



Wildlife Rehabilitation Internship Program

Overview

The Inland Valley Wildlife Project (IVWP) offers a hands-on internship program designed to train the next generation of wildlife rehabilitators, conservationists, and animal care professionals. Interns support the rescue, care, and release of wildlife while learning directly from permitted wildlife rehabilitators in compliance with California Department of Fish & Wildlife (CDFW) and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) guidelines.

Internship Structure

- **Duration:** 8–13 weeks (seasonal: spring and summer cohorts)
- **Hours:** 8–20 per week, including weekends and early mornings
- **Location:** Temecula Valley, with fieldwork and potential release-site visits across Southwest Riverside County.
- **Minimum Hours for Certificate of Completion:** 100 hours

Focus Species

Interns gain experience with small mammals and songbirds common to Southwest Riverside County, including:

- **Birds:** House Finches, Goldfinches, Northern Mockingbirds, California Scrub-Jays, Mourning Doves, Pigeons, Sparrows, California Towhees
- **Mammals:** Opossums, squirrels, and cottontails

Core Training Areas

1. **Daily Husbandry** — cleaning enclosures, sanitation, preparing diets, monitoring health
2. **Feeding & Nutrition** — formula preparation and species-specific diets (Fox Valley, Exact Avian, fresh greens, seeds, insects)
3. **Intake & Triage** — assisting with patient admission, weighing, recordkeeping, photo documentation
4. **Medical Support (Observation & Assistance)** — basic wound management, medication administration under supervision, fluid support, parasite treatments
5. **Rehabilitation Protocols** — biosecurity, quarantine management, enrichment, and pre-release conditioning
6. **Public Interaction** — answering rescue calls, assisting with education materials, communicating proper wildlife handling to the public

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the internship, interns will be able to:

- Perform species-appropriate husbandry for common songbirds, small mammals, and doves/pigeons
- Conduct basic intake triage (history, visual exam, weight, hydration assessment) and complete intake records
- Prepare and deliver diets/formula safely (e.g., gavage for neonates only under supervision)
- Implement biosecurity, quarantine, and sanitation protocols to minimize disease transmission
- Recognize pain, stress, and abnormal behavior; escalate concerns promptly
- Assist with enrichment, conditioning, and pre-release criteria; document progress toward release
- Communicate professionally with the public, rescuers, and agency partners

Requirements

- Must be 18 years or older
- Current college students or recent college grads pursuing a degree in biology, wildlife, vet tech, environmental science, or related fields
- Current tetanus vaccination (proof required)
- Able to lift 40 pounds, work outdoors, and handle demanding physical tasks
- Willingness to perform essential support work (laundry, dishes, enclosure sanitation)
- Commitment to avoiding imprinting and habituation — no socializing with wildlife patients

Rotations

- **Avian Nursery:** neonate/juvenile passerines; formula prep; temperature/humidity management
- **Small Mammals:** opossums, squirrels, cottontails (husbandry and feeding within scope)
- **Triage/Intake Desk:** phone triage, admit workflow, data entry, supply stocking
- **Education/Outreach:** booth support, social posts (rehab-appropriate messaging), facility tours (if offered)

Sample Weekly Schedule (12 hrs)

- Tues 7:00 –11:00: Avian nursery husbandry, feedings, weight logs
- Thur 8:00 –12:00: Small mammal rotation, enclosure resets, enrichment
- Sat 1:00 – 5:00: Intake desk support, laundry/sanitation, treatment observation, release prep, community outreach events

Training & Supervision

- **Onboarding (Week 1):** orientation, safety, zoonoses, PPE, intake protocols, bite/scratch reporting, California Minimum Standards overview, permit boundaries, animal welfare ethics
- **Skills Modules & Rotations/Skills Practice(Weeks 2–7):**
 - Sanitation & quarantine
 - Diets & feeding techniques (songbirds/small mammals/doves)
 - Handling & restraint, stress minimization
 - Recordkeeping & digital systems
 - Triage & stabilization basics (observe only for procedures beyond intern scope)
 - Enrichment, conditioning, and release readiness
- **(Optional) Additional Skills Practice (Weeks 8-11):** Practice learned skills
- **Final Week:** Skills and knowledge evaluations with sign-off checklists

Evaluation & Completion

Interns receive a program certificate of completion and verified service hours at the successful conclusion of the program. High-performing interns may be invited to return as advanced volunteers or satellite rehabilitators.

Application

Interested applicants should apply online and submit:

- Online application, resume and statement of interest
- Two references (academic or professional)
- Availability for the upcoming season

Applications are reviewed on a rolling basis. Selected interns will complete an interview and facility orientation before beginning.