WILDLIFE CARE OF VENTURA COUNTY

RESCUE, REHABILITATION AND RELEASE OF INJURED AND ORPHANED WILD ANIMALS

NOVEMBER 2006
VOLUME #4, EDITION #2

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FERAL CAT COLONY

BOBCAT

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YES, I WANT TO HELP NATIVE WILDLIFE

BOOTH DATES:

*** Wednesday at the Northridge Farmers Market
*** Sunday at the Oxnard Farmers Market

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President's Perspective

As in past years, this year has not failed to amaze me bringing forth a plethora of great animal rescues, animal releases, meeting new friends and becoming more respectful of old ones. People were transporting from animal control shelters in Lancaster, Agua Dulce, Castaic, Burbank and Los Angeles County to points in Woodland Hills, Simi Valley, Camarillo, Ojai and even San Pedro! Everyone networking together made a huge impact on how quickly the animals got to the facilities specializing in their care - and in turn, allowed them the best possible chance of survival and release.

It's times like this that you can't help but wonder ... "While we're all busy saving the animals - the animals are busy saving us right back."

Although I could go on and on about the people I am fortunate enough to meet and work with, not all of the experiences were that great, I almost lost one of my cats to the local coyotes. She is fine after a two week recovery period; amazingly she came through the ordeal with only two punctures on the back of her neck and a reinforced respect for the local bad boys.

She was a rescue herself - a stray, 14 years ago, and came with an ego that would stand down my mother's Rottweiler... especially if there was food involved, so I don't think she was totally innocent in this adventure.

But it begs a question: are the coyotes really the bad boys? Or is that just the perception of them in this particular situation - they did nothing wrong, they were coyotes living by their rules and trying to survive in this world like the rest of us. They weren't concerned with whether this four legged animal had a name or a family somewhere. It didn't occur to them that she was off limits and not part of the food chain just because she happened to be sitting on a manicured lawn, instead of hiding in the bush. Those are our rules, not theirs. Every specie of animal has rules, boundaries and most times a hierarchy that they live by, which contributes to their ultimate survival and the survival of their specie.

The domestic cat, however, also a predator, will hunt and kill but is not dependent on the success of that hunt in order to survive... like the coyote is.

This newsletter draws our attention to some very real and possibly devastating reasons for keeping our cats indoors ... other than their safety.

Anna Marie Reams

House Cat Predation on Our Native Wildlife

With many species in danger due to habitat loss, predation by our house cats is yet one more hardship we humans impose on wild animals already struggling to survive.

While many cat owners may believe that their pet cannot possibly have a significant impact just because it hunts, the cumulative devastation of cat attacks on wildlife is substantial.

Isn't hunting by cats a natural thing? While it may be instinctive for a cat to hunt, house cats are not native to North America and they cause an imbalance in the ecology of an area by killing so many wild animals. Because their population numbers are artificially large due to being kept as pets, cats are far more common than natural selection would normally allow native predators, such as fox or bobcat, to be. Predators are supposed to be rare, not abundant, in nature.

Cat predation can also negatively impact our native predators, especially hawks and owls. A study in Illinois concluded that cats were taking 5.5 million rodents and 2.5 billion other vertebrates from a 26,000 square mile area, effectively depleting the prey base necessary to sustain wintering raptors and other native predators.

Cats have huge advantages over native predators. Being well-fed, they are not vulnerable to changes in prey populations. In addition, pet cats are more protected from diseases, predation, competition, and starvation--factors that control native predators.

Unaltered cats are prolific breeders. In states with warm climates, a female cat can have up to three litters per year, with four to eight kittens per litter. Unlike many native predators, cats are not strictly territorial, keeping members of their own species out of a given area. As a result, cats can exist at much higher densities and may out-compete native predators for food.

Overwhelmingly, cat predation (including cat attack cases and animals orphaned by cats) is the single largest reason for admission to many wildlife centers. Even when external damage appears minor, there is usually massive internal hemorrhaging and soft tissue damage from crushing and even minor puncture wounds exposes the victim to over 60 types of bacteria known to exist in cat saliva.

Unvaccinated free roaming **cats can spread deadly diseases** such as rabies, feline leukemia and distemper to wild cats and other wildlife.

Well-fed cats and cats with bells: Even well-fed cats kill birds and other wildlife. A cat's hunting instinct is independent of the urge to eat. Studies show that bells on collars are not effective in preventing cats from killing animals. Birds do not necessarily associate the sound of a bell with danger, and cats with bells can learn to silently stalk their prey. Even if the bell rings, it offers no protection to young animals.

What about animals that escape? Small animals injured by cats die unless they are taken to a wildlife rehabilitator immediately. Cats carry bacteria and viruses in their mouths and on their claws, some of which can infect a small animal quickly. An animal may also die from internal hemorrhaging or injury to vital organs caused by a cat attack.

Consider these studies:
In a study of radio-collared farm cats in Wisconsin, researchers Stanley Temple and John Coleman estimated that each year cats kill at least 19 million songbirds and 140,000 game birds in the state of Wisconsin.
A researcher at Point Reyes Bird Observatory in California, noting that there are approximately 55 million cats in the U.S., of which 44 million are permitted outdoors, suggested that the toll may be as high as 4.4 million songbirds per day in the U.S.

All of us who own cats can help wildlife by keeping our pets indoors. It may be hard to break an adult cat of the urge to roam outdoors, but you can let your cat out as infrequently as possible. Let your cat out during the middle of the day when it is the warmest and your cat is less active. And so are the birds. Having your cat spayed or neutered will also help curb this roaming urge.

To learn more - American Bird Conservancy / Cat indoors site

Domestic Cat Predation in California, Florida and Hawaii

Domestic cat predation on wildlife is a serious conservation issue, particularly in California, Florida, and Hawaii as these states have:

1) Sensitive ecosystems endangered by urban sprawl, especially in coastal areas.
2) The greatest numbers of threatened and endangered species in the U.S.
3) Large numbers of free-roaming owned, stray, and feral domestic cats, partly due to warm climate allowing cats to breed year-round.

American Bird Conservancy
(Funded by The Kenneth A. Scott Charitable Trust)

The Opportunistic Raccoon is also affected by Feral Cat Colonies

Feral Cat Colony

A feral cat colony is a population of feral domestic cats (not to be confused with wild cats). Members of a feral cat colony can include cats that have strayed after living with human caretakers as well as their offspring, which have had little human contact or none at all. Established feral colonies are located worldwide.

The term is used primarily when a noticeable population of feral cats live together in a specific location and utilize a common food source — such as food scavenged from refuse bins, dumpsters or supplementary feeding by humans — and reach a population density which might be regarded to be undesirable.

Feral colonies occur when unsterilized domesticated cats become, intentionally or otherwise, disconnected from their responsible or irresponsible human owners and managed domestic environment. They quickly have to learn to fend for themselves and form the breeding communities. Feral cat colonies typically arise when changes in human activity create an opportunity for existing baseline feral cat populations to form a locally concentrated group.

For example, the opening of a new restaurant can allow for easily gained food via unprotected garbage cans. Or the on going feeding of well meaning humans to support a population. **The greater the food source, the larger a feral colony will become.** Feral cat population expansion can be quite rapid.

The regular feeding schedules and large amounts of food that are left behind at feral cat feeding stations - attract the attention of the local wildlife

Artificial feeding, intentional or otherwise tends to concentrate raccoons in small areas for longer periods of time, creating unnatural numbers of raccoons and in some cases different species of animals that under normal circumstances would not forage together, possibly creating undesirable situations for you, your children, neighbors, pets and the raccoons themselves, altering the natural dynamic of the area and creating unsanitary conditions for humans and the environment. Overcrowding can spread diseases and parasites many of which are transmittable to humans and domestic pets.

Raccoon Facts

Food and Feeding Habitats

* Raccoons will eat almost anything, but are particularly fond of creatures found in water—clams, crayfish, frogs and fish.
* Raccoons also eat insects, slugs, snails, dead animals, birds and bird eggs, as well as fruits, vegetables, nuts, and seeds.
* Although not great hunters, raccoons can catch young gophers, squirrels, mice and rats.
* Around humans, raccoons often eat garbage and pet food.
* **Raccoons are primarily solitary** except during the breeding season and when females have young, **But Individuals will eat together if a large amount of food is available in an area.**
* Raccoons die from encounters with vehicles, hunters, trappers, disease, starvation and predation.
* Young raccoons are the main victims of starvation, since they have very little fat reserves to draw from during food shortages.
* Artificial food sources can directly affect litter size.
* The average life span of a raccoon in the wild is 2 to 3 years

Excerpts taken from Washington USFW

BOBCAT *lynx rufus*

#1 - This young male bobcat was hit by a car in Agua Dulce, sustaining head trauma. Following a 3 month recovery period he was released back in the area. WCVC 2006

Identification:

The bobcat is a stout-bodied, medium-sized feline, with a short, "bobbed" tail (six to six-and-a half inches), a prominent face ruff and tufts of black hair on its pointed ears. The sides and flanks are usually yellowish-brown or reddish-brown with distinct or faint black spots. The underparts are white. The back is often tawny-colored with a dark middorsal line. The tail may have one to several indistinct dark bands and a tip that is black on top and whitish below. Bobcats are about twice the size of their distant relative, the housecat, and the tracks of a young bobcat can easily be confused with those left by a roaming housecat. Adult housecat prints, however, are much smaller than adult bobcat prints. Bobcat tracks have an overall round appearance with four round toe pads in both front and rear prints. There is a fifth toe on the forefoot; however, it does not leave an impression because it is raised high on the foot. The claws do not leave an impression either because they are usually retracted.

Weight: Adult males: 14-40 pounds;
adult females: 10-33 pounds. Length: Adult males: 32-37 inches;
adult females: 28-32 inches.

Habitat: Mixed deciduous-coniferous and hardwood forests; rock ledges; preference for brushy and rocky woodlands broken by fields, old roads and farmland.

Food: Cottontail rabbits, woodchucks, squirrels, chipmunks, mice, voles, snowshoe hares, deer, birds, and, to a much lesser extent, insects and reptiles; bobcats also prey upon domestic animals such as poultry, small pigs, sheep and goats.

Range: The bobcat's range has historically extended throughout the lower 48 United States into southern Canada and south to central Mexico. This range has remained largely intact due to the species' adaptability to various habitats and human pressures. However, the bobcat has been extirpated from some areas along the mid-Atlantic coast due to dense human population and development. Bobcats are also no longer found in those portions of the Midwestern states where intense agriculture has decreased suitable habitat. Territorial and home ranges in the Northeast vary from eight to 20 square miles in size. Females tend to have smaller and more exclusive ranges than males. Daily movements of one to four miles are common.

Reproduction: Bobcats are polygamous (have more than one mate) and do not form lasting pair bonds. They breed between January and May. Females may breed before they are one year old but generally do not produce a litter until they are two years old. Dens are located in caves, rock crevices, hollow logs and trees, beneath windfall, or in urban areas under homes or patios. The den may be lined with dry leaves, moss or grass, which is formed into a shallow depression by the female. The same den site may be used for several years in a row. Rock ledges and outcrops are often used as daytime retreats and natal dens.

After a gestation period of about 62 days, kittens are born, with an average of two to three per litter. Kitten survival is a major factor in annual bobcat population fluctuations; survival is linked to food abundance. When food is plentiful, many young survive; a scarcity of food results in heavy mortality to kittens. Kittens weigh 10 to 12 ounces at birth. They are born blind and their eyes remain closed for three to 11 days. Kittens nurse for about 60 days and remain with the female until the following spring. Males do not participate in raising the young. At about four weeks of age, kittens begin to leave the den and take solid food provided by the female. Juvenile bobcats leave the female's territory before she gives birth to a litter the following year.

Interesting Facts: Bobcats are most active just after dusk and before dawn. They are secretive, solitary and seldom observed, tending to hunt and travel in areas of thick cover. Bobcats rely on their keen eyesight and hearing for locating enemies and prey. They are very patient and ambush their prey. Their sense of smell is not acute.

Bobcats specialize on medium-sized prey such as rabbits and hares. Although white-tailed deer is reported in diets of bobcats in the Northeast, there is evidence that bobcats probably kill very few deer unless other foods become scarce. When bobcats do take deer, they are most likely to kill sick, injured, young or very old animals.

Bobcats may cache, or cover, their kills with leaves, grass, snow and even hair from the carcass. Other feline species are known to cache their kills for future consumption.

Management of Nuisances: Compared to many wildlife species, bobcats rarely cause conflicts with human activities. Infrequently, they kill livestock, especially fowl, and attack domestic cats. Most often this situation arises when the bobcat is physically compromised and cannot hunt its normal prey.

#1

#1

#2

#2 A Male bobcat with a severe case of mange was trapped by the property owner in a humane trap in Malibu. They had observed him attempting to catch their chickens. Following a treatment program involving medications to treat the mange, proper diet and full exam, he was released 6 weeks later back into the area he was familiar with.

WCVC 2006

#2

Here he is 6 weeks later and ready for release.

To view his release, log on to our website at www.wildlifecareofventura.org.

Order: Carnivora **Family:** Canidae

Gray Fox

DESCRIPTION: A grayish body with reddish patches on the back of the head and neck. Throat is white and the chest, sides and belly are reddish. Tail has a black “mane” on top and black tip. Prominent ears.

SIZE: Weight, 5-13 lbs.; total length, 37-40 inches. Males slightly larger than females.

LOCOMOTION: Has been clocked running at 28 mph for short periods. Able to climb trees to escape an enemy or capture prey.

COMMUNICATION: Growls, dog-like bark and yap.

HABITS: Found in deserts, open forests, brushy habitats, woodlands and canyon country.

Mostly nocturnal, but will sometimes forage during the day. Keen intelligence has allowed it to maintain its numbers. Often found within city limits where there are areas of cover.

DIET: Foxes are omnivorous. They eat small mammals, rabbits, rodents, lizards, snakes, birds, insects, eggs, fruit, nuts, grains, and even human garbage. Rabbits are a preferred prey animal. In campgrounds, you might see them at night, picking through fire rings in search of morsels from campers’ meals. They are frequently seen crossing roads at night. In towns, they often eat pet food.

RANGE: Found in most of the United States, also northern Mexico and Baja California.

FAMILY LIFE: Mate when they are approximately one year old, sometime between January and March. Gestation period is two months, after which 2-7 blind pups are born. Male remains with female until young are weaned at about 6 weeks. They begin hunting for themselves at 4 months.

NESTING: Dens can be in holes in the ground, hollow logs or trees, small caves or among boulders.

ENEMIES: Dogs, bobcats, coyotes and man.

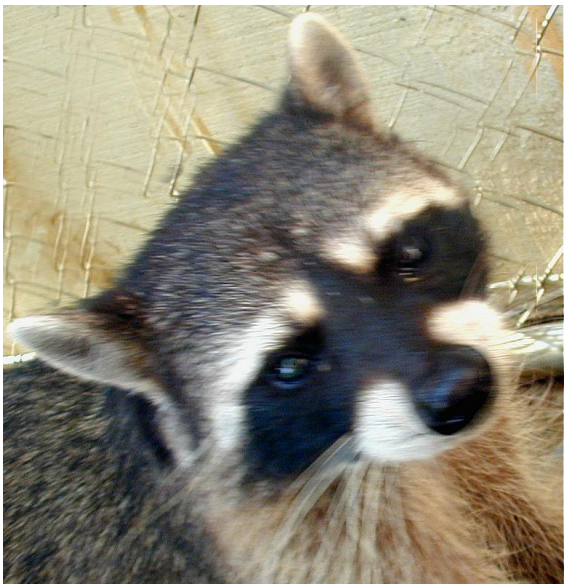
Gray Fox tracks show four toes and claws. Sometimes, the semi-retractable claws do not show. Their tracks average less than two inches in length. Tracks commonly run in straight lines, one print in front of the other. Front and hind prints overlap each other and appear as one print. Only foxes and members of the cat family walk in this manner. In fine mud, the hair on the foot may be visible in the track. Gray Foxes are primarily nocturnal and hunt small mammals. Sometimes, they hunt by day. They are the only canines that can climb trees. They seek refuge in trees and also climb to find food. The bark of the Gray Fox sounds like a hoarse cough. If you startle a fox, it may bark at you.

A Gray Fox also known as a “Kit” was rescued from beneath a car in Van Nuys. WCVC 2006

He was released with two other Gray Foxes into a habitat more conducive to their survival. WCVC 2006

WE CANNOT DO THE WORK THAT WE DO WITHOUT ALL OF YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS....

PLEASE HELP OUR NATIVE WILDLIFE



A VERY SPECIAL THANK YOU TO FRIENDS OF WCVC FOR THEIR CONTINUED SUPPORT!

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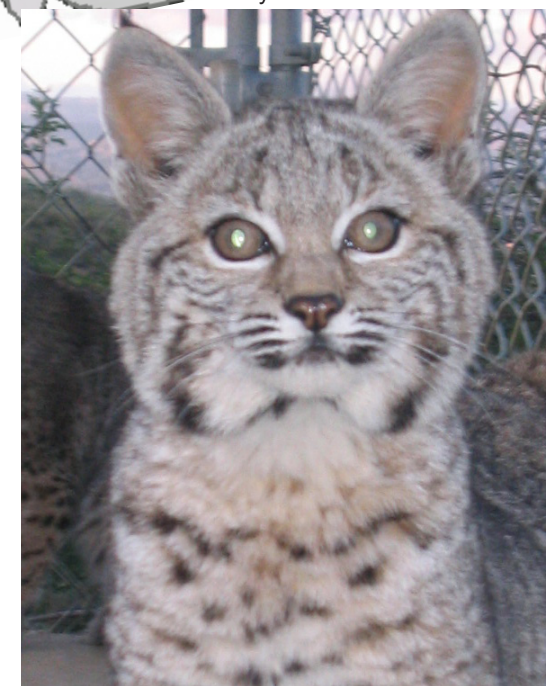


Your donation of $25.00 or more will entitle you to continue to receive our semi-annual newsletter**!**

WCVC is a non-profit organization and all contributions are tax-deductible.

$25.00_____ $35.00 _____
$50.00 _____$100 _____
$_____Other Amount

JOIN OUR TEAM and be a part of the solution!

_____ I would like to help care for wild birds or small mammals in my home.

_____ I would like to assist other rehabbers a few hours a week.

_____ **I would enjoy transporting animals within my work route from local agencies to rehabilitators.**

NAME: _____
ADDRESS: _____
_____
PHONE NUMBER: _____

Please mail to: WCVC
P.O. Box 941476
Simi Valley, CA 93065
Thank you to all who continue to support our efforts.

If you are selling or buying a home and would like to help the animals at the same time - contact **Peggy Orefice (Realtor) @ Century 21 All Pro (805) 551-2380. She will donate 5% of her commission to WCVC !!**

Help the animals while you shop at Ralphs. No Cost to you! By using your Ralphs card, a percentage of your purchase will be donated to WCVC. **Everyone who signed up and contributed in the past must re-register. Contact Sharron Baird at (805) 498-8653 or RALPHS.com to sign up. Click on "Community Contribution", "Participant" and follow the easy steps to enroll!**

WILDLIFE CARE OF VENTURA COUNTY
P.O Box 941476 Simi Valley, Ca 93065

DID YOU KNOW ...?
Native Gray Fox Facts

* They will eat scorpions, stinger and all.

* The gray fox is the only American canid with true climbing ability.

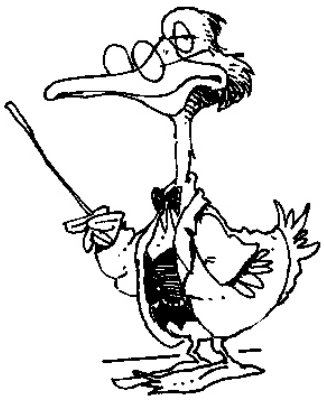
* Tree and scent posts marked with urine help define territories.

* Besides being able to climb trees to chase prey, the gray fox also uses its perch to ambush victims from above.

*** They are the only canines that can climb trees.**

* They seek refuge in trees and also climb to find food.

* The bark of the gray fox sounds like a hoarse cough.
If you startle a fox, it may bark at you.



WILDLIFE CARE of VENTURA COUNTY

WCVC is a non-profit all volunteer organization holding permits through the California Department of Fish and Game, United States Fish and Wildlife and USDA. The organization was founded in 1994 and rehabilitates all native wildlife with the exception of bear, mountain lion and deer.

Our volunteers specialize in one or more species and operate as a team of dedicated and highly trained individuals.

We work very closely with veterinarians who provide medical care, x-rays, surgery and humane euthanasia when necesary. Beyond the immediate benefits of helping wildlife in need, WCVC provides a valuable service to the entire community by making help accessible to those who find wildlife in distress. Our mission is to rescue, rehabilitate and release, as well as educating the public on how to coexist with our wild neighbors.

(WCVC is permitted through the State Department of Fish & Game, U.S. Fish & Wildlife and USDA.)

"Saving the world one animal at a time ...
Changing the world one person at a time."