Dear Wildlife Supporters:

As we get into 2021, and our daily lives are edging towards a more regular pattern, we're getting busier, and more things are requiring our attention. However, without fail, we see that people are never too busy to help animals in need, and that is a great thing, especially because we have taken in a record number of patients this year. Since January 1, we have received over 4,700 patients, which is unprecedented. Our intakes are up over 25% from the same time last year, and we know we will easily surpass the 6,200 animals we treated in 2020.

The many calls we get daily are about what people can do to help wildlife in need; many that are literally in their own backyard. It doesn't matter if it's a hummingbird or fox, skunk or squirrel, our callers have one goal in mind—to get that animal assistance.

This is why we chose to focus on common backyard wildlife in this issue. You'll learn how you can actually start helping the animal before you even leave your house! We'll share how to discourage unwanted visitors from taking up residence, common ways you can keep wildlife from getting hurt, and what to do if you find an animal that is sick, injured, or orphaned (see page 6).

We are so grateful for your support of our mission, as it has never been more important than right now. Because we are a small nonprofit that is funded almost entirely by individual donations, and the only wildlife center in Santa Clara County, your support is critical. Because of the pandemic, the cost of food, medication and other essentials has skyrocketed. This, combined with the unprecedented number of needy animals we are receiving, makes things challenging financially.

We could not provide the services and quality of care we do without your generosity. We are thankful for 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 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 benefiting charity. Every little bit helps!

**Amazon Wish List**: If you wish to buy a specific item that we need, try our wish list. To find it, go to wcs.org/wishlist, and you will be automatically redirected to Amazon.

**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 non-profits like WCSV. Visit their website to learn more about how to donate a vehicle to help WCSV at https://www.v-dac.com/.

**Bequests or Living Trust**

We are humbled by your generosity always, and especially in these trying times. Thank you for your support and for your devotion to our mission to rehabilitate and release wildlife in need. We truly appreciate you being a member of the WCSV team and an invaluable part of the work that we do.

With gratitude,

Laura Hawkins, Executive Director

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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.
A Rare Bird: Short-eared Owl

In early March, we received a very special patient: this short-eared owl, the first one in our Center’s history. These owls are unlike most others in that they nest on the ground in secluded, grassy locations. Other owls take over existing cavities and enclosed spaces.

This poor bird was found grounded on a Sunnyvale trail, covered in dried mud. Further examination revealed that the owl was not only emaciated and dehydrated, but it was also missing feathers and had a minor injury to its left eye. Without intervention, this owl would not have survived.

Staff warmed the bird up in an incubator, and administered fluids, vitamins, and medication. Due to the owl’s weak condition, we started by tubing it a liquid critical care diet, and after several days, we had successfully stabilized the bird to where it could resume eating solid foods. Once the owl could maintain proper body temperature, our technicians carefully gave it a bath and rinsed off all of the dried mud. This owl, once severely debilitated and nearly dead, was now clean, eating, gaining weight, and ready for its next step in its recovery! The raptor was moved to an outside enclosure so it could build up its flight strength. Luckily the bird flew beautifully and was soon ready for release. This lovely creature was then returned to the wild to fly free once again.

Pallid Bat

Late last year, a resident of San Jose went camping in the Eureka Dunes in Death Valley. Nearly a week after his return, he discovered this pallid bat inside of his truck, which must have flown inside when he had left the windows open one evening. Despite having been trapped for nearly seven days, the bat was in good health and only mildly dehydrated. After a full examination, we set the bat up with fluids and food, keeping it under close observation. It ate and drank well and did not seem any worse for wear.

Once the bat was deemed fully healthy, staff coordinated with California Department of Fish and Wildlife and local biologists to arrange for the animal to be returned to where it was found. Biologist Richard Lescalleet, a friend of the Center, was headed down to do field work in Death Valley, and was able to release this amazing winged creature just before the start of the new year!

Pallid bats eat by capturing insects off of the ground before flying to a safe perch to consume them, and can eat up to half of their body weight in one night. Imagine how many more bugs would be in our neighborhoods if it wasn’t for animals such these bats!
**Common Wildlife Situations**

**Fledglings**

During the summer, we field lots of calls about birds found on the ground, running or jumping around but not flying. These avians are often described as injured adults.

What these callers are seeing is actually a normal part of the development of young songbirds. Most nestlings grow very quickly and are almost the same size as the parents within about two weeks, though their feathers are often duller in color. About a week after that, many young birds are ready to leave the nest even though they cannot yet maintain sustained flight. The fledgling’s parent will feed, nurture, and protect it as it runs or hops around on the ground. Most species will be flying within several days.

**Hummingbird Nests**

During the spring and summer, we receive many calls and messages from concerned watchers worried about what they think are “abandoned” nests. After the babies are approximately one-and-a-half weeks old, they are old enough to regulate temperature on their own and mother hummingbirds no longer sit on the nest, even at night.

The mother feeds her babies very quickly and is often gone in less than sixty seconds so that predators do not notice the nest. If you are not seeing her, that means she is doing a very good job! Baby hummingbirds will make a high pitched, constant peeping sound when they are not being fed, to signal to the mother that they need attention. They need to make this sound so the mother can be alerted that it is hungry. Please do not attempt to feed the baby – it will become full, stop making sounds, and the mother will not feed it. This can lead to the mother abandoning the nest.

Please visit our website, wcsbv.org, for more detailed instructions on how to determine if juvenile or baby hummingbirds are actually orphaned.

**Prevent Common Injuries**

Here are some easy ways to prevent common injuries to your wild neighbors:

- **Trim trees only in the fall and winter, specifically only in early November to early January.** This avoids squirrel and most birds’ nesting season.

- **If you experience frequent window strikes, there are stickers and films you can purchase to apply to your windows that are nearly invisible to you, but are highly visible in the UV spectrum to birds.**

- **Do not use garden netting, as it can trap many kinds of birds, reptiles and mammals.** Chicken wire with a stiff frame constructed from wood or PVC pipe is a more wildlife-friendly option.

- **Do not use glue traps; these catch insects, but they also catch whatever is trying to eat the insects.** These birds and small mammals often severely injure themselves and die trying to free themselves from these sticky traps.

- **Do not use rodenticides.** They are indiscriminate, and are often consumed by other animals and even outdoor neighborhood pets. They also secondarily poison animals that prey on rats and mice, such as hawks or foxes.

If you find a bird on the ground, and it is bleeding, visibly limping, displays a twisted neck, in entangled in string or wire, has been caught by a dog or cat, or is otherwise clearly sick or injured, please contact us or your local wildlife rehabilitation center for advice on what to do next.

*Crow specifically tend to fledge quite early and will spend up to two weeks on the ground, walking and hopping around, still in the care of the flock. One easy way to identify the juveniles is that their eyes will be blue, as opposed to dark brown or black. As long as there are other crows nearby, the juvenile does not need any human intervention. The parents will provide everything it needs, and will go to great lengths to defend their baby.*

*If you find a bird on the ground, and it is bleeding, visibly limping, displays a twisted neck, in entangled in string or wire, has been caught by a dog or cat, or is otherwise clearly sick or injured, please contact us or your local wildlife rehabilitation center for advice on what to do next.*

*Please visit our website, wcsbv.org, for more detailed instructions on how to determine if juvenile or baby hummingbirds are actually orphaned.
**Ducklings**

During the summer, you may see female mallards leading her ducklings around on foot. She knows where to go, because she already has a water and food source in mind, and sometimes her route will include passing through your yard, or even crossing traffic.

Please do not attempt to help them by catching and relocating them; this will stress out the mother, causing her to fly away and abandon the ducklings. She will not return for them, and the ducklings will then need to be taken to your local wildlife rehabilitator.

If they have taken up residence in your swimming pool and cannot get out, you can create a makeshift ramp using a wooden plank for the mother to lead the ducklings out of the pool. There are also commercial ramps for pools that you can purchase to use. Once they are out of your pool, covering it will encourage the mallards to move on.

If you do not have a pool cover or are unable to cover your pool, placing inflatable pool floats also deters the mother from choosing your pool as a preferred body of water.

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**How To Keep Your Wild Neighbors From Moving In**

While we treat 160+ species of wild animals native to the state of California, it is understandable that you may not wish to share your property with all of them. Here are some species commonly found in many neighborhoods in the Bay Area, and how to keep them from taking up residence in your yard.

*Virginia opossums* are opportunists, and will take advantage of holes created by other animals to live under your house, shed, or deck. They often take up temporary residence in these cavities, but they are actually nomadic and will not stay in one place for long. Scent deterrents, such as old rags soaked in ammonia, can convince them to move on. Make sure you do not leave pet food out at night, and clean up any dropped fruit below your fruit trees, to reduce the incentive for opossums to stay.

*Skunks and raccoons* – but not opossums – are excellent diggers and can destroy your lawn. They are after the delicious grubs found underground. You can apply cayenne pepper, or a hot pepper mix, as an immediate deterrent which works similarly to pepper spray, but ultimately you will need to eliminate the food source attracting them. Beneficial nematodes are microorganisms that will kill the grubs, are harmless to humans and pets, and can be purchased at your local nursery. Depending on the size of your yard, it may take several weeks for the nematodes to take effect.

Predatory mammals such as *gray foxes* and *coyotes* are very well-adapted to thrive in our local neighborhoods, and may view domestic animals in your neighborhood as prey animals. Gray foxes will attempt to prey on farm animals such as chickens, while coyotes are larger and can pose a risk to your dogs or cats if they are left outdoors at night. Clear low shrubbery, piles of wood, yard waste, or other debris that can serve as shelter for coyotes and foxes, and install predator-proof enclosures for domestic fowl so they cannot get in.

For more detailed information on how to safely and humanely exclude wildlife from your yard, please visit wcsv.org, or give us a call at (408) 929-9453.

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**Hot Pepper Deterrent**

This recipe works well for mammals, such as raccoons, because of the capsaicin in the peppers. Spray around entry holes and problem digging areas.

1 Yellow Onion – chopped
1 Jalapeno Pepper – chopped
2 tablespoons Cayenne Pepper

Combine above ingredients with about 2 quarts of water. Boil for 20 minutes. Strain. Once liquid has cooled, pour into spray bottle. Apply to “problem” areas, and reapply as needed.
What to do when you find an animal

I found an injured/orphaned animal and WCSV is closed. It is a...

Bird

Large (bird of prey, waterbird, shorebird)

It is unsafe to handle.

Call your local animal control agency.

Small (songbird, pigeon)

Pick up with a towel or other cloth.

Place in a secure, ventilated box overnight.

Small (rodent, rabbit, young opossum)

Bring to WCSV during open hours.

Medium/Large (adult opossum, raccoon, bobcat, coyote, fox, skunk, deer, mountain lion)

It is unsafe to handle. DO NOT ATTEMPT.

Bat

DO NOT offer food to any wild animal.

DO NOT offer food to any wild animal.
**Release Highlights**

**American Crow**

This American crow came in with an open wound on the right side of its head, and an incredible amount of dried blood all around the right eye. Our animal care staff was concerned about potential damage to the poor crow’s eye, and the possibility of infection in the wound. We prescribed an extensive treatment of antibiotics and anti-inflammatories before carefully cleaning the wound. There was so much dried blood that staff could not remove all of it at once, but we were able to determine that the crow’s eye was intact. Our technicians and veterinarian spent nearly a month cleaning the crow’s injury as it healed, and luckily no infection developed. The gash soon closed completely, and staff took the crow back to near where it was found and released it.

**Western Gray Squirrel**

A concerned individual found this male Western Gray Squirrel in her backyard, trapped in a child’s wiffle ball net. To free the squirrel, our technicians carefully restrained him and cut away the netting from around his hind legs. They then thoroughly examined the squirrel, discovering that he was in good condition overall and not seriously injured. Staff gave him fluids, and prescribed anti-inflammatory medication for three days to treat any possible swelling from the entanglement. The squirrel developed no other complications from its ordeal and was then moved to an outdoor enclosure for further observation. He was soon deemed fully healthy and ready for release. One of our dedicated volunteers drove the squirrel back to Los Gatos, returning him to his natural habitat.

**Rock Pigeon**

A member of the public found this rock pigeon on the ground in Campbell that was not flying away when approached by humans. Upon intake, our technicians discovered that white paint was all over its body, holding its feathers together and not allowing the poor pigeon to spread its wings to fly. To prevent further damage, our veterinarian slowly cleaned the paint off over the weeks the pigeon was in care, carefully separating the primary and secondary feathers from each other. By removing the paint in small portions, we were able to allow the pigeon to fly again without having to molt its old feathers, greatly reducing the length of its stay in our hospital. After a little over three weeks, the pigeon was able to fly again, and was released to continue thriving in the wild.
WINGIN' IT FOR WILDLIFE

SAVE THE DATE

SATURDAY

SEPTEMBER 18, 2021

5:00 TO 6:30 PM

DETAILS TO COME

Featuring a silent and live auction

Online event

Free tickets

Internet connection required

A virtual fundraiser for wildlife