every day. Climate change, wildfires, and urban development have limited food availability and habitat. It is becoming increasingly more difficult to be a wild animal, but thankfully, they are in the good hands of the people of Santa Barbara and the folks at SBWCN.

Wildlife rescue and rehabilitation brings out the best in people. Animals arrive on the backs of motorcycles, in the cupped hands of children, or even in an Uber called specifically to transport a tiny bird. Every year, thousands of amazing people from every walk of life pause their day to save a wild animal. Hundreds more volunteer their time to feed, clean, and transport animals in need. All this is fueled by the kindness of donors whose gifts fund the formula, fish, medication, bandages, and everything else the Center needs to care for all the animals.

The Santa Barbara Wildlife Care Network is incredibly proud to serve such a compassionate community. We plan to break ground on a state-of-the-art wildlife hospital within the next few months to better meet the needs of the many thousands of animals who will come through our doors in the years to come. To join the Network, visit sbwcn.org or call us at (805) 681-1019.