

# Stanislaus Flyer

Winter

Stanislaus Wildlife Care Center

2020

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.

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## SWCC Staff

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

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## Creature Feature

### Douglas Squirrel

Aka - chickaree or pine squirrel

By Nancy Haydock

Douglas squirrels (*Tamiasciurus douglasi*) live in the coniferous forests along the Pacific Coast from California to British Columbia. They don't come down to the valley floor, so we seldom admit any. However, we did receive a baby Douglas squirrel this fall. By the time he was old enough to be released, snow had already fallen at his release site. Without parents, a social group, or food cache to see him through the winter, he had little chance of survival. We decided to keep him until spring. John Muir described the Douglas squirrel as "By far the most interesting and influential of the California Sciuridae."



This lively, noisy squirrel weighs between 150 to 300 grams. In the summer, they are grayish or almost greenish on their backs and pale orange on the chest and belly. In the winter, their coat is browner, their underside is grayer. They have white eye-rings and tall ear tufts.

Douglas squirrels always have something to say, and ours is no exception. She chips, burrs, and makes loud *bauf bauf bauf* calls. She also squeaks, squeals, and growls. The native Americans of King's River described the Douglas squirrel's alarm call as "pillillooeet."

During the day, Douglas squirrels feed on the seeds of Douglas Fir, Sitka Spruce, and pines, berries, acorns, mushrooms, twigs, sap, leaves, and buds. At night, they sleep in a hollow tree or make a stick nest.

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# Golden Eagle



By Veronica Sandow

I wish I had a dollar for every interrupted lunch. The message I got was simple.

"Help! We don't know what's in the box, but it's big."

The person who found the bird thought it might be a condor, but they don't live anywhere near here.

I opened the box and found a large, massively uncoordinated, golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) tumbling around. By her size, she had to be a female. Males are much smaller.

I stood her in our largest hospital cage, and she faceplanted as if drunk. Something was very wrong.

After she was safely ensconced in the hospital cage, I got ready for her initial exam. That is no small task when the patient has an 8-foot wingspan and talons that can go right through an arm. After gathering the necessary safety equipment and a couple of trusted and trained helpers, I brought her into the treatment room for a careful evaluation.

She was severely underweight and had obvious neurological problems but no fractures, open wounds, or head trauma. Our best guess was West Nile Virus or lead poisoning. The next step was a trip to the vet clinic.

There is no way to get a large carrier into the backseat of a Honda Civic without turning it so many directions that any animal inside would be terrified. So,

first the carrier went in the car, then one huge, reluctant, and uncooperative eagle. A larger carrier would have made the eagle wrangling easier, but it wouldn't fit.

She needed x-rays and blood tests to check for both lead poisoning and West Nile. We had to put her under anesthesia for that, which was risky in her weakened state.

The eagle took a long time to come out of anesthesia, so much so that it warranted 24-hour critical support care at home. That first night was quite dicey. The eagle was barely responsive for hours. After she woke up, she still couldn't stand. I wasn't sure what caused the neurological problems, but the weakness was probably from emaciation. I fed her mouse chunks, which I had to massage down her neck into her crop.

I checked her every few hours that night, each time expecting the worst. I was pleasantly surprised when morning came, and the eagle was standing upright looking alert

She stayed with me for almost three weeks of one-on-one care. Eagles get very skittish with lots of people around but do surprisingly well with one caretaker. Her steps of progress were slow but steady. She started out by staying upright for an hour at a time. Her stamina grew, and she was able to preen herself.

It took two weeks of mild force-feeding before she understood that what I put in her mouth was food.



Once that link was made, she eagerly took mice from my hands. A little too vigorously, so I wisely switched to tongs.

By this time, most of the eagle's bloodwork results had come back normal. But we still didn't have the results of the West Nile test.

Soon she was ready to go in a small aviary for a few hours a day. She couldn't fly, perch, or eat on her own, but sunlight and fresh air do wonders for a wild animal's health. Just a few days after the initial introduction to an aviary, the eagle was perching on a low perch.

Dr. Davis emailed me that our precious, giant eagle was positive for West Nile.

No one was really surprised by this. West Nile is a virus, so the only treatment is supportive care. It is spread only by mosquitos. We had already started to do what we could to limit the mosquitos at the center to protect our other animals. No additional isolation procedures were needed!

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Eagle photos by Veronica Sandow.

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### *Douglas Squirrel continued from page 1*



Douglas squirrel photos by Veronica Sandow.

Douglas squirrels are born with their eyes closed, no hair, and weighing around sixteen grams - about as much as a walnut. It takes two to three weeks before their bodies are covered with fur, and five weeks before their eyes open. They don't eat solid food until they are eight or nine weeks old.

These squirrels are great jumpers and have excellent hearing and sense of smell. We have our Douglas in a large enclosure where he zooms around at breakneck speed, leaping from perch to perch. He lets everyone know that they don't belong in his territory. It makes cleaning his nest box and replenishing his food an adventure.

The Douglas squirrel population is stable. They are listed as 'least concern' on U.S. federal lists.

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# Flying Squirrels



The southern flying squirrel lives east of the Rocky Mountains. The northern flying squirrel lives in Canada, the Rocky Mountains, the Appalachian Mountains, and the Cascade and Sierra Mountains. Northern Flying squirrels are twice as big as southern flying squirrels. Otherwise, they look very much alike.

Besides eating the typical squirrel diet of seeds, nuts, berries, and buds, flying squirrels eat insects, which they hunt at night.

Flying squirrels don't really fly, but they do take giant leaps and glide to their destination. When first admitted, the squirrels had small but obvious flaps of skin along their sides, and their tails were long and round. As the grew that flap of skin got bigger and bigger until it spread out several times wider than the squirrel's body. Having all the extra skin makes the squirrels feel much softer and more delicate than other squirrels. And their tails are flattened. The tail fur spread out to the sides. Instead of a bushy tail, theirs is flat and wide, perfect for providing lift.

While they were nursing, I could feed them during the day. But once they started eating on their own, their nocturnal lifestyle became obvious. They

By Donna Burt

A man walked into the center with three little creatures in his hand.

"A tree fell down near our campsite and broke apart. These opossums were inside," he said.

I couldn't believe my eyes. They were eyes closed, baby flying squirrels (*Glaucomys Sabrinus*). It is always exciting to get uncommon animals.

All three were warm, uninjured, and healthy. Fortunately, the people who found them didn't try to feed them. At 13 grams each, less than a walnut, feeding requires specialized equipment to make sure the squirrels don't aspirate the formula and die from pneumonia.

There are two species of flying squirrels in the US, the northern flying squirrel and the southern flying squirrel (*Glaucomys Volans*.) They are not often seen because they are nocturnal.







Flying Squirrel photos by Donna Burt.

wouldn't leave their nest during the day but were active all night. And the older they got, the more active they became, running around, squeaking and chattering at each other, running on the exercise wheel and in general making a racket. Even closing the door wasn't enough to let me sleep.

These babies didn't get old enough for release until after the first snowfall. Without family, social group, or seed cache, they can't be released until spring. They are in a large enclosure with lots of branches and perches to practice leaping and gliding. We find evidence of their nightly adventures around the cage. But during the day, they cuddle in a heap in their nesting box, along with whatever uneaten food they have stashed.

The northern flying squirrel is listed as endangered because of habitat loss. We want to make sure these squirrels have the best chance of a successful life after release.

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## ***Future Projects***

*By Donna Burt*

The SWCC is undertaking several improvements this year.

We are moving our duck brooders to a new location so the shed they were in can eventually be demolished. It is in very poor condition, but since we are still using it for storage, we don't want to demolish it just yet.

We are improving the irrigation systems for the aviaries and coyote enclosures, so we can keep grass growing all year long. That sounds simple. However, the sprinklers must be overhead. Putting sprinklers eight or ten feet above ground requires careful backflow protection as well as enough pressure to get the water from the edge of the aviary to the center. Being aviaries, the roofs are not strong enough to walk on, so all access must be by ladder. Another inconvenience.

We also hope to put sprinklers in our lawn. Dragging a hose around to water the lawn is time-consuming and leaves hoses that the public can trip over. However,

it is expensive, and there always seem to be more important things for money to buy.

But our biggest undertaking is funding an expansion and renovation to our hospital. The planned expansion will double the size of the existing building. There are many decisions to make about the floor plan and renovations.

We hope to increase the size of Ward 1, where we have our stainless-steel hospital cages adding a couple of much larger cages for eagles and great-blue herons. We want to increase the size of our kitchen, adding a side room for dishwashing. Since animals often get their food dishes rather dirty, it is best if they are not washed in the food preparation area. We will also enlarge our treatment room, add a room for animals needing quiet or special care, add a meeting room and an office. Currently, the meeting room and office are in a forty-five-year-old trailer with no heat or air conditioning. Last, we will add a second, and much needed bathroom.

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# Why I Volunteer

By Janice Lookabaugh

Is it all fun and games? Do I get to play and cuddle with cute animals all the time?

Actually, volunteering is a lot of work. We clean cages and wash lots of food dishes and bowls. All the animals need to be fed and given fresh water each day, and their cages need to be cleaned. There's also laundry to be done and the floors to be swept and mopped.

It can be scary work. Some of the birds have huge talons and look like they might attack you. I have been peed on by a squirrel, pooped on by several birds, and pecked at by other birds. It can be sad working here too. Sometimes badly injured animals are brought in and don't survive, in spite of the hard, dedicated work of the employees and volunteers.

So why do I do this? Because it is rewarding. I meet wonderful people who go out of their way to bring in injured animals. The employees are dedicated

and caring people. It's rewarding to see animals that come in badly injured and yet survive. Occasionally, I even get to hold an animal during a medical examination. Another joy is being able to release animals back into the wild to give them a second chance.

Some of the volunteers prefer to care for the hundreds of baby birds brought in during the spring and summer. While others purchase supplies or do repairs. There's something for everyone.

One of the volunteers, Maliah Faye, explained it brilliantly. "I volunteer with SWCC because you see the true beauty of animals and their capabilities. It brings me no greater joy to be able to assist these lovely creatures back into health. Every aspect of it is wonderful, even the dirty bits because you know you're making a difference in that animal's life."

If you're interested in volunteering, please go to our website and request an application by email.

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## How Can I Help?

By Donna Burt

That is a question we get asked a lot.

We obviously need volunteers to help care for the animals and money. But we also need gardeners.

We have two acres to tend. There are complex sprinkler systems that always seem to need adjusting. And there are flower beds that really, really need a green thumb or three. And hedges that need trimming. As the seasons change, the plants require different kinds of care. And there are unique challenges.

A great-horned owl, who was making overtures to one of our residents, kept dislodging the irrigation timer on top of the raptor complex. One of the coyotes discovered he could get his paw far enough through the fence to pull off the irrigation timer for that area.

Besides the front lawns, the enclosures need regular mowing, for which we have a quiet, battery mower. The 'back forty,' vacant land between large enclosures, also needs regular mowing during the rainy season. For that, we have a riding mower.

If you would like to donate a few hours every other week or so to gardening, please let us know. You will be much appreciated.

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Great Egret Exam

Donna Burt

### 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**

# Baby Animal Shower

By *Cindy Manning*

Our next Baby Animal Shower will be April 25, 2020.

In the last 2 years, attendance has been amazing. Eleven hundred people attended in 2018, and twelve hundred attended in 2019.

We are currently preparing and planning for the next Baby Animal Shower. Besides our animal presentations, we have a bar-b-que, kids' activities, and other events, including the chance to peek in on some baby animals as they are fed.

We even have a new tee shirt design.

Save the date, April 25, 2020, and come see us!

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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.**



## 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!

Winter 2020

Stanislaus Wildlife Care Center  
P.O. Box 298  
Hughson, CA  
95326 209-883-9414  
SWCCenter@stanislauswildlife.org  
www.stanislauswildlife.org

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