

SWCC

Stanislaus Wildlife Care Center Summer 2023

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Creature Feature Striped Skunk

By Donna Burt

Striped skunks (*Mephitis mephitis*) are famous for their typical defense behavior - spraying a sticky, foul-smelling fluid from their anal glands. But unless they have recently sprayed, they don't smell bad at all. In fact, they have very little odor.

We don't get many skunks, but we tend to be quite fond of them. The babies are adorable, and the adults are easy to handle as long as you pay close attention to their tail positions. This year we admitted five baby skunks. They are now ready for release.

Skunks are found all over North America. There are several subspecies with slightly different fur patterns. But all have black bodies with white stripes, fluffy tails, and well-developed scent glands.

Although classified as insectivores, they seem to be omnivores, eating corn, peas, cat food, eggs, grapes, lettuce, and freeze-dried insects. But the first thing they take from their food dishes are the mice.

They are not too particular about habitat, living in woods, fields, and the middle of the city. Even though they are quite common, they are seldom seen, being nocturnal, quiet, and secretive.

Male skunks sometimes have temporary harems of several females with which they mate. Once the females are pregnant, they go off on their own to raise the babies. The kits are independent when three months old.

Most predators leave skunks alone, but hawks and owls will eat them. They are most vulnerable to great-horned owls. Great-horned owls are big enough to easily take a skunk and hunt at night when the skunks are active.



Young Striped Skunk

In many ways, skunks are easy to handle. They seldom act fearful and are not aggressive. If you are careful, they tolerate a lot of handling.

We had an adult male skunk in the hospital for several months while he recovered from a fractured pelvis. He never sprayed even though he was moved to a different (clean) cage each day. When well, he rode in a carrier in a car to his home without spraying.

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The Mission of SWCC is to promote respect for wildlife & increase the public's awareness of the importance of preserving wildlife through the care of injured and orphaned California native wild animals and community education.

Killdeer And Wood Ducks

By Donna Burt

Killdeer are small shorebirds famous for laying nearly invisible eggs. Wood ducks live along densely forested streams famous for laying eggs in tree cavities. Despite all these differences, we usually put newly hatched killdeer and wood ducks together in the same incubator.

Killdeer (*Charadrius vociferous*) are robin-sized birds with long legs known for faking wing injury to lead predators away from its nest. They are found all over North America in grassy fields, sand bars, and along waterways. They eat a wide variety of insects and spiders.

Killdeer don't build nests. Instead, they lay their eggs on gravel or rocky areas. The eggs are gray and brown speckled making them very hard to see against gravel.

Wood ducks (*Aix sponsa*) breed along the west coast and in southern states where there are large trees near water. They eat insects, seeds, and nuts. Unlike mallards, pintails, and other more common ducks, wood ducks perch in trees. After their eggs hatch, the babies jump out, bounce on the ground, and follow mama to water, where they hide along the streamside in dense vegetation. Wood ducks seldom venture into large areas of open water.



Killdeer & Wood Ducks in Incubator

Newly hatched mallards, pintails, and other common ducks eat dry duck food, which makes them easy to feed. Not so, killdeer or wood duck babies. They eat small insects. And they require a much warmer incubator than mallards.

We feed newly hatched killdeer and wood ducks frozen blood worms. Although the tiny red worms aren't technically alive, the wood ducks and killdeer happily scarf them down. After a week or two, they can eat mealworms and Robin Mix (a combination of ground cat food, peanut butter, vitamins, and calcium.)

Once they are big enough, the wood ducks transition to regular duck diet and go into the pond. The killdeer continue to eat insects and Robin Mix and go into songbird aviaries.

The one thing we like about raising killdeer and wood ducks is that they feed themselves, unlike most small birds, which must be hand fed every thirty minutes from sunrise to sunset.



Adult Killdeer

Eagle Aviary Repairs

The walls of the eagle aviary are made of coated 1" x 1" hardware cloth. That is strong and durable but a bit hard on bird wings and feet if they hang on the wire. To prevent wing and foot damage, we line the inside of the hardware cloth with cat proof screening. We used shade cloth on the west side to prevent the public from looking in and window screening on the ends and east side to protect the birds.

The screening was ten years old, and the winter storms tore it apart.

We rented a scissor lift and replaced all the netting. We also did repairs on the sheltering boxes and the perches. Although the scissor lift costs a little over \$1,000 to rent for a week, it was well worth it.

The aviary is eighteen feet high. It might be possible to hang the netting using ladders, but it would take hundreds of trips up and down the ladder. A scissor lift is much easier and a lot safer.

We replaced the screening on the ends and east side with a 3/8" mesh product we have used on other aviaries, and put shade cloth on the west side. The eagle aviary is in great shape, and it even has a golden eagle in it.

We owe much thanks to Hector S. Vera and to Phil McKay for hanging the netting.



The eagle aviary before repairs. Although the basic structure is quite sound, the netting made it look as if it was about to fall down.

We knew the netting would need to be replaced soon, but the stormy winter made the repairs imperative.



Hector on the scissor lift putting up the shade cloth. This makes it hard for people driving by to see inside the aviary. It also makes it hard for the birds to be disturbed by passersby.



Above

Phil McKay installing the 3/8th inch netting. This material is thick and tough. It arrives all bunched up and must be stretched. That takes two people pulling grabbing hold of two sides, leaning back, and pulling against each other, working their way down the section, stretching it every few inches. Then doing it again in the other direction.

Right

The finished aviary. There is even a golden eagle standing on the carrier at the far end, although he is rather hard to see in this photograph.



One Last Shed

By Donna Burt

Our long-awaited carrier shed is finally completed. In the last few years, we have replaced several very old and dilapidated metal sheds with insulated buildings. Unlike the standard garden shed, these are more like real buildings. They have double-sided insulated walls and roofs and are on concrete slabs. They have a window and sturdy, locking door.

All panels and other parts arrive on a large pallet. We have to assemble the building. There is a thick and detailed instruction manual with lots of pictures and very few words. The instructions say that two people can assemble the shed in eight hours. Perhaps, after assembling a dozen or so, two people might get it done in eight hours. On the first try, eight days would be a better estimate.

This is our fifth shed. We use one building for general storage, one for laundry, one for tables, chairs, canopies, and other equipment used at the Baby Animal Shower, and one contains seven freezers and shelves for bulk food storage. Our newest shed contains pet carriers and wire cages.

The building and concrete pad cost around \$10,000, but these should last many years, and they are water-proof and rodent-proof.

I think this will be the last shed we will build for a while. Thank you to everyone who contributed to these buildings.



The Carrier Shed



Our Carriers - we have plenty for now.

New Dove Aviaries



Dove Aviary Location

Supplies We Need

Paper Towels
Scrub Brushes
Puppy Pads
13 gal plastic garbage bags
Dishwashing Gloves (S & M)
Visit our Amazon Wish List for other ideas.

Volunteers & Money

We once again received a \$14,000 grant from the Native California Wildlife Rehabilitation Voluntary Tax Contribution Grant Program. Anyone can contribute to this fund when submitting annual taxes. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife distributes the money to wildlife rehabilitation centers that have applied and met the requirements. This year we are using the money to purchase aviaries for doves.

This project will cost considerably more than \$14,000, but several donors have made up the difference. At this time, the slab is poured and water plumbed for the cages. We have ordered the aviaries. They should arrive soon.

There are two aviaries. One aviary is eight feet wide, twenty feet long, and eight feet high. The other is the same width and height but only sixteen feet long. These will be located some distance from our songbird aviary complex.

Doves carry a disease called trichomoniasis, which is seldom a problem for them but is quite dangerous to other small birds. Doves are currently housed in an aviary in the songbird complex. It is too small for the large number of doves we have. Moving them to their new location will give them better housing and free up an aviary for other birds.

2023 Baby Animal Shower

By *Cindy Manning*

The 2023 Baby Animal Shower was Saturday, April 15th, and it was a huge success. Six hundred people came to see our animal presentations, buy raffle tickets, and eat tri-tip, hot dogs, and ice cream sundaes.

Although we generally make \$8,000 to \$10,000 at this event, we took in around \$30,000.00 this year, thanks to one \$20,000.00 check. That was a wonderful surprise and has helped a lot with our expenses.

Lots of kids came to the event. They enjoyed dissecting owl pellets, rock painting, face painting, and other fun activities.

A big thank you to Collin Burt for providing the BBQ and cooking the tri-tip and hot dogs. Boy Scout Troop 27 from Hughson helped us with parking. Thank you, boys. You did a great job!

Also, thank you to the Coca-Cola distributor for donating sodas and water and to Jack Frost for donating ice.

Thank you to all our volunteers who gave up their Saturday to help us man the booths and care for our animals.



Animal Talks



Kids Crafts



Dr. Marks Talk on X-Rays



Guest Transport



Boy Scout Troop 27 Volunteers

Raffle & Auction Donors

Ace Hardware
Bethel Retirement Community
Blossom Hill CA Native Plants
Calif Almond Pollination
California Poultry Association
Candy Klachus
Carol Shipley
Chicken Ranch
Cindy Manning
Coco's Taqueira
Community Vet Clinic
Conlin's Supply
Crows Landing Vet
Daniel da Silva
Dr. Calvin Lee – Surgical Artistry
Dutch Brothers

Emily Blickenstaff
Empire Vet
Frantz Nursery
Funworks
Get Air Turlock
Gowan's Printing
Janice Lookabaugh
Karen Koenig (Sawdust by K)
Les & Linda Weidman
Love's Treasure Ministry
McHenry Bowl
Modesto Nuts
Monte Vista Small Animal Hospital
Nicole and Ronnie Leonard
Norma Nagel
Oakdale Feed & Seed

Pam Miller
Pioneer Landscaping
Pioneer Market
Pizza Plus
Raley's
Retired Superior Court Judge Loretta
Murphy Begen
Rodin Ranch
Save Mart
Sky Zone
Waterford Vet
Westurf Nursery
Windwalker Vineyard
Yosemite Lanes
Cheesecake Kitchen
Pizza Plus Riverbank

Striped Skunk - continued from page 1.

Skunks don't like to spray and will give ample warning before doing so. If they are wandering around with their tail down, they are happy and calm. If they put their tail up, curved back like a squirrel, they are alert and a little worried. If they face you, tail straight up, they see you as a threat. If they hop forward and slide back, they are making a serious threat. Best to very slowly back off. If they turn their butt to face you, beware. That skunk is armed and ready to fire. Freeze until he relaxes, then back off slowly.

As cute and wonderful as skunks are, they come with a warning. Skunks often have rabies. They can have asymptomatic rabies, which means they can have rabies without appearing sick. Even newborn skunks have tested positive for rabies. They contract it through the placenta. The good news is that skunks seldom bite.

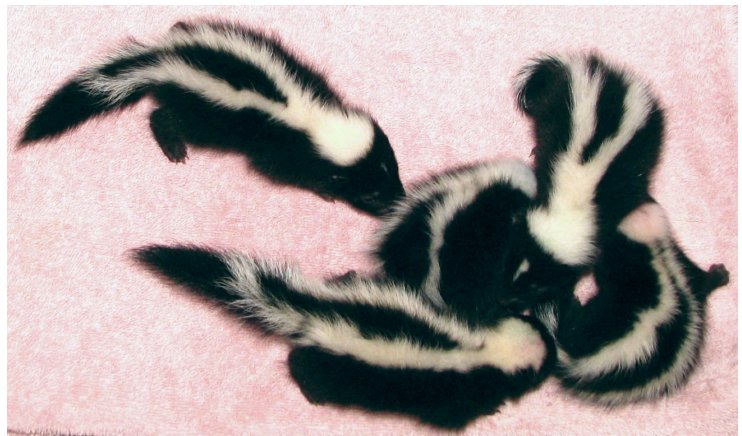
Rabies is transmitted via bites, so just being near a skunk isn't dangerous. But getting bit is.

Rabies can be prevented by vaccinations given shortly after a bite. But once symptoms appear, it is fatal. That is why vaccinating dogs, cats, and other animals is essential.

Our skunk handlers are vaccinated against rabies and use gloves and caution when handling skunks.

This year's skunks are grown up and ready to return to their home and live on their own.

They haven't sprayed even once.



Baby Striped Skunks



Ready for Release

Volunteer

SWCC Staff

Executive Director
Donna Burt

Animal Care Manager
Veronica Sandow

Animal Care Coordinators
Duane Dahl
Alyssa Washburn
Michelle Mason
Debbie Jones

Groundskeeper
Alex Mendoza

Seasonal Employees
Samantha DeKasha
Melanie Pierce
Anna Gebbing

Board of Directors

Janice Lookabaugh Chairperson
Linda Weidman Vice-Chair
Cindy Manning Treasurer
Dorothy Tuggle Secretary
Phil McKay Member
Jennifer Gowans Member
Dr. Doug Marks Veterinarian
Donna Burt Executive Director

We have a wonderful group of volunteers. Some have been with us for years, others are new, but they all share a common goal - to get the animals ready for release.

Employees do most of the evaluation and medical care, the volunteers do everything else. They clean cages, prepare food, and put it into the cages. They also assist with exams, moving animals between cages, and releasing animals.

Of course, volunteers do many more mundane things such as washing dishes, mopping the floor, laundry, gardening, and repairs. All these housekeeping activities are critical to maintaining a clean and healthy facility.

If you are interested in volunteering, please request an application via email. Because there is an extensive training period, volunteers must commit to at least four hours a week for a year.

Thank you all for your support. We can't do it without you.



Food Preparation

Moving??

If your address changes, please let us know. Send in the membership form or email:
SWCCenter@StanislausWildlife.org

Membership Form

Name _____ Date _____

Street _____ Phone () _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

E-mail Address _____

_____ No Receipt _____ Email Receipt _____ Mailed Receipt

_____ New Membership _____ Membership Renewal _____ General Donation _____ Restricted Donation

___\$20 Individual___\$30 Family ___\$50 Grantor ___\$100 Sustaining ___\$500 Contributor ___ \$1000 Donor Other \$ _____

All donations are tax deductible and gratefully accepted. Please consult your tax advisor.

Make checks payable to: SWCC, P.O. Box 298, Hughson, CA 95326 - THANK YOU!

Please email SWCCenter@StanislausWildlife.org if you would like to volunteer.

The SWCC does not sell or give addresses to anyone!

Summer 2023

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