Our vision is a San Francisco Bay Area Wildlife Corridor. UWRP notes that as Silicon Valley's human population, development, and sea level increases, it is of utmost importance that the wildlife thoroughfares are identified and protected, thus maintaining California's natural genetic diversity.

Gray Fox Report for November 2017

by William C. Leikam, co-Founder, Urban Wildlife Research Project (UWRP)

Section I
Watching the Region for Gray Foxes with Trail Cameras

Last month I began the fox report with, "When you don't have the actual live foxes moving through the baylands ... how do you know if these elusive foxes are there hanging out in the brush?" I focused on scat, but another way to tell is with trail cameras. However, no matter how experienced one might be at trail camera placement, each camera can only capture images in a very narrow and limited part of the trail or the road. There in the baylands there are many hundreds of remaining acres not covered by these cameras.

None-the-less, I had anticipated seeing young gray foxes dispersing from their home ranges both south of the Palo Alto Baylands Nature Preserve around Moffett Field and north from along East Palo Alto and the Facebook region. Based on years of experience, I predicted that they would begin to show up around mid-November and on into December. On November 2nd at 7:34 PM the first of the month's gray foxes appeared on one of the trail cameras as it briefly sniffed about, then moved off to right of the camera. Normally, I would look at a fox to see if there were any distinguishing characteristics but night images on the trail camera are black and white, making it nearly impossible to see a unique Identifier. This appearance suggested that dispersal had begun but earlier than expected.

On November 8, at 7:31 PM another trail camera recorded another gray fox as it urine-marked the trail, looked around, scratched under its chin, and then moved off to the left of the frame. Three days later, on November 11, one of the cameras was not quick enough and almost missed recording a gray fox quickly trotting along the road at 7:29 PM toward the junction. It crossed the road over toward marsh. The way it quickly moved, gave me the clear impression that it had caught something and was going out
It was with that last sighting that I began putting together a puzzle in an attempt to decide whether these were three individual foxes, or a single fox appearing multiple times before multiple cameras. As November ended, I had a sense that this was a single gray fox. I checked back over the videos. A picture formed. I watched the fox's varied movements; the way it carried itself, the way it moved. If we add into the mix years of experience, I have come to the tentative conclusion that all of the November sightings are of the same gray fox. If so, this suggests that it may stick around the area until a mate shows up. If that is the case, then we are due to have a litter of gray fox pups foraging about at the Palo Alto Baylands Nature Preserve this coming April, 2018.

**Gray Foxes General Health**

Given the presence of the gray fox mentioned above, it is a healthy, looking fox.

**Total Numbers Of Gray Foxes in the Palo Alto Baylands Preserve**

As far as I can see, one, but there may be two as on last night's trail camera at the old ITT Facility, a gray fox passed in the dark. Impossible to tell if it was the same gray fox I'd picked up with the other trail cameras.

---

**Section II**

**Update for the Urban Wildlife Research Project - Greg Kerekes & Bill Leikam**

On November 28 in an article and published in the San Jose Mercury News titled "With elk on rebound, California releases new management plan: Wildlife experts say it's time to expand, link and improve their scattered habitats", I was quoted along with two other elk experts. [read article]

The following are events that Greg and I have been invited to present to. [Contact us for more information].

1. **December 8th, 2017**: [Deer Hollow Farm, Cupertino, California] - This is a private presentation to the docents of Deer Hollow Farm.
2. **January 10, 2018**: [Redwood Regional Ornithological Society, Santa Rosa, California] - Our next public gathering!

To find out more about us, search Urban Wildlife Research Project, UWRP, gray foxes, wildlife connection corridors, [UrbanWildlifeResearchProject.com] and
1. **Check out our Facebook Page.**
2. **If you haven’t had a chance to read at least some of the articles that have been written about our study of gray fox behavior and our corridor work, click on these links as they will take you to the source:** [Bill Leikam - The Fox Guy](#), and [Greg Kerekes & URWP](#).

---

### Section III

**Gray Fox Baylands Goals**

Within the permit that allows the Urban Wildlife Research Project to conduct its study of the behavior of the gray fox at the Palo Alto Baylands Nature Preserve, the objectives covered are:

- **Monitoring of urban gray fox denning sites in Palo Alto Baylands.**
  
  This is being accomplished during the period when the gray foxes use a den site. It is one of the prime locations for gathering most of the behavioral data on the litter and on adults alike.

- **Assessment of status and population trends of Baylands urban gray foxes.**
  
  See above - As of June 2015, it appears as though the number of gray foxes at the baylands has declined considerably. This brings up the question: As with coyotes that can regulate the number of pups born in a region, might also gray foxes do the same?

- **Identification of habitat features that promote the presence of urban gray foxes**
  
  As stated in a previous gray fox report, there is a need to undertake some work to increase the habitat features required by the gray foxes and other wildlife in an area where a road was built that borders the saltwater channel. I asked construction supervisor Frank Muzzi about this and he felt that the old growth Coyote Bush would grow back within the coming year and therefore accomplish the same goal. After considering this and talking with people who know how to restore habitats, we need to assess what kinds of plants would grow best along the edge of the saltwater channel and alongside the marsh. The Alkaline Saltbush is one but there are probably others as well. We need to grow a permanent habitat that contains the corridors and plant it as soon as possible. We'll keep an eye on this as this is a critical link between the southern region of the baylands and the northern region.

- **Assessment of reproductive success and identification of factors that promote successful reproduction.**
  
  Last month I wrote that gray fox reproduction at the baylands appears to be holding steady with an average of 3.3 pups developing to maturity during the 2013 and 2014 seasons. As noted above, the 2015 season has fewer pups than in years past. **Solution?** Open up the pinch-point along [Matadero Creek](#) by developing thickets that link one area to another.

- **Identification and assessment of possible dispersal travel routes.**
  
  Presently there can only be guesses as to dispersal travel routes. We intend to make this important question much more concrete when we attain our collaring/take/capture permit from the Department of Fish & Wildlife.
Until next month, I hope that your endeavors are productive and rewarding. Take care.

Bill Leikam - The Fox Guy
Urban Wildlife Research Project (UWRP)

Thank You to Our Partners

CuriOdyssey

Pathways for Wildlife

Urban Wildlife Research Project | 650-856-3041 | Email | Website

STAY CONNECTED