



## SAVE THE DATE SATURDAY, SEPT. 22, 2018 FALL OPEN HOUSE

### Busy Summer Months

The influx of orphaned animals has not slowed down even into July, perhaps due to the mild spring. This is causing us to delay releases. The birds of prey are usually the first to mature. To make them ready for release, they need to learn to hunt. Once the birds are fully feathered we select two or three and relocate them into a "hunting" cage which is a regular enclosure outfitted with a large cattle trough where we can release live rats and mice. If the birds are able to recognize the rodents as food, swoop down and kill them and eat them, then we are pretty confident that they should make it in the wild. Sometimes they just don't get it and we have to place a permanently injured adult in with them to teach them to hunt. Needless to say this process can take several days. We try to set aside more than one enclosure for this training but with a huge influx of birds this year, the process is moving slowly. Once the birds have hunted we try to immediately release them either near where they were found or in some other safe location.

#### CIRCLE OF SUPPORTERS MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Membership Categories	Annual Dues
Student	\$ 15
Senior	\$ 15
Individual	\$ 25
Family	\$ 50
Sponsor	\$ 100
Patron	\$ 250
Corporate or Life	\$ 1000

Make checks payable to:  
Animals for Education

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

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





# Why Do Birds Travel En Masse?

(excerpted from an article in "Wild Talk")

From the deft maneuvers of starlings to the symmetrical V shaped formations of Canada geese and the seemingly chaotic "gang-flight" of cedar waxwings, the coordinated movement of birds on the wing has delighted human spectators for thousands of years. Beyond its purely aesthetic value, though, flock flight raises a host of fascinating and difficult questions.



Why, for instance, does one species fly in a symmetrical formation while another congregates in an aerial ball? And what about the organization of the flock—do birds in the air line-up in the same social positions as they might on the ground, then follow the orders of some "leader"? If not, what is the "glue" that hold flocks together?



Since ancient times, the persistent question has been the most fundamental: Why do birds fly in flocks at all? Or, in more modern evolutionary terms, what is the adaptive value of coordinated group flight? What advantage does it confer on the individual birds, and how does it help them survive?

There are a number of possible answers, depending, to some degree, on the species and the geometry of its group flight. One of the oldest theories is called "aerodynamic" or "racetrack" hypothesis. Birds flying single-file carve the air in such a way as to create a partial vacuum, or slipstream, which makes the going easier for the others. Another theory suggests that birds flying in a staggered formation can save energy by placing their wingtips in the rising whirlwind of air streaming off the wings of their neighbors. Scientists have calculated that flying in a staggered V formation could gain birds an

energy savings of as much as 70 percent.

Even for birds that don't fly single-file or in V's, group flight apparently can confer an aerodynamic advantage. For example, individual birds within migrating flocks of western gulls have been seen following one another into updrafts, where they can get more lift and make better headway. Instead of using up energy by flapping their wings, the birds rise and coast, rise and coast. By following one another into updrafts, the gulls are essentially exchanging information. The flock possibly serves as a sort of information center for its



members. All kinds of vital information can be exchanged through the collective experience of the individual.

This information center may also help the birds locate food. In California's Central Valley, tricolored blackbirds are often seen flying in long, linear flocks, thousands of them, in a tornado like swirl, extending like a tentacle from the roost to the foraging area. This behavior provides strong evidence that being in a flock gives the individual birds information as to where the feeding ground is.



Information-sharing is one of the more popular theories scientists have put forth to explain the tendency of birds to fly in flocks. Perhaps the most widely accepted hypothesis, though, is that the flock affords protection against

predators. Safety is sometimes a matter of probability. A flock in the air is certainly less vulnerable to predators than individuals flying alone. If there are a thousand of you and the predator is going to get one, then your individual odds are a thousand-to-one. If there are only ten of you, then obviously the risk to each individual is much greater. Starlings are known to "ball up" in the air when attacked by a falcon. This balling-up makes it much more difficult for the falcon to cull a single starling for its dinner. In addition the falcon isn't likely to risk injury by trying to dive through the bunched flock.



Flying in flocks probably serves a multitude of functions and causes such as aerodynamics, information-sharing, or predator-control. At this point we simply don't know them all.

## Cheena-Capuchin

Critter Creek has transferred one of its most beloved residents to the Applegate Zoo in Merced. She was joining a single capuchin who has recently become the sole resident of the zoo's monkey enclosure. Despite all the enrichment provided here at Critter Creek, we decided that nothing fills the day better than being able to interact with one of your own kind. Her first few weeks were a little rocky but she is now in an outdoor enclosure next to Cokomo. It has already been reported that she has made friends with the staff. We miss her tremendously.



## VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES

Must be 16 or older and attend a Saturday orientation: call ahead 559-338-2415 or email [crittercreekwildlife@hughes.net](mailto:crittercreekwildlife@hughes.net)

1. Runner--- pick up wildlife, do initial care (needs to be available to respond to calls). This involves sometimes netting and handling orphaned or injured wildlife
2. Wildlife Care--- help with weekly wildlife maintenance at the facility. This includes washing water dishes, raking enclosures, general clean up. There is a great deal of contact with the animals.
3. Construction Crew--- help with building projects, repairs, and renovations. This includes carpentry, cement work, plumbing, etc.
4. Open House Guides--- help several times a year with tours and wildlife inquiries
5. Fundraising--- help to organize and run fundraisers
6. Baby Bird Care--- help with the regular feeding of baby song birds during the spring