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 August 2016

Respectfully Submitted by
William C. Leikam, Founder of the Urban Wildlife Research Project (UWRP)

Odd Pups & More

There are two odd, baffling gray fox pups over in the overflow channel. Last month I included a paragraph about these two, stating how, when I came back from Montana and I first encountered them, they did not show any flight response which is the norm for any wild animal. Not only did they allow me to walk up to them, but I have had reports from others that these two pups just lay there in the grass, most generally within the shadow of a nearby bush and if they are awake, they just look up rather inquisitively and as often as not, they just close their eyes and go back to sleep. Several teenagers have been hanging out lately along the ditch, back under the canopy. They said that when they are there, the two pups come from the brush and lay around nearby.

Someone just looking and seeing such a response might conclude that they are sick, but they are robust, well fed, chubby young foxes. On one occasion one of the pups lay out in the open on the dry grass. I watched it from a distance when suddenly; it came alive, dashed off into the brush nearby and within about three minutes returned with a fat woodrat in its mouth. I assume that they are fully capable of hunting on their own so there's no deficit in their behavior when it comes to attaining food.

As well, almost all of the foxes that I have monitored over these past seven years find refuge during the day off in the brush, under the canopy where it's not only safe but cool on hot summer days. These two pups seem not to know this little fact of gray fox-life for they are always out in the open; in the afternoons sleeping. One morning as I walked up the channel, there ahead of me were two dark balls of something out in the middle of the concrete channel. As I drew closer, I saw that it was these odd pups. That's not the first time I've come across them like that, yet most of the time they are with the adult male Blue nearby.
The Hawks & the Pups in Fox Hollow

On the whole, the gray foxes at the baylands are the top predator and indeed the keystone predator of the area, but with one exception: **Hawks.** The big Red-tailed Hawk will not take out an adult gray fox, but they will kill a pup. This past month one of the Red-tails has been hanging out off and on back by the water treatment plant and the truck washing pad. There is also a Cooper's Hawk that has been perched in one of the big eucalyptus trees. Back when the pups were about six weeks old, I walked down the dirt road into Fox Hollow. At that time, the pups were sleeping and denned up on the marsh side of the road in the tall, thick grass. When I came around the bend, there standing on the ground, just at the entrance that the pups used to come and go to the marsh, stood that Cooper's hawk just waiting for a pup to emerge and become dinner in an instant. The hawk flew.

Earlier this month, that hawk returned, sat up in a eucalyptus tree and waited. The pups had followed me across the truck washing pad (TWP) as I set-up my trail cameras. I paid little attention to the hawk, but when I finished with my work, the pups followed me out onto the pad. That's when the hawk launched, dove toward one of the pups that by then was dashing at top speed for the tall grass on the other side of the road. The hawk had to pull up before it caught up with the pup. That pup hit the grass at top speed.

Total Numbers Of Gray Foxes in the Palo Alto Baylands Preserve

There are 20 total gray foxes in the region of the Palo Alto Baylands. One pair, Big Guy and Pale have left the area since last month. I might add here that there are gray foxes living in the thickets along the overflow channel that are wild and do not show themselves.

Healing & Health

A week ago today, Wednesday, August 24, 2016, as I made my way toward the clearing to set-up my trail camera for the night, the two pups followed me. I turned and shooed them back but instead of reacting by leaving, the two of them defecated side-by-side. I checked their scat. One had no solid material in the scat and the other pup had just a little. It was mostly nearly black water. The pups had a serious case of diarrhea, an indicator that although they appear to be healthy, they may not be. Need to keep a watch on this.

Given the number of injuries that the gray foxes have suffered over the past several months, Gray's eye infection has returned. He has that ugly puss-like drainage at the corners of both eyes. One of his pups also has such drainage in its left eye. Over in the channel, the alpha male Dark has eye infections off and on. I'm beginning to wonder whether or not this is a part of what comes with being a gray fox.

Three of the foxes: Gray, Dark and Dark Eyes all have dealt with their worm eggs in their scat. They are clear. Given the intense scratching by these foxes over the past several
months, it appears as though the vermin are fading out because the foxes do not have to bite and scratch as much as they had.

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

As an update on events occurring with the Urban Wildlife Research Project:

1. Freelance nature writer [Tom Molanphy’s article](#) about our corridor and fox work around the San Francisco Bay that linked us into the Yellowstone to Yukon (Y2Y) Initiative was published in the [SF Weekly](#) as a front page feature article. We are truly honored to have such an article written about what many call, our important work.

2. Beth Pratt-Bergstrom’s new wildlife book [When Mountain Lions Are Neighbors](#) covering not only Mt. Lions but as well other wildlife, has been officially released on the book shelves as of August 1, 2016. Within, the book there is a chapter that covers the Urban Wildlife Research Project’s documentation of the gray fox. **Please purchase a copy of this valuable book. All proceeds will be used to fund these important projects found in the book.**

To find out more about us, search Greg Kerekes, Bill Leikam - The Fox Guy, [Urban Wildlife Research Project, UWRP](#), gray foxes, corridors, and more.

1. We changed the URL for our website to [UrbanWildlifeResearchProject.com](#).
2. Check out our [UWRP Facebook Page](#).

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**Within the permit that allows the Urban Wildlife Research Project to conduct its study of the behavior of the gray fox, 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 Bayland’s 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
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**

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**Thank You to Our Partners**

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