As we start a new year and a new decade, I’ve been reflecting on the work we’ve accomplished over the more than 26 years we’ve been helping sick, injured, and orphaned wildlife in Santa Clara County. It has been a rewarding, fascinating, and sometimes heart-breaking endeavor. Yet, it is one that we are completely committed to every day. It’s the miraculous cases of recovery and fulfilling releases that make this work so worthwhile, and keep us going.

When this edition was being written, our staff members were asked to name some of their most memorable cases. Inevitably, each of us had a particular story we wanted to contribute that touched us. From the western fence lizard who got himself into a bit of a predicament, to the owl that ended up being an unexpected passenger in an truck, we have many great stories to tell. And never do we forget that without the tremendous support from you, our donors, these success stories would not be possible. We consider you a part of our team, and the reason we are able to successfully help so many animals. Because of this, we wanted to start out the new decade by sharing this retrospective of some of our most interesting cases from the past to the present. We hope you will find it as special and satisfying as we do.

WCSV could not provide the services and quality of care we do without your generosity. As a small nonprofit, it is crucial for us to raise funds to continue with our mission to rehabilitate and release local. We are grateful for each and every contribution, and no amount is too small. There are also other ways to help WCSV beyond making a cash donation. Here are some suggestions:

- **Monthly Giving Schedule**: Set up a monthly giving schedule through PayPal. Once you set it up, you don’t have to think about it again, and the Center will benefit from your contribution year-round.
- **Employer Matching Program**: This is a fantastic way to see your gift doubled. See if your employer has a matching gift program.
- **Bequests or Living Trust**: A bequest or a gift through a living trust is another great way to contribute to WCSV.
- **Amazon Smile**: You can donate to the Center when you shop on www.amazon.com. The AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5% of the sale price from your eligible purchases to WCSV. To register, go to smile.amazon.com, and select us as the benefitting charity. Every little bit helps!
- **Amazon Wish List**: If you wish to buy specific items that we need, try our wish list. To find it, go to www.amazon.com, select “find a list or registry,” enter our name, and click “search”.
- **Vehicle Donations**: Consider donating that old vehicle to V-DAC (Vehicle Donation to Any Charity) as a way to help our local wildlife. Their programs turn any car, truck, boat or RV into cash and deliver a high percent of net proceeds to nonprofits like WCSV. Visit their website to learn more about how to donate a vehicle to help WCSV at https://www.v-dac.com/.

We truly appreciate you being a member of the WCSV team, and for your devotion to our mission to rehabilitate and release wildlife in need.

With gratitude,

Laura Hawkins, Executive Director

---

Tracks…across the backyard, along a wooded trail, meandering by a creek. Whose tracks are they? Are they coming or going? Perhaps they are the tracks of things past, or of visions to be revealed, and stories yet untold. Come join us as we explore the different dimensions of wildlife rehabilitation and the special wild neighbors with whom we share our communities. It is the intention of this publication to investigate our dynamic relationship with wildlife within the greater context of our relationship with the earth and each other. The issues are many, as are the myths, feelings, and beliefs surrounding each one. Let’s follow the tracks, wherever we may find them, and leave our own for those who may follow.

---

The Wildlife Center of Silicon Valley is a California nonprofit organization that since 1993 has been committed to providing the highest quality care and rehabilitation to urban wildlife and to promoting a mutually beneficial and respectful coexistence between humans and wildlife in our communities.

(408) 929-9453
info@wcsv.org
wcsv.org
3027 Penitencia Creek Road
San Jose, CA 95132

Board of Directors
President Lisa Van Buskirk
Secretary Katie Dinneen
Treasurer Mary Spjostrom
Patience Davidson-Lutz
Aaron Frank
Ken White

Staff
Executive Director
Laura Hawkins
Development Manager
Holly Cormier
Volunteer & Outreach Coordinator
Michael Chen
Admissions & Administration
Jenny Liu
Development Assistant
Jenny Liu
Veterinarian
Dr. Jacqueline Hansted, DVM
Hospital Manager
Ashley Kinney
Wildlife Technicians
Ashley Damm
Laura Kurtz

Tracks is a biannual publication of the Wildlife Center of Silicon Valley.
Managing Editor – Michael Chen
Layout and Design – Ruth McDunn
Every animal that comes to the Wildlife Center of Silicon Valley arrives in its own unique way. Here are some of the more memorable intakes from the past decade.

**Yellow-bellied marmot**

Yellow-bellied marmots sometimes climb into the warm engine bays of vehicles and end up being inadvertently relocated away from their homes. This is just what this little stowaway did in 2014, when he hitched a ride with an unsuspecting motorist who returned to the San Francisco Bay Area after a trip to Yosemite. The marmot was brought to WCSV for a complete medical examination. In addition to possible cuts or burns, marmots can suffer the effects of poisoning from consuming antifreeze, which is toxic to animals. Fortunately, this patient was healthy, and we arranged for transport back to Yosemite where it was released.

**Gopher snake**

This gopher snake was brought in from Gilroy, stuck inside a round valve box cover. Upon cutting the patient out of the plastic cover, we discovered that it had a two-inch long laceration. This patient spent a month in care before release; because they are reptiles, snakes' wounds can require a prolonged amount of time to heal, and snakes must display perfect shedding ability before being returned to the wild.

**Western fence lizard**

In June of 2016, a man who had just stepped out of his front door in Los Gatos found this western fence lizard struggling on the ground with an acorn cap stuck to its head. The finder first attempted to remove the cap himself, but did not want to injure the animal so he brought it to us. WCSV’s hospital manager was able to draw on past experience to remove the cap without harming the lizard, and the patient was able to be immediately returned to where it had been found.

**Anna’s hummingbird**

At the end of March in 2019, this Anna’s Hummingbird nestling came in after a woman found the nest precariously attached to a lemon. Hummingbirds use spider webs in their small nests so they can stick to tree branches and expand as the babies grow, but this nest was in danger of falling. She removed the lemon before it could fall off of the tree and quickly transported the nest to the Center. Depending on their age, hummingbird nestlings must be fed between every 15 to 45 minutes and they must be fully self-feeding before they can be released.

**Black phoebe**

Concerned individuals often have to be resourceful when they find injured or orphaned animals. In June of 2019, these black phoebe nestlings were safely delivered to the Center in a Starbucks venti cup. After technicians determined that the patients were uninjured, they were set up in our hospital to be raised in our baby bird nursery. Phoebes eat by catching insects in flight, so they must build up flight muscles in outdoor aviaries and practice flight skills before being released to the wild.
Songbirds and hummingbirds can contract a variety of illnesses from dirty feeders or seed, such as avian pox, mycoplasmosis, salmonella, trichomonas gallinae, and candidiasis. Many of these conditions are difficult to treat and are often fatal. By keeping our birds feeders clean, we ensure that we do not contribute to the spread of preventable disease. Here are instructions to have your feeders ready for the spring and summer.

If you are having trouble cleaning your bird feeder, you can bring it to Los Gatos Birdwatcher located at 792 Blossom Hill Road Los Gatos, CA 95032. They provide free cleaning on Tuesdays and Thursdays in exchange for a donation to one of their nonprofit partners; look for the Wildlife Center of Silicon Valley's donation box! When you bring your feeder in, they ask that you also please specify if you have seen sick birds in your yard. For more information, give them a call at (408) 358-9453 or visit http://www.losgatosbirdwatcher.com/

**Bird Feeder Cleaning**

1. Mix 9 parts water with 1 part bleach
2. Discard any remaining old seed or sugar water.
3. Take apart feeder as best you can.
4. Immerse feeder in bleach and water solution; brush all nooks and crannies.
5. Let dry in the sun (if available), and reassemble feeder.

If you do not want to use bleach, you may use a commercial product by Songbird Essentials called “Birdhouse and Feeder Cleaner” which consists of non-toxic all-natural enzymes that remove parasites, droppings, and other organic contamination.

**Bird Bath Cleaning**

Keep all bird baths free from mosquito larvae and algae with regular cleaning. If you begin to notice algae growing, clean the bath with “Superbac” bird bath scrub or white vinegar and a few drops of “Fountec”.

Hummingbird with avian pox

Finch with mycoplasmosis
Here are some birds that you may notice at your feeders and in your yard during the spring and summer months.

**Allen’s and Rufous Hummingbirds**

These two species of hummingbird sport copper-colored feathers, and their breeding range in the spring and summer months includes the San Francisco Bay Area. You may see them aggressively competing for territory with Anna’s hummingbirds, which live here year-round.

**California Towhee**

California towhees spend much of their time foraging low to the ground, and using their feet to dig and scratch at dirt to find seeds and insects. You may notice evidence of this behavior in the form of displaced dirt around your garden or yard.

**Chestnut-backed Chickadee**

Chestnut-backed chickadees are very vocal birds, named after their call that goes “chickadee dee dee.” They are cavity nesters and will cover their eggs in a half-inch thick layer of fur collected from both wild and domestic animals.

**Hooded Oriole**

Hooded orioles build nests by weaving pouches and attaching them to the underside of palm fronds. In addition to drinking sugar water from hummingbird feeders, orioles also enjoy eating fresh oranges.

**House Finch**

Male house finches’ feathers can change color depending on their diet while molting; coloration ranges from pale yellow to deep red. They are native to the western regions of the United States and Mexico, but have spread to the eastern United States, southern Canada, and Hawaii.
We are a high-volume animal hospital and receive over 5,600 patients per year. As WCSV enters the new decade, we would like all of you to join us on a quick look back at some of the most captivating stories from the past ten years.

**Brutally trapped Northern raccoon**

In September of 2013, WCSV received this male northern raccoon after he was found in South San Jose. He had spent the entire night dangling from a fence with his front paws caught in a pair of illegal leg-hold traps. Due to stress, he had self-mutilated three-quarters of his tail. It took two staff members to open the trap and free his paws. The patient had three fractures and numerous open wounds on his swollen paws; staff spent two months regularly administering pain medication and performing topical wound care. The next step in rehabilitation was to move the raccoon to an outdoor enclosure to confirm that he could be fully mobile and able to survive on his own. Once deemed healthy, he was returned to the wild at Almaden Quicksilver Park.

**Rare ferruginous hawk**

We received this adult male ferruginous hawk in 2015; he had sustained a fracture of its left wing after a collision with a model airplane in Morgan Hill. Staff stabilized his injured wing, which fortunately did not require surgery, and the patient spent two months recovering before we released him back to the wild. We have only ever received two of this species of hawk. Ferruginous hawks are migratory with a large range extending from southern Canada to northern Mexico, and they are only found in the San Francisco Bay Area during the winter.

**Uncommon black-headed grosbeak**

A woman brought in this rare orphaned black-headed grosbeak in summer of 2019. This species is migratory and is only in the region for several months during the summer, and the Center rarely receives this species. This nestling was covered in residue of bird formula, not appropriate for this species, that had damaged many of the feathers around its face. Staff carefully cleaned the bird off and moved it to our baby bird nursery where it was fed every 30 minutes. Once the bird was older, we moved the grosbeak into an aviary for it to practice flight and foraging skills before we released it near where it was found in Los Gatos.
Trapped and Traumatized Coyote

This male coyote was found caught in an illegal snare trap in 2016. After WCSV received him, technicians quickly freed the coyote from the cruel trap and observed a noticeable limp as well as a flea infestation. Staff administered medication for pain and swelling in the leg and gave flea treatment. We believe that, as often occurs with animals caught in traps, he injured himself while attempting to get free. He remained in care for several months until he was fully healed and could be released in Monte Sereno near where he was originally found.

Burnt Red-Tailed Hawk

In 2016, a female red-tailed hawk flew through a methane burner at a local landfill, singeing feathers all over her body and rendering her unable to fly. A woman witnessed the shocking event and immediately brought the hawk to WCSV for treatment. Staff treated the patient for all possible burns, as they can cause internal injuries that take days to become evident. Fortunately, the bird did not have any deep tissue injuries, but we had to wait for all the damaged feathers to molt out. She spent almost an entire year in care regrowing her feathers before she was ready to be released.

Great-Horned Owl Meets Truck

In November 2019, a truck driver struck something on the freeway near Fremont. Upon arrival at his destination in Mountain View, he discovered this male great-horned owl stuck to the grill of his truck. The poor owl had suffered an injury to his right eye and had several twisted feathers; staff administered medication for pain and swelling, and set him up in our hospital to recover. The condition of his eye improved quickly, and he was moved to an outdoor enclosure so we could check his flight skills before release. After about two weeks in care, a volunteer released the owl back to the wild in Fremont.
**Cracked Shell Western Pond Turtle**

In 2017 an individual discovered this western pond turtle on the side of the road in Morgan Hill. The turtle had a severely cracked shell and we believe it was struck by a car. Our veterinarian stabilized the patient with metal staples, which it wore for several months before the damaged shell fragments could be safely removed to allow healing to continue. Western pond turtles typically overwinter in a state of hibernation, which greatly slows recovery. A dedicated volunteer kept the turtle in a climate-controlled environment over the winter to prevent hibernation, and its shell healed successfully. After an entire year, we were able to return the turtle to the wild.

**Eastern Gray Squirrel Struck by Lightning**

In 2017, lightning struck a tree in Sunnyvale, and WCSV received this female eastern gray squirrel that was discovered stunned at the base of the tree. During the initial examination, staff discovered her whiskers and fur were singed. While there were no visible burns, soft tissue injuries from electrical burns may take time to become apparent. Because of this, we gave the squirrel medication as a precaution, and kept her under close observation until we confirmed that she had not developed further injuries. She was moved to an outside enclosure and released after her whiskers and fur grew back.

**Tortured Virginia Opossum**

At the end of February 2019, the Center received this female opossum with a cable tie fastened tightly around her body. We suspect this had been done intentionally and that the animal had been suffering terribly for at least one week. Staff sedated her to clean the severely infected laceration left by the tie and prescribed medication for pain. Her injury required daily dressing changes to keep it clean and prevent re-infection. The opossum healed completely, and we returned her to the wild after she spent 49 days in care.
**Facility - Past and Future**

**Looking Back**

Towards the end of the past decade, we made huge improvements in our ability to provide quality care to our patients. The addition of two Tuff Sheds allowed us to create dedicated spaces to house certain species of young animals. A generous volunteer donated one shed in 2017 which became our baby bird nursery, which we named the “Baby Bird Barn.” The barn allows us to provide a safe space for them to grow up with conspecifics, and also provides a warmer environment necessary for these vulnerable babies. One year later, the Thelma Doelger Trust for Animals funded a second shed. The Center outfitted it for young predatory mammals, who require a quiet location to rehabilitate away from the noise of the main hospital.

Right before the end of 2019, volunteer Chuck Piercey donated and installed a floating island in our water bird enclosure. This island, covered in natural water grasses, prevents mosquito growth and provides enrichment for patients such as ducks, egrets, and herons.

**Going Forward**

As we move forward into this next decade, we are continuously looking to improve our quality of care. We continue to rely on contributions from readers like you to rehabilitate and release sick, orphaned, and injured wildlife. Here is a quick look at some of our efforts.

Thanks to donations from generous individuals and grants awarded to WCSV, we were able to start remodeling a number of old enclosures in desperate need of repairs. This will provide better housing conditions for songbirds, pigeons, doves, squirrels, and opossums. Some of the enclosures were no longer weatherproof, and therefore unsuitable for use. Volunteers are working tirelessly to have these projects completed in time for the approaching busy season.

Another project funded by grants involves technology that many of you might already have at home. By installing surveillance cameras, our technicians will be able to remotely monitor our predatory mammals. Some animals, such as coyotes, get very stressed when caretakers are present, and exhibit behavioral changes that make it difficult to assess their actual condition in person. By watching the video feed from afar, staff can ensure that our patients are healthy and displaying proper wild behavior.
This **American crow** came to us in October. Its tail feathers and primary flight feathers had all been clipped, leaving it unable to fly. We know based on veterinary experience, that corvids can have issues with their feathers growing back improperly if they are removed as a form of treatment. For this patient we must allow its damaged feathers to molt naturally. This crow is overwintering at the Center as we wait for old feathers to fall out and new feathers to grow in.

**Release Highlights**

Right before Christmas, this **striped skunk** came in from Sunnyvale after being rescued from the bottom of a drained swimming pool in Sunnyvale. It became water-logged during a heavy downpour and was unable to get out as the pool filled with rainwater; Santa Clara County Vector Control rescued the skunk from the bottom of the pool before it drowned. Once in care, we treated it for low blood sugar and hypothermia with a specific fluid solution and placed it in an incubator. The patient dried off overnight and had eaten all of its food by the next morning. It was returned to the wild shortly after the start of the new year.

On January 8, this **ring-billed gull** was inadvertently struck with a tennis ball at nearby Piedmont Middle School. A staff member rushed the gull to the Center, and we gave it medication for swelling and pain. While the initial examination did not reveal any noticeable injuries, staff kept the patient under observation to make sure the bird did not have any complications from the incident. After two days, staff determined that the gull was completely healthy and ready to be returned to the wild. The gull was released at Penitencia Creek Park, located adjacent to both the Center and Piedmont School.
WILDLIFE WORD SCRAMBLE

Unscramble the words to identify the animal in each photo.

A - VULTURE
B - DUCKLING
C - FOX
D - GOPHER
E - CORMORANT
F - CEDAR WAXWING
G - HOARY BAT
H - OPOSSUM
I - HUMMINGBIRD
J - BOBCAT

Answers:

A - U R L U E V T
B - N L C U D K G I
C - X F O
D - H O G E R P
E - T O C R M A O R N
F - R E C A D X W I G N A W
G - Y A H R O A T B
H - S M O O P U S
I - M U G B D I H M N I R
J - O T A B B C
If you see a wild animal in distress, find helpful information at wcsv.org
(408) 929-9453

A leased facility of the Santa Clara County Parks and Recreation Department, funded in part by San Jose Animal Care & Services, Milpitas, Silicon Valley Animal Control Authority and Sunnyvale.

Tracks is responsibly printed on FSC certified paper with agri-based inks.

Thank You! A Special Thanks to Our Invaluable Partners in Service

- BelleJAR Foundation
- Bohannon Family Foundation
- Carla Carstens
- Charles Wade
- Chuck Piercey
- City Council District 4
- City of Milpitas
- Davidson Family Foundation
- Dennis & Sharon Fredericks
- DJ Normark
- Dollinger Properties
- Facebook
- Farrington Historical Foundation
- Frank & Lisa Bourgault
- Google
- Guha Jayachandran
- Heather Hohlowski
- Heidi Miller
- IBM Volunteer Outreach Council
- International Bird Rescue
- Joanne Watts
- Karan Gathani
- Karen Campbell
- Karin Clements
- Kathryn Edwards & Kermit Kubitz
- Kenneth Gilbeau
- Lee Pauser
- Lisa Keeling
- Los Gatos Birdwatcher
- Lynn & Brendan Cullen
- Manfroy Family
- Marilyn Fowler Trust
- Martin Pool & Stephanie Miller
- Mary Susan Hood Living Trust
- Merryhill Elementary School
- Mission City Community Fund
- Native Songbird Care & Conservation
- Ohlone Wildlife Center
- Pacific Gas & Electric
- Peninsula Humane Society
- Robert Bicknell
- Ruth McDunn
- San Jose Animal Care and Services
- Santa Clara County Animal Care and Control
- Santa Clara County Department of Parks and Recreation
- Santa Clara County Vector Control
- Silicon Valley Animal Control Authority
- SPCA for Monterey County
- Susan Stevenson
- Thomas Walls
- Trevor Gearin
- Vagabond Marketing
- WildCare