



# California Wildlife Center

## Patient of the Week

### February 9th, 2024

## Responsible Pet Owners Month



Olivia's person walks her regularly at times when coyotes are active. Olivia wears a coyote-deterrent jacket to provide an extra layer of protection.

Though it's chilly in Los Angeles this week, we can feel the early hints of Spring. CWC received our first early babies, a coyote pup and neonate squirrels, at the end of January. As these vulnerable young animals are born and begin to emerge from their nests and dens, it's a better time than ever to do what we can to keep them safe. We're joining many of our veterinary and conservation colleagues in celebrating Responsible Pet Owners Month throughout the month of February with a wildlife-focused twist.

CWC receives hundreds of cat-caught, dog-caught, displaced, and harassed wild animals yearly. We also field countless calls about skunked dogs, cat owners concerned about coyotes, and other interactions between domestic animals and their wild neighbors. As hard as these stories can be to witness and hear, as a community we have the power to create a happier, healthier future for all the animals we love. You can take action this month and every day by thinking about...

### Trail Safety:

SoCal residents love to hike, and so do our pets. But domestic dogs and cats are predators who make an impact even if they have no physical contact with a wild animal. Some trails may be closed to domestic animals in order to prevent their sight, smell and sounds from driving wild animals out of limited habitat in threatened areas. Keeping them on leash and on approved trails prevents them from startling other animals away from their food, shelter and safe spaces. It also reduces the risk of harm to your pet from rattlesnakes, ticks, foxtails, thorns, wild predators and much more.

### Home Safety:

Outdoor pets are a touchy subject, but their reach is undeniable. It's estimated that free ranging cats kill as many as 4 billion birds and 22.3 billion mammals annually across the contiguous United States. Our beloved cats are incredible, adaptable hunters, and they leave a deadly mark on wild animals. The risks go both ways; outdoor cats often live significantly shorter lives due to the challenges they face from disease, dangerous roadways, and conflicts with wild predators. Both cats and dogs benefit from supervision when outdoors, including a standard-



Beloved cats, Biscuits and Gravy, live full and enriched lives indoors thanks to toys, quality time with their person, and each other.

sized leash as needed. When unable to be fully supervised, domestic animals should be secured inside an enclosed dog run or "catio" for their safety and the safety of wildlife.



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Penny is always ready for her next outdoor adventure; on a 6 foot leash, of course.

Securing food sources:

Oftentimes, the safest place for wild animals is at a respectful distance from humans, and vice versa. In human-altered environments, though, the search for food may draw wild animals in closer to people than is safe for everyone involved. Securing food sources like trash, fallen fruit, and especially pet food is a critical first step to positive coexistence practices. By removing food, you help wildlife move on to safer foraging grounds. Pet owners can also rest easier knowing that removing unsecured food reduces the risk of diseases passing between domestic animals and wildlife, and lowers your chances of having a smelly interaction with a skunk on the porch!

This February, join us in celebrating Responsible Pet Owners Month by taking these steps at home and on the trail. You can also find us on Facebook and Instagram for shareable tips on coexisting with wildlife as a pet lover.