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Three Gopher Snakes Return to the Wild After Tangling with Garden Netting

San Diego Humane Society encourages wildlife-safe materials in yards and gardens

SAN DIEGO — After lengthy specialized rehabilitation, three gopher snakes treated at San Diego Humane Society's Project Wildlife program are back in their natural habitat. The snakes were rescued on June 30, 2025, after becoming severely entangled in garden netting at a home in Solana Beach.



When they arrived at our Bahde Wildlife Center, the netting was wrapped so tightly around their bodies that it caused broken scales, a punctured lung, and severe lacerations of the skin. Once in care, the snakes underwent multiple anesthetized wound repairs, performed by the Project Wildlife veterinary team, to address life-threatening injuries. They also underwent a series of bandage changes and were on many medications for pain management and antibiotics to prevent infection. Two of the snakes required surgeries to repair the wounds inflicted by the netting. The third was kept for observation and was able to be released three weeks after they were admitted.

The rehab staff provided the snakes with proper nutrition and husbandry, including carefully monitoring their humidity level to ensure that the snakes were shedding appropriately. The wildlife veterinary team monitored their shedding cycle closely to ensure they were healing properly, which is important after snakes undergo trauma and surgeries.

"These gopher snakes play an important role in our ecosystem by controlling rodent populations," said Alexis Wohl, DVM, Wildlife Veterinary Manager at San Diego Humane Society. "They're non-venomous and generally avoid people, but unfortunately, common garden materials like netting can be a serious hazard to them."

In just the past six months, San Diego Humane Society has treated 21 gopher snakes — many of them victims of garden netting. Other animals, such as songbirds and small mammals will also get stuck in the netting frequently.

To help protect local wildlife, Project Wildlife recommends:

- Avoid using garden netting when possible.
- If netting is used, keeping it taut and raised off the ground and check it frequently for entangled animals.
- Choosing wildlife-safe options like rigid netting with ¼-inch or smaller openings, or hardware cloth.

For more tips on how to coexist safely with local wildlife, visit sdhumane.org/coexist.

Photos/video of the snakes' care and return to the wild for media use can be downloaded here:

<https://spaces.hightail.com/space/mAIr4Di69W>

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, please visit sdhumane.org.