



Stinky's Release

One baby skunk had a rough introduction into the world. Only days old, he was caught in the backwash from a pool in Chandler where, luckily, the homeowner found him before he drowned. How he got there is still a mystery. There were no obvious signs of skunks in the immediate area. Fortunately for him, the homeowner had the presence of mind to call Southwest Wildlife for help.

Asked to be his surrogate parents until he was old enough to be introduced to his own kind, we had a job ahead of us. So small, with big beady black eyes, a white tuft of fur standing on end, resembling the wild hairdo of Albert Einstein, and a persistent attitude, were all traits that captured our hearts as he grew healthier with us. We named him Albert Einstink, a.k.a. Stinky. Even as his armor of odor matured and he discovered how to use it, we still felt a special bond with this creature. Soon however, he was healthy and large enough to be placed outdoors with other skunks, where he belonged.

Imagine how excited we were to be invited along on his release back to nature. The summer was over and skunks everywhere were separating from their mothers and dispersing to new territories. It was time for Stinky to discover life beyond the rehabilitation enclosure. At the end of a long, bumpy dirt road northeast of Globe, tucked in a small canyon once used for mining, was the sight selected for his release.

Tall cottonwoods, sycamores and alder trees draped over a natural pond. Canyon grape, Arizona rose and buttonbush carpeted the banks in a thick tangle of leaves and branches. With a nearby creek, this riparian area was "Skunk Hilton". Stinky now had the fortune to live in a beautiful area, secluded from people.

We unloaded Stinky from the car and set his crate near the pond. The door to his crate remained closed while we unloaded several other animals, leaving Stinky time to assess the new smells and sounds of the area. An hour later, we held our breath and opened the door to his crate. Confidently, he meandered out. He sniffed the grass, and then stopped to smell and then taste a flower. Later he strolled over to, and along the edge of the water. How exciting to be part of an animal's rehabilitation and be able to witness its return to the wild. This was our own "Born Free" story. We just hope he won't try swimming anytime soon.