

Stanislaus Flyer

Fall

Stanislaus Wildlife Care Center

2019

The Mission of SWCC is to promote respect for wildlife and increase the public's awareness of the importance of preserving wildlife through the care of injured and orphaned California native wild animals and community education.

Inside this issue...

Creature Feature	Pg 1
Baby Animal Shower	Pg 2
Raptor Aviaries	Pg 3

SWCC Staff

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Assistant Director	Donna Burt
Animal Care Manager	Veronica Sandow
Animal Care Coordinators	Duane Dahl CeCe Hurst Samantha DeKasha

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Cindy Manning	Director
Dorothy Tuggle	Secretary
Janice Lookabaugh	Treasurer
Dr. Doug Marks	Veterinarian

Creature Feature

Smart, Adaptable, Curious Crows

The SWCC cares for many crows each year. We also take crows on our classroom talks.

North America is home to the American crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*), but there are around forty different species of crow throughout other parts of the world. Crows like open areas with trees nearby. Cities and towns suit them just fine.

Crows eat almost anything, typically earthworms, insects, small animals, seeds, fruit, carrion, garbage, and chicks they rob from other bird's nests. Their bills are large, but not as powerful as they look. When eating carrion, they have to wait for other animals to penetrate the tough skin. To eat walnuts, they fly high into the sky and drop the walnut on roads or other hard surfaces, hoping to crack the shell.

Crows gather in large numbers to sleep in communal roosts, especially in the winter. Some of these roosts have been in the same general area for well over one hundred years and are home to hundreds of crows. The noise and mess near the roosts may cause conflicts with people living or working near them.

They live in large social groups where many individuals help to raise, protect, and feed young ones. They do not breed until they are between two and four years old.

Crows have excellent problem-solving skills. They make tools by shaping twigs and then sticking them into holes to extract larvae. They drop bits of pinecone or other things on animals passing by, including people. They can identify individual people, both those who feed them and those who bother them. A captive crow learned to use a cup to carry water to dry mash.



Young Crow.

Veronica Sandow

Continued on page 5

Beau 2001- 6/30/2019

Beau came to the center in 2001.

He was found by students and raised in a classroom. Baby crows are engaging creatures. I'm sure the students and teachers were captivated by his blue eyes and big mouth. However, his diet was deficient in calcium and protein, which lead to life-long bone and joint problems.

Baby birds will eat, and appear to enjoy, just about anything put into their mouths. Crow babies need lots of high protein, calcium-rich food. We feed them mice.

Beau was never able to fly, and never grew well-formed feathers, so we couldn't keep him in a big aviary. Instead, he lived in the lobby. To make up for his small cage, we gave him lots of attention, toys, and a view of the outside world.



Beau

Veronica Sandow

Beau seemed to enjoy solving puzzles. We put his food into containers that he had to open or manipulate. Crows also have great memories and strong opinions. Beau not only greeted, and announced, every person who walked in the door, he had his favorite people. He recognized the cars of people he liked and sounded off whenever they drove into the parking lot.

Beau lived 18 years, a lot longer than crows in the wild. The lobby seems empty without him.

I think Beau must have been a Walmart Greeter in a previous life because he was always happy to greet everyone who came to the center.

Janice Lookabaugh

Now that Beau is gone, walking into the center will never be the same. He always greeted me before I even got out of my truck because he recognized it as soon as I drove up. Beau made special whistles and sounds as I scratched his head.

I loved that bird and miss him greatly.

Linda Weidman

I'll miss how much Beau likes his head scratched!

Doug Marks

A beloved, wonderful crow.

His name was Beau. Whenever someone walked into the center's front door, they were greeted by a crow who said in crow talk, "Welcome!"

I taught him to say his name, and to the people he knew, he would say, "Beau!" He was loved by everyone, and we are all mourning his loss.

May you fly high Beau!

Nancy Haydock

Beau, the ambassador

The best thing about walking in the door at the center was getting a warm welcome from Beau. He was always cheerful and enthusiastic. He loved a little head rub and dissecting his mice the most.

Dorothy Tuggle

What is a Killdeer, and Does it Kill Deer?

By Janice Lookabaugh

This summer, I was walking through a mulch-covered area near our house when I saw a bird with a broken wing. It moved awkwardly on the ground and called out in a high-pitched wail. I tried to catch it so I could take it to the Stanislaus Wildlife Care Center, but to my surprise, it flew off! What was going on here?

What I had just experienced was a killdeer defending its nest.

Killdeer (*Charadrius vociferous*) are a kind of plover, which is a shorebird, but they are often found in meadows, farm fields, and lawns. They are one of the most successful shorebirds. They have even adapted to nesting close to people.

They are nine to eleven inches from beak to tail with two black chest bands, long legs, an orange rump, and dark tail feathers with white tips.

Nests are usually on the ground in an open location with good visibility, but killdeer have been known to nest on gravel roofs. The nest is a shallow hole in soil or gravel and may be lined with bits of grass or twigs. The eggs, usually four or five, are tan and blotched with black or brown, which helps to camouflage them.



Killdeer

Janice Lookabaugh

The eggs blended in so well with the ground that I had a hard time finding them.

Both parents incubate and protect the eggs. The parents often fake a broken wing or leg to lure possible predators away from their eggs or young, which is what happened to me.

Whenever I got too close to the nest, one of the parents put on a show to draw me away. I even saw how well their act worked when our dogs were outside. The dogs followed the strange-acting bird until it flew away. They never did find the nest.

Killdeer eat a variety of insects including beetles, caterpillars, grasshoppers, and fly larvae. They also eat spiders, earthworms, snails, and some seeds.

So, no, killdeer do not kill deer. They get their name from the calls they make, which sound like "kill deer."

Have you ever been deceived by this performance?



Killdeer Eggs

Janice Lookabaugh



Save Mart, O'Brien's, Food Maxx, and many other local retailers honor escript. Sign up at www.escript.com and register your card. The store will donate a portion of your purchase to us every time you shop.



Open an Amazon Smile account and designate the SWCC as your charity. It's the same as a regular Amazon account except they donate a percentage of each purchase to us.

You don't pay anything extra, but we get some, much-needed money.

Center News

If you love that politician, pull the chain,
Send a world of woe and trouble down the drain,
It's the road to satisfaction
It's a natural reaction . . .

Or so wrote Tom Paxton.

Tales of Woe and Trouble

By Donna Burt

This isn't about politics, but it is about sending woe and trouble down the drain. If that drain leads to a municipal sewer system, the woe and trouble ends up at a water treatment plant and becomes someone else's trouble.

It is true that you can't throw anything away. You can only move it from one place to another. In our case, the woe and trouble went from the faucet into the septic system.

Our septic tank and leach lines were installed in 1992. The planning and building departments didn't expect the SWCC to succeed and grow as we have. So, my request for a rather large and extensive septic system was denied, and we ended up with a smaller domestic system, which we outgrew a long time ago.

Initially, we had two leach lines. One is now completely obstructed with tree roots.

Another leach line was installed a few years ago, but the system is still not able to handle the amount of water we use in the spring and summer.

We added another leach line last month, which cost \$6,000. It was either that or let the septic tank overflow.

Coming at the end of the busy season, this put a severe drain on our bank account. So much so, that we had to tap into our emergency funds. We are always strapped for money from late summer until early December when we send out a Christmas plea for money.

During the spring and summer, we increase employee hours to care for all the orphans. We have to buy lots of insects to feed the songbirds: 250,000 mealworms, 30,000 super worms, 20,000 waxworms, 20,000 crickets, not to mention gallons of formula, and other foods. We also have a \$400 to \$450 electrical bill each month because, in addition to incubators, we have eight freezers (for the mice, fish, and other foods) and four refrigerators. It can be hard to judge just how much money we can allocate to wages and still have enough left over for food and utilities.

Needless to say, a surprise \$6,000 bill was a financial setback.



Leach Line Repair.

Donna Burt

We still have to hire a tree trimming service because the digging did significant damage to the roots of two of our big sycamore trees. We don't want to lose those trees or have them blow over in the winter winds. They need to be topped and thinned if they are to survive.

We are working on ways to keep everything clean using less water, but that is a challenge.

Supplies We Need

- Paper Towels
- Toilet Paper (for bird nests)
- Kleenex (for bird nests)
- Puppy Pads
- 13 gal plastic garbage bags
- Dishwashing Gloves (S & M)

Volunteers & Money

New Master Plan

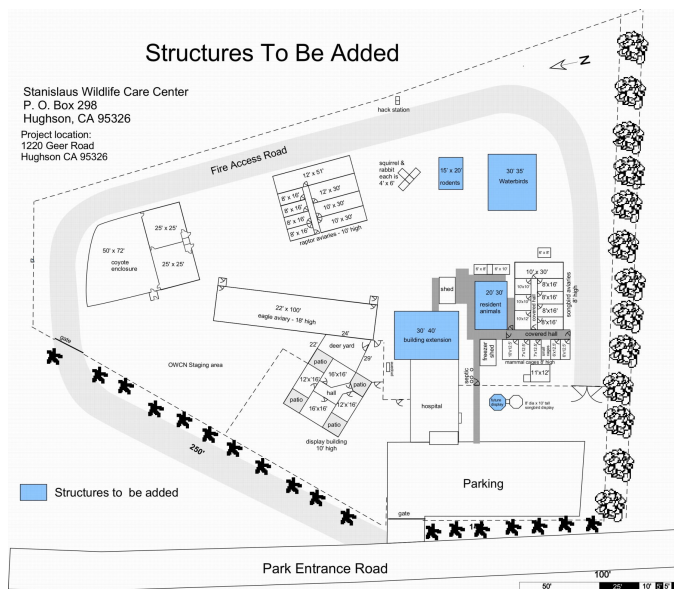
By Donna Burt

The county has approved changes to our master plan. This is a crucial first step in our plan to enlarge and renovate our hospital.

The SWCC land is owned by the State of California and managed by Stanislaus County, so everything we build requires county approval and must be on our master plan. We changed the plan to include improved and enlarged water bird facilities, larger squirrel and rabbit pre-release caging, and doubling the size of our hospital building.

The building expansion will let us put our office, breakroom, laundry, and duck brooders inside, as well as making room for a larger kitchen, second restroom, and two more animal rooms. The plans include a second septic system, this one designed to meet our needs well into the future.

The first goal is to get money for the building extension. So far, cost estimates on the hospital improvements are just a guess, but \$500,000 is a reasonable first guess. Once the plans are finalized, we can get more accurate cost estimates. Fundraising should begin early next year.



Taking Over

By Cindy Manning

Before I retired from my career in information technology, I had volunteered at the center for seventeen years.

For the last several years, I fed and cared for baby birds and released animals when they were ready. I also did other things for the center, such as maintaining the membership database, editing the newsletter, and chairing the events committee. Previously, I had worked with raptors (hawks & owls), so I am familiar with them. But, I never worked with mammals at the center because I did not have a pre-exposure rabies vaccination.

After I started working as the director, I found that, even though I had volunteered for so many years, there was still so much I didn't know. It didn't help that I started at the beginning of May, which is when our busy season really ramps up.

The employees were very patient with me and taught me many aspects of the center that I didn't know. I'm still learning and will continue to learn.

Summer was hectic this year. Even though we had lots of volunteers, including four summer interns, there was still so much to do that I helped clean and feed the animals as often as my director's duties let me. I came home exhausted on a great many days.

Donna was helpful and patient with me. She did most of the facility upkeep such as mowing and landscaping. She still manages the education and grant programs.

By the time you receive this newsletter, the busy season will be over, and I should have time to breathe and catch up on my managerial duties. I have to figure out where we can save money in our day-to-day expenses. I also need to work on new ideas for fundraising. I would like to work on improving and documenting our protocols for different animals.

Over the last ten or so years, the center has improved so much under Donna's leadership. I want to continue those improvements in future years.

Thank you so much for your support, and please continue to support us in the future.

Smart, Adaptable, Curious Crows from page 1

The oldest recorded wild American Crow was at least sixteen years and four months, and a captive crow in New York lived to be fifty-nine.

Crows don't usually visit feeders, but unsalted peanuts in the shell will attract them. I enjoy watching them get as many peanuts in their mouth as they can before flying off.

Summertime



Mockingbird Eating Mealworms

Veronica Sandow

By *Veronica Sandow*

Not many people can call cage cleaning in triple-digit heat, or feeding two hundred baby birds every thirty minutes, their idea of fun. Our volunteers and interns dedicated their summers to doing just that. And many dedicate their winters to the same, minus the baby birds and excessive heat.

Volunteers and interns made all the difference in this busy season, as they do every spring and summer. When handed another nest of four or five baby songbirds, some volunteers even said, "thank you." Those were truly touching moments. With one-hundred fifty-nine baby birds squawking to be fed every thirty minutes, welcoming more takes real dedication.

This season also brought in another batch of non-releasable animals. These are all wild animals with injuries so significant that they would never survive in the wild but who have the temperament to be in a zoo or education program.

Many of our animals need surgery or specialized veterinary care. We wouldn't be able to do that without our team at the Monte Vista Small Animal Hospital and our veterinarians, Dr. Marks and Dr. Davis.

Most recently, Dr. Davis amputated part of a young opossum's tail and spayed a squirrel named Freya. The opossum went to CuriOdyssey in San Mateo, and the squirrel is staying with us.

Of course, we cared for hundreds of healthy but orphaned birds and mammals, who were released to live free.

There were also many hawks, crows, and doves with gunshot wounds; lots of birds with head trauma from hitting cars or windows; many punctured crops on doves and other small birds that had been mauled by cats. Our team worked diligently to put these animals back together and get them returned to the wild.

We cannot do this work without our volunteers, staff, vet team, donors, and money.

Our Newest Addition



Freya

Donna Burt

By *Donna Burt*

Freya and her siblings had just opened their eyes when they wandered outside their burrow. Kids threw rocks at them, killing all but two. The male was unharmed and was released. Freya was hit in the head. She has balance problems and is blind in one eye. Freya is the newest addition to our California ground squirrel colony. She joins Slomo, who has multiple congenital issues, and Scrunchie, who has minor neurological problems.

Book Review

by Cindy Manning

I know Sal Salerno from attending Audubon Society bird-watching trips. I also subscribe to the Audubon/Sierra Club publication, The Valley Habitat, so I have read most of the articles that Sal has written over the years. Even though I have read most of these articles, I was surprised how much I enjoyed reading them in book form.

Most of the chapters, especially at the beginning of the book, are short, which was the perfect length for me because I didn't have much time to read. I had forgotten how good a writer Sal is. He brings you into the story effortlessly.

Each chapter is about a different aspect of birding or about different birds. 'Consider the Sparrows of the Field' is all about small sparrow-like birds. 'The Stars of our Valley' features the yellow-billed magpie. And 'Our American Jazz Singer' is all about the northern mockingbird. The chapters titled; 'What is a field mark,' 'The Artful Skill of Listening,' and 'It's Not Like the One in the Book!', are all about birders and birding.

There are helpful lessons for beginning and intermediate birders in several chapters. The SWCC is even mentioned in one of the chapters.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book, and I recommend it.

Of Birds, Birders, and Birding is available at Yesterday's Books in Modesto, the Great Valley Museum's Nature Shop, or contact Sal at: bees2@sbcglobal.net.



Moving??

If your address changes, please let us know. Send in the membership form or email: SWCCenter@StanislausWildlife.org

Membership Form

Name _____ Date _____

Street _____ Phone() _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

E-mail Address _____

New Membership Membership Renewal General Donation Restricted Donation

\$20 Individual \$30 Family \$50 Grantor \$100 Sustaining \$500 Contributor \$1000 Donor Other \$ _____

If you do not need a receipt, please check here . You'll save the SWCC the price of a stamp. Thank you!

All donations are tax deductible and gratefully accepted. Please consult your tax advisor.

Make checks payable to: SWCC, P.O. Box 298, Hughson, CA 95326 - THANK YOU!

Please email SWCCenter@StanislausWildlife.org if you would like to volunteer.

The SWCC does not sell or give addresses to anyone!

Fall 2019

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Golden Eagle

Veronica Sandow

On September 11, 2019, we received a four-year-old female golden eagle that had fallen from a two-story building. Eagles don't fall from buildings. They soar high in the sky.

When she was admitted, she was too weak to stand or even stay awake. As I write this, she is doing better. She is still too weak to feed herself, but at least she is strong enough to stand, which gives us hope that she will survive.

Her blood test was positive for West Nile Virus. We hope she recovers completely, but West Nile may cause permanent brain damage.

Watch our Facebook page for updates.