



# Paw Print

Spring/Summer 2021

## It Takes a Village

*Rehabbing is no small task, especially when it comes to a rare spotted skunk*



### REHABBERS' TALES



PHOTOS BY DEBRA WEBSTER

It took nearly one year and three wildlife rescue groups to make sure one little spotted skunk made it back into the wild.

The rare beauty, especially rare to El Dorado County, was found orphaned in Bishop last spring. Jenny Curtis of Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care, Inc. initially took in the female and cared for her as she reached maturity. Unfortunately, her original habitat in Bishop had been ravaged by wildfires over the summer, which prohibited her release at the point of origin.

With the weather turning cold in the Tahoe region, Jenny reached out to Sierra Wildlife Rescue in hopes that the 3-pound skunk could not only be released in a more temperate climate but also near her own species. El Dorado County is home to hundreds of the larger striped skunk species but, to date, only two spotted skunks have been taken into care at SWR and that was four years ago. (That pair was successfully rehabbed and released under the watchful eye of Debbie Datilio, former SWR president and skunk rehabber extraordinaire.)

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As this *Paw Print* goes to press, spring is bursting out everywhere you look.

One sure sign of the new season and the renewal it offers is the birth of new life among our native wildlife neighbors. As in previous years, some of those neighbors, either orphaned or injured, will be looking to Sierra Wildlife Rescue and its volunteers to rescue, rehabilitate, and return them to their native habitat. Once again, we expect to care for hundreds of songbirds at our Baby Bird Nursery (scheduled to open May 1) as well as countless other animals, including raptors, fawns, squirrels, rabbits, opossums, and others at SWR volunteers' in-home rehab sites.

Doing so takes committed volunteers and financial resources. However, this year because of Covid-19 restrictions, SWR was not able to hold its major an-

nual fundraiser, the Toast to Wildlife. Instead, we have launched a series of mini-fundraising efforts, including an "Operation Feed the Wild Babies" campaign to raise \$5000 to purchase mealworms for this year's Baby Bird Nursery season. (Each bird can consume up to 200 mealworms a day so the tab adds up quickly), a Spring Baby Shower mailing, and participating in the Big Day of Giving, May 6. To offer a helping hand, please visit our website at [www.sierrawildliferescue.org](http://www.sierrawildliferescue.org) or keep an eye on your mailbox and as well as your Twitter and Facebook accounts.

Every dollar we raise helps give us the resources to fulfill our mission. Please consider giving generously... it's the neighborly thing to do.

—Michael Damer

### REHABBERS' TALES

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I offered to take in the spotted skunk and make arrangements for her to be released near Quintette, the point of origin and release of the pair rehabbed by Debbie. Unfortunately, by the time arrangements were completed, a serious cold snap was on its way. I then offered to let the spotted beauty "winter over" in my 6'x12' skunk pen normally used for the larger striped species each year.

She seemed to agree with the arrangement. Live mice, mealworms, and crickets were routinely dropped in to sharpen her hunting skills. And I would often find her curled up in her sleep cubby immediately above the heating pad running 24/7. Not only did she continue to thrive and put on weight, she was featured in a segment highlighting SWR rehab efforts that aired on CBS13 Sacramento.

The Quintette arrangement began to lose its shine with another year passing between her potential release and the release of the other



spotted skunks. I happened to catch a Facebook post by Santa Barbara Wildlife Care Network in December where they released a handsome male spotted skunk two months earlier. A few phone calls and emails later, arrangements were made to have my little female make the 400-mile trip and be released at the exact location as the spunky male.

Dr. Avery Burkowitz, the Santa Barbara group's full-time veterinarian, and I agreed to let the weather warm up a bit and the rodent population bloom prior to her release. We choose March 10, 2021, as the date to convene early evening at the Romero Canyon Trail Head above Montecito. After a quarter-mile hike uphill (no small feat packing a skunk in her cubby), we reached the confluence of two year-round creeks. With a little coaxing, the spotted beauty left her cubby, climbed the short hillside, and disappeared into a rocky outcrop. A truly perfect ending to this otherwise successful release? A litter of spotted skunk kits next spring.

—Debra Webster

# Mind Your Own Business...the Hawk Says

**O**n my way back from milking the goats at the barn one morning I noticed something fairly large jumping around down by my compost area.

I grabbed the binoculars and saw a Red Shouldered Hawk hopping on the ground. He'd sit for a bit, then flap up and come down, then flap up again and come back down a little further away and sit for a bit.

I watched him repeat this action several times and became concerned that maybe he couldn't fly or there was something wrong with his leg as I could see that the talons were curled on one leg each time he flapped up. Finally, my husband suggested that I walk slowly down there and see if he would fly away from me or just flap and hop like he had been doing, before I called Sierra Wildlife Rescue.

So I made my way down and slowly walked to-



PHOTO BY MARY HESS

ward him, at which point, amid very loud, and I'm sure angry calls, he flew up into a nearby tree. I walked over to where he had been. There was a gopher run going along just below the surface. My guess is that the gopher was working just under the soil and every time it moved the dirt the hawk was jumping on that spot trying to catch the gopher with its talons.

While I stood there the hawk flew back right over my head, telling me again in very loud and in no uncertain terms that he was annoyed. And he landed again in another nearby tree. I was too slow to get the hint and get out of there so after a couple of minutes he flew off,

once again voicing his disgust at my interference with him getting his breakfast.

This was not a random action as later that day in another area I saw him doing the same thing again.

—Mary Hess

## So You Found a...

**I**f you find an animal you think needs help, please call the hotline number below for instructions before picking it up. If safe to do so, using light work gloves, place the animal in a well-ventilated cardboard box or pet carrier with several soft cloths, like baby blankets or T-shirts, under and over it. Do not give it food or water.

If the animal needs to be transported, keep it in a well-ventilated cardboard box with a lid or in a closed paper bag (if a bird or reptile) and in a warm, dark and quiet place until you can get it to a SWR volunteer.

SWR's Wildlife Center at 777 Pleasant Valley Rd.,

Diamond Springs, is open to the public for drop-off of injured/ill/orphaned **BIRDS ONLY** from May through August, 8am until 6pm. (If a bird needs help earlier than 8am or later than 6pm, call the number below to reach

*rabbit...skunk...songbird...deer...*

an SWR rehabber for animal care and info 365 days a year.) Please do not drop off a bird or a donation unless someone is there.

Visit our website at [www.sierrawildliferescue.org](http://www.sierrawildliferescue.org) for more information and consider volunteering if you would like to be trained as a wildlife rehabilitator!

# Youth Project Benefits Wildlife

**H**ands4Hope – Youth Making A Difference is a nonprofit, youth-driven organization with the mission to inspire and empower youth in leadership and service. It offers hands-on education and community engagement opportunities to youth from grades K-12 through school-based and after-school programs in Sacramento and El Dorado counties.

Hands4Hope has a catchy tagline, “Youth Making a Difference,” and that’s exactly what a group of students at Placerville’s **Herbert Green Middle School** recently did. After exploring several organizations, the students decided to offer a hand to Sierra Wildlife Rescue by developing and selling a 2021 calendar and providing the proceeds to SWR.

“Hands4Hope teaches students about leadership, responsibility and community involvement,” commented **Madison Matlack**, one of the 14 students active in the school’s Hands4Hope club. The club secretary, **Sophia Hinchliffe**, learned firsthand that caring for wildlife is important when she saw her father rescuing several orphaned birds and bringing them to SWR for rehabbing.

SWR is very grateful to these students and the positive difference their efforts will make in helping to provide SWR with the resources to rescue, rehabilitate, and return injured and orphaned wildlife to their native environment. For more information on Hands4Hope –



Youth Making A Difference, visit their website at [www.hands4hopeyouth.org](http://www.hands4hopeyouth.org).



## Leave a Legacy for Wildlife

**F**or over 25 years, Sierra Wildlife Rescue has been dedicated to the mission of preserving El Dorado County’s wildlife through rescuing, rehabilitating, and re-releasing injured and orphaned native birds and mammals back into the wild.

By making a gift to Sierra Wildlife Rescue in your will, trust, or other financial plan, you can help protect and

preserve wildlife in El Dorado County for generations to come.

Contact your attorney, tax adviser, or financial planner to discuss ways you can help Sierra Wildlife Rescue, or consider using this sample bequest language in your will or trust.

Bequest language: *“I give to Sierra Wildlife Rescue, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization with its principal offices at 777 Pleasant Valley Rd., Diamond Springs, CA (mailing address: P.O. Box 2127, Placerville, CA 95667), the sum of \$\_\_\_\_\_ (or 100% or \_\_\_% of my residual estate), to be used for the organization’s general purposes of protecting and preserving El Dorado County wildlife.”*

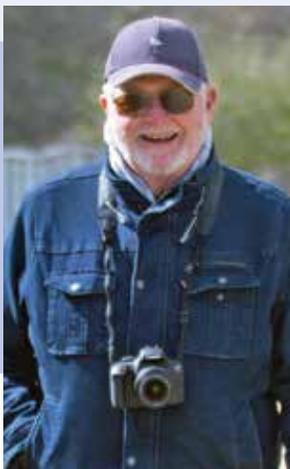


# Wildlife of Cameron Park Lake

*Through the Lens of Rich Caulfield*



(Pictured clockwise from upper left) Great white pelican; otter; mother mute swan and cygnets; American bald eagle; green heron.



### **About the Photographer:**

*A semi-retired lawyer, Rich Caulfield started walking Cameron Park Lake in the spring of 2019. Intrigued by the bountiful wildlife he observed, he purchased a digital camera with a 300mm lens and started documenting the birds and mammals that frequent the lake.*

# California Mule Deer

**P**robably one of the most common wild animal sightings in the Sierra Foothills is the California mule deer. While they can cause havoc in our gardens, their graceful presence in our midst is a thing of beauty.

To distinguish the California mule deer from the white-tailed deer, a deer common to the rest of the United States, look for the petite ears on the white-tail contrasted to the very large “mule-like” ears on the mule deer. Also, from the behind, the white-tailed deer has an enormous expanse of white on the underside of its tail while the mule deer has a much smaller dark tail.

**Size:** The mule deer’s height ranges from 31”-42” at the shoulders and nose-to-tail length of 3.9’- 6.9’. Adult males can weigh up to 330 pounds, averaging around 200 pounds. Females typically weigh 95-200 pounds, averaging around 150 pounds.

**Habitat/Diet:** California mule deer prefer hilly terrain, particularly an oak woodland habitat. They usually browse within a mile or two of a water source, typically lakes or streams. Mule deer are browsers and take in over 90% of their diet from shrubs

(Below) A California mule deer recuperating from an injury under the care of a SWR rehabber. Note the extra-large ears.



PHOTOS BY DAVE COOK

(Above) Fawns are born with spots on their bodies to help camouflage them. Since newborn fawns are typically too weak to keep up with their moms for the first few weeks of life, they rest in vegetation while she’s gone foraging for food for up to 12 hours at a time. The spots will disappear within a few months.

and leaves and the balance from grasses. During the summer, they consume many types of berries while in the winter they’ll consume conifers such as twigs of Douglas fir, juniper, and sage. Mule deer will feed year-round on acorns and have been known to sample pet food as well. They are picky eaters and will eat the most nutritious plants and parts of plants instead of consuming large quantities of lower nutrition feed such as grasses.

Fawns and does often forage together in family groupings while bucks will often travel alone or with other bucks. They are most active near dawn and dusk.

**Breeding:** The rutting (mating) season for California mule deer occurs in autumn when the doe is in estrus for only a few days each season. Bucks aggressively compete for mates and does will often begin estrus again if they don’t mate the first time. The gestation period is approximately 200 days and females usually give birth to two fawns. Fawns remain with their mother throughout the summer and will be weaned in autumn.

**Interesting Facts:** Bucks shed their antlers each year, typically in February, and then immediately start growing new ones. While capable of running, mule deer are often observed “stotting” or “pronking,” meaning all four feet leave and come down together as they glide across the landscape. California mule deer usually live 9-11 years in the wild.



# New Release Cage for Doves and Pigeons Completed

When long-time dove and pigeon rehabber Judy Monestier recently sold her house, SWR had the challenge of finding another location for a release cage for those birds. It was decided that the perfect location for a new release cage would be in the backyard of the SWR Center in Diamond Springs.



LS COUPER DVM PHOTOGRAPHY

The cage's construction was made possible by a grant from **The Latrobe Fund**, which was created several years ago by a few local philanthropists with the goal of providing grants for local nonprofit organizations within El Dorado County.

"Thanks to the generosity of The Latrobe Fund, SWR was able to build a first-class release cage for doves and pigeons," commented Joan Winton, a SWR board member and team leader for doves and pigeons.

The cage, which was completed in April, is an "L" shape configuration with two 19-foot-long arms and is 8' wide at the ends and 8' high.

"This size is required for larger species of birds for developing muscle mass and for conditioning feathers for flight and release back into the wild," Winton added. "Now we have an essential tool for rehabbing these birds... and it's in our own backyard."

(Above) Mourning dove; (below) new release cage waits for doors.



## More Ways You Can Help

Looking for additional ways to help our local wildlife? Donate your Rewards Points from **Holiday Market** to us, set your **Amazon Smile** account to donate to us, or view our much-needed items in our **Amazon** and **Chewy wish lists**.

For Amazon Smile, go to [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com) and login with your existing Amazon account, username and password. Type Sierra Wildlife Rescue in the "pick

your charitable organization" box and click on the "Donate Items from A Charity List" box.

With Chewy's "Wish List," simply select Sierra Wildlife Rescue, shop from its "Wish List," then check out and let Chewy take it from there, shipping direct to our door at no extra cost to you. Go to [chewy.com](https://chewy.com) and click on the "give back" tab along the top of the screen and select Sierra Wildlife Rescue.

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President: Michael Damer | Vice President: Pamela Watson

Treasurer: Bo Thompson | Secretary: Peg Campbell

Members at Large: Laurin Peterlin | Gail Crawford

Denise Pané | Joan Winton | Kristi Schroeder

Lisa Seto | Debbie Buckles | Vivian Kane

Shauna Lea Sullivan | Jill Tripoli

### SWR BOARD MEETINGS

Held the third Tuesday of the month at 6pm (7pm May through August). The meetings are open to the public and are currently being held on the Zoom platform. If you wish to join a meeting, contact Michael Damer at [mjdamer@gmail.com](mailto:mjdamer@gmail.com) to be added to the attendance list.

### OUR MISSION STATEMENT

*The purpose of Sierra Wildlife Rescue is the preservation of El Dorado County's wildlife, which we work to achieve in two ways: First, we rehabilitate and release injured and orphaned wild animals. Second, we educate the public about living with wildlife and respecting its habitat. Each of these is important to the long-term health and well-being of our area's wildlife.*



**SIERRA WILDLIFE RESCUE**

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## ***Wildlife of Cameron Park Lake (page 5)***



# **Come Join Us!**

**C**ome enjoy the wonderful fellowship among people who share your concerns about wildlife and the environment! Sierra Wildlife Rescue always needs new home rehabbers for all species. If you would like to learn more about home rehabbing, would like to feed baby birds at our Wildlife Center in the summer, or would be available for transporting animals from rescuers to rehabbers, please call us at **530-621-2650**, or check out our website, [www.sierrawildliferescue.org](http://www.sierrawildliferescue.org).

SWR provides training, licensing, and most supplies. As a home rehabber, you will attend training classes, join a team and work with an experienced mentor for awhile; someone will always be available to advise and assist you. No prior experience is necessary—all you need is a concern for wild animals and the willingness to learn.

Rehabbing and returning wild creatures to their natural environment is more exciting and fulfilling than you can imagine!