



MEDIA RELEASE

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Horrific Skunk Attack Leaves Bad Taste

After an appalling attack on a young skunk, the Wildlife Rescue Association is calling on the public to learn to live in harmony with these naturally timid creatures.

The female skunk was brought to the WRA Care Centre with an arrow impaled through its abdomen. Despite the removal of the arrow and the best efforts of the rehab team, the skunk did not recover from its ordeal.

“It was pretty horrific and the skunk was in a great deal of pain,” says Lani Sheldon, Team Leader of Wildlife Rehabilitation at the WRA. “We see many animals in distress brought into the WRA, but it was particularly disturbing to see such a deliberate act of cruelty committed against an animal that poses so few threats to humans.”

With their legendary ability to cause a stink, skunks have few friends. But the truth is, humans cause skunks more problems than they cause us.

The WRA receives up to 100 skunks a year – almost all suffering the consequences of human behaviour. Over the last 18 months, WRA’s rehabilitators have treated skunks for a range of issues, including vehicle collisions, entanglements, entrapments, and cases of human abuse.

Last year, one skunk was admitted as the victim of a pellet gun attack. Dumpsters are also a problem and every year, the WRA gets called to help with skunks trapped in them. Their heads are just the right size to get stuck in dumpster drain pipes when looking for food scraps.

Currently, the WRA is caring for two skunks that had to be cut out of dumpsters in North Vancouver, and both are set to make a full recovery.

While we may fear their noxious sprays or worry about them making a home on our property, skunks are not a physical threat to pets or children, and are not aggressive, only spraying as a last resort says Sheldon. “For sure, skunks have an image problem, but the bum rap they get is unfair,” she says. “Skunks are actually pretty useful

creatures to have around. Their natural diet includes slugs, wasps, bees, crickets, grasshoppers, worms, grubs and larvae, so they are perfect natural pest controllers”.

A skunk family (a mother and six kits) set up home alongside the administration building of the WRA at Burnaby Lake this past summer. After being left undisturbed for several weeks, the skunks moved on without creating a scene or causing a stink.

“We didn’t even know they were there until a colleague working late saw them come out one night,” says Lani Sheldon. “We left them alone and they weren’t a problem at all. If we can just take a few appropriate measures we can live in harmony with skunks.”

Six steps for skunk harmony

- If you come across a skunk, leave the scene quietly and give it space to escape.
- Know the signs of an imminent skunking. Skunks only spray as a last line of defence. Before they spray they will usually hiss, stomp their paws and flick their tails in an upright position.
- Secure your garbage indoors until collection day.
- Feed your pet indoors or put the food away as soon as feeding has finished.
- At night, keep your cat indoors and your dog on a leash.
- Skunks typically build nests in April/May before the kits are born and build dens in late fall to prepare for cold weather. Block your porches, sheds, cellars, garages etc to discourage entry.

~End~

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WRA Wildlife Rescue Association of BC is a charitable society that has rehabilitated wildlife on the shore of Burnaby Lake since 1979. Each year, WRA receives around 3,000 injured, orphaned, and pollution-damaged animals, and WRA’s education and outreach program annually delivers over 100 invited presentations and displays throughout the Lower Mainland.

If you find a wild animal in distress, please call our Care Centre 604.526.7275 or visit us online at www.wildliferescue.ca to find other ways to help wildlife.