

Stanislaus Flyer

Fall

Stanislaus Wildlife Care Center

2021

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
A Passel of Opossums	Pg 2
Thank You Mike Stine	Pg 3
A Tale of Mice and Washing Machines	Pg 4
Lake Tahoe and the Caldor Fire	Pg 5
Welcome L. L. Scrub Jay	Pg 6

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Animal Care Manager	Veronica Sandow
Animal Care Coordinators	Duane Dahl Alyssa Washburn Michelle Mason

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Creature Feature

Gray Fox

By Janice Lookabaugh

Every year the SWCC admits a dozen or so gray foxes. Most are babies. Although we do our best to isolate the kits from diseases, we risk them contracting canine distemper as soon as we put them into outside cages. Some years, all goes well. But some years, we aren't so lucky.

Canine distemper is fatal to most dog-like mammals, including fox, raccoon, and coyote. We vaccinate the raccoons and coyotes, but we cannot use canine distemper vaccines on gray foxes because it kills them. Now, there is a new vaccine just for foxes. It isn't cheap or easy to get, but it does protect our foxes from distemper.

The gray fox is native to California and is widespread throughout North and Central America. Although gray foxes may look cat-like, they are in the same family as dogs and wolves (Canidae).

Their scientific name, *Urocyon cinereoargenteus*, roughly translates to ashen silver. This is a good description since gray foxes are salt and pepper gray in color with orange and white markings. The tail is bushy with a black tip and a black stripe on top. They are about 3 feet long (including the tail) and weigh between 6 and 10 pounds. All of the foxes have cat-like eyes with vertical slit pupils. Their sight, sense of smell, and hearing are extremely keen.

Gray foxes are omnivorous. They hunt between dusk and dawn, eating birds and rodents. They also eat grass and wild fruits. Ones who live by water catch fish.

Most live in forests but they are also found in the desert. They will live in ground burrows, hollow logs, tree trunks, and under rocks. They may also shelter among cacti.

Like house cats, and unlike other foxes, gray foxes have retractable claws.



Gray Fox

Donna Burt

continued on page 7

A Passel of Opossums

By Cindy Manning

This spring, we had a huge increase in the number of opossums coming in. In March and April, we admitted one hundred thirty opossums. In both 2019 and 2020, we only admitted around one hundred twenty opossums for the entire year.

Many of the opossums were little babies that had to be bottle-fed several times a day. One of our employees, Alyssa Washburn stepped up, taking several dozen baby opossums home for care.

When they were older and self-feeding, they were transferred back to the center. There were so many, we ran out of opossum cages. Alyssa figured out how to house so many babies. She stacked several small pet crates in the hospital ward. They looked like possum condos! There were about a dozen crates, each with small groups of baby opossums.

When the opossums grew up, we moved them to outside cages for a few weeks before being released.

Most of the opossums were released by another employee, Samantha Dekasha. She traveled as far north as Stockton and as far south as Merced releasing many, many opossums where they had been found. But the season wasn't over yet.

We received a few opossums in June. Then, in July, we received forty-three opossums. In September and October, we received thirty-three more opossums. Some 'late' babies came in September, including eleven siblings that



Opossums

Veronica Sandow

The year has not ended, and we have received two hundred seventy-three opossums so far. Although most of those were healthy babies, there were also many injured adults and babies that had been without care for so long they could not survive. This year's survival rate for opossums is 79%, which is quite good.

Why so many opossums? We have no idea, but with the perseverance, dedicated care, and ingenuity of our employees and volunteers, most were released back into the wild.



Opossums

Donna Burt



Open an Amazon Smile account and designate the SWCC as your charity. Every time you buy something, they send us a little money at no charge to you.

Thank You Mike Stine

By Les Weidman

Once again, SWCC would like to recognize Mike Stine, President of Waterford Farm Supply, for his wonderful donation of a new heavy-duty riding lawnmower. This will replace another mower that Mike donated more than 5 years ago. It finally gave up the ghost after countless hours of use!

With two acres of land, we have lots to mow. The riding mower makes this mowing quick and easy.

Although a large area near the duck pond is irrigated, most of the land around the aviaries and enclosures is not landscaped. In the summer, it is dry ground, but it grows a healthy crop of weeds all winter and spring. Without a riding mower, we just couldn't manage those areas. Even the gigantic eagle aviary needs mowing.

We also have several large sycamore trees in the front that drop an amazing amount of leaves, more than we could ever fit into our garbage bins. We dump those leaves in the "back 40" and mow over them, mulching them into the weeds.

The riding mower is a wonderful gift.
Thank you, Mike.



Cindy Manning on the New Mower

Donna Burt



A Tale of Mice and Washing Machines

The Machine

And the Mice

By Donna Burt

By Donna Burt

There just isn't any room inside the hospital building to put a washing machine. There is hardly enough room to house all the animals. Our washing machine is in a shed just outside the back door. It wasn't much of a shed to begin with, and now, many, many years later, it's falling apart.

This winter, we are determined to replace that shed with an insulated modular building. We have put up several of these buildings in the last few years. They are double-walled, insulated, steel construction. Put on a concrete slab, they are rain and mouse-proof.

The building we have in mind is large enough for two washing machines and clean laundry storage. Moving the clean laundry into this building will free up space for more cages inside the hospital building.

During the spring busy season, we often have eight or ten loads of laundry per day, mostly receiving blankets.

This summer, our washing machine was destroyed by mice, which we cannot keep out of the existing shed. We have a new washer. We want to keep it safe.

The building costs about \$7,000, and the concrete slab around \$2,000. Shelving and another washer will bring the total to roughly \$11,000.

Can you help fund the new laundry building? Please!

When our water-efficient washing machine stopped working, we called a repairman. After examining the washer, he determined that he couldn't repair it because the mice had chewed too many wires. This is not surprising. The washer was in a shed that is so old the walls are starting to crumble.

I wrote about the washer in the summer fundraising mailer. Lucinda Chipponeri offered to buy a commercial washer to replace the broken one. But since we can't provide a safe environment for such an expensive machine, we replaced the washer with a standard water-efficient household washer.

When the mice first destroyed the previous one, we acquired a very old hand-me-down washer that used gallons and gallons of water with each wash. Continuing to use that machine for any length of time would overwhelm our leach lines.

Ms. Chipponeri's generous donation not only helped with the endless stream of dirty towels and receiving blankets from animal cages, but it protected our septic system.

Hopefully, we will be able to fund our new laundry building soon, protecting the new washer and removing the last of the old rotting wooden structures.

Please help us



turn this



into this

Lake Tahoe and the Caldor Fire

By Donna Burt

On August 30, 2021, Denise Upton, Animal Care Director at Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care (LTWC), called asking for help. The Caldor fire was headed in their direction, and they were under mandatory evacuation orders. They reached out to several wildlife centers for help.

When fires and other disasters threaten nearby centers, we always let those centers, and the California Department of Fish & Wildlife, know we are willing to help. We serve as designated evacuation zones for Rosewolf Wildlife and Sierra Outdoor School.

With the approach of the Caldor fire, LTWC made plans for a possible evacuation, releasing or transferring all the animals they could. But when the call came, they only had a few hours to gather up the remaining animals and leave.

Fortunately, LTWC had recently received a grant to get a disaster preparedness kit, including a new trailer and carriers to haul animals in the event of a disaster. So, they had the equipment necessary to transport their animals.

They had planned to take their coyotes and raccoons to a center in Nevada. That state refused to allow those animals to come in, even for a few days, to save their lives. Nevada does not permit the rehabilitation of carnivores - coyote, fox, raccoon, bobcat, etc. The Tahoe people were forced to turn around and head west.

Morgan Amsden, Facilities Manager, and his son drove the animals to us. After being cooped up in cages and driven for hours in a trailer, the coyotes and raccoons were more than happy to get out and explore their temporary enclosures.



Dirty and frightened after their long journey, it takes the coyotes a few minutes to gather the courage to leave the carrier.

Veronica Sandow



Unloading a crate full of raccoons.

Veronica Sandow

There were seven coyotes, a pack of three and a pack of four. We have three interconnected coyote yards. To accommodate the Tahoe coyotes, we locked our coyotes out of one of the smaller enclosure and put the pack of four in there. The other three were put into cage 1. It is not ideal, being a bit small and concrete floored.

Raccoon cages 6 and 7 have a pass-through door, which had been open, letting the raccoons from both cages interact. All those raccoons were locked into cage 6. After a thorough cleaning, the Tahoe raccoons were placed in cage 7. Both their animals and ours were a bit crowded for the duration, but at least they were safe and alive.

About two weeks later, the fire danger had passed, and LTWC was again open for business. Fortunately, the fire didn't damage their facility.

Morgan Amsden and Kevin Willitts, DVM, helped catch the raccoons and coyotes for transport back to Tahoe.

We are happy to help other centers in need. This support isn't one way. Tahoe has taken several of our animals in the past when we didn't have the facilities they needed. Rosewolf takes our fawns.

No wildlife care center has facilities or expertise to care for every animal it receives, so we support each other when needed.

Veronica Sandow contributed to this article.

Welcome L. L. Scrub Jay

By Donna Burt

Last year we received a grant through the state of California voluntary tax contributions. We used that money to upgrade our facilities, including building another display aviary on the front lawn. We will apply for the same grant this year to replace our Formica counters with stainless steel.

The new aviary is finished. We attached it to the older smaller aviary, so they share a safety area. The safety area prevents escapes when we open the doors to enter the aviaries.

Our resident songbirds now live in the new, larger aviary.

Our newest resident is L. L. Scrub Jay, an albino scrub jay. He lives in the older, smaller aviary.

Normal scrub jays are blue and grey. This one is completely white and has pink skin and eyes - a true albino, not just a light color phase.

True albinos are not releasable because the complete lack of pigment makes the feathers weak and causes vision problems.

Over the years we have received several albino jays from the Modesto area. Most do not survive. We did have a white jay, named Snow, for many years. He died of old age quite a while back.

Stop by and visit L. L. He is quite friendly and will pose for photos.



L. L. Scrub Jay

Donna Burt



New and old Aviaries

Donna Burt

**DONATE YOUR CAR,
TRUCK OR BOAT**

*It's
Easy*

**Tax Receipt Given
Not running OK
FREE PICK UP
Call 877-411-3662**

Gray Fox continued from page 1



Gray Fox

Donna Burt

Gray foxes are very skillful at climbing trees. In our area, they are often arboreal, spending the day, and even denning, in trees. This helps them avoid predators.

The wildlife center sometimes gets calls about a fox stuck in a tree or on the roof of a building. But don't worry, the fox is only doing what foxes do. He got up there, and he can get down.

Gray foxes are believed to be monogamous; pairs remain together for life. They form family groups with their offspring from prior years. Their breeding season varies by location. In this area, they breed in early spring. We start receiving babies in May. Gestation is a little under 2 months, and they give birth to around 4 babies, called kits. The kits learn to hunt at about 3 months old and reach sexual maturity at 10 months.

Although you might never see a fox, you should be aware that these wonderful creatures live among us.

Moving??

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

Supplies We Need

Paper Towels
 Scrub Brushes
 Puppy Pads
 13 gal plastic garbage bags
 Dishwashing Gloves (S & M)
 Visit our Amazon Wish List for other ideas.

Volunteers & Money

Membership Form

Name _____ Date _____

Street _____ Phone() _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

E-mail Address _____

Receipt: _____ No receipt _____ E-mail receipt _____ Mailed receipt _____

___ New Membership ___ Membership Renewal ___ General Donation ___ Restricted Donation

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

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!

The SWCC does not sell or give addresses to anyone!

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

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A few of our gray foxes

Donna Burt