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

**Critter Creek Chronicle**  
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**CRITTER CREEK WILDLIFE STATION  
SPRING OPEN HOUSE  
SATURDAY, APRIL 16, 2016  
11:00 AM until 2:00 PM**

Enjoy the wildflower display on your way to Critter Creek. The Open House will be unguided, so the pace is leisurely offering more opportunities to take pictures. Our volunteers will be on hand to answer questions. Visit our gift shop. A picnic area is available so bring a lunch. Tonka, our young mountain lion, can now be viewed romping around in his outdoor enclosure. Call (559) 338-2415 for information or look online at [www.crittercreek.org](http://www.crittercreek.org)

- Gate will close at 1:30 pm to allow you enough time to tour.
- Entrance is by donation and tour takes 1 ½ hours.
- Our field parking is free.
- Country Store has refreshments for sale next door.

**Critter Creek**  
 36710 Sand Creek Road  
 (559) 338-2415

## Treating the Injured

During the winter months, we seldom see any orphaned babies come in, but we do deal with an increase in injured wildlife. The most common injuries are broken wings or head trauma. These are usually the result of an impact with a car or a window. One patient this winter came from a ranch up in Three Rivers. It was a Great Horned Owl that was caught in a barbed wire fence. The rancher was willing to cut the strand so the owl could be transported to Critter Creek by some caring volunteers. We were able to remove the section of barbed wire still embedded in the fleshy part of the wing. Usually the bird will struggle while caught in the wire sinking the barbs even deeper into its wing often breaking a bone in the process. This owl was lucky...no broken bones. It is still facing months of rehabilitation because of the damage caused by the barbs but it should be able to be released.



Owl caught in barbed wire



After 10 weeks, all that is left to heal is a small wound

Another unusual patient this season was a red-tailed hawk that was found nearly starved to death with a terribly deformed beak. Our veterinarian is excellent at "sculpting" beaks. After several sessions over time, we were able to fix the beak so the bird could eat cut up food. After several more weeks, the red-tail was finally able to tear apart its own food and eat. It will eventually be released.



Before trimming the beak



After several sessions of beak trimming



## How to Prevent Injuries in Wild Birds

Most wild bird injuries are caused by human activities. Most of the injuries are accidental and almost impossible to avoid due to modern society. By taking some precautions, you can minimize the chance that a wild bird will become injured because of your activities. Examine trees and scrubs that are to be cut or trimmed. Many birds are orphaned yearly because people decide to cut trees or shrubs during the spring and summer. These are prime nesting times. In the fall, nests are no longer in use, and you may safely remove whatever you need to without jeopardizing wild birds. Some bird species prefer a hollow or pre-existing hole often in a dead tree to call home. These are cavity nesters such as screech owls and woodpeckers. They use a tree hollow for roosting throughout the year. Before you cut any dead tree, check the hollows for wildlife. Grey fox and squirrels sleep and raise their young in tree hollow. That tree you are about to cut may be someone's home or nursery. Dead trees are valuable assets to wildlife.

Bird nest locations can sometimes pose special problems for people. Birds often choose hanging plants, exhaust vents, containers, mail boxes and other peculiar places to build nests. You can discourage birds from building nests in dangerous or inconvenient spots. If you see birds building nests in such areas, remove the nesting materials if the birds are just beginning to build the nest. Movements such as waving a towel to scare them away is said to work. Loud noises are not tolerated by birds so clap your hands, shout, and make other noises to scare them away from a location that is not safe for them to nest. You may discourage wild birds from nesting too close to your home by removing outside hanging plants, block openings in and around window air conditioners, and check to make sure your kitchen fan and clothes dryer vent doors are closed. Ducks and geese seeking natural sites may choose to build under your shrubbery especially if you have a pool. Ducklings and goslings hatching in high risk areas face often insurmountable obstacles and seldom survive. If you notice them attempting to nest in an obviously dangerous area, chase them away. Discouraging them will no doubt prevent disaster later in the season. Disturbed enough at a site, they will nest elsewhere.

Every year thousands of birds suffer impact injuries from flying into windows and glass doors. They fly into glass because they, no doubt, mistake reflections for the real thing. Also, they do not perceive glass as a solid object. If birds flying into windows are a special problem for you, there are steps you can take to prevent the situation. Place bird feeders away from windows. Place colorful cloth streamers across the glass expanse. Also try a decorative wind sock in front of the problem glass area. The movement of the wind sock will prevent birds from coming too close. Stretch numerous strands of colorful yarn across the glass area in a criss-cross pattern. Tape a hawk silhouette on to the glass. This is a symbol of danger. Hawk silhouettes are available commercially. Leave a light on behind the window. Reflections can appear only if it is darker behind the glass. Stain glass ornaments hanging from suction cups on outside surfaces provide natural deterrents to free flying birds. These may be used to break up the reflective images the bird sees in glass. By following the above suggestions you may be able to save several birds' lives in your backyard.

Remove outdoor sporting nets. Owls are especially prone to become entangled in soccer, badminton, and tennis nets. Remember they are on the move at night hunting primarily from dusk to dawn. Lower nets after each use if possible, and take them down completely during off seasons. Fishing line, kite strings and similar materials pose serious dangers to wildlife. Birds may become entangled in the line and be injured and killed. It is not unusual for cavity nesting birds to mistake chimneys as suitable nesting areas. To avoid unwanted avian visitors down your chimney and to prevent injuries install a chimney screen. Enjoy the birds around you and help prevent injuries to them in your own backyard.