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THE WILD TIMES



YEAR OF THE COYOTES

*Publication from
Lake Tahoe
Wildlife Care*

MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Welcome to the very first edition of *The Wild Times*. I'm truly thrilled to share a deeper look into the work happening every day at our wildlife center. Whether you're a longtime supporter or discovering us for the first time, thank you for caring about the wild beings who share this incredible region with us.

This past year has been full of challenges, surprises, and moments that reminded us just how resilient wildlife can be when given a second chance. From tiny patients who arrived in critical condition to the larger predators who needed space, time, and skilled care to recover, each story has strengthened our belief in the importance of what we do.

We could not do any of this without you. Your compassion fuels our rehabilitation efforts, supports our volunteers, and keeps our doors open to animals in need. Every donation, every shared post, every encouraging word truly makes a difference.

I hope *The Wild Times* brings you closer to the heart of our mission. As you flip through these pages, I hope you see the impact of your support in every face, every release, and every success we celebrate together.

Thank you for being part of this journey. Together, we're building a future where wildlife has a fighting chance and where our community continues to grow in understanding and respect for the natural world.

With gratitude,
Catherine Mendez



Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care is committed to rescuing, rehabilitating, and releasing injured and orphaned wildlife while also educating the community on how to peacefully coexist with wildlife

If you see an animal in distress, contact us at:
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“Only if we understand can we care. Only if
we care will we help. Only if we help shall
they be saved.”
— Jane Goodall

BY THE NUMBERS

SUBJECT TO INCREASE BY DECEMEBER 31ST, 2025



912 INTAKES

The Second
Highest Patient
Year in 47 Years

Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care is NOT funded by local, state, or federal sources. Our work is made possible entirely through public donations, allowing us to provide care at no cost.



112 SPECIES ADMITTED



LONGEST TIME IN CARE

Our Northern Raccoon orphans spent 141 days in care.



385 ORPHANED BABIES



It costs approximately \$45,000 each year to feed our wildlife patients.



We spend approximately \$11,000 on medications, lab work, diagnostic testing, and related care.

Heaviest Animal By Weight

15KG

ORPHANED MULE DEER

OTHER HIGHLIGHTS OF 2025

- Prepared approximately 58 gallons of milk to feed neonatal patients
- Completed an average of 1,500 loads of laundry in just four months
- Longest volunteer transport: 236 miles round trip to Sacramento for two baby bats (by Sue)
- Fawn transports: Three trips to Shingle Springs totaling 412.2 miles (by Vickie)

PORKY

Porky's story this year is one of confidence and connection. Through presentations and outreach programs, she has inspired hundreds of visitors while helping them better understand and appreciate her species. She continues to grow more comfortable with diverse crowds and new environments. This year's training has focused on travel preparation through crate and wagon work, along with positive, low-stress nail trims and touch training to support routine medical care.



PHOENIX

Phoenix brings energy and play to everything he does. This year, his training shifted toward choice-based participation, allowing him to decide when and how he engages with staff. He has taken part in public tours and has shown growing confidence around people. Outside of training, Phoenix thrives on play enrichment, especially sticks, feathers, and splashing in his water bath. He also enjoys misting during hot summer days. Touch training is helping Phoenix become comfortable with nail trims on the glove and routine medical care.



OZZY

Ozzy has been steadily building confidence as his training becomes more choice-based and trust-driven. His work centers on controlled flights to and from the glove and responding to directional cues. Ozzy has begun appearing in public tours, where visitors learn about his story, injury, and training. He enjoys enrichment that engages his curiosity, especially foraging for hidden mealworms and investigating his reflection. Touch training is helping Ozzy become comfortable with nail trims on the glove and routine medical care.





THE WILD PATH

This year has been truly remarkable for us at LTWC. Over the course of the year, we intaked more than 22 coyotes, the most we've ever seen at our facility. Some were local to Tahoe, while others arrived from Big Bear, Santa Barbara, and even Morro Bay. Seeing them up close has been incredible, watching their personalities shine through in play, exploration, and natural hunting behaviors. Each coyote reminded us just how smart, curious, and full of spirit these animals are, and how lucky we are to share even a little time with them.

EXPLORATION & PLAY

The coyotes explored every corner of their enclosures. Logs became climbing spots, hollowed-out spaces offered hiding places, and piles of dirt and pine needles were perfect for foraging. Treats were tucked under rocks or in the grass, and it was fascinating to watch them work out how to get to them.

Play was everywhere. Coyotes sprinted across the yard in bursts of energy, chased each other, wrestled, tugged sticks, or carried objects like little trophies.

Each animal had its own style, some bold, some careful, some clever in finding the quickest way to a treat. Their curiosity and energy were infectious, showing they were enjoying themselves just as much as we were enjoying watching them.

Every session gave staff insight into how behaviors develop, which helps shape enrichment, training, and rehabilitation techniques for future patients.



HUNTERS BY NATURE

One of the most important parts of caring for the coyotes this year was keeping their diets varied. In the wild, coyotes eat whatever is available depending on the season, so we offered elk, deer, quail, fish, rabbits, and rats to help them stay sharp and encourage natural foraging behaviors. It wasn't just about feeding them. Each type of food challenged them in a different way and kept their instincts active.



When appropriate, coyotes were given live prey exercises to maintain natural hunting behaviors. These challenges let their natural skills guide them while strengthening abilities critical for survival in the wild.

Observing these exercises provides valuable insight into coyote development. Each session reveals how behaviors like decision-making and spatial awareness emerge, helping rehabilitators understand how to support growth and prepare them for life in the wild.



INTO THE WILD

Release day is the result of months of care, training, and observation. Coyotes enter the wild with instincts and skills strengthened during their time in our care. Foraging, problem-solving, and navigating natural challenges help them stay confident and adaptable.

Watching them explore their new environment highlights just how capable they are. Moving through cover, responding to scents and sounds, and testing obstacles all show instincts honed during rehabilitation and skills critical for survival.

Every interaction in care, from enrichment to diet, builds independence and resilience. All of that preparation comes together on release day.

Seeing a coyote step confidently into the wild shows the strength and spirit these animals carry.

Donors make this possible. Every log the coyotes climb, every hidden meal they discover, and every instinct they practice is supported by the people who give behind the scenes.

Your contributions help these animals leave stronger, smarter, and ready for the wild world ahead.



GROWING WILD CURIOSITY

At LTWC, we believe that real change begins with connection. That's why our education work reaches into every corner of the community, meeting people where they are and inviting them to discover the wildlife that shares this place with us.

Throughout the year, our team brings wildlife education to groups all across the community. At Wild Wonders, kids crowd around specimens with wide eyes and endless questions. Our work with Girl Scout troops gives youth a chance to explore wildlife up close and build confidence in the outdoors. Little Explorers camps spark that first connection with nature for many children, and even our visits to the juvenile detention center create meaningful moments where curiosity opens the door to new perspectives about the world around them.

Some of our most meaningful moments happen at community events like Meyer's Market. Each week, we meet families, locals, and visitors who want to learn just a little more about the animals around them. One boy, about twelve years old, visited our table during the first week of the market. He asked question after question, soaking in every detail. Then he came back the next week. And the next. Soon, he and his family joined our Wild Wonders program, where his curiosity only grew. By the end of the summer, he told us he wanted to become a wildlife biologist because of what he learned at LTWC.

Experiences like these show why education matters. When people get the chance to connect with wildlife, they begin to care. And when they care, they join in the effort to protect the animals and wild places that make Tahoe so special.



WESTERN GRAY SQUIRREL # 25-729/30



This season, LTWC cared for a number of orphaned Western Gray Squirrels, including two siblings and a lone juvenile that needed extra attention. The siblings were tiny, one barely moving while the other chased people, and all required formula and specialized diets. With round-the-clock feeding and hands-on care, these baby squirrels learned the skills every adult needs, climbing, foraging, and exploring safely. Once strong and confident, they were released back into the wild!

AMERICAN KESTRAL # 25-878



This juvenile American Kestrel was found grounded in Minden with wing trauma and minor injuries to its beak and talons. At intake, it was quiet but alert, and staff quickly began fluids, medications, and supportive care. In the days since, the kestrel has been eating well, perching confidently, and regaining strength. Each day brings more energy and coordination as it works toward a full recovery and eventual return to the wild.

MULE DEER # 25-509



This patient arrived after surviving a dog attack. The young fawn was underweight, dehydrated, and had a cut under her eye, abrasions on her legs, and a deep puncture wound on her rear.

With round-the-clock care, fluids, pain management, and bottle feedings, she steadily regained strength and even began nibbling on alfalfa. After a successful recovery, she was released back into the wild, healthy and ready to continue growing strong in her natural habitat.

NORTHERN PYGMY OWL # 25-909



This adult Northern Pygmy Owl was found trapped inside a glass patio enclosure, repeatedly trying to escape but unable to see the clear barriers. After several hours, the owl became disoriented and mildly dehydrated. At LTWC, staff cleaned debris from the cage, provided fluids, and completed a flight test that showed strong, controlled flight. The owl was released back into the wild later that evening, a successful reminder of how invisible glass can impact wildlife!

MOST UNIQUE PATIENT OF 2025

WHITE-FACED IBIS #25 - 782

Latin Name: *Plegadis chihi*

SIZE

Length: 22–26 in
from bill to tail
Wingspan: 35–41 in
Weight: 14–19 oz

HABITAT:

Marshes, wetlands, flooded fields, and shallow lakes across much of North and Central America

WHY DID HE END UP IN OUR CARE?

LTWC recently admitted a White-faced Ibis, a species we had not seen at the center since 2016! The ibis was found alone in a puddle after remaining in the same spot for several days. Thanks to quick action by rescuers, it made it safely to our care.

With fluids, rest, and supportive care, the ibis regained strength, appetite, and mobility. Staff believe it may have become disoriented during migration based on its non-breeding plumage. After recovery, this rare visitor was successfully released back to the wild!!



FUN FACTS

- Their long, curved beak works like a tiny vacuum for mud, letting them feel prey before seeing it.
- During breeding season, their face turns bright white, making them easy to spot in a flock.
- They are strong fliers and can cover hundreds of miles during migration.
- White-faced Ibises are social and almost always forage, nest, and travel in groups.

WHY THIS ANIMAL MATTERS

White-faced Ibises are more than striking wetland birds. As they forage in shallow water, they help control insects and recycle nutrients, keeping ecosystems balanced. Their presence signals a healthy habitat that supports fish, amphibians, and many other species. Protecting ibises means protecting the wetlands they rely on.



PROTECT THE LOCALS

The “Protect the Locals” collection was created with our mission at heart. Each design features artwork by Debbie Griest, inspired by animals that have been patients at Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care. Our apparel celebrates local wildlife and honors the animals we care for.

Every purchase provides real support for our patients. Shirts, hats, and totes help fund food, medical care, and enrichment for injured and orphaned animals. When you wear or use these items, you are showing your commitment to protecting the animals that share our home.



Because of your support, our mission is possible. Every animal rescued, every patient cared for, and every release back into the wild happens because this community chooses to protect local wildlife.

Your generosity reaches far beyond a single season. By supporting rehabilitation, education, and conservation, you are helping ensure that future generations will continue to share this place with the wildlife that call it home.

Thank you for standing with us, believing in our work, and making a lasting difference for Tahoe's wildlife today and for years to come.

**With Gratitude,
Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care
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