Gray Fox Report for February 2015

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

To: Select City of Palo Alto Staff, City Council & Other Interested Parties

Date Submitted: February 28, 2015

The gray foxes at the Palo Alto Baylands has turned a significant corner, meaning that at this time all of the females that will get pregnant are pregnant and have denned up with their mates and simply await April when they will have their new litters.

This year, at the overflow channel, the pair known as Dark and Cute will have their litter in the same location as they did last year. There is one somewhat bewildering situation along Matadero Creek, namely there are two unattached juveniles, both females, that call the area their home range. These two young foxes are known as Tippy and Tense. They present an interesting problem, in that neither have paired up with a male. The question becomes, will they be the helper females for Dark and Cute, for Dark eyes and Blue Tag? There is also an adult female Dark Eyes that has taken up residency in the same location as Dark and Cute but I have not seen any direct indications as to whether she has paired up with the only other male in that area Blue Tag. (This male has been living in the thicket for the past year and a half after being tagged by Brian Popper of the USDA.) If so, they will have their litter near Dark and Cute’s natal den.

Along the north side of the Matadero Creek, along the levee where Little One and Helper have been living for the past two years, those two foxes have left with a male, Brownie, that came onto the scene there nearly six months ago. I have strong indicators that Brownie has led these two females out into the marsh across the levee road. It is possible that he has paired with Little One but if not, he paired with Helper. If the latter be the case, then Little One will most likely become the Helper Female for this “family” whereas when Helper first came into the area she helped Little One raise her litter of four. (Only one pup out of the four survived that year; 2013.)

Numbers

As previously noted in the December fox report, there are four adults in the area that had pups and reared them during the 2014 season. Two of them, Papa Gray the male and Mama Bold the female, are to be found near the water treatment plant and two are on the south side of Matadero Creek; adult female Cute & her mate Dark. There is one female adult on the north side of the creek that had no pups this past season. This one is Little One. Total adult population equals five adults.

As for the number of pups still in the area there are four. They are: Tippy, Brownie, and Pale. The latter is near the water treatment plant while Tippy is on the south side of Matadero Creek and Brownie is on the north side of the creek. This gives a total of both adult and pups remaining at the baylands to eight gray foxes. In July 2014, there were 26 pups and adults combined.
Update for the Urban Wildlife Research Project

As an update on events occurring with my organization, the Urban Wildlife Research Project: This year we expect that we will be funded by the National Wildlife Federation (NWF). Amount is unknown at the moment. A new urban wildlife book will be published this year that contains a chapter on my research/study being done at the baylands on the gray fox. A new documentary has been released. See it on YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=06ehckMEXOY&feature=youtu.be. We are being asked by organizations, corporations, and a university to advise them on the gray foxes in their area. During February we were asked to present our work to several organizations. We are working to develop an integrated, seamless animal corridor from Redwood City, south along the bay and then north to the southern edge of the Oakland Airport. This work is already underway. We have been featured as one of the most important urban wildlife projects in California by the NWF and will on March 17th be once again a featured part of the NWF annual gathering in San Francisco at the Hall of Flowers.

Sincerely,

Bill Leikam, aka The Fox Guy

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