

THE WILDLIFE OF MOUNTAIN HOUSE CREEK

The restoration of Mountain House Creek has provided valuable new habitat for the wildlife of the Northwest Central Valley. With three distinct ecological zones, the Creek provides habitat for a large diversity of animals ranging from small insects to a number of small mammals. Possibly the most important new habitat is for the birds, which have struggled to find areas to nest and roost since the agricultural growth of the Central Valley took hold in the early 1900's. The Valley was once home to giant flocks of wintering waterfowl that were attracted to the waterways and the marshes that dominated the landscape. The riparian woodlands adjacent to these waterways provided important pathways and breeding grounds for many neo-tropical migratory birds. The upland grasslands supported a number of predatory birds as well as antelope, elk, wolves and

even grizzly bears. In and around the streams were reptiles and amphibians not to mention several species of salmon that would spawn in the waters of the delta in great numbers. Due to the development of agriculture in the Central Valley much of the habit for the birds and mammals has been lost and many species have struggled to survive.

The restoration of Mountain House Creek is an important way to help provide new habitat for animals, birds, and insects while allowing for the growing needs of the community around it. The Creek with three distinct habitats, (prairie/savannah, riparian and wetland/stream) is able to provide habitat for a wide range of wildlife.

BIRDS

The Central Valley supports nearly 250 species of birds and, if you look carefully, it is quite possible to see many of them visiting or residing in the Creek during different periods of the year. Popular permanent residents of the area include Great Blue Herons, several species of ducks, as well as nearly 90 other species. An important summer resident is the Swainson's Hawk. The hawk, like other summer residents, are considered neo-tropical migratory birds because they spend half of the year in Central or South America. In the case of the Swainson's Hawk it travels 8,000 miles to southern South America every fall and flies back every spring. Look for the hawks in the tallest trees above the creek and look for many of the smaller neo-tropical migratory birds in the dense brush of the riparian zone. Some of the most important resident species such as the heron, the ducks, and a number of different egret species can be found in the water or at the water's edge.



*Top: Goldeneyes can be found in the ponds and in parts of the Creek that have large areas of standing water.
Left: Great Blue Herons can be found hunting on the edges of the Creek and water quality basins.*



*Top: The Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher is the smallest of birds and will easily fit in the palm of your hand.
Right: The Swainson's Hawk is an endangered species that hunts in the upland grassy areas and can be found roosting in tall trees.*



MAMMALS

Unlike birds who can easily change the location of where they live by flying to a new spot, mammals (with the exception of bats) have to walk to their new home and are slower to colonize a newly restored creek like Mountain House Creek. Overtime though, the animals will work their way up the waterways and find their way to the creek. Many have already done so, but, because they are so small, they might be hard to find. Common small mammals of the area include the California Ground Squirrel, the Deer Mouse, the Brown-Footed Mole and a number of vole species which are cousins of the mouse. Some of the larger mammals possibly visible are the Beaver, Muskrat, and River Otter, all water loving and water dependent creatures. One mammal species that has found it easy to rediscover the Creek (and all the insects it provides) is the bat. The bats, such as the Townsend's Big-Eared Bat or the Hoary Bat, can be found in the evenings and the night feeding on the insects that live in and near the water.



*Top: The tiny Deer Mouse can be found foraging underneath bushes and grasses.
Left: The Coyote hunts for small animals like the deer mouse above.*



The Black-Tailed Jackrabbit can be found in the grasses and bushes of the upland terrace.



The Muskrat lives and forages at the Creek's edge.

MOUNTAIN HOUSE CREEK PARK
PARK OPEN SUNRISE TO SUNSET
SENSITIVE CREEK HABITAT
PLEASE STAY ON PATHS & DESIGNATED AREAS

WALKING DISTANCES

GREAT VALLEY PARKWAY	1.1 MILES	DE ANZA BOULEVARD	0.6 MILES
WEST ENTRANCE	1.0 MILES	BYRON ROAD	0.7 MILES
TOWN CENTER	0.4 MILES	NORTH COMMUNITY PARK	0.9 MILES
CENTRAL COMMUNITY PARK	0.15 MILES	OLD RIVER REGIONAL PARK	1.8 MILES
CENTRAL PARKWAY BRIDGE	0.3 MILES	VIA CENTRAL PARKWAY OVERPASS	

LEGEND

- PEDESTRIAN/BIKE PATH
- PEDESTRIAN CONNECTION
- RESTROOM
- INTERPRETIVE PANEL
- PARKING
- POCKET PARK/PICNIC AREA

NO PEDESTRIAN CONNECTION ACROSS BYRON ROAD AT CREEK USE CENTRAL PARKWAY OVERPASS

NO PEDESTRIAN CONNECTION ACROSS FROM ROAD AT CREEK USE CENTRAL PARKWAY OVERPASS

NO PEDESTRIAN CONNECTION ACROSS FROM ROAD AT CREEK USE CENTRAL PARKWAY OVERPASS