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Animals for Education

Mail to:  
Critter Creek Wildlife Station  
36710 Sand Creek Road  
Squaw Valley, CA 93675

Members receive our quarterly newsletter  
Visit [CritterCreek.org](http://CritterCreek.org) to see back issues of the Chronicle



Newsletter of Critter Creek Wildlife Station

Winter 2013

Volume 18, No. 4

# Happy Holidays

From all of us at Critter Creek



Join us on Saturday, Dec. 28<sup>th</sup> from 11:00am-2:00pm

## REASONS TO COME TO OPEN HOUSE

1. You have relatives visiting and everyone has got cabin fever...a road trip to Critter Creek might be just the answer.
2. You received some cash for Christmas and you're looking for a place to spend it—our Gift Shop awaits you.
3. You would rather see gorgeous fur coats on animals rather than models...Critter Creek has fox, bobcat, lynx, serval, raccoon, caracal, and coyote to dazzle you.
4. You learn such interesting bits of information about wildlife that you will become an excellent conversationalist at parties.
5. You will actually learn "What does the fox say?"

**Critter Creek Chronicle**  
 Animals for Education

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# Is It Dead...Frozen?

Winter is finally arriving with cold, wet weather. Wildlife has many techniques to cope with these changes. Some birds from the Central Valley migrate to warmer climates. Birds from the Arctic and Canada travel here during the winter. Another technique certain birds use to deal with the cold is torpor (tore-purr).

Torpor is “a state of slowed body functions used to conserve energy and heat. Animals that enter a state of torpor lower their body temperature and slow their heart rate, respiration and metabolic rate dramatically, effectively conserving energy because fewer calories are needed to maintain life. Metabolic rate can actually decrease up to 95 percent. This type of short term hibernation can help animals and birds survive cold temperatures, and this state is most frequently used on winter nights. Some birds will also enter a torpid state if food supplies are scarce” ([www.discoverwildlife.com](http://www.discoverwildlife.com)).

Many a would-be rescuer picks up a bird in torpor since it appears near death. Once disturbed in order to completely recover all their reflexes, they often need to sun themselves and find a ready food source. Once hydrated, fed and warmed, they are ready to be returned to their original environment. We try to encourage people not to disturb them, but it is difficult because the bird looks so lifeless. Birds that regularly use torpor to deal with the cold include: hummingbirds, poorwills, swifts, nighthawks, doves, and chickadees.



Hummingbird on left



Poorwill on right

For mammals, especially large ones, winter can be just a matter of migrating or growing a warmer fur coat. Smaller mammals, though, often use either hibernation or torpor. Discover Wildlife describes the differences in this way: Torpor is short-termed reduction of body temperature on a cool day while hibernation is an extended reduction for weeks. Torpor is caused by ambient temperature and food availability while hibernation is caused by day length and hormone changes.

Bats are the most frequent mammals we receive that have been disturbed while in a torpid state. It typically takes about two hours to go into torpor and under an hour to come out of torpor. Since food is scarcer during the winter, bats need to decrease their metabolic rate as often as possible to conserve energy and torpor fits their needs.

Many amphibians and reptiles hibernate over the winter seeking out protected areas for an extended period of time. Others use a shorter state of torpor to conserve energy during cold spells.



Snakes emerging from winter den sites

# Gift Giving

We are entering the holiday season—a time of giving and receiving. Please keep wildlife in your thoughts.

We have listed ways you can help Critter Creek Wildlife Station as we begin 2014.

1. Renew your membership (perhaps at a more generous level)
2. Donate an additional gift to help with on-going projects like the reptile enclosure, large mammal recovery kennels, or small mammal rehab area
3. Donate linen: sheets (both flat and fitted), towels, and pillow cases. (We currently have no need for blankets)
4. Donate time. Perhaps one Saturday a month, you can come to Critter Creek to help clean or construct. (See [crittercreek.org](http://crittercreek.org) for volunteering options)
5. Give a membership to a special someone as a gift that keeps on giving the entire year

**Come to Winter Open House**  
**Saturday, December 28th - 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.**  
**Last Sign-In 1:30 p.m.**



The Open House will be unguided, so the pace is leisurely offering more opportunities to take pictures and spend time with your favorite animal. Relieve the stress of the holidays with a visit to the foothills with family. Admission is by donation. Call (559) 338-2415 for information or look online at [www.crittercreek.org](http://www.crittercreek.org)

Don't forget to wear your warm, winter coats; our animals are wearing theirs.