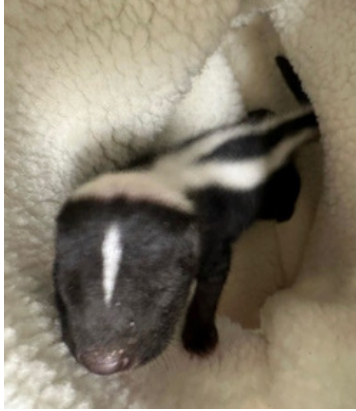




California Wildlife Center

Patient of the Week

April 17, 2026



Patient of the Week - The Sweet Smell of Survival

The first Striped Skunk kit of the season arrived at the end of March. He was found orphaned, with dry skin, severe dehydration, dirt crusting his body, and small puncture wounds around his left shoulder. Our Wildlife Technicians carefully cleaned his wounds, provided medications, and placed the small patient in an incubator for much-needed heat support. The kit was also introduced to a formula diet and is fed at intervals of 3-4 hours. Due to the patient's weight and stage of development, he is currently being cared for by one of our experienced homecare volunteers, who can provide the 24-hour support this vulnerable young animal requires.



The Striped Skunk is often first recognized for their smelly defense mechanism, but this species contributes a lot more to their environment than many realize! The skunk is a great garden companion, as they eat many pests like insects, small rodents, and other invertebrates. Additionally, when searching for insects they often dig and inadvertently aerate the soil! Skunks also forage berries and seeds which they disperse through their scat, thus increasing biodiversity.

People often ask whether our staff, interns, and volunteers ever get sprayed, the answer is yes! That said, our team is trained to recognize the warning signs. Before spraying, a skunk will typically stomp their feet, hiss, arch their back, and puff up their fur. Spraying is truly a last-resort defense. Once a skunk releases the powerful scent, it can take about 10 days for their glands to refill, leaving the animal especially vulnerable during that time.

The young kit's wounds have healed well, and he is taking formula appropriately. He will remain in homecare until he gains enough weight to move to less frequent feedings. Once he returns to CWC, he will be introduced to other skunks indoors and eventually transitioned to an outdoor enclosure. These spaces are designed specifically for the species and include hiding spots, digging areas, tire swings, exercise wheels, and plenty of sunshine. Our team also provides enrichment items, such as dirt and leaf-litter bins filled with insects, giving developing patients the opportunity to root and dig just as they would in the wild.

It is important to note that skunks can carry the rabies virus, and members of the public should never touch or interact with them. If you suspect a skunk is injured or orphaned, please call a professional to assess the next best steps.

We're hopeful that this first kit of the season will continue to thrive and ultimately be released back into the wild!