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



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No Summer Open House, but set aside September 12th Saturday from 11:00am-2:00pm for our Fall Open House

WESTERN POND TURTLES

Fewer seasonal bodies of water are available because of the drought, so people have been seeing a lot more Western Pond Turtles on the move. Sadly they are often hit in the road crushing their shells or they wander into a yard where dogs injure them. This year we have taken in over a dozen and still counting. Heron Creek provides a perfect environment for them to recuperate and fatten up for release later in the summer.

Western Pond Turtles can grow to 8 inches in carapace (shell) length. They are dark brown to dull olive in color. The underside is yellowish with dark blotches. The carapace is low, smooth, and broad. They live in marshes, streams, rivers, ponds, and lakes preferring habitats with emergent logs or boulders to bask in the sun. They are omnivorous eating insects, crayfish, algae, tule and cattail roots. They are most often seen during breeding season when they move to search for a mate. It is best to leave them alone. If they are on the road move them to the other side whichever direction they were heading. The eggs take almost a year to hatch and first reproduction occurs only after 10-12 years of age. This reproductive cycle, dwindling habitat, and the onslaught of red-eared sliders (a non-native turtle) have caused Western Pond Turtles to become a species of interest.



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RED-EARED SLIDER TURTLE

Red-eared sliders have been a common pet for decades often found in pet stores. Unfortunately they are not native west of the Rockies, yet when people tire of taking care of them they simply release them into the wild. This has produced lots of problems for the native Western Pond Turtle. Reports have shown that because red-eared sliders are so aggressive and bold they out-compete Western Pond Turtles for food, nesting and basking space, and hiding places. Western Pond Turtles also have no immunity to parasites and diseases carried by the red-eared sliders. Turtles can live over twenty years, so releasing a non-native turtle can have a long-term effect on a native population.



MAMMAL REHAB CAGING COMPLETED

The caging complex to house our baby mammals was barely finished before it was completely occupied. So far this season we have taken in baby grey fox, coyotes, and raccoons. The framework for this cage was salvaged from an old Chaffee Zoo cage. All of the fencing was salvaged chain-link. Roofing, smaller gauge wire, tarps, and shade cloth were bought with donations. A very big thank you to all the volunteers who poured cement, welded pipes, wired, and hog ringed the structure together. Its location at Critter Creek sets it aside from the main thoroughfare providing much more privacy than before. Less contact with people means these youngsters will be wild when released.



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 Thanks to those of you using the SaveMart S.H.A.R.E.S. Program. If you would like to help out, please let us know and we can send you a card to swipe at checkout. Again, it costs you nothing; but we receive a quarterly donation.

Also, remember to use Amazon Smile while shopping online, as we receive a quarterly donation from Amazon based on the amount of everyone's purchase.

WELL ATTENDED SPRING OPEN HOUSE

For three hours during our March Open House, Critter Creek was swamped with kids. Students from two after-school programs attended...each bus carrying about eighty students. Lots of families attended—all eager to fill out their Bingo cards to receive a small gift before their departure. Many enjoyed seeing the alligators being fed. The wild pig splashed around in his mud hole flinging mud on anyone who got too close. The face painting was popular as was the Gift Shop. In the end we raised much needed funds for food and construction projects.



ALLIGATORS FIND NEW ENCLOSURE MOST AGREEABLE



The first picture is of Tick Tock in the bottom of a Verikennel several years ago. Once we were able to move him to his new enclosure he has quadrupled his weight and doubled his length in less than a year. The second picture is of him basking on a diving board placed in his pond. Alligators can grow as large as their environment accommodates. We don't know how much bigger Tick Tock will grow. Albert, our second alligator, was smaller than Tick Tock but he has also grown quickly. The two get along together in the enclosure except at feeding time. We often see them basking together with their arms over each other.