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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
DEC. 2, 2024**

Severely Injured Mountain Lion Returns to Wild

Emaciated female cougar with open wounds rehabilitated at San Diego Humane Society's Ramona Wildlife Center



RAMONA, CA — A young female mountain lion is back in the wild after spending nearly six months at San Diego Humane Society's Ramona Wildlife Center. The cougar was released by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) on Nov. 20, 2024, in San Bernardino County. Before release, she was outfitted with a satellite GPS collar for tracking to help ensure her future health and wellbeing.

CDFW first brought the mountain lion to San Diego Humane Society on May 30, 2024, severely emaciated, anemic and with soft tissue trauma. She had been found in Yucca Valley by a member of the public, and her open wounds were consistent with an animal attack. Due to her low body weight, she was presumably too weak to fully fend off her attackers.

Project Wildlife's veterinary team at San Diego Humane Society's Ramona Wildlife Center gave the cat pain medication and antibiotics, and treated her wounds. During a sedated exam on June 28, veterinarians determined her wounds were healing nicely and she was moved to an outside enclosure to continue her recovery.

While outside, Project Wildlife's care team monitored the mountain lion from a distance with trail cameras in a habitat that closely mimicked her life in the wild. To make a successful release possible, it is essential for staff to keep mountain lions wild and to avoid human contact.

Mountain lions are apex predators, so it is crucial for them to be fully recovered and able to survive and hunt on their own. "We did not know if this mountain lion was going to make it at first because she was so debilitated," said Autumn Nelson, Wildlife Operations Manager at San Diego Humane Society's Ramona Wildlife Center. "Remarkably, against all odds, she gained the necessary weight and became strong enough to return home, which is the goal for every patient who enters our care."

San Diego Humane Society's Project Wildlife program is the primary resource for wild animal rehabilitation and conservation education in San Diego County. Each year, the organization gives more than 10,000 injured, orphaned and sick wild animals a second chance. At the Ramona Campus, which they have been operating since 2020, San Diego Humane Society specializes in caring for native apex predators and birds of prey, including hawks, owls, eagles, coyotes, bears, bobcats and, under special case-by-case authorization, mountain lions.



Photos/b-roll of mountain lion's return to the wild for media use can be downloaded here:
<https://spaces.hightail.com/space/AtFtgTlwtv>

Photos/b-roll of mountain lion's treatment/recovery while at the Ramona Wildlife Center for media use can be downloaded here:
<https://spaces.hightail.com/space/jke6USa2ru>

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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