



How Do Wildfires Affect Wildlife

Critter Creek Wildlife Station has been fortunate, so far, to escape California’s wildfire season. The foothills below Kings Canyon National Park have been spared as of now. We are on standby to help with any injured wildlife found at the Creek Fire in the Shaver Lake area. The reality is that we are unlikely to see many injured animals. The fire fighters are very busy saving human lives and property and are not always able to deal with wildlife. Most of the wildlife in these forested areas have had to adapt to wildfires for centuries. They have an intuitive sense of danger. Different animals have their own way of avoiding or escaping fire. They might hide in riparian or moist leaf-litter sites or stand in streams. Some tunnel underground or hide under rocks. The large animals keep moving away from the fire. Some simply fly away. If mortality occurs it is when a fire is large, intense, and produces a lot of ground smoke like the first days of the Creek Fire. The elderly and the very young can’t always outrun the flames. Fortunately “baby season” has been over for many weeks, so the loss among youngsters should be minimal.

Sadly the majority of wildlife deaths occur after the fire. The loss of important habitat and food sources burned in the fire makes it necessary for wildlife to find new habitat. Animals can wander into densely populated areas where they come in contact with humans they would normally avoid. The burned areas create new habitat that will encourage wildlife back into the area, but this takes time. Those living around the burned areas need to be tolerant of their displaced neighbors. Here are some tips from the Lindsay Museum in the Bay area for coping with and helping wild animals that come to your property:

1. First of all, please keep your pets inside, especially at night. The smoke and the potential encounters with passing displaced wildlife put both at risk. Do not leave pet food outside. It will attract wildlife.
2. You can leave shallow bowls of water outdoors for displaced wildlife that are passing through. Wild animals may wander into your yards and property, looking for safe places to shelter or rest. Providing water can help them cope with the heat and exhaustion. Place sticks and stones on one side of the shallow water bowls to give small animals an escape route if they become trapped. DO NOT leave food out.
3. If there is a swimming pool in your backyard or residential complex, make sure there is something that animals can use to climb out if they fall in when seeking water. A heavy rope, a board, or a sturdy branch can help a stranded animal crawl out and wander off to safety.
4. If an injured animal wanders into your yard, call the nearest rescue center in your area. In the Central Valley, call Critter Creek Wildlife Station 559-338-2415. We will instruct you on how to proceed based on the severity of the animal’s injuries.

So in the months ahead you may be seeing some of these displaced animals. We urge you to have some empathy for their situation. In time they will adjust and migrate until they are able to set up new territories. Give them that needed time.

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

Members receive our quarterly newsletter
Visit CritterCreek.org to see back issues of the Chronicle

Make checks payable to:
Animals for Education

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

Dangers of Snap Traps

Recently we had a young opossum brought to us with a bad leg injury. It had been caught in a mouse snap trap. These traps go back for decades as the “go to” method to kill mice. The problem, which is also the case in poisons, is that they don’t just hurt or kill the target animal. Infection had set in and this little opossum died from its injury. From the picture you can see that it would have lost that limb had it survived. We raise a few rats and mice to use to hunt our releasable hawks, owls, fox, coyotes, etc. so we know they are able to survive out in nature. Occasionally one of these rodents gets away and we need to trap it. Pictured are a variety of live traps that we find work pretty well. If you are trying to get rid of mice from a building, you can transport the live caught mouse to a nearby field and hope it doesn’t return. Mainly, just be mindful what you may catch when you set any trap even live traps. Also make sure you check them frequently. The animal is stressed in a confined space with no food or water. It doesn’t take them long to die under those conditions.



These are a few live traps, but many different types are available.



No Winter Open House

Unfortunately, the county we live in has done very little to lessen the covid positivity rate. Social gatherings, even with precautions in place, continue to be the main cause. We are not seeing a bright future for a Winter Open House. We are eager to get that aspect of Critter Creek up and running again, but we do not feel comfortable contributing to the pandemic. Hopefully 2021 will be a better year.

Success Finding a Diving Board

Our search is at an end! Tim Hughes, our intrepid volunteer, has found a diving board that we can butt up against the existing diving board to give our still growing alligators the necessary room to climb out of their pond. They are pretty active right now, so it may take a while to install it.



Volunteers at Work

A big thanks to Stuart Greer and Tim Hughes for clearing the tops of the two flight cages of debris and for setting up defenses from marauding critters along the bottom of the cages.

What Luck for This Bald Eaglet

On July 23rd of this year we picked up a baby bald eagle born in a nest at Shaver Lake. It was one of three eaglets. The parents ousted this chick apparently due to overcrowding as the brood kept growing. California Fish and Wildlife biologists handed the bird over to us. Since the Creek Fire, the biologists



think the nest tree was spared. The young eagles were more than old enough to have fledged and most certainly left the area once the fire started. The eagle in our care is doing very well. It prefers whole trout over any other fish and has a ravenous appetite. So if you have some freezer burned trout in your freezer give us a call. The Fish and Game hatchery is helping out with their culls, but I’m not sure they will be able to keep up.