

About the Wildlife Center

The Wildlife Center is a nonprofit corporation dedicated to the rehabilitation of California wildlife since 1967. It was initially permitted for Wildlife rehabilitation by the Department of Fish and Game (DFG) in 1987 and maintained active wildlife rehabilitation permits through 2000. The Wildlife Center was permitted to rehabilitate all native California wildlife species.

Dr. O'Leary first volunteered for the Wildlife Center in 1992 and took over the care and custody of the birds. These birds were used as foster parents for orphaned baby birds and educational animals for school group programs. In 2000 the wildlife rehabilitation program was temporarily halted. At the same time DFG Region 5 was undergoing a reorganization of their Wildlife Rehabilitation Program. During DFG's reorganization they had an unofficial Amnesty Program during which time their Wildlife Rehabilitation Regulations were not being enforced. It was during this time that Dr. O'Leary contacted the DFG, San Diego Regional office and inquired about permits needed to continue to care for the Wildlife Center's permanently disabled birds. The Wildlife Center was never informed that the Amnesty program ended in November 2001 and they would need to get a Restricted Species Permit to continue to care for the Birds.

Cotie was taken to the veterinarian in September of 2004 for treatment of a seizure disorder, which set off a chain of events that resulted in the DFG impounding Cotie and the wild birds. The animals were taken during an armed raid by the DFG for which they did not have a warrant. Over half of the birds and Cotie died while in the custody of the DFG.

The animals were not receiving necessary care while in the DFG impound. Cotie had died and the birds were dying one after the next. In September 2005, the Court granted Dr. O'Leary temporary custody of the remaining birds. Dr. O'Leary, on behalf of the Wildlife Center, has continued her fight for the lives of these beautiful birds. The DFG, represented by the Attorney General's Office, and funded by tax dollars continues to fight to gain custody of the birds so they can be euthanized. It is the DFG's philosophy that if an animal has a disability and is not able to make it in the wild, it is better off dead.