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Injured Mountain Lion Rehabilitated and Released Back to the Wild

Two additional cubs continue recovery at San Diego Humane Society's Ramona Wildlife Center

RAMONA, CA — After nearly five months of rehabilitation at San Diego Humane Society's Ramona Wildlife Center, a young mountain lion injured in a vehicle strike has been successfully released back into the wild.

The male mountain lion, estimated to be around 10 months old, was released by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) into a remote location of the Santa Ana Mountains in Orange County on June 17, 2025.

He was transferred to San Diego Humane Society on January 15, 2025, after being hit by vehicle 4 days earlier and receiving emergency veterinary care at Serrano Animal and Bird Hospital in Orange County. He was suffering from a skull fracture, head and eye trauma, and lameness in his left hind leg. During the initial weeks, the organization's Project Wildlife team care focused on providing pain management, nutritional support and close observation. As he stabilized, the young mountain lion was moved to an outdoor enclosure, where he continued healing with minimal human contact — a critical part of preparing him for life back in the wild.



After 153 days of expert care, the mountain lion reached key milestones for release, including gaining strength, reaching a healthy weight of approximately 60 lbs., demonstrating natural survival behaviors, and avoiding people.

“This is the moment we all work toward — seeing a wild animal return to where they belong,” said Autumn Welch, Wildlife Operations Manager at San Diego Humane Society's Ramona Wildlife Center. “Our job is to provide medical care while preserving the animal's wild instincts, so they have the best possible chance at surviving on their own.”

San Diego Humane Society's Ramona Wildlife Center is part of its Project Wildlife program and specializes in the rehabilitation of native apex predators and birds of prey, including eagles, owls, hawks, coyotes, bobcats, bears and, under special case-by-case authorization, mountain lions. The nonprofit serves as the primary resource for wildlife rehabilitation in San Diego County.

The organization is also caring for two orphaned mountain lion cubs who arrived at the Ramona Wildlife Center on March 26, 2025. The UC Davis California Carnivores Program Team and CDFW safely trapped the cubs, who were found alone, and transferred them to San Diego Humane Society, where they are undergoing rehabilitation.



The goal is to raise the cubs in a setting that limits human interaction and allows them to build essential survival skills. Once they reach a healthy weight, exhibit appropriate wariness of people and demonstrate independent hunting behavior, they too will be considered for release into suitable habitat.

“We’re grateful for our partnership with CDFW and UC Davis, and for the opportunity to give these incredible animals a second chance at life in the wild,” Welch said.

San Diego Humane Society’s Project Wildlife program cares for more than 10,000 wild animals each year — from orphaned baby songbirds to apex predators — with the mission of rehabilitating and returning them to their natural habitats whenever possible.

Photos/b-roll of mountain lion’s return to the wild for media use can be downloaded here:

<https://spaces.hightail.com/space/nBSJhvux1U>

Please note individual files for photo credit.

SDHS=San Diego Humane Society

CDFW=California Department of Fish and Wildlife

Photos/b-roll of mountain lion’s rehabilitation for media use can be downloaded here:

<https://spaces.hightail.com/space/jpLqb40Vfh>

Photo/video credit: San Diego Humane Society

Photos/b-roll of the mountain lion cubs arrival in March here:

<https://spaces.hightail.com/space/mfkHMuMUBA>

Photo/video credit: San Diego Humane Society

About San Diego Humane Society

San Diego Humane Society’s scope of social responsibility goes beyond adopting animals. We offer programs that strengthen the human-animal bond, prevent cruelty and neglect, provide medical care, educate the community and serve as a safety net for all pet families. Serving San Diego County since 1880, San Diego Humane Society has campuses in El Cajon, Escondido, Oceanside, Ramona and San Diego. For more information, visit sdhumane.org.

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