Critter Creek Chronicle
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Critter Creek Chronicle

Newsletter of Critter Creek Wildlife Station **Summer 2025** **Volume 30, No. 2**

A Day of Injustice for Critter Creek

If you recently visited Critter Creek during our Spring Open House, you noticed the entire facility and cages were open to the public. Here's why. The last week of January, California Department of Fish and Wildlife conducted an unannounced inspection of our rehabilitation facility. One week later, they came with 10 people and confiscated every animal we had except for those under our education/exhibiting permit. Some of the animals were still being rehabbed and had not been here for 180 days. Some needed a permanent refuge, having been brought to us by their own California Department of Fish and Wildlife and settled in here as confiscated pets. Several were permitted under our United States Department of Agriculture permit but not yet under California Fish and Wildlife. They took everything—eagles, hawks, owls, crows, ravens, songbirds even Bernie, a little sparrow that was burned in one of the foothill fires and survived. We had intake (information) forms for every one of them, just not the paperwork they wanted. We do not have the money to hire a veterinarian on staff. We are fortunate that San Joaquin Vet. Hospital is willing to help us treat most wildlife that needs care. The vet records are with them. Because there were no records of vet care on site, they confiscated the animals. We had some of the animals longer than 180 days and had not yet moved them over to the education/exhibiting permit. Another reason cited for the confiscation. We also were using some permanently injured animals that were comfortable in their enclosures to foster the juvenile birds—a process sanctioned by the United States Department of Fish and Wildlife, but again we had no paperwork verifying the use of these birds for fostering. We had applied for an education/exhibiting permit for a young bobcat, but they ignored the application and confiscated the bobcat giving him to some other rehab. facility.

Of the animals confiscated, we do not know what happened to them. They said sixteen birds were euthanized; yet many of these birds were content and comfortable in our enclosures. Several were injured in their efforts to catch them and load them into carriers.

It was a dark day especially since there was little information as to why they raided us. I immediately sent a letter describing the process that permit inspections are supposed to follow based on my 45 years of experience. The inspector comes, inspects, lists what problems need to be corrected, the corrections are discussed and a time line is set for reinspection at which time the problems need to have been addressed. (Continued inside left)

There is no need to remove any animals. None of this was done. In about two weeks, we received a letter stating that our rehab permit had been suspended pending correction of ten deficiencies listed in the letter and a deadline of June 1st when Critter Creek would be reinspected.

After three months of expensive repairs and hundreds of hours of volunteer work, we were ready for the reinspection. Weeks before June 1st, we had sent our responses and descriptions of corrective actions addressing each of the deficiencies with documentation. We got no feedback at all. During this time, there was only one wildlife rehabber trying to meet the needs of the entire Central Valley. By the 1st of June, they were at capacity and no longer accepting animals. Animals had to be taken out of the region or left to die. We contacted the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, only to be told that they would not conduct a reinspection. The only reasons given were "on-going investigation and additional animal welfare concerns." I'm not sure they ever intended to reinstate our rehab permit.

I asked for more information in several follow-up letters and was finally told I would have to file a public records request (essentially a FOIA request).

We have spent four months trying to work with them to get whatever problems there are resolved. They have done nothing to move this along. They have nullified a $10,000 grant to continue our work and they are trying to deny a grant we were to receive from Fresno County. Financially, after all the grants that are being pulled and expenses meeting their agenda, we are unable to hire an attorney. The process to appeal this attack going forward is beyond my skill set.

We could use our supporters to speak up and contact media, contact California Fish and Wildlife, and inform other wildlife agencies. We need donations to keep Critter Creek operating, and volunteers to continue to keep the facility up to inspection standards. There are expectations from California Fish and Wildlife for a facility dealing with the volume of wildlife we are serving each year to have four full time employees. Yet, they pulled the grant that would have paid for a five-month employee.

We tried to do this quietly with little publicity in the hope that the California Department of Fish and Wildlife would also cooperate to remedy whatever issues there are, but they are refusing any efforts we have made to solve whatever problems are still unresolved.

We do not have the financial revenue stream of Marin County, Monterey Bay, San Diego, or Malibu, but we do an amazing job given our resources and number of wildlife (1600 animals in 2024) we serve. This spring has been difficult for wildlife in the Central Valley without our services. Yet, no effort is being made to reinstate and renew our rehabilitation permit.

Let us know how you can help!

Kaweah, Our Golden Eagle Now Has A New Education Mew

Towards the end of 2024, it was brought to our attention that even though Kaweah was in an enclosure with ample length and width, the height was too short by one foot. Even though Kaweah is missing a part of his wing, the requirements call for a 9-foot ceiling.

We were able to get a grant from the Glide Foundation to build the proper 9-foot enclosure. It took us months with all of the distractions we were dealing with, but he is now enjoying his new location.



New enclosure being built.





Left: New enclosure being built.

Right: Kaweah in his new educational mew.



Critter Creek Wildlife Station is now open to the public for tours mostly on weekends.
Please contact us at crittercreekwildlife@hughes.net to make arrangements.