We’ve spent much of the winter months preparing — cleaning, organizing and researching better methods of care and feeding for a variety of species. In addition, we’ve also been busy caring for many injured birds, mammals and reptiles that arrive at our doors during the fall and winter.

Already trickling in are tiny pinky tree squirrels and opossums by the dozen or more, some still in their mother’s pouch. Young hummingbirds, most weighing no more than a gram or two, are frequent patients in cold winter months. I’m always amazed that people actually find these tiniest of birds and get them to the Center for care. Soon we’ll be swamped by an onslaught of babies and the season will turn to full-swing.

Unfortunately we see way too many animals — but particularly hawks, owls and falcons— brought to the Center because they have ingested poisoned rodents. One of our featured articles talks about secondary poisoning cases. Please share it and help spread the word on the detriments of poisoning wildlife.

We hope you’ll join us at this year’s Jewels in Flight fundraiser, which promises to be a fun time with music, wine and food at the beautiful Guglielmo Winery in Morgan Hill on May 4th. Buy your ticket today, before they sell out — we promise you won’t be disappointed!

There are several ways you can help the Center. We could not do the important work we do without your help! Last year, we received an astonishing 4,248 animals. Our animal care expenses alone, not including administrative costs, were nearly $80,000!

Money 

Monetary donations are always appreciated and directly help the animals.

Many corporations will match your donations or even compensate WCSV based on your volunteer time. Find out if your company has a matching gift program.

In-kind donations come in all shapes and sizes. Excess produce from your garden, t-shirts and towels. See our current list of needed items on our website. Our Amazon Wish List has many items that can be purchased and sent directly to the Center.

AmazonSmile is a simple way to support WCSV every time you shop, at NO cost to you. When you shop at amazonsmile.com a portion of the purchase is donated to WCSV.

There are several unique ways to leave a charitable legacy. Besides continuing to support your favorite nonprofit beyond your lifetime, a charitable bequest can help reduce or even eliminate estate tax burden for its heirs.

Give Back Nights — we hold several of these each year at local restaurants. Bring the family to a designated restaurant on a specified night and WCSV gets a portion of the proceeds.

We’re almost ready for this busy time of year. We are gearing up our intern program and hope to have 25 students that will not only get school credit, but help us care for the animals during the busiest months of the year. It’s a win-win and well worth the experience.

Our Outreach and Education programs are getting a revamp and promise to be better than ever. We are actively looking for volunteers to help with events and docent work in the park. If you like to educate, consider joining the team.

We hope you enjoy our spring Tracks. Keep up with our latest patient stories and Center updates on our Facebook and Twitter pages. And take some time to appreciate those wild critters right in your own backyard!

Janet Alexander
Director of Operations

tracks... across the backyard, along a wooded trail, meandering by a creek. Whose tracks are they? Are they coming or going? Perhaps they are the tracks of things past, or of visions to be revealed, and stories yet untold. Come join us as we explore different dimensions of wildlife rehabilitation and the special wild neighbors with whom we share our communities. It is the intention of this publication to investigate our dynamic relationship with wildlife within the greater context of our relationship with the earth and each other. The issues are many, as are the myths, feelings, and beliefs surrounding each one. Let’s follow the tracks, wherever we may find them, and leave our own for those who may follow.
Nothing beats quality time outdoors to help you feel renewed and refreshed. Some of the best moments can be spent quietly in the woods listening to all the other beings going about their lives, or exploring a new birding site and catching a glimpse of an avocet, Cinnamon Teal, or Snowy Plover. A safe encounter with another living creature has the potential to be one of the most rewarding of experiences. Staring at another animal and knowing we’re both astonishingly similar and fascinatingly different from these other beings helps us to appreciate what it is to be human. Going beyond our screens to experience the world firsthand is the best (and increasingly rarest) medicine.

Aren’t we fortunate to live where we do? California is listed among the top 25 global biodiversity hotspots, so we don’t have to venture far — even in Silicon Valley — to find a myriad of other species, including some that don’t exist anywhere else in the world. More species of birds come here to breed over anywhere else in the world, close to 50 different types of amphibians are endemic to this state alone, and of the 150 different species of native California mammals, 20 only exist here. When you’re feeling the urge to reconnect with nature, here are a few favorites around the Bay to explore.

Great birding spots

Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge
• Key species to spot: Clapper Rails, Western Snowy Plovers, Black-bellied Plovers, Dunlins, White-tailed Kites, Cinnamon Teals, and Wrentits

Palo Alto Baylands and Shoreline at Mountain View
• Key species to spot: Clapper Rails and Black Rails

Alum Rock Park (also great hiking!)
• Key species to spot: Golden Eagles

Hawk Hill (Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy)
• Don’t miss the fall raptor migration!

Elkhorn Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve
• Cinnamon Teals, loons, rails, Common Murres, egrets, sandpipers

Great local hikes

• Almaden Quicksilver County Park
• Castle Rock State Park
• Henry W. Coe State Park
• San Bruno Mountain County Park

Success in the Fight Against Rodenticides

By Jen Constantin

This year began on a particularly bad note. By the beginning of February, we had already seen five cases of toxin exposure – an opossum, Barn Owls and a Great Horned Owl – and none of these animals were surviving treatment. That is, all but one Barn Owl who was fighting hard to pull through. This owl had actually come in just before the end of 2013. She was found lying down in the middle of a backyard in San Jose. She was extremely weak, severely dehydrated and emaciated because she did not have the strength to hunt. She had already begun to lose blood.

Treatment for poisoning involves working to flush the toxins out of the animal’s system. It was a long road to recovery for this bird with a number of highs and lows. Even when she seemed to be gaining strength and eating on her own, she would still exhibit signs of anemia. When she bumped into things within her smaller indoor hawk box, she would easily break open the skin and begin bleeding. Because of this she wasn’t ready to be moved to an outdoor aviary until the beginning of March. Now that her anemia is under control and she’s at a good healthy weight, she’s flying and gaining strength, preparing for a successful flight back home.

We wish all our patients could pull through as this Barn Owl has done. Even better would be if they didn’t need hospital care from the outset. In light of this current victory we are hopeful for a continuing trend in legislation protecting our wild neighbors.
Each year local wildlife rehabilitation centers receive large numbers of baby birds and squirrels that have been injured or orphaned by tree trimming. Tragically many of them do not survive. Most of these patients arrive in the spring, which is the worst time to prune a tree for both the tree and the wildlife living in it.

By following a few simple guidelines you can help reduce the number of baby birds and squirrels injured, orphaned, and killed by tree trimming.

**The Best Pruning is None At All**

In the past arborists believed the best way to maintain a tree was to cut out about a third of its interior branches every few years, ostensibly to let light into the canopy and to “tidy up” the tree. But then research in tree care showed that pruning can actually harm trees. Not only does it traumatize them, causing them to expend a great deal of energy to recover, but it also makes them susceptible to disease. For these reasons, tree care researchers now say that the best pruning is none at all. Arborists recommend that you prune only to remove dead or diseased wood or branches that may injure the tree by chafing against each other. For aesthetics, you may also cut branches that cross the center of the tree, but otherwise, just leave the tree as Mother Nature intended.

**If You Must Prune**

If you absolutely have to prune a tree, be sure to check the area for squirrel and bird nests first. Squirrels nest twice a year from February to May, then again from July to September, and their nests look like a big clump of leaves and twigs caught in the junction of two branches (either near the trunk or farther out on the limb). Bird nests are smaller and harder to find, especially hummingbird nests, which are about the size of eggcups, so just look for a dark spot tucked among the smaller branches. If you find a nest filled with eggs or babies, leave it alone. Moving a nest can severely hurt the babies’ chance of survival, and it may even be against the law. Under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, it’s illegal to harm or remove the nests of all migratory and native birds, and most songbirds. So to be absolutely safe, put off pruning until the babies have flown the coop.

**The Best Time to Prune**

Keep in mind that some seasons are better for pruning than others. For the rest of the United States where there are four bona fide seasons, arborists recommend pruning in the winter (when trees have the greatest reserves of energy stored in their tissues and can cope with the shock of pruning) or in the fall, just after deciduous trees have lost their leaves. In California, however, most trees don’t lose their leaves until December, so that’s generally accepted to be the best time to prune. By then, baby squirrels and birds have reached self-sufficiency and their parents have wrapped up their procreation activities for the year. The worst time to prune a tree is in the spring and summer – the height of nesting activity for most birds and squirrels. Spring is also the time when a tree is directing all of its energy into producing new growth. Pruning in the springtime can not only impede a tree’s growth, but also increase its chances of becoming diseased.

**There are Some Exceptions**

As always, there are exceptions to the rule. Dead wood can be removed anytime of the year, and weak shoots that sprout out of existing limbs or old wounds should be pruned in the later summer, after the tree has finished its growth spurt. Just be sure to check the area for nests before you cut. Most fruit trees are pruned annually, but again the best time to do this is while they are dormant in the winter.

And for the sake of your trees and the wildlife living in them, don’t cover the stubs of freshly cut limbs with those black wound dressings. Birds can foul their feathers by brushing up against the goo, and the dressings can make your wildlife vulnerable to widespread damage by covering up early signs of bacterial infection. Just make a clean cut and leave it at that. Your trees will heal the cuts themselves and your wildlife will be healthier for it.

**If the Worst Happens**

If the worst happens and you find baby birds or squirrels on the ground either in their nest or outside of it, don’t panic. Call the Wildlife Center to determine the next best steps. We want to make sure the healthy and well-attended animals remain with their natural parents, and only those truly needing help make it safely to the Center.

**Jackie Turner** is a volunteer wildlife rehabilitator at the Wildlife Center of Silicon Valley and a master gardener.
NORTHERN RACCOON CAUGHT IN ILLEGAL LEG-HOLD TRAP

By Ashley Kinney

On September 26, 2013 San Jose Animal Care and Services (SJACS) responded to an urgent wildlife call about a raccoon caught and tangled in a chain link fence in South San Jose. The injuries sustained by this raccoon resulted from one of the most inhumane acts of cruelty we have witnessed at our wildlife hospital. Officers Teri Reeve and Barbara Wallace arrived at the scene to find the raccoon dangling by his front legs on the fence, both caught in two illegal leg-hold traps. Shocked at the condition of this animal, the officers quickly freed him from the fence and rushed him to the Center.

Prior to the raccoon getting caught, these barbaric snares were buried in the ground in a setting ideal for raccoons and other wildlife — along a creek where food and water are abundant. Because of their extremely sensitive paws, raccoons have a natural curiosity for "feeling" out new things in their environment, making them particularly vulnerable to "dog-proof raccoon traps." This raccoon probably cued into the smell (typically these traps are also baited) and then used both front paws to explore further with those sensitive digits, only to become ensnared. In an attempt to free himself and flee the scene, the raccoon pulled his front legs out of the ground, traps still attached, and became caught on the nearby chain link fence where he was found hanging in pain and fear.

Once the raccoon arrived at the Center, the staff quickly sedated him to fully evaluate the severity of his injuries. His paws were tightly gripped by the pressure of the traps, cutting off circulation, causing a massive amount of swelling to his paws and digits. It took two people putting their full weight on the release lever to free his arms from the cruel traps. Once freed, a thorough exam of the raccoon’s wrists, paws and legs was performed. Radiographs confirmed an ulna/carpel fracture of left leg and right wrist, and a distal radius fracture at the growth plate of his right arm. Sadly, he was missing three-quarters of his tail due to self-mutilation, which is a common behavior for a frightened, trapped animal.

Due to the raccoon’s sensitive front and rear paws, pain management was absolutely essential. The Center veterinarian prescribed pain medications, antibiotics and topical wound care, all of which made his stay a little more comfortable during recovery from these heartbreaking injuries. He was housed in a kennel to limit him from putting too much weight on his healing front legs. This raccoon was such a strong fighter who undoubtedly had the will to survive. He tolerated the routine exams, medication administrations and topical wound care.

NOTE: This act of cruelty is not only inhumane, but illegal in the state of California for both wildlife species and domestic animals. Any illegal traps should be reported to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

And how he loved his meals! Progress was closely monitored over the next three weeks, and major improvement was noted, not only in his behavior, but also in his ability to use both front paws to feel for food, dunk food in water, groom, and try open food enrichment items. All of these signs led us to believe this trooper was going to run free once again!

Two long months went by before he was ready for the next step of rehabilitation. Our staff determined he was all set for his big move to an outdoor enclosure where he could climb, play in water, and exercise. Just a few weeks outdoors proved to be adequate time for a full recovery and he was more than ready to go. In early December, staff and volunteers along with the SJACS officers who rescued him were present for the big release. Together we watched as he exited the kennel and ran as fast as he could down a path at Almaden Quicksilver Park and out of sight. His story was a media sensation, touching the hearts of all.

PHOTO: ASHLEY KINNEY

Preparing for radiographs

PHOTO: ASHLEY KINNEY

Progress after 35 days

PHOTO: ASHLEY KINNEY

Climbing in the outdoor conditioning enclosure

PHOTO: ASHLEY KINNEY

Nails damaged in attempt to escape trap

PHOTO: ASHLEY KINNEY

Paw after trap removal

PHOTO: ASHLEY KINNEY

Illegal "dog-proof raccoon traps"
By Jen Constantin and Ashley Kinney

Ranging from Canada all the way to southern Mexico, the Bobcat has adapted to a wide spectrum of habitats. Typically, Bobcats are found where you’d expect: in forested and mountainous areas, riparian zones, and deserts. Less often they can be found in developed suburban areas. But even if Bobcats are attracted to a well-shaded yard with a good deal of natural shelter, under normal situations they can easily be scared off by loud noises. Predominantly crepuscular (hunting mostly at dawn and dusk) and notably cautious, Bobcats are spotted very rarely, which makes sightings that much more exciting!

Adult Bobcats are solitary animals, with the exception of the breeding season (roughly December through March), and are exclusively carnivorous, primarily taking advantage of smaller prey such as rabbits, rodents, and birds within a well-defended territory of up to 12 miles. Far less commonly, Bobcats will prey on animals their own size or even larger. Changing seasons, climate change, and severe drought have taken their toll on all wildlife, including Bobcats, disrupting patterns and food sources and pushing them into unfamiliar habitat. This may be what led an immature female Bobcat to venture onto one of the busiest parts of Silver Creek Valley Road one evening in early November 2013.

The San Jose Police Department received a late call on November 2 from a caring and concerned person who spotted a Bobcat struggling but alive on the side of road. She was at a fairly developed intersection at Silver Creek Valley Road and Farnsworth, and had been hit by a car. Officers were able to get the Bobcat into the back of the squad car while she was still in shock, and then contacted local field wardens through CA Department of Fish and Wildlife. By the time the field wardens arrived, however, the Bobcat was far more alert, making it quite a challenge for them to transfer her safely from the squad car into a crate.

The next morning at the Wildlife Center, staff had to sedate the cat to determine the extent of her injuries. They found two fractures to her right femur and evidence of internal trauma (her abdomen was distended and she was urinating and defecating blood). Acting quickly, they prepped and re-crated her for a trip to Adobe Animal Hospital. Dr. Rachel Boltz graciously had made time in her schedule to perform emergency surgery on the Bobcat’s fractured leg. Following the successful addition of a buttress plate and two screws to her right femoral fractures, she rested and was monitored at Adobe for 24 hours.

When she returned to the Wildlife Center the next day, everyone was surprised and excited to find her growling and feisty. She was even self-feeding within two days of surgery! Doctor’s orders included eight full weeks of cage/crate rest — a challenging experience for both a wild animal and her caretakers! To keep the Bobcat stimulated enough to avoid depression and fidgeting too much with the injured leg,
while also keeping her and her surroundings quiet enough to reduce stress and allow for necessary healing, creativity was key.

To minimize disruptions, crate cleaning and Bobcat feeding were designated as “staff only.” Every day, WCSV staff not only had to feed and provide water, but also clean her bedding and remove old food — not an easy feat with an alert, nearly full-grown Bobcat! She was housed in a crate away from all of the hospital hustle, too, in a separate portable unit that kept sound to a minimum. But as we all know, nature isn’t silent. Staff played recordings for her from the south San Jose hills near where she was found to keep her auditorily stimulated. These had been captured by a volunteer, Jean Higham-Sergeant, and her husband Steve Sergeant. Scent enrichment — also so important in the feline world — was introduced in the form of different herbs.

Within two weeks of extensive care, combined with a medication regimen and natural diet, this tenacious Bobcat had already started putting a small amount of weight on her right foot. Even though this was an excellent first step, her prognosis remained guarded. It was clear that her recovery would still be relatively slow going, and only time would tell whether or not she would ever be able to have full use of that leg and foot. For the first two to three weeks at the Center, she continued to walk tentatively on the knuckles of the right foot. But by the end of November she was putting full weight on it!

At week eight, just as projected, she was ready to be moved to an outdoor “conditioning” enclosure. Only in this larger space could staff properly assess her healing process, by giving her the chance to fully move and gain strength. Almost immediately, she appeared to appreciate the change by basking in the sunshine. Staff watched her progress remotely with the help of GoPro cameras, as her initial limp and wariness in the new surroundings developed into climbing, jumping, and chasing after food items. Now, with a full 16 weeks of rest and rehabilitative care under her belt, her growling wildness still firmly in place, she’s more than ready to run in the South Bay hills again. She’ll be released in the same general area in late April, only not so close to busy roads and suburbs.
PATIENT GALLERY  Who’s on the Mend at WCSV

Western Pond Turtle recovering from the severe trauma of being run over by a car

Nestling Rock Pigeons who luckily made their way to WCSV after being dropped off at the Salvation Army

Hoary Bat whose intake exam revealed a tiny puncture wound on his left wing

American Kestrel following fracture stabilization. The falconry hood helped to keep him calm.

Gray Fox stuck in a fence and was rescued by Wildlife Emergency Services

Gray Fox in her outdoor conditioning enclosure just three days after intake and three days prior to release
Northern Raccoon taking a quick peek of the world outside her conditioning enclosure

Beautiful fledgling Anna’s Hummingbird found alone on the ground unable to fly

Anna’s Hummingbird after excessive handling by the person who found him. The oils on our skin can damage a bird’s feathers over time.

Black-tailed Jackrabbit orphaned after a dog scared the mother away

First baby tree squirrel of the season fast asleep after a good formula meal

Cedar Waxwing recovering from head trauma after striking a window

Red-tailed Hawk ready for release after suffering severe burns at a PG&E power station and needing 16 months of rehabilitative care

Perched on a nearby tree, visited by a local Red-tailed Hawk

After a brief rest, off to freedom
This year we decided to finally ask if any volunteers felt compelled to share how wildlife rehabilitation has changed their lives. We got incredible feedback. It truly is a labor of love. Here are a few excerpts from our simply outstanding volunteers.

“Volunteering for wildlife rehab has indeed made me change the way I think about loving animals. Human love for animals can be very possessive and therefore potentially destructive. I learned that what I think is best for an animal is not necessarily what it needs. We should change this love into a veneration for life and respect the animals and their habitats.”
— Luciana Meinking

“Volunteering at WCSV has been one of the most positive and rewarding experiences of my life, and I like to think I’m making a difference. I found my favorite animal when I settled into caring for all opossums, large and small. I’ll continue volunteering and educating people on opossums and other wildlife until my time is up on this planet.”
— Sue Cukrov

“I am 17 years old and have been volunteering for 10 months now. This summer I will be interning with the WCSV and I can’t wait to begin that experience. When I can assist staff members, work with a team of volunteers on a common task or just make a sick animal feel more comfortable, I know that it will be time well spent. These fulfilling experiences that I have had at the Wildlife Center draw me to serve and to help these animals that truly need it.”
— Philip Law

“Volunteering here allows me to observe and understand the severe damage that humans inflict on wildlife. It has opened my eyes to the repercussions that human encroachment on the environment has created for fauna.”
— Krti Tallam

“The accomplishments of the WCSV, serving as a model of a working wildlife hospital, motivated me to return to school to pursue veterinary technology. Participating in the long road recoveries of the WCSV patients, gaining hands-on nursing skills while rehabilitating breathtaking native species, and upholding the center’s mission of keeping wildlife wild, makes being a part of the WCSV volunteer team one of the most enriching opportunities available to learners and appreciators of the wild.”
— Tessa Buchin

“At first, volunteering with wildlife rehabilitation provided balance to my crazy work schedule. Then I realized that volunteering with wildlife provided balance and harmony to me. It has truly become a part of who I am and my connection to the world around me. Plus, it allows me to play a small, but critical role in reducing the impact that humans have on wildlife. Wildlife have no say when we pave over habitat, remove nesting grounds, or choose to behave inhumanely. Volunteering to help rehabilitate wildlife is an opportunity to give back and make a difference.”
— Lisa Konie

“Before I volunteered for the WCSV some sixteen years ago, I didn’t spend much time being present or aware of our local wildlife. As my animal experience developed through volunteering my mind was opened to the detailed coloration of feathers, different textures of fur, delicate bones, intelligent eyes and the perfectly created anatomy to serve each individual species. The honor of volunteering has truly opened me up to appreciate each animal and the purposeful role they play in keeping our planet beautiful.”
— Trudi Burney

“Caring for all wildlife that has been injured, mostly by human activity, is rewarding and purposeful. The balance of life is tipped heavily against wildlife by that same human activity. When one songbird, hawk, bobcat, pigeon, crow or goose recovers and lives wild again, we help bring that scale back into balance — for wildlife’s sake, and for our own. And that I wouldn’t miss for the world.”
— Anonymous WCSV Volunteer

“Volunteering to help save wildlife is something I’ve always wanted to do since I was a child, but never quite found the time. When I finally “made time” to explore it, and take that step, it was definitely life changing. I see it as a blessing and a gift to be able to contribute, and it keeps my inner light glowing to help these beautiful animals that I love, respect and admire so much!”
— Chieko Redmer

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**NAME THAT NEST**

A. Ok, it isn’t as much of a nest as a burrow, but can you guess who made this natural high-rise?

B. Who made this nest?

C. Who made this nest?

D. Who made this nest?

**TRICKY TRIVIA**

1. What do you call a flock of hummingbirds?

2. This bird is known for stealing acorns from Acorn Woodpecker stashes, and at higher elevations for robbing seeds and pine cones from Clark’s Nutcrackers. They’re also intelligent enough to look around and make sure they don’t have any witnesses when they’re caching their own food.

3. Males of a species don’t vocalize loudly like the females. Instead they have a quieter, raspy call. Males and females are both strong fliers, though, gaining speeds of up to 55 miles per hour during migration.

4. This wildcat’s rear legs are longer than its front legs, making it a stellar jumper, capable of jumping 15–20 feet up and 40 feet forward! Over time this feline has been given many names including “shadow cat.”

5. These animals eat 2,000–6,000 insects each night, and the females give birth to young that are 25% of an adult’s body weight. This would be the equivalent of human mothers giving birth to toddler-sized infants!

6. What bird flies like a champ, but has such tiny legs that it can’t walk or hop?

**THANK YOU!**

Acknowledging our Invaluable Partners

Adobe Animal Hospital  
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Dr. Gary Look  
Felton Veterinary Hospital  
Patagonia  
Silicon Valley Cares  
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Visit www.wcsv.org or
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Jewels in Flight
A benefit for Wildlife Center of Silicon Valley
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SUNDAY, MAY 4 ♥ GUGLIELMO WINERY ♥ 4PM - 7PM

For event details, visit: wcsv.org/jewels-in-flight