



California Wildlife Center

Patient of the Week

October 3, 2025

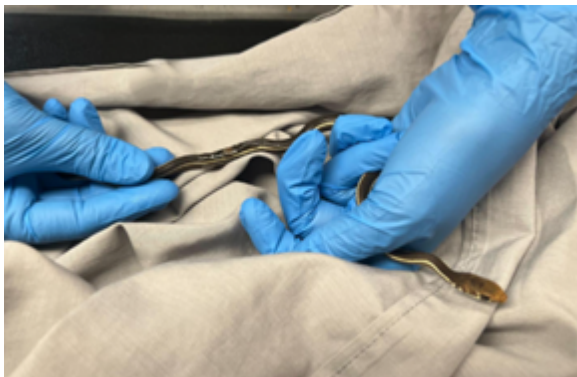
Racing to Release

The California Striped Racer, also called the California Whip Snake, is endemic to California and is found in a variety of habitats and locations throughout the state and in Mexico. The Striped Racer is a diurnal species (active during the day), and when spotted, might be quickly “racing” along the ground hunting for a variety of prey such as insects, birds and small mammals. This species is non-venomous though they may strike if they feel threatened.

Recently, a California Striped Racer was admitted after being caught and injured by a cat. When examined by our veterinarian, two staff members assisted, as the patient was highly active and prone to striking. Dr. Michaels found that there was a deep wound over the spine, exposing the muscle but luckily not reaching the bone. There was another wound, with necrotic tissue, observed on the snake’s left side, towards the tail. The reptile had begun to shed the night prior, though it had stopped at the bandage. Initially, treatment included daily cleaning of the wounds with betadine, partial soaking to aid in shed removal, and application of medical grade honey to the lacerations. The patient was also started on anti-inflammatories and broad-spectrum antibiotics to treat a serious bacterial infection in the wound near the tail.

The patient hasn’t been eating, so in addition to wound care, getting them to eat is a top priority. Once the patient is eating more regularly, they may need a more thorough wound debridement (removal of damaged tissue) under general anesthesia, given the large wound on their back.

In general, reptiles take longer to heal due to their slower metabolic rate, which is a result of being cold-blooded. Dr. Michaels anticipates it may take a month or two for this snake to make a full recovery. Staff are limiting handling to minimize the snake’s stress levels while still providing wound care and treatments every few days. While this California Striped Racer’s prognosis remains guarded, our team is working diligently to help this patient return to the wild.



California Striped Racer patient being examined.