

Tracks



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*Black-crowned Night Heron
Cover photo: Paul Morsen, Wildlife Photography*

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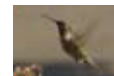
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From the President...

The end of the year always makes us look back over the events of the past 12 months. As a board member, and more recently as board president, one of my duties is to compile a list of WCSV accomplishments. I am always so proud of all that we have been able to achieve through the incredible hard work of our volunteers, staff and the generosity of our members. This year my feelings are mixed with nostalgia, however. After five years, I am stepping down from board membership. I remember clearly the day I first heard about the Wildlife Center's existence. I lecture at San Jose State, and one of my students, who was an animal care volunteer, was describing to the class her experience. As a longtime animal lover, I was hooked and signed up right away. I soon found myself with the varied experiences of feeding mealworms to robins, tube feeding doves, and bottle feeding squirrels. That's interesting, because I am trained in nutrition. I never expected to extend my expertise beyond my own species, however. My two years of doing animal care was an incredibly enriching experience. Within six months of becoming a volunteer, I was recruited to join the board, and ever since have been involved in event planning, fund raising, and managing a budget. I found that by working to ensure adequate funds for the Center I was able to care for not one or two animals, but thousands, and that has been extremely gratifying. I thank you all for allowing me this privilege.

I am not leaving the Wildlife Center. I would like to return to my original reason for joining WCSV – to care for animals. Giving direct, hands-on care to injured wildlife elicited very powerful emotions for me, and I would like to return to that. In addition, having a periodic change in board members is important to keeping enthusiasm fresh and ideas flowing. Three of our four board officers will be new to their positions, so I would like to take a moment and introduce them.



Kathleen Cahill, President

President: Patricia Abreu. What hasn't Pat done, and what volunteer doesn't know her? Pat has been on the board for four years, conducts orientations for new volunteers, does on-site animal care, is on the event planning team, and is, in general, a great cheerleader for WCSV and everyone associated with it. She is a rare person who cares passionately for people and animals.

Vice President. Continuing as VP is Lynne Grob. She has been with the board for two years, has a BS in Zoology, has served as an instructor at the Wildlife Conservation Society, a docent at the Bronx Zoo, and had such exotic experiences as banding penguins in Argentina and doing gorilla census in Rwanda.

Treasurer: Larry Stites. Larry is a CPA, holds an MBA, and has more than 25 years of financial management experience. He also volunteers for the Trail Center. He is a wonderful addition to our team.

Secretary: Dayna Grabeklis. Dayna has extensive experience in the non-profit world as a program coordinator, office manager, and event coordinator, for such wide-ranging organizations such as the Second Harvest Food Bank to the Healing Woman Foundation.

I am very confident that the growth we have had for the past 12 years will continue in 2007 and beyond with the exceptional people who donate their time, energy, and funds to helping our local wildlife.

Tracks...

Tracks is the newsletter for the Wildlife Center of Silicon Valley. Submit photos and articles to janet@wcsv.org for consideration.

Our Mission

To provide high quality care and rehabilitation of injured, sick and orphaned wildlife within the Silicon Valley community. Through educational programs, we foster a positive coexistence between the general public and wildlife and encourage an interest in and concern for wildlife conservation issues.

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*Coyote
Ashley Kinney*



Western Scrub Jay *Aphelocoma californica*



As competition goes, the Western scrub jay is just as much a formidable hoarder of acorns as any other animal. In a single season, an individual jay can bury and store upwards of several thousand acorns.

In this way, Western scrub jays not only ensure themselves an advantageous edge for surviving winter and a greater probability of their

own reproductive success in the following year, but also unknowingly act as one of the greatest contributors to the reproductive success of oak trees in their community.

Of the many ways to survive and prosper in the wild, it is through this cycle of giving and receiving that Western scrub jays have truly earned their biological niche in the natural balance shared by all living things.

Who Am I?

by James Link

Identifiable by its white throat, outlined in blue and the well-defined contrast between its smoky brown back and dark blue upper and lower parts, the Western scrub jay is a regular sight in most of California. In fact, the successful survival of this species of jay has been observed throughout the majority of the southwestern United States and into parts of Mexico.

Western scrub jays are omnivorous feeders. Their main diet consists of nuts, seeds and berries; however, they also supplement their diets with food items, such as small frogs, lizards and insects.

In California, scrub jays prefer to live in oak scrublands and oak woodlands. Both are habitats in which a staple food source of acorns is supplied. Like many other animal species in its habitat, the Western scrub jay has adapted to rely heavily on the annual production of acorns.

When acorns begin to ripen in the fall, a large number of animals begin to eat them. Black-tail deer, feral pigs, and turkeys all compete for immediate consumption of the energy-rich nuts, while other animal species, such as gray squirrels, wood rats, and acorn woodpeckers, tuck them away for times of scarcity.



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Living with Wildlife

by Shira Grubl

Part I: Preventing Problems with Raccoons

There is an old saying that the easiest problem to fix is the one that never happens. This is especially true for problems with raccoons. These intelligent, curious animals have extremely nimble hands and are prone to getting into just about anything. Luckily, with a little planning, it's not that difficult to stay just a few steps ahead of them.

The key to preventing problems with raccoons is limiting their access to food and lodging. Just like any enterprising, free-loading human, raccoons are always on the lookout for a free meal and a comfortable place to stay. And when they find either one at your house, the problems begin. Raccoons that go onto people's porches to dine on cat or dog food left out overnight are much more likely to get into scrapes with domestic animals that are sharing (and maybe even defending) the same food. And raccoons eating your garbage or garden can cause a big mess. Not to mention the potential problem of sharing your attic or chimney with an uninvited masked guest. So what can you do? Consult the tips below for ideas on how to make your place less attractive to raccoons.

By not feeding raccoons, either intentionally or unintentionally, you will also be helping to keep them healthy. With all the junk food available, urban raccoons can weigh up to twice as much as more rural, wild raccoons! Overly plentiful food also causes raccoon populations to skyrocket in urban areas. Some biologists estimate that the number of raccoons per square mile in cities and suburbs may be up to 20 times as high as in more rural areas! It's not a big surprise that problems arise when you pack a large number of raccoons into a small area shared with people.

However, no matter what steps you take as an individual, raccoons will always be present in the Bay Area, and that's not a bad thing. They



play a very important place in the urban ecosystem: controlling the rodent population, eating snails, and contributing to keeping our neighborhoods free of garbage. So don't panic if you see a raccoon passing through your yard at night. It's probably not doing any damage and is helping to keep your yard free of rats and snails. If you spot a raccoon sleeping in a tree, consider leaving it alone as it is not harming anyone. It's better for everyone sleeping in the tree than in your attic!

How To Reduce Food Sources

Don't leave pet food outside at night. Bowls of cat and dog food are one of the biggest culprits in attracting raccoons. If your neighbors leave pet food outside overnight, talk to them and let them know that other animals are likely visiting your neighborhood to eat it. If you are feeding stray cats, put food out in the morning and take it in before dusk.

Secure your trash cans. Use bungee cords to keep the lids shut, tie them to a rack or fence to prevent them from being knocked over or keep them in the garage or a shed until garbage day. Never leave trash outside in a garbage bag alone, always place it in a trash can. If you live in an apartment or condominium complex, keep the lid on the garbage dumpster closed, especially at night. You might want to consider trying to educate your neighbors on the importance of keeping the lid shut. Just be sure not to trap any raccoons inside!

Harvest all vegetables and fruits as soon as they are ripe. Pick up fruit that has fallen on the ground. You can also put smooth metal guards around fruit tree trunks to keep raccoons from climbing up to gather fruit. Metal

guards (also called "flashing") should be a minimum of 18 inches wide and placed on the tree trunk five to six feet above the ground.

Don't leave small animals, such as rabbits, outside overnight. If it is absolutely necessary to keep a small animal outside, use heavy gauge wire to enforce the enclosure.

Ideally, cats should not be left outside overnight and dogs should be on a leash. At the very least, inspect your yard for raccoons before letting dogs loose in the yard at night. While raccoons are not generally aggressive, they can inflict damage when cornered or harassed by any animal.

Protect your koi ponds if they are not deeper than three feet by covering the top with nylon netting or wire mesh. This deters raccoons since they do not like to walk on unstable surfaces. If your pond is deeper than three feet, make sure to include hiding places such as ceramic pipes, cinder blocks with holes or arrangements of underwater rocks.

If you install fresh sod, take preventative measures to keep raccoons from digging it up as they go after grubs. Raccoons have a particular penchant for uprooting newly laid sod because of all the tasty bugs found under it. The most effective strategy seems to be to cover the area in chicken wire and stake it down. Keep it in place until the new grass is well-rooted (you can even mow over the chicken wire). If you want to prevent raccoons from digging in an established lawn (much less common), you can buy predatory nematodes at your local nursery or online that will kill the grubs the raccoons eat.



Monique Lee

How To Keep Raccoons Out Of Your Lodgings

Make sure all vents and openings are covered with ¼ inch mesh hardware cloth.

Cover your chimney with a spark arrestor (required by law in some places), specially made cap or hardware cloth.

Do more extensive home repairs in the fall so that raccoons with young do not enter the area being repaired and become trapped.

If you have a cat or dog door, either lock it at night or get the kind that requires a magnet on your animal's collar to open. Raccoons have been known to enter houses through pet doors and consume both pet and human food.

Don't leave your garage or shed open at night.

Trim trees and brush that grow alongside your foundation or over your roof to prevent easy access to the attic or crawl space.

Clear brush piles if you are not OK with raccoons using them for shelter, hunting rodents in them or using them as a latrine.

Cover your pool and hot tub if you are not OK with raccoons investigating it and possibly dunking their food in it.

Part II: Solving Problems with Raccoons

Once you have a problem with raccoons, it will take a consistent effort on your part to resolve the problem humanely as raccoons are persistent animals and return frequently to areas where they remember finding good food and lodgings. The first step is identifying what caused the problem and removing the attractant (pet food, fallen fruit, etc.). The next step, and main component of any problem solving plan, is deterrence. You want to make the area as unpleasant for raccoons as possible. One of the easiest ways to do this is to place ammonia-soaked rags in the problem area every evening for at least 10-14 days. If you have raccoons in a part of your house, you can also use bright lights and a radio to make them feel less at home. Make sure the raccoon(s) have left before closing off access to the part of your house they occupied. One way to do this is to sprinkle flour around the exit to their hiding place and check frequently in the evening for



footprints leaving the area. In the spring, it is best to leave mothers nesting with newborns alone until they move on their own. If this is not possible, you may need to be extra patient as it can take longer for mothers with young to relocate. For more ideas and strategies tailored to specific problems, check out our website at www.wcsv.org or give us a call at (408) 929-9453.

Part III: Special Situations

If you find raccoon feces, or what you think might be raccoon feces, in your yard, you will need to take extra precautions to clean it up. This is because raccoons sometimes carry a parasite (the roundworm *Baylisascaris procyonis*) that can be fatal to humans and pets if ingested. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommends wearing gloves and a mask when disposing of raccoon feces. The feces should be put in your garbage bin, buried or burned. Cement and wooden areas where feces have been deposited should be rinsed with boiling water. Be sure to immediately remove all clothing and your shoes after clean-up and wash them and your hands thoroughly. Once you have cleaned up the area, place ammonia-soaked rags around the spot for 10-14 days to prevent raccoons from returning to the site.

If you have small children, don't let them play in previously contaminated areas or woodpiles, which raccoons often use as latrines. It's also a good idea to cover sandboxes at

night to prevent raccoons from defecating in them. For more information, consult the CDC website:

www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dpd/parasites/baylisascaris/factsht_baylisascaris.htm.

Resources:

Wild Neighbors: The Humane Approach To Living With Wildlife. Humane Society of the United States. Hadidian, John; Hodge, Guy R.; and Grandy, John W. editors.

Living With Wildlife: How To Enjoy, Cope With, And Protect North America's Wild Creatures Around Your Home And Theirs. The California Center For Wildlife. Landau, Diane and Stump, Shelley.

Employer Matching Programs for Charitable Contributions

Employer matching programs are a great way to boost your donation to the Wildlife Center. Check today to see if your company offers such a program. It's a great way to double your donation!



Once Upon a Time...

by Pam Lavin

A few decades ago, when the Wildlife Center was a small extension of the Humane Society, there were few consistent protocols, training classes or rigid supervision by the Department of Fish and Game. The early volunteers and supporters were drawn together by their love of and interest in wildlife and a desire to learn by trial and error. Here are a few fond memories of animals that touched our lives.

In the late sixties, a baby squirrel was floating in a neighbor's pool. At first glance, I thought it was a pine cone but soon realized it needed help. I jumped in the pool and shook it by the tail. It sneezed and then entered our lives. Of course, by today's standards we did everything wrong. "Squirrelly" became part of our household. I fed him when I fed my new baby and let him play with the older children and sleep on their pillows. He went to school for Show and Tell and delighted the students by running up and down the curtains. Two of my daughters "taught" him how to climb by putting him on our large avocado tree trunk. Of course, he got stuck and had to be coaxed down. Once, unseen, he fell in the toilet!

As he matured and started nipping, he went to live outside and would signal for food by running up and down the outside screens. He returned less and less frequently and finally joined the local squirrel tribe.

Our next rescues were two fawns, one brought to us with an IV in his back. As they slept behind the sofa, I drove to Foothill College parking lot, where a strange lady unloaded several plastic bags of white powder while students stared at us; heaven only knows what they thought—but of course, it was only fawn formula!

The fawns lived on a small fenced back porch with a convenient hose bib for easy cleaning, unless we took them out front to play with the dogs and neighborhood children. Nowadays, our rescued fawns live in isolated sanctuaries, tended and fed by one volunteer and freed as wild as when they came in. Not our pair, Bambi and Bruno. When the

time came to release them, a kind gentleman had them flown by helicopter to his property and deer herd in Grass Valley.

One night, I was called to pick up a grown deer at an emergency animal clinic. A friend and I loaded the large sedated buck into the station wagon and insouciantly brought him home, completely unaware that if he had awakened, he could have trashed the car, not to mention cause us serious harm.

And the birds! I remember the baby great horned owl who sat in a box by my bed one night with his huge eyes fixed on me whenever I turned on the light. Or, the injured hummingbird who stayed for a few days in a shoebox fearlessly dipping his bill into a syringe of sugar water.

On another call, I met a fellow volunteer at a house where a red-tailed hawk, while chasing a dove, had flown through the open front door and up the staircase to alight on a window ledge. We trapped him with a netted pole and brought him out, past the gaping homeowner, the poor dead dove lying at her feet.

These are a few memories of the early days which may make current volunteers, much better trained and knowledgeable than we were then, shake their heads. However, we take such great pride in the Center's constantly growing rescue work and education of the public!

Editor's note: We want to thank Pam for her many years of devotion to the wild animals. She is an inspiration to all of us and a true friend to WCSV. Rehabilitation has come a long way in the last two decades— to become a recognized profession by federal and state authorities is a testament to those who preceded us!



Dina Hawkins

Winter Tips

by Shira Gruhl

Winter is typically the time of year when people use the most energy in the Bay Area. Cutting back on how much energy you use, even just a little, will help reduce pollution and thus benefit wildlife. There isn't a lot of wildlife activity at this time of year and with a few exceptions (such as Anna's hummingbirds), most animals are not nesting or raising young. The best thing you can do is to give wild animals the space they need and make sure you aren't putting out any wet bird food or toxins that will harm them.

Do ...

Adjust your outside watering for the wetter winter season in order to help conserve water. Santa Clara Valley Water District recommends turning off your watering system starting in December and keeping it off for the duration of the rainy season.

Try to reduce the amount of energy you use this winter. Using less energy means you use less non-renewable resources and contribute less to global warming-- all good things for both people and wildlife in Silicon Valley (and elsewhere). While most people know that you can save energy by turning down your thermostat, you may not know that low-flow showerheads and faucet aerators can reduce your water heating costs by 10-16 % without any decrease in the warmth of your house. Or that fixing leaky heating ducts can reduce your natural gas usage (and bill) by up to 20%. Another simple thing you can do is open blinds and drapes during the day to let sunlight heat your house and close them at night to keep heat in. For a bunch more tips, visit PG&E's website at <http://www.pge.com/docs/pdfs/res/rebates/123GasTipsFall05v3.pdf>.

Turn off lights when you aren't in a room. During the winter it gets dark much earlier, so more lights get left on. You can further decrease the amount of energy you use for lighting by installing compact fluorescent light bulbs, which use only a quarter to a third the energy of incandescent bulbs. According to the Energy Star website, replacing just one incandescent bulb with a compact fluorescent one will cut 450

pounds of emissions from being released into the environment! Just remember to dispose of them at a hazardous waste collection site (most hardware stores will dispose of them for you) since they contain mercury. For more information go to http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=cfls.pr_cfls.

Don't ...

If you feed birds, don't leave waterlogged bird feeders outside for long periods of time. Wet bird seed goes bad very quickly. If possible, take your bird feeder inside as soon as it starts to rain. If you're not home, dump the wet bird seed when you get home, clean the feeder and refill it with fresh, dry seed. You can avoid wasting lots of bird seed by not filling your bird feeders completely during the winter or placing feeders in an area sheltered from rain, such as under an awning.

Don't stray from the trail when hiking, skiing or snowboarding. It might be tempting to do some bushwacking in winter since there is significantly less undergrowth than in other seasons, but venturing off trails disturbs wildlife and can damage plants that wildlife depend on for food. It can also cause or speed up erosion, a major problem on hillsides in the Bay Area. You might not think your actions make much of a difference, but when you consider all of the hikers out there, every person's shortcut quickly adds up.

Don't dispose of old antifreeze in storm drains, sewage systems, your garbage containers or septic systems. Instead, if you're changing your own antifreeze, contact Santa Clara's free hazardous waste disposal program at (408) 299-7300 to arrange to drop off your old antifreeze. Additionally, if you see green fluid leaking under your car, it is antifreeze and you should make an appointment to bring your car to a mechanic. Antifreeze made with ethylene glycol is very toxic for humans, pets and wildlife, and if it is leaked or dumped improperly, you not only pollute the environment, but risk poisoning an animal attracted by its sweet taste. Although California passed a law in 2002 requiring the addition of a bittering agent to antifreeze containing ethylene glycol, antifreeze purchased before the law went into effect has no such protection to deter animals from eating it. Just a teaspoon or two can be fatal, so don't dump and don't drip antifreeze!

Gardening for Wildlife: California Fuchsia

by Shira Grubl

What attracts more hummingbirds than a hummingbird feeder and doesn't require constant cleaning and refilling? A flowering California fuchsia! This perennial native has a mass of grey-green leaves and puts out stunning bright red flowers from mid-summer through late fall. Depending on the variety, it can range from under one foot to as tall as three feet. When in bloom, it is an all-time favorite of hummingbirds. The availability of its nectar in the fall helps migrating species, such as the Rufous hummingbird, make their long journeys and sustains resident hummingbirds at a time when other flowering plants become scarce.

California fuchsia is one of the easiest natives to grow. It requires no water once established and little water to become established. It tolerates different soil types, provided it has excellent drainage, and does not need to be fertilized. There are many different varieties (also called cultivars), which will do well in conditions ranging from full sun to partial shade. The only care it requires once established is to be trimmed once a year to within an inch of the ground in the winter. This will help it have a neater appearance in the garden and keeps new growth (generated by its rhizomes) from being smothered by old foliage.

When planning where to place California fuchsia in your yard, you should be aware that it spreads readily and if given the opportunity, will take over a large area. That might just be what you are looking for, especially if you have a barren, sunny hillside. However, if you want to avoid having to continuously trim it back to keep it within a certain space, consider planting it in



an area isolated by asphalt or pavement from other parts of your yard. California fuchsia does particularly well in the dry, hot patches of dirt found intermittently along sidewalks, or even in just a half foot strip of dirt running between two driveways.

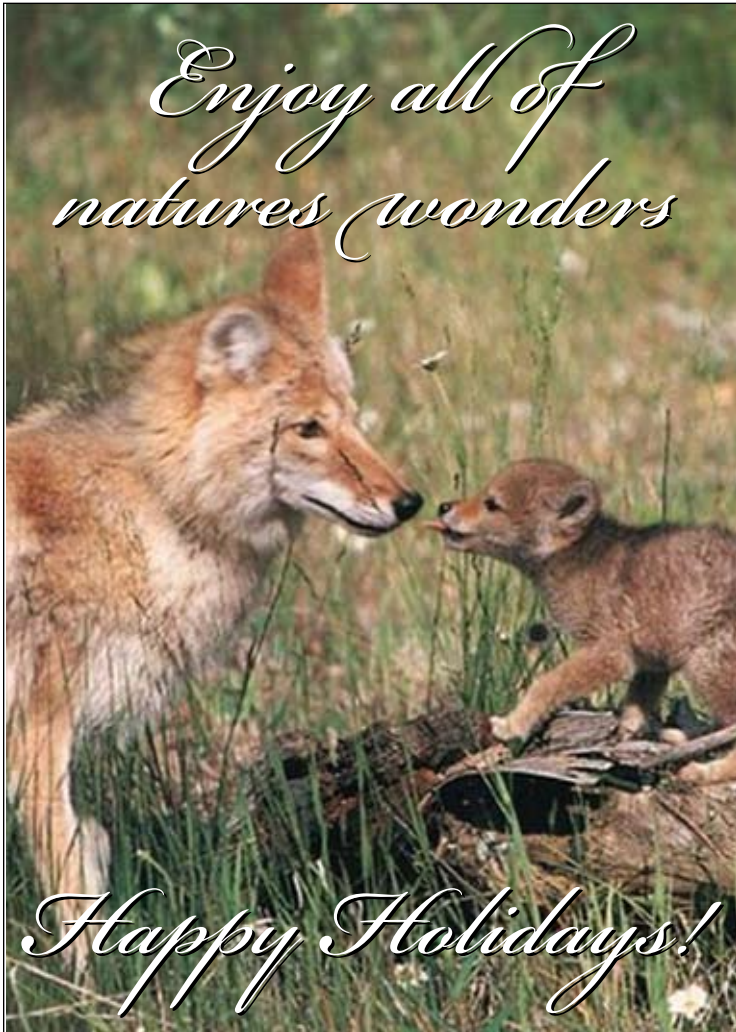
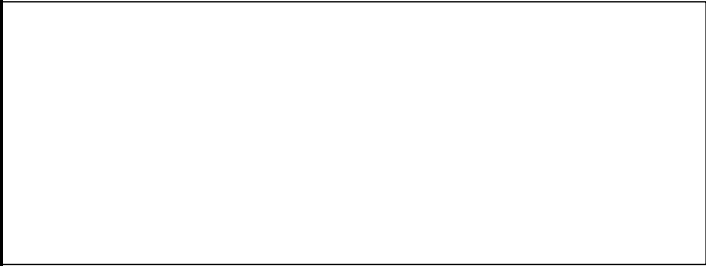
Since it is one of our more popular natives, it can sometimes be found at local nurseries. If you can't find it readily at a conventional nursery, you can try one of the nurseries in the Bay Area that carries a large selection of natives. For a list, check out the California Native Plant Society website at: www.cnps.org/links/native_plant_nurseries.htm.





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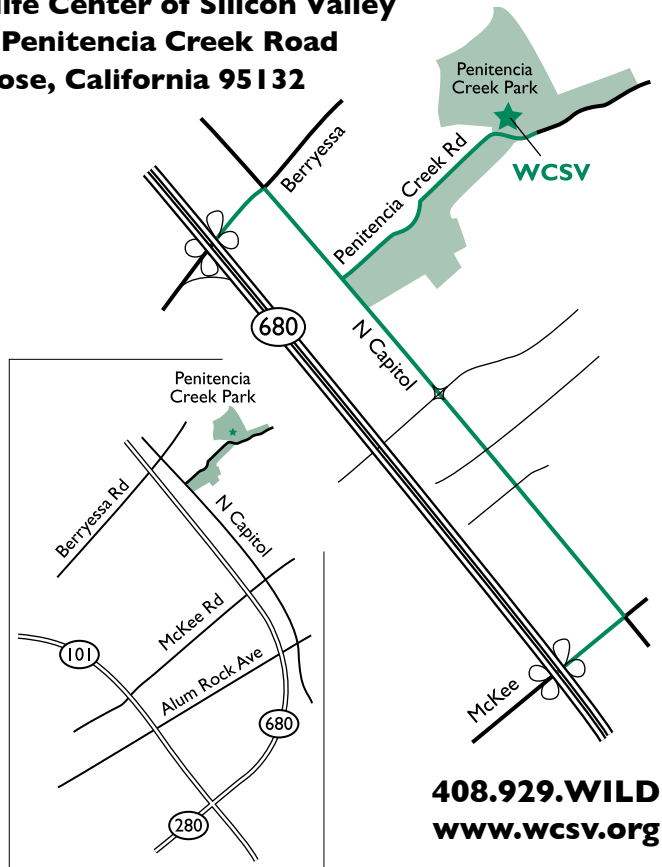


*Enjoy all of
 nature's wonders*

Happy Holidays!

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www.wcsv.org

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