Critter Creek Chronicle
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Critter Creek Chronicle

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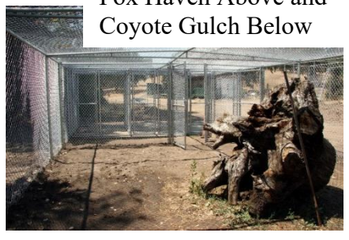
Celebrating 40 Years of Wildlife Rescue

The Creation of Critter Creek Wildlife Station--2006 – 2009

It is now 2006. That year we had a deck built in front of the infirmary. It provided shelter for our increasing number of small caging. As an eagle scout project, a young man built 4 well-constructed cages with an upstairs and downstairs level. They were so well-made, we continue to use them to this day. Also in the spring of 2006, we began fund raising for nicer, more natural enclosures for our permanent coyotes and fox as well as waterfowl including ducks, geese, heron, egrets, etc. With a generous donation from Dr. Settimi, we were able to start the coyote enclosure and fox enclosures. We were able to incorporate an oak tree in the grey fox enclosure to their utter delight. They love to climb in it and have made it their "den". For the red fox, we were able to incorporate a huge boulder pile—their favorite spot to sleep and scope out what is going on. Thus was the creation of Fox Haven.



Fox Haven Above and Coyote Gulch Below

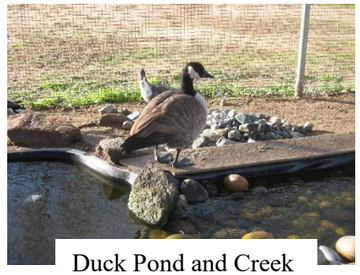


The coyotes had a large exercise yard with a few small trees and boulders to hide behind. They were thrilled to have such a spacious area to exercise. At night, they each had their own bedroom to retire for dinner and sleep. Thus was the creation of Coyote Gulch.
It took another year, 2007, to raise money for the extensive enclosures for ducks and geese and the accompanying enclosure for herons and egrets. Again, our goal was to try to make the enclosure as natural an environment as possible. The ducks and geese enclosure had to have a large pond. We purchased a huge fiberglass tank which had to be put together along with a thick pond liner. It was a chore digging the hole, setting the tank into place and then struggling with the pond liner to place it into a circular pond. We did prevail.



Heron/Egret Creek

Now how to keep the water clean without chemicals. We had a crash course in biofilters which involved another tank with almost the same water capacity, another pond liner, a pump, and tons of aquatic plants. We decided the heron/egret enclosure should have a waterfall and creek flowing through it to help aerate the water. The creek dumps



Duck Pond and Creek

into the duck pond, to be pumped into the biofilter that is then piped into the waterfall. “Voila” a biofilter using no chemicals. We do keep the system supplied with plenty of mosquito fish. Over the years the biofilter has filled with crawdads which come in handy to teach the raccoons how to “fish” before being released. It is hard to grow much vegetation in the duck/geese enclosure, but the enclosure was named Web-Foot Wash. We were able to grow trees and aquatic plants in the heron/egret enclosure which became Heron Creek. Both of these enclosures have been very successful in rehabilitating all the water birds we get each year.

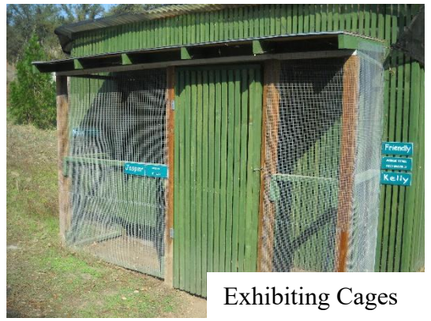
In 2007, several new “needs” arose. We had no separate enclosure for our intermediate raptors like hawks. We also needed enclosures for our small owls, and our new rapidly growing mountain lion cub. At the same time CDF&W confiscated a trio of exotic cats from a woman in Armona who had purchased them in Texas and transported them to her home in California. We deemed them the “tri-cats”—a Siberian Lynx named Achilles, a Caracal named Simba, and a Serval named Zeke. Zeke was the friendliest and was a huge hit with our volunteers. No zoo would take such common exotic cats, so we became their permanent home which triggered more fund raising. The tri-cats were used to being together, so we constructed an enclosure complete with three bedrooms and a large exercise area including limbs, platforms, and toys. That enclosure was completed in spring of 2008.



Tri-Cats Above, Large Hawk Cage Below



We were becoming experts at building wood, wire and slat bird enclosures. Beginning in the fall of 2007, we started building a large hawk flight cage 24X60X12, and three exhibiting cages for our permanent Kestrel (Friendly), Barn Owl (Jasper), and Great Horned Owl (Galileo). We picked a perfect spot for the screech owl and burrowing owl enclosure. There was a small boulder pile with a young oak tree growing out of it. We were able to bury a utility access box with tubes going to it underground. We built the enclosure around all of it. Over the years, the burrowing owls taught the screech owls to seek shelter from the summer heat by joining them in the underground den and passageways. For a long time, we had a camera in the den so visitors could see the owls underground. All three of these projects were completed by the winter of 2008.



Exhibiting Cages



Lee and Dan Welding Mountain Lion Cage Panels on Roof

Building the mountain lion enclosure was a challenge. We found a galvanized, steel, domed building kit to be the strongest structure to start with. The kit was expensive and arrived in the fall of 2008. Getting it set up took months. We would weld horse fence panels over the structure to create a strong enclosure for what was becoming a strong cat. Both Lee Kasper and Dan Turner were excellent welders and volunteered countless hours welding for weeks at a time. With the help of Albert Schrock, a local large equipment operator extraordinaire, we were able to move huge tree trunks and limbs and boulders into the enclosure. We built a cave with a lookout above it for the mountain lion’s viewing pleasure. Also attached to the cave was a pond where, as a juvenile cat, he often played and soaked on hot days. Years later we would also construct a loft above his bedroom which gave him an even higher vantage point. One of our supporters, Don Jensen, a retired farm machinery welder, created an incredible entry gate to the overall enclosure. Not only is the enclosure a beautiful structure but it serves the purpose well. My bedroom window isn’t far from the enclosure and on summer nights, I could hear our mountain lion romping around, batting his huge toy ball all over the enclosure. No wonder he slept through most hot summer days, but then what cat doesn’t.



Mountain Lion Welded Gate

One last project occurred in the winter of 2009. Cal Fire required us to pour a cement pad and place a 10,000-gallon water tank high enough on the property for them to use to fight fires. Since it is gravity fed, they could still use it even if electricity failed. Over the years, we have come to truly appreciate that resource.



Water Tank Arrival

This segment only brings us to 2009, yet many of our most ambitious projects have been built. These projects embody the spirit of Critter Creek Wildlife Station—we strive to meet the needs of Central Valley’s wildlife.

PayPal Fraud

We are a small non-profit, Critter Creek Wildlife Station, that opened an account with PayPal in 2015. They administer donations to our charity through GoFundMe, PayPal Giving, and Venmo. So. in order to deposit these donations periodically, they have access to our bank account.

Around the middle of November, 2025, we started getting frequent requests from them to change our password. Then around the first of December, they paused the account. Once we were able to get into the account, we saw that there were thousands of dollars of fraudulent transactions. We went to their “Resolution Center’ to report the unauthorized activities, but when we clicked on a fraudulent transaction, their response was “This transaction is not eligible for review.” This happened for transaction after transaction. It was clear these were fraudulent transactions—trips to Singapore, expensive Apple phones, etc. We could get no one on the phone and the “chat” response was basically robotic.

Then I got my bank statement towards the end of December and discovered that PayPal had made dozens of withdrawals from our non-profit bank account totaling $10,000. I reported this to our bank and within 24 hours, they declared the withdrawals to be fraud and closed the account. Within 48 hours, they opened a new account for us and reimbursed us the $10,000. They then went after PayPal who did listen to them.

However, there were still thousands of dollars in the PayPal account which they had doled out for all these unauthorized purchases. We have, for the past six months, been trying to get them to give back the money we raised over the holidays. They keep denying that it is fraud saying these transactions follow a pattern of our spending. Our tech volunteer went back through all of our transactions with PayPal from 2015 to the middle of November 2025. We seldom spent over $500 on anything. Then in the middle of November, many of the transactions were over $500 into thousands of dollars. Previously most of the purchases came to Critter Creek’s address, never someone or somewhere else. They said we could appeal their decision, but there was no place on their website to do that. We finally, through “chat”, got someone who said they would file the claim/appeal for us. All of the appeals were denied.

Since PayPal has been cut off from withdrawing money from our bank account, they now claim we owe them $3,134.93. Our claim is at least $8,000 of our money was used to pay for unauthorized transactions from our PayPal account. They are threatening to get our non-profit status revoked by the IRS unless we pay. They told us to claim we never received the merchandise, but all those claims were denied.

We have been advised to file an FBI fraud report. A while ago, PayPal came out publicly to admit they were hacked in July and tons of personal information was taken. I don’t see how they can continue to deny they were hacked and their security system never flagged these transactions.

The loss of this money is a serious blow to the operation of our wildlife rescue non-profit. I would appreciate any advice you have to pursue the recovery of our funds and to create a fraud case on PayPal.