

SWCC

Stanislaus Wildlife Care Center Spring 2024

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Creature Feature Two Bats



Mexican Free-Tailed Bat

Donna Burt

By Janice Lookabough

The SWCC receives ten to fifteen bats each year. Even though that doesn't sound like a large number, bats require very specialized care, so specialized that only two people are qualified to care for bats.

Bats are amazing animals.

There are over 1,400 species. Over twenty species live in California. They're probably best known for their ability to echolocate. The most common species we receive are Hoary bats (*Lasiurus cinereus*) and Mexican free-tail bats (*Tadarida brasiliensis*).

With echolocation, "the bat's call is scattered and reflected by whatever's around it, and the animal detects and interprets the portion that rebounds." For a wonderful explanation of this and other animal senses, from which I got the above quote, I highly recommend the book *An Im-mense World* by Ed Yong.



Hoary Bat

Donna Burt

When hunting, bats chirp at frequencies too high for people to hear. These sounds bounce off objects. The bats have highly specialized ears to pick up the rebounding sounds. When not hunting, they often make sounds within human hearing.

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

Mexican Free-Tailed Bat



Mexican Free-Tailed Bat and a Mealworm

Donna Burt

At three to four inches long, the Mexican free-tailed bat is much smaller than the hoary bat. They weigh around 12 grams, or about as much as two quarters. For such a small bat, they have a wingspan as long as the much larger hoary bat. Their tail is almost half their length. They are uniformly dark gray. The females are heavier than the males.

Unlike hoary bats, Mexican free-tailed bats live in large colonies, mostly in caves, but also in buildings, under bridges, and in bat houses. Some caves have millions of bats. Mexican free-tailed bats don't hibernate. Most migrate to the southern parts of the US and Mexico, but some don't migrate at all.

They emerge from their roosting sites at sunset and eat mainly moths and mosquitoes but also flying ants, weevils, stink bugs, and ground beetles. They will land and forage on the ground.

Their ears and tails are designed for speed. The ears fold back, exposing little ridges that funnel air over their backs, reducing drag. The skin on their tail pulls up, so only the skinny tail drags behind them. That, and their long wings, make them one of the fastest flyers in the world. Their average flying speed is around sixty miles per hour. They have been clocked at one hundred miles per hour.

When they hone in on a moth, the skin around the tail spreads out to form a scoop so they capture prey like other bats.

They have only one pup each year, which is able to fly at 5 weeks.

The major predators of Mexican free-tailed bats are red-tailed hawks and other birds of prey, as well as cats and dogs. They once numbered in the millions, but their numbers have been dramatically reduced due to human disturbance and habitat destruction as well as pesticide poisoning. Wind turbines kill very large numbers of Mexican free-tailed bats, up to forty per cent of those migrating through areas with turbines.

Hoary Bat

At five to six inches long, the hoary bat is one of the largest bats in California. The wingspan is a little over a foot. They weigh around 30 grams, as much as five quarters. Their fur is dark brown with white tips, making them look frosted. They also have cream and golden patches around the face and on the wings. As in many bat species, females are heavier than males.

Hoary bats are solitary, hanging high in the foliage of trees, preferring maple, oak, ash, alder, hemlock, and redwoods. They blend well with the bark. They've also been seen in caves with other bats.

Hoary bats don't hibernate during the winter. Instead, they migrate. Some only go to Southern California others go as far as Central America. They return in spring and summer. They are uncommon but widespread in these areas.

Hoary bats emerge from their roosting sites late in the evening, about two to five hours after sunset, in search of food. They mostly eat moths but also true bugs, mosquitoes, dragonflies, and other insects. Their flight is slow and deliberate, usually less than twenty miles an hour. Like all bats, they catch prey by scooping it up in their tails and then bending their heads down to bite it.

They have one or two pups each year, which are able to fly at four or five weeks.

The major predators of hoary bats are jays, kestrels, hawks, owls, and snakes. Loss of habitat due to timber harvesting is their greatest risk. In suburban settings, jays are a major threat.

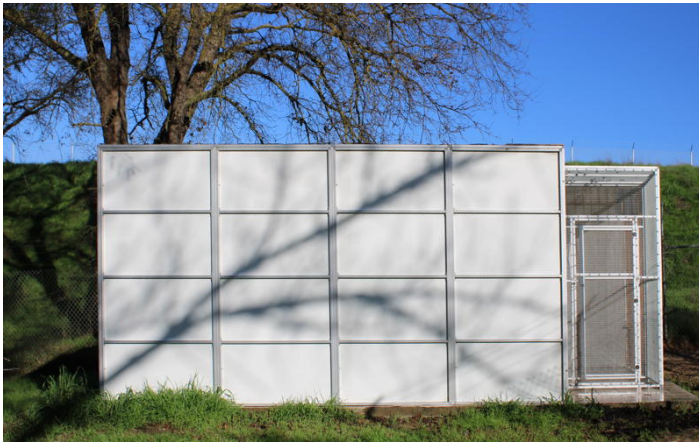


Hoary Bat.

Donna Burt

Many people are concerned about rabies when they see a bat. Although bats *can* carry the rabies virus, less than one percent of the free flying bat population has the disease. However, rabies makes the bats sick, and they can't fly. About one in ten grounded bats will test positive for rabies. It's not a good idea to handle them, as all bats have sharp teeth! But if they are injured or sick, please bring them to us so dogs, cats, or children don't play with them. As long as you don't touch the bat with bare hands, you are safe.

Dove Aviaries



Completed Aviary.

Donna Burt

By Donna Burt

Last year, we received a grant to build dove aviaries. This project has been a long time coming. First, we had to run water to the site and pour a concrete slab, then order and assemble the aviaries. But they are finally up and in use.

Trichomoniasis is common in doves and pigeons. It sometimes makes them sick, but many are asymptomatic carriers. This disease can devastate raptors and small songbirds, especially house finches. Even though we prophylactically treat all doves on admission, we keep them separate from other birds. The baby doves even go to home care to prevent spreading this disease to other baby birds.

These new dove cages are bigger than the current one and far away from the rest of the songbird aviaries. In a few months, they will be full of young doves getting ready for



Aviary Interior

Donna Burt

Doves are prone to injuring themselves by flying into the ceiling, so we have draped shade cloth from the ceiling to act as a visual barrier and soften the blow should one hit the ceiling.

Veronica Sandow

By Donna Burt

In 2009, Veronica Sandow joined the SWCC as a seventeen-year-old volunteer. It was only a short time before she was at the center several days a week and learning as much as possible. She even applied for an animal care coordinator position but wasn't hired. However, a few months later, I hired her to manage the baby bird room.

We often have two to three hundred baby birds in that room. They must be fed every thirty minutes for at least twelve hours each day. Each day, some graduate to outside aviaries while new babies are admitted. Keeping track of all that is difficult, but Veronica did an excellent job. It wasn't long before she was promoted to animal care coordinator.

In 2011, her family moved to Oregon. Veronica enrolled in college and returned to California in 2014, asking for her old job. I was delighted to have her back at the center.

Currently, Veronica is the animal care manager. She oversees the care of all of our resident and rehab animals, including housing, diets, medications, and veterinary visits. As such, she is our only full-time employee.

Besides animal care, she manages volunteer training and recruitment and permit compliance. I want to congratulate Veronica for her knowledge, skills, and dedication.



Veronica & Golden Eagle

Donna Burt

Turkey Vulture Release



Turkey Vulture.

Veronica Sandow

By Bob Bagin

And then the phone rang.

Jan said she was on her way home with three turkey vultures to release on our property. The vultures were in boxes and pretty agitated. So, I got the dogs in the house and waited. We live in the county. There aren't any houses near us, so the vultures have plenty of space to roam and find food.

The vultures were only six or seven months old, so they didn't have their red heads yet but were already pretty big. When we opened the first two boxes, the vultures hopped out and took off. The third vulture jumped out its box and walked around. Thinking it was probably traumatized by a forty-five minute car ride, we left it alone.

When we returned a few minutes later, the first two were long gone, but the last one was still walking around. As soon as the vulture saw us, it spread its wings and ran at us. We ran into the house.

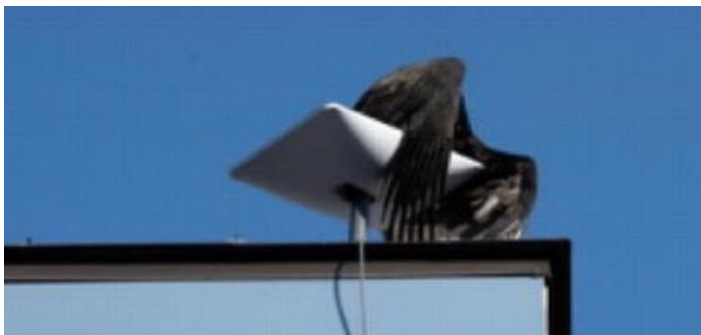
We live in the county. There aren't any houses near us, so the vultures have plenty of space to roam and find food.

And that was that, or so we thought. We assumed it would fly off and hook up with its nest mates. But...

The next day, I went outside, and guess who was up on the roof of the garage? Need a hint? It's big and brown with a huge beak and a six foot wingspan. It immediately flew to the ground and chased me around again.

And this kept happening.

By the third day, I started to get worried. This was the third day without food. So, Jan drove to the center to get a supply of food.



Vulture on Satellite Dish

Bob Bagin

When she got back, we thawed two day-old ducks (donated by a breeder of ducks).

We couldn't even reach the driveway before the bird flew down and nipped at our heels. The two ducks were gone in 5 minutes.

When we went out to feed it the following day, one of its siblings appeared and demanded some, too. So, we got two more ducks.

This went on for at least two weeks. We named them Hekyll and Jekyll. Our roofs and satellite dish were covered in vulture poop.

We tried feeding them every other day. Maybe they'd get hungry enough and head out of town. After just one day of no food, it started ripping up the cushions on our deck chairs.

But we continued feeding them every other day. Eventually, Hekyll flew off, but Jekyll stayed. We started picking up fresh roadkill for him, hoping he would get a better idea of what to eat.

He'd follow us on walks. It seemed as if he would never leave.



Checking Out Shoes

Bob Bagin

Vultures are very sociable animals and readily take to humans. It's a violation of California law to keep wild animals as pets. But we weren't keeping him, just feeding him, hoping he would leave.

Jekyll had been here for over a month by this point, and we reluctantly resigned ourselves to let it stay as long as it wanted.

The next morning, we went out and gave it four ducks. It hopped up and down with delight, wings spread and feathers fluffed as it ate them.

After eating, it waddled under a tree and took a nap. And then it flew up into the sky and circled the house a few times as if to say goodbye. That was the last time we ever saw it.

I was sad for the next week. It was such an intense experience, every day for at least six weeks. I was worried that it would be okay. But at the same time, I felt great that it survived and could be free.

Isolation Building

By Donna Burt

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza H5N1 (HPAI) is here to stay. Last winter, the disease surprised us, and the birds in our pond got sick. Some died, and some survived, but we had to wait several months before we had permission to release the survivors. Then, we gave the pond a complete overhaul. Now, it is possible to clean and disinfect the area should another outbreak occur.

To avoid bringing the disease into the hospital, we erected tents to use for intake and quarantine.

HPAI is a cold-weather disease. The disease is common in waterfowl, but any animal can get it. We even had a peregrine falcon die from HPAI.

With few exceptions, all animals are initially examined in one tent. If they are obviously positive for HPAI, we euthanize them immediately, as per California Department of Fish and Wildlife guidelines. Once they are sick enough to be captured, survival is highly unlikely, and the risk of spreading the disease to our other animals, or even to humans, is relatively high.

If the animal is not obviously ill, we keep it in quarantine in another tent for a few days to be sure it isn't sick.

This is a problem. Newly admitted animals need much more care than we can provide in a tent. Therefore, we are constructing a quarantine building. It is tiny but has a small room for initial evaluation and a somewhat larger room for initial quarantine. With a heater, sink, and power outlets, we can give these animals a better chance to survive.

This building is being paid for out of our general funds. We would appreciate any donations to help pay for the building.



Building Under Construction

Donna Burt

Financial Statement

Our income has remained stable for the last few years, but our expenses continue to increase. Some of the increase was caused by inflation. Most of the increase is the result of increased labor expenses driven by increases in the minimum wage.

Although we could not function without our wonderful volunteers, our success rate is determined by the number and experience levels of our employees.

The easiest way to reduce expenses is to reduce employee hours. But that does not decrease the work. The remaining employees are left with an impossible workload, even with volunteers to help.

The shortfall of -\$25,466 is partly a general increase in expenses but is primarily due to spending \$41,860 on new structures. Most of the structures were paid for by grants, but about \$20,000 was from the restricted funds account. That money was donated in 2022 for construction.

Income

Interest	\$158
Taxable Sales	\$3,318
Direct Public Support	\$136,733
Direct Mail Solicitation	\$48,312
Indirect Public Support	\$13,945
Outreach Program	\$1,105
Baby Animal Shower	\$27,658
Grants	\$24,000
Total Income	\$255,230

Expenses

Cost of Goods Sold	\$3,767
New Construction	\$41,860
Repairs, Improvements, Utilities	\$20,765
Animal Food and Medical	\$24,787
Business Expenses	\$1,582
Training Symposiums	\$1,896
Miscellaneous Expenses	\$21,130
Printing and Publications	\$5,171
Fundraising Expenses	\$5,527
Labor Expenses	\$154,212
Total Expenses	\$280,696
Profit/Loss	-\$25,466

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

2023 Animal Statistics

	SR	A	R	P	T	D	E	DFD	EFD	DOA
Amphibians	100%	4	2					1	1	
Birds										
Ducks & Geese	59%	182	64	4		36	12	38	26	2
Hummers & Swifts	67%	46	16			3	5	14	7	1
Shorebirds & Rails	79%	36	21	1		5	1	6	2	
Pigeons & Doves	63%	286	96	5		46	13	35	84	7
Raptors	66%	276	113	8	1	42	21	30	56	5
Pheasants & Quail	100%	7	4		3					
Songbirds	47%	692	187	5		176	40	166	89	29
Hérons & Egrets	67%	131	55	1		20	7	29	16	3
Woodpeckers	59%	24	10			6	1	4	3	
Pets	100%	1			1					
Total Birds	58%	1681	566	24	5	334	100	322	283	47
Mammals										
Deer	83%	8			5		1	1	1	
Carnivores	53%	277	103	7	1	71	26	32	23	14
Bats	25%	13	1			3		8	1	
Rabbits	17%	25	3			13	2	4	2	1
Mice	62%	80	34			11	10	10	13	2
Squirrels	78%	50	30	2		7	2	7	2	
Total Mammals	56%	453	171	9	6	105	41	62	42	17
Reptiles	77%	13	6	1	3	2	1			
Total Animals	58%	2151	745	34	14	441	142	385	326	64
Average days in care			51			20	22			

SR = Success Rate - the percentage of animals released, pending, and transferred. Does not include animals that died in less than 24 hours.

A = Admitted - total number of animals received in 2023.

R = Released - number of animals released.

P = Pending - animals still in care at the end of the year.

T = Transferred - number of animals transferred to other facilities.

D = Died - number of animals that died after at least one day in care.

E = Euthanized - number of animals euthanized after at least one day in care.

DFD = Died First Day - number of animals that died in less than 24 hours.

EFD = Euthanized First Day - number of animals euthanized in less than 24 hours.

DOA = Dead on Arrival - number of animals who arrived dead.

We received slightly fewer than our average number of animals this year. The very wet spring may have caused that. Injured and orphaned animals may have gotten too wet and cold to survive long enough to be found.

Our success rate varies with different species. Some species, such as cottontails and black-shouldered kites, are prone to capture myopathy. Just being in captivity causes them so much stress that they fail to thrive, no matter how hard we try to reduce their stress. Others, such as raccoons and barn owls, do well in captivity and are easier to care for.

It is important to remember that we do not receive any animals in "good" condition. All have some serious problem, or they would easily have evaded capture.

This year, we had good success with house finches, house sparrows, and mockingbirds. These, especially house finches, are notoriously difficult to raise.

We had less success with raccoons. Raccoons are hardy and typically do well, but many contracted rotavirus.

Rotavirus is a new infection in raccoons. It is usually fatal. The local population doesn't have any immunity, and there isn't a vaccine yet. We are instituting strict quarantine procedures for baby raccoons to ensure we don't inadvertently spread this disease.

We also received animals we don't usually get, such as snow geese and Ross' geese. These were all sick with HPAI, and none survived.

However, an overall release rate of 58% is superb. Thanks to our excellent staff, almost every animal that could have survived and be released, did survive and was released.

Most Commonly Admitted Species

Common Name	Number Admitted	Success Rate
Northern Raccoon	65	38%
Northern Mockingbird	66	48%
House Sparrow	83	50%
House Finch	100	45%
European Starling	104	44%
Eurasian Collared-Dove	111	76%
Mallard	119	58%
California Scrub Jay	152	46%
Mourning Dove	153	51%
Virginia Opossum	187	58%

There were no surprises in the most commonly admitted species. However, some of the success rates were a surprise.

Most songbirds we receive are either babies or have been mauled by a house cat. Mockingbirds and house finch babies can be challenging to raise. The release rates of 48% and 45% are excellent. The credit should go to the baby bird feeders who toil from sunrise to sunset, feeding the babies every thirty minutes.

Raccoons usually have a very high release rate, but many came in with rotavirus, our release rate for raccoons is much lower than usual.

SWCC Staff

Executive Director
Donna Burt

Animal Care Manager
Veronica Sandow

Senior Animal Care Coordinators
Michelle Mason
Aurora Washburn

Animal Care Coordinators
Duane Dahl
Anna Gebbing
Raquel Soto

Board of Directors

Janice Lookabaugh Chairperson
Linda Weidman Vice-Chair
Cindy Manning Treasurer
Dorothy Tuggle Secretary
Phil McKay Member
Jennifer Gowans Member
Dr. Doug Marks Veterinarian
Donna Burt Executive Director

¿Hablas Español?

By Donna Burt

We would like to have a Spanish-language version of our website. Although Spanish was my high school major, I went in other directions in college. My Spanish isn't up to this task.

If you can write grammatically correct Spanish and would like to help, please let me know.

You don't need to work on the website itself; just translate from a Word file.

This would be an ongoing commitment. I make changes to the website every month or so, but they are usually small.

If you are interested, please email me at donna@StanislausWildlife.org

2024 Baby Animal Shower & 40th anniversary

The Baby Animal Shower is on April 27, 2024.

The SWCC was founded in 1984, so 2024 is our 40th anniversary. We are still in the early stages of planning the event. Updates will be posted on our website starting in March.

We hope to see you there.



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 _____

_____ No Receipt _____ Email 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!

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



Wish List



Donations

The SWCC does not sell or give addresses to anyone!

Spring 2024

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Hoary Bat

Donna Burt