

## Inside this Issue:

- ▶ PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE 1
- ▶ ANNOUNCEMENTS ..... 1
- ▶ REGARDIN' KIT FOXES ON THE CARRIZO PLAIN ... 2
- ▶ SECRETARY/ TREASURER'S REPORT ..... 3
- ▶ PHOTO HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE KIT FOX WORKSHOP ..... 6
- ▶ SFBA CHAPTER FARALLON ISLAND TRIP ANNOUNCEMENT ..... 11
- ▶ ANNOUNCEMENTS ..... 13
- ▶ USFWS LAUNCHES TWO SCIENTIFIC JOURNALS 14
- ▶ SF BAY AREA CHAPTER OFFICER'S DIRECTORY 15



## San Francisco Bay Area Chapter of the Wildlife Society

### President's Message

*Christine Gaber*

Hello Everyone. There is a lot to report this quarter, so I'll try to keep it brief. First off, I'm very happy to welcome Karen Swaim, herpetologist extraordinaire, to the Chapter Board as President-elect. We thank Karen for accepting the position and know she'll keep the momentum going into 2011. We're also grateful that EBMUD fisheries and wildlife biologist Bert Mulchaey donated his Saturday to lead our June 26th field trip to District watershed lands in the Pinole Valley. Trip highlights for me were visiting some excellent pallid bat and CRLF habitat, and hearing about the District's ALWH trapping study, CRLF telemetry research, and pond restoration. Hopefully some of the District's findings on CRLF upland habitat use will make their way into the literature. Karen even brought along some local snakes for a lunchtime show and tell.

*Continued on pg. 3*

### Announcements

**SFBA Chapter Farallon Island Trip** – Save October 2nd on your calendar for a boat ride to the Farallon Islands! Can't tell a Risso from a Dall (both are porpoises)? We can help. This is shaping up to be an incredible private charter trip that we've reserved through the Oceanic Society.

## Regarding Kit Foxes on the Carrizo Plain

Brian Pittman

The kit fox “in running appears to float above the ground with one fore leg partly extended and the opposite rear one the same. In turning, the fox is so quick that the human eye cannot detect the movement. It is going one way, and as a dog reaches for it, it is off on a new course.”

- Perry S. Sprague,  
quoted in the *Fur Bearing Mammals of California*, Vol. 2, 1937

The SFBA Chapter’s recent two-day San Joaquin kit fox workshop can’t be described without missing some fundamental details, whether about the ABCs of kit fox biology, ecology and identification, camp camaraderie and cowboy cuisine, or hour upon hour of somnolent night surveys. If a reasonable measure for workshop success is greater participation by foxes than biologists, then the effort was profoundly successful. A fortunate group of twenty-five attendees, most from the Bay Area, gathered in the vast 30,000-acre Chimineas Unit of the Carrizo Plain Ecological Reserve for a full emersion session led by species expert Howard Clark with assistance from Bryan Cypher. By all appraisals this workshop provided a rare and unique kit fox training opportunity and the chapter is already talking with Howard about another go-round next year.

The lecture aspect of the workshop was held at Chimineas Ranch; however, the 250,000-acre Carrizo Plain National Monument served as an outdoor classroom for much of the clinic. A trace of green was still visible across the Carrizo this August and the ground was moist in some areas, especially in tributaries to the region’s defining ephemeral, alkaline water body, Soda Lake. The Carrizo, like much of the State this year, is experiencing mild, wet conditions that are beneficial to small mammal populations. In 1937, Grinnell, Dixon and Linsdale recognized a “significantly close coincidence of the areas occupied by (kangaroo rats) with those on which the kit fox ranges,” concluding that, “kangaroo rats constitute the ‘staff of life’ of the kit fox” in some localities (*Fur Bearing Mammals of California*, Vol. 2). We now have predator/prey population data to reliably affirm that kit fox population dynamics are intimately tied to the boom and bust population cycles of prey species, especially k-rats. The mild spring and summer of 2010 had been particularly beneficial to the kit fox and other the denizens of the Carrizo, which to our gain included workshop participants.

It’s late; probably around midnight. K-rats are everywhere and I speculate that an army of k-rats could take down a Jeep – especially *giant* k-rats. One’s thoughts seem to ramble about and border on the absurd when surveying open rangelands after the midnight hour. Are the moving lights on a distant hill those of drug runners, or is it someone from our survey team? Perhaps they’re seeing foxes and we should drive over there. More than likely they’re skunked too; we’ve already been through there with no luck. Near as I can tell, cowboy fever is another thing that happens on the Carrizo with unfettered spotlighting opportunities in some of the finest kit fox habitat in the State. We’ve got it in spades. At this point we’re riding sidesaddle on the truck windows, scanning the landscape for any sign of motion or eyeshine; liberated from our seatbelts – though perhaps I only imagined that part, since it’s so late.

*Continued on pg. 5*

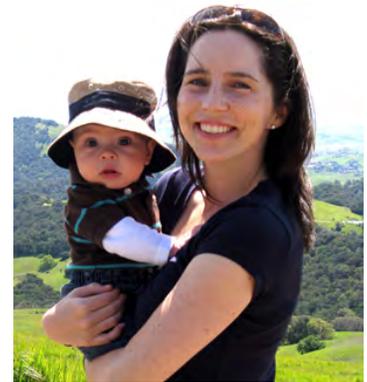
**President's Message, Continued from pg. 1**

Our San Joaquin kit fox workshop in July also was a smashing success, thanks to the hard work of Natasha Dvorak, Doug Bell and others.

As if the Chapter calendar isn't full enough, the fall promises to be a busy season too. After many years of talking about it, we're partnering with the Oceanic Society for a Farallon Island boat trip on October 2nd (see page 11). Online registration will be available soon. Also in the works – a certification workshop and potentially a weeknight bat presentation. Stay tuned for details! We welcome your feedback, so drop us a line anytime and let us know how we're doing. However, please direct all complaints to Bryan Olney.

Take care,

Christine



Christine

## Secretary/Treasurer's Report

*Bryan Olney*

So far, 2010 is looking to be another strong year for the Bay Area Chapter. We currently have 100 members according to my records, which is likely an underestimate due to intermittent updates from TWS Western and National. We also still have 14 student-sponsored memberships available for the chapter (!), so if you know any enterprising young wildlife students, encourage them to sign up! We love new students.

Our books are fortunately not cooked, and we have \$10,686 in the bank right now. Additionally, in the transfer of Secretary/Treasurer duties, we opened up a business account for the chapter with assistance from Citibank. This means our account is now classified legitimately (with no other practical changes or additional costs), which should help you all sleep a little better at night.

Our workshop admission funds from the exceedingly popular San Joaquin kit fox workshop the chapter organized are still pending, and once that check comes in, we will be rock-solid. Headed up by our Section rep Natasha Dvorak, the workshop provided unprecedented *bang-for-your-buck*; highlights included well-spoken kit fox experts, a biologist caterer, and spectacular accommodations. At the same time, participation fees were comparable to most other wildlife workshops, and the chapter made a reasonable profit to support future events, students, and donations to TWS Western and National. Everyone wins! Hooray!

It's been a great half-year as your Secretary/Treasurer – if I haven't met you yet, hopefully see you at the next Bay Area Chapter event!

- Bryan



Bryan O. – Day's end at the California Living Museum in Bakersfield

***Regardin' Kit Foxes on the Carrizo Plain, Continued from pg. 2***

Even in the best of habitat, the first cardinal sin of kit fox surveying must be at the front of one's mind. Through no fault of their own, coyote pups are remarkably similar in size, color and build to adult kit foxes. I've illustrated this phenomenon in several photos that follow this report. There are obvious differences between the two, in the way they behave, their posture, and of course physical differences if one gets a good enough look. But they're an easy pair to mix up without proper awareness. Someone at the session described the coyote pup as "dog-like" with a broad muzzle, wide face and an overall stocky build, whereas a kit fox is, well, "fox-like" with a fine muzzle and sleek overall character. That brings me to cardinal sin #2 of kit fox surveying: using extremely large ears as a single species identifier – because coyote pups, like adult San Joaquin kit foxes, have large ears relative to their head and body size. A few photos from the classroom illustrate the point.

We were working a dirt road with naught worth mentioning for hours on end when the first sign of movement came into view. It was two badgers working on an excavation; perhaps digging out some k-rats or who knows what. We park for extended viewing and, after snapping a few photographs and a GPS point, we're back on our circuit. At that juncture, life started bubbling on Soda Lake Road.

The diminishing range of the San Joaquin kit fox, once described as Byron (Contra Costa County) in the north to the Tehachapi Mountains south of Bakersfield (Kern County), can be almost singly attributed to loss of habitat through agricultural conversion. Habitat loss began in earnest in the early 1900s as the native grasslands of the San Joaquin Valley were converted into croplands. Habitat loss is a continuing threat, though it continues at a slower pace than previous years – perhaps because there's so little habitat remaining. These days, the arid plains that kit foxes inhabit are being eyed by the next great nuisance – solar power development. Howard and other researchers consider the unincorporated town of Santa Nella, near San Luis Reservoir, as about the northernmost extent of self-sustaining kit fox populations. Those populations further north are in decline and perhaps aren't self-sustaining without continued immigration from the south. Aside from habitat conversion, chief sources of kit fox mortality mainly include coyote predation (with extensive interference and exploitative competition, where the coyote may kill but not necessarily consume the fox) and vehicle collisions, though other significant sources are attributed as well.

As luck would have it, some speculate that the projected rise in global temperatures and associated aridity may improve kit fox habitat in the northern portion of their range, perhaps even driving some farmers off their land. At face value, 'global warming to the rescue' doesn't sound like an even-tempered conservation slogan. Luckily there are other kettles on the stove – including conservation of large extant kit fox populations on the Carrizo Plain (San Luis Obispo County), Elk Hills and Buena Vista Valley (western Kern County) and Panoche Valley (Fresno and San Benito Counties), among other areas.

We turned south on Soda Lake Road and it wasn't another 10 minutes before the holy grail of foxes was leaping, gazelle-like through our spotlights. Who knew it was a liability to catch the initial glimpse of a kit fox. Now you can light up k-rats like a Christmas tree, but the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service protocol stipulates one spotlight per kit fox. As everyone in the truck trained their binoculars on the fox, the spotter gets stuck holding the light. "Hold that spotlight steady, damnit." We're a punchy bunch. We may have had a 30 second glimpse of that first fox, with two other canids trailing off over a distant hill. At this point we're all wide awake.

*Continued on pg. 6*

**Regardin' Kit Foxes on the Carrizo Plain, Continued from pg. 5**

From there things got thick. We stumble on four more foxes at two more locations – the last of which put on a 20 minute performance before we finally tired of watching it. What a night! On the drive back to Chimineas a tiny kit fox pup leapt through the truck headlights and rebounded off into the horizon. When all was said and done, the last warm evening in July revealed well over 30 kit foxes, mostly adults with a few pups. Other nighttime notables from the Carrizo included long-tailed weasel and burrowing owl, among many others.

After a phenomenal breakfast the next morning, participants were treated to loads of kit fox scat at an active natal den and a nearby 'bachelor' den, followed by a raffle that included a mounted Peter Knapp kit fox photograph. Initially billed as an 'alcohol raffle', partly to build group interest but also because that's all we could find to hand out, our clever and resourceful SFBA Chapter officers came through with some non-alcoholic, non-farm items to raffle off.

Some time after noon, a dedicated small group trekked to Bakersfield for close-up kit fox viewing opportunities at the California Living Museum (CALM). A book entitled *Cowboy Quotes*, allegedly written by a true vaquero, kept us amused and awake for the ride. Natasha was skeptical about the author's supposed "cowboy" status, but stayed awake for the drive, which was good enough for the rest of us since she was at the wheel.

My initial odd feelings about the CALM were quickly dispelled; with the exception of several diminutive canids loafing around, this place was nothing like a Chihuahua kennel. All five adult kit foxes were salvaged animals, one with a missing limb, and remarkable to study at close range. Kit fox movement, posture and behavior were particularly interesting to examine. In something of an arranged marriage, the four male kit foxes were housed with a coati (*Nasua narica*) and an island fox (*Urocyon littoralis*); while the female cohabitated with a gray fox (*U. cinereoargenteus*). Overall, this was a sociable group that lent itself to some excellent photo opportunities.

On behalf of the SFBA Chapter I would like to thank Howard Clark and Brian Cypher for their participation in the workshop, Bob Stafford and the hospitality of Chimineas Ranch, Peter Knapp for his donation, and everyone else who contributed. Our own Natasha Dvorak and Doug Bell deserve special recognition for the hard work in setting up this wonderful event.

- Brian P.

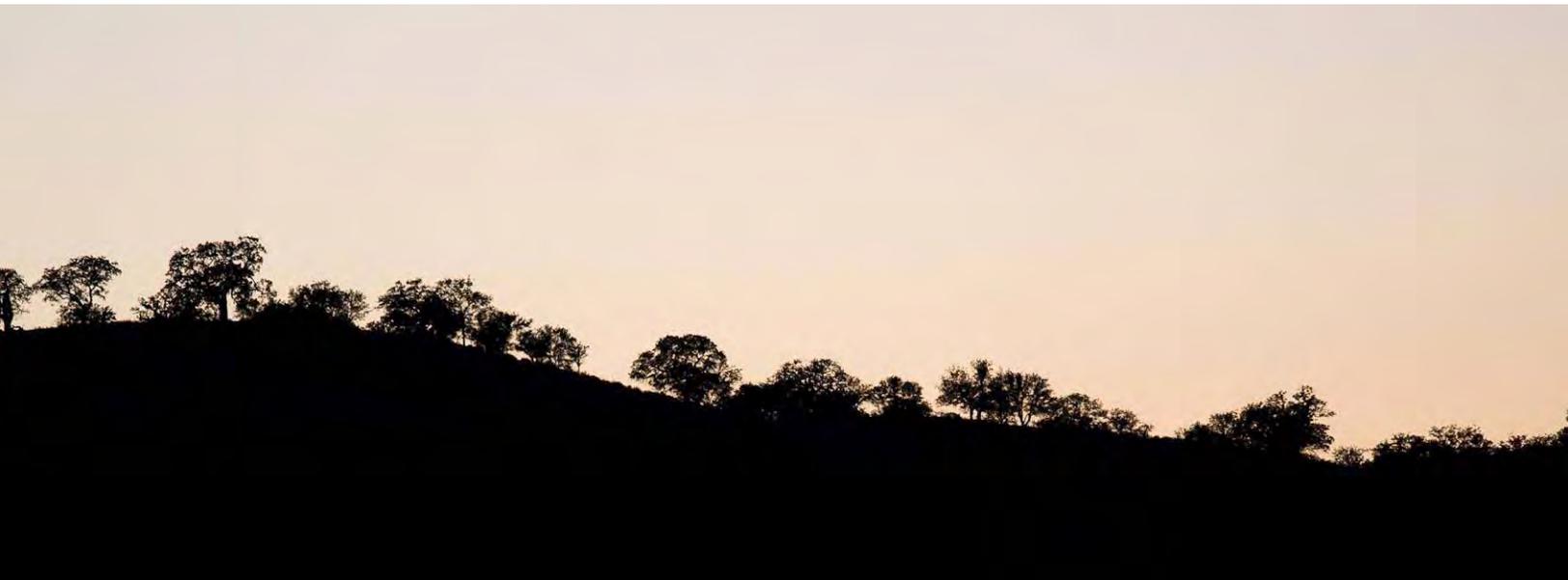
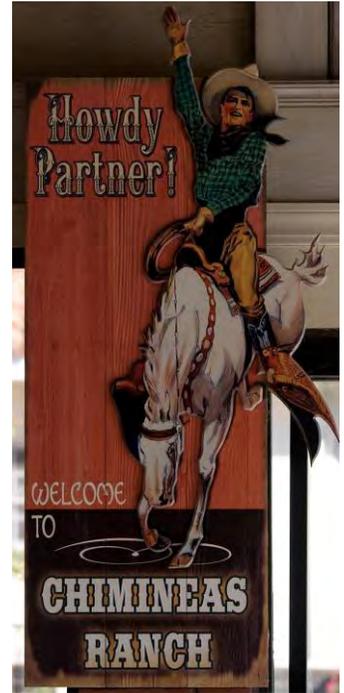


Photo Highlights from July 31, 2010, San Joaquin Kit Fox Workshop – Chimineas Ranch

Surrounded by canids and powered by Skittles, the group settles in for the lecture at Chimineas Ranch. All photos by B. Pittman.



Mounted displays from the workshop (below) are an adult SJKF (upper left), four kit foxes (one pup) and a coyote pup (top right), a gray fox (bottom center and right; note the black tail stripe) and a coyote pup (bottom left). As the canid group photo shows, coyote pups can easily be mistaken for adult kit foxes.



**Photo Highlights from July 31, 2010, San Joaquin Kit Fox Workshop – Night on the Carrizo**

On Saturday night, five independent cars set out with spotlights at 2000 hours. Our car reported six kit foxes, two unidentified canids, two badgers, two pronghorn antelope, and hundreds of k-rats. One car (Howard's) reported over 20 kit foxes. All-in-all, a pretty good night's work.



Night photography at a distance presents particular challenges, but I still managed to capture two blurry pronghorn, an inquisitive badger and a San Joaquin kit fox. Kit fox tail posture, seen in the photo, is described as somewhat 'straight out', whereas coyotes tend to droop their tail between their legs.

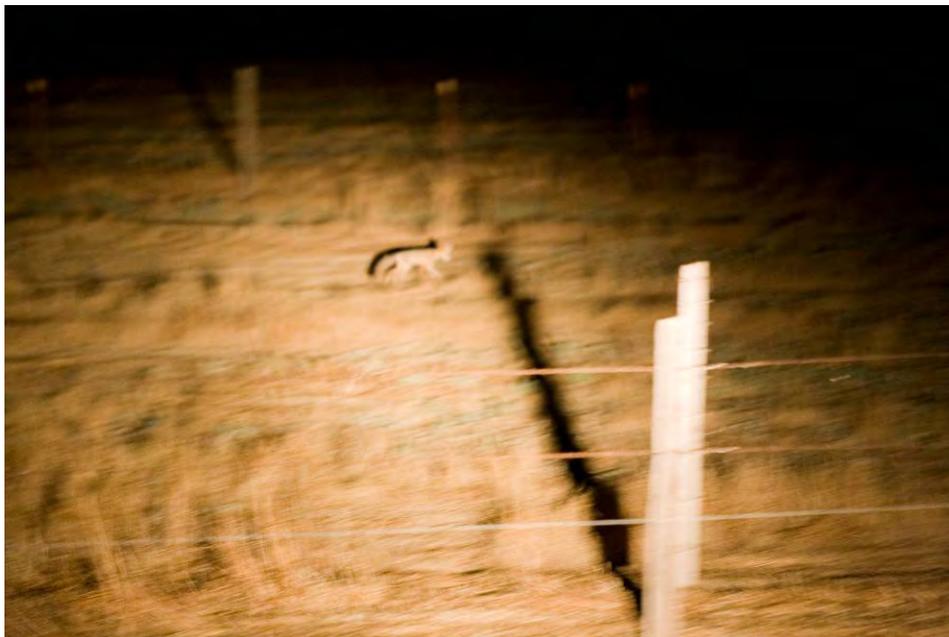


Photo Highlights from August 1, 2010, San Joaquin Kit Fox Workshop – Daytime on the Carrizo

Day two was dedicated to examining active kit fox dens, including a natal den and a bachelor pad. Accordingly, there was lots of kit fox sign to catch sight of. My brief survey of kit fox scat (top photo and continuing clockwise) found that the distal segment of my ring finger best approximates the length and breadth of a typical scat. Fresher scat tends toward dark brown coloration, which washes out to light tan with weathering. Lower right: the crew gears up for a final field excursion before the great Carrizo raffle. Bottom left: an active natal den beneath some long forgotten farm equipment (also left center).



**Photo Highlights from August 1, 2010, San Joaquin Kit Fox Workshop – Daytime on the Carrizo**

From the pictures one might think this was kit fox Disneyland, and they'd be right. The main attraction at this site was the enormous dirt mound at the kit fox bachelor den (top) and investigation of kit fox tracks and scat (bottom left). Bottom right shows an active kit fox den with scat, tracks and other sign.



## Photo Highlights from August 1, 2010, San Joaquin Kit Fox Workshop - CALM Visit

From one type of kit fox sign to another, about ten committed individuals from the original 25 continued to the California Living Museum in Bakersfield for an intimate visit with five captive adult San Joaquin kit foxes. Pictured below are three male kit foxes and a three-legged female (bottom left).



## Announcing the SFBA Chapter Farallon Island Trip!

C. Gaber

You want a trip to the Farallon Islands? Well, you're in luck! The Chapter Board has heard your pleas for a fall excursion to see the marine mammals and seabirds of this amazing ecosystem. We have reserved a private charter for October 2nd through the Oceanic Society (<http://www.oceanicsociety.org/farallon>), with the Bay Area Chapter's own Roger Harris as our guide. In addition to his day job as a Principal/Certified Wildlife Biologist at LSA Associates, Inc., Roger is a naturalist with the Oceanic Society. This will be an all day affair departing from Sausalito and/or the San Francisco Marina Yacht Harbor. Normally the individual rate for this type of trip is \$120, but the Oceanic Society has offered us a discounted rate of \$75 per person. And what will we see? Here's the scoop from Roger:

"Our key target cetacean species would be blue whale and humpback whale. So far this has been an excellent season for both. Harbor porpoise are nearly always present and there is always a possibility for Dall's porpoise, Risso's dolphin, Pacific white-sided dolphin, and northern right whale dolphin. Among the pinnepeds, we should expect California sea lion and harbor seal, with good chances for northern elephant seal and Steller's sea lion and a more distant possibility of northern fur seal. Among the fish, there is a possibility of ocean sunfish (*Molla molla*), a lesser but still good possibility of blue shark, and a remote possibility of great white shark. Seabirds should be great, including common murre, rhinoceros auklet, Cassin's auklet, possibly tufted puffin, sooty and pink-footed shearwater, and possibly black-footed albatross."

Online registration will be up and running on our Chapter web site soon. I'll send out an email with the link when it is live.

Hope to see you there!

- Christine

### THE FAR SIDE • Gary Larson



The woods were dark and foreboding, and Alice sensed that sinister eyes were watching her every step. Worst of all, she knew that Nature abhorred a vacuum.

## ...And Now a Word from our Sponsors

This quarter (like the last) we took a break from our corporate sponsorship program, but not for lack of trying. The program has to date funded six student members and we have set aside funds to support fourteen more. Presently, we're starting to use these student-designated funds to increase student involvement in Chapter and Section events.

So, we're still soliciting tax deductible donations from individuals and companies to increase student involvement. A \$50 donation provides a quarter page advertisement in two issues of the *Wandering Tattler*. Prospective sponsors and student members should contact Secretary/Treasurer Bryan Olney for more information.

- Brian P.

---

"The scientist, by the very nature of his commitment, creates more and more questions, never fewer. Indeed the measure of our intellectual maturity, one philosopher suggests, is our capacity to feel less and less satisfied with our answers to better problems."

~G.W. Allport,  
*Becoming*, 1955.'

---



## Announcements

### **California Burrowing Owl Consortium Meeting in Sonoma**

September 11, 2010 at Viansa Winery

The organization *Birding Sonoma Valley* is sponsoring a Burrowing Owl Consortium event in Sonoma Valley on September 11, 2011. The event will be held at the Viansa Winery in Sonoma. The website indicates that the day's agenda will include a range of presentations by several burrowing owl experts, breakout sessions, a panel discussion and reception. The \$30 cost includes lunch and beverages. Information can be found at [www.sonomabirding.org](http://www.sonomabirding.org) or by contacting Tom Rusert (415-302-5601).

---

### **CNAH Announcement – Herpetofaunal Checklist Online**

The Center for North American Herpetology, Lawrence, Kansas  
15 July 2010

Made available as a gratis service by CNAH, the herpetofaunal checklist of the state of California is done and has been uploaded. Based on the CNAH North American list, this state checklist will be updated daily and simultaneously with the CNAH list when new discoveries are published that change the higher taxonomy (genus and family) of these creatures. Species-level changes will also be posted daily, but will not change on the California web site until evaluated by systematists and published in the print version of the next edition of the CNAH common and scientific names list; these proposed changes (and their citations) will, however, be immediately accessible through the California checklist, just as they are for the CNAH main list.

To view any or all of the available North American provincial or state checklists, go to:  
[http://www.cnah.org/state\\_list.asp](http://www.cnah.org/state_list.asp)

---

### **Proposed Federal Listing and Critical Habitat for the Franciscan Manzanita**

On August 10, 2010, the USFWS published a 90-Day finding on a petition to list the Franciscan manzanita (*Arctostaphylos franciscana*) as endangered with critical habitat. It is interesting to note that this species was thought to be extinct in the wild for the last 62 years, and then one individual was found beneath Doyle Drive in San Francisco in late 2009. The single, massive individual was found in the most unlikely of places, in an island of disturbed habitat between two highways.

<http://www.fws.gov/policy/library/2010/2010-19429.pdf>

---

### **Proposed Federal Listing and Critical Habitat for the Mohave Ground Squirrel**

On April 27, 2010, the USFWS published a 90-Day finding on a petition to list the Mohave ground squirrel (*Xerospermophilus mohavensis*) as an endangered species with critical habitat. The Federal Register petition can be found at the following link:

<http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2010/2010-9377.htm>

## USFWS Launches Two Scientific Journals

In June 2010, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced the release of the inaugural issue of the public domain Journal of Fish and Wildlife Management (JFWM) and the re-launch of the prestigious North American Fauna (NAF). These Web based journals focus on the practical application and integration of science to the conservation and management of North American fish, wildlife, plants, and the ecosystems upon which they depend.

The new publications will offer Service employees and others across the scientific community new outlets for peer-reviewed research that will help advance the Service's capacity for science-driven wildlife management.

The JFWM's editor, John Wenburg, director of Alaska Conservation Genetics Laboratory in Anchorage, Alaska calls the Service's revived endeavors in science publications a valuable tool for practical conservation science. "We are excited to launch these two important publications," said Wenburg.

The Journal of Fish and Wildlife Management, which can be found at <http://www.fwspubs.org/loi/fwma>, publishes original, high-quality, scientific papers on practical applications for conservation of fish, wildlife, plants, ecology, and land management in North America. Scientists are welcome to submit manuscripts to The Journal of Fish and Wildlife Management and North American Fauna regardless of professional or personal affiliation, as the scientific standards of the peer review process are applied equally to all.

A survey of articles, notes and survey methods from the first journal finds the following:

### Articles

Functional Relationship between Watershed Size and Atlantic Salmon Parr Density (John A. Sweka and Gregory Mackey)

Early Growing Season Flooding Influence on Seedlings of Three Common Bottomland Hardwood Species in Western Tennessee (Jonathan R. McCurry, Matthew J. Gray, and David C. Mercker)

Structured Decision-Making and Rapid Prototyping to Plan a Management Response to an Invasive Species (Sean M. Blomquist, Trisha D. Johnson, David R. Smith, Geoff P. Call, Brant N. Miller, W. Mark Thurman, Jamie E. McFadden, Mary J. Parkin, and G. Scott Boomer)

### Notes

Red-Shouldered Hawk Nesting Habitat Preference in South Texas (Bradley N. Strobel and Clint W. Boal)

Delineating Grassland Bird Conservation Areas in the U.S. Prairie Pothole Region (Rex R. Johnson, Diane A. Granfors, Neal D. Niemuth, Michael E. Estey, and Ronald E. Reynolds)

Comparison of Agricultural Seed Loss in Flooded and Unflooded Fields on the Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge (Melissa A. Foster, Matthew J. Gray, Craig A. Harper, and Johnathan G. Walls)

### Surveys

Application of a Double-Observer Aerial Line-Transect Method to Estimate Brown Bear Population Density in Southwestern Alaska (Patrick Walsh, Joel Reynolds, Gail Collins, Brook Russell, Michael Winfree, and Jeffrey Denton)

### Issues and Perspectives

Dandelions and Climate Change: Lessons from Your Front Lawn

## SF Bay Area Chapter Officer Directory

<b>President</b>	Christine Gaber (cog3@pge.com)
<b>President-elect</b>	Karen Swaim!!! (kswaim@swaimbio.com)
<b>Past President</b>	Doug Bell (dbell@ebparks.org)
<b>Secretary/Treasurer</b>	Bryan Olney (bolney@esassoc.com)
<b>Chapter Representative</b>	Natasha Dvorak (ndvorak@esassoc.com)
<b>Newsletter Editor</b>	Brian Pittman (bpittman@esassoc.com)
<b>Webmaster</b>	Luke Maculay (luke.macaulay@gmail.com)
<b>Advisor at Large</b>	Dana Ostfeld (dostfeld@esassoc.com)



The usual suspect, Wile E. Coyote, has been rounded up and is now in custody.

## Chapter Newsletter

For our upcoming 'lucky 7th' fall 2010 issue of the *Tattler*, I'm begging that some caring person might contribute a small morsel of news for our members to digest. Please don't make me ask our fanatical local Cat Lady for news contributions, because that's how hopeless we've become. Desperate times, desperate times... My email address is in the directory.

<b>Deadline</b>	<b>Mailing By</b>
April 15	April 30
July 15	July 31
October 15	October 31
January 15	January 31

## Cover Photo

San Joaquin kit fox mount from the Chimineas Ranch kit fox workshop. Photo by B. Pittman

## Membership Renewal

If your membership dues are not paid for 2010, or you would like to become a member please contact Secretary/Treasurer Bryan Olney. Regular annual dues are \$10 and student memberships remain free at this time.

## Chapter Website

The SFBA Chapter website is the place to visit for past Wandering Tattler newsletters and minutes from our Chapter meetings. The site is located on the National TWS server at:

<http://joomla.wildlife.org/sanfrancisco/>