

THE VALLEY FEVER

December 2016



Announcements

Next Chapter Board Meeting

Our next San Joaquin Valley Chapter board meeting will be Thursday, February 9th from 2000-2130 at the Sierra Penthouse Suite – 1st floor, Room 1748, Peppermill Tower, Reno, Nevada. Please join us for refreshments and enlightening Chapter discussions to hammer out next year's plan for workshops and other activities.

New Appointments to the Board

Lori Bono has been appointed as Granting Committee Chair, Petros Chrysafis is our Student Representative at CSU, Fresno, and Howard Clark is our newsletter editor. We appreciate them for taking on these important roles.

2017 Natural Communities Conference

The annual Natural Communities Conference is planned for March 16, 2017, at Hodel's Country Dining, 5917 Knudsen Drive, Bakersfield, CA. This one-day conference offers the opportunity to hear the latest research and management of species within the San Joaquin Valley and surrounding areas, network, and catch up with fellow biologists. Please send abstracts by March 8th to erin.tennant@gmail.com. Like last year, there will also be 5 minute summary talks. More info coming later. We hope to see you there!

President-Elect

Larry Saslaw has agreed to be our president-elect for 2017. Larry worked as a wildlife biologist in the Bakersfield Bureau of Land Management office between 1985 and 2011 where he collaborated on studies that investigated the effects of livestock grazing, fire, and oil and gas activities on several San Joaquin Valley listed species. Other work has included monitoring kangaroo rat species distribution and abundance, evaluating kangaroo rat translocations, developing habitat management prescriptions, and restoring previously disturbed habitats in the San Joaquin Desert region. Larry is currently working part-time for the Endangered Species Recovery Program and McCormick Biological, Inc., as well as serving on the Tulare Basin Wildlife Partners board. Much thanks to Larry for taking on the role of president-elect.



Blunt-nosed Leopard Lizard (*Gambelia sila*), from the Pixley National Wildlife Refuge, Tulare Co. Photo by Joe Medley.

Winter Raptor Field Trip—Panoche Valley—21 January 2017

Kris Robison, President; kristofer.robison@gmail.com

Join SJV Chapter President and raptor expert Joe Medley on an all day field trip to the beautiful and remote Panoche Valley! We'll meet in Fresno around 0800 and traverse the Central Valley together looking for raptors and other wildlife. We'll head into Little Panoche Valley, stopping first to look for Bald Eagles at Little Panoche Reservoir. After that we hit Mercy Hot Springs to check out a well-known Long-eared Owl roost (but no time for a soak, today!). Panoche Valley will be our final destination where we'll have the opportunity to observe a number of awesome species including Merlin, Prairie Falcon, Peregrine Falcon,

American Kestrel, Cooper's Hawk, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Ferruginous Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Golden Eagle, or even Mountain Plover!

Weather dependent! If we get anything other than a rainy day, we'll head out into the field. Transportation will be provided if enough people are interested in attending. If we need to rent vans, there will be a charge to attend (amount TBD); otherwise it will be free. BYO lunch! Please RSVP to Kris Robison by 6 January 2017! Don't miss your chance to see the beautiful Panoche Valley and learn about raptor biology from a raptor expert!!



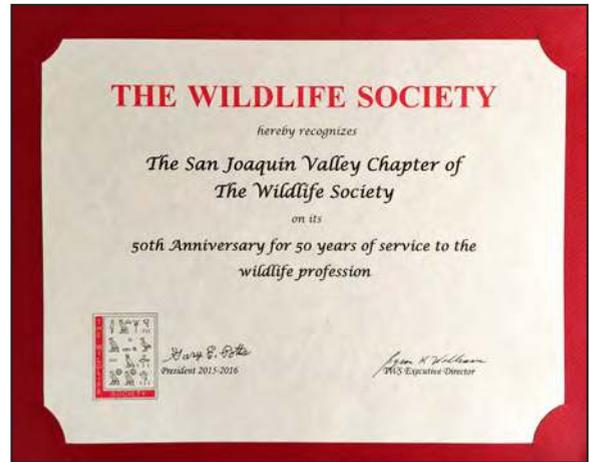
(A) Long-eared owl (*Asio otus*), Yosemite National Park, Mariposa County, CA, 2009. (B) Ferruginous hawk (*Buteo regalis*), Klamath National Wildlife Refuge, CA, 2012. (C) Prairie falcon (*Falco mexicanus*), Sierra Valley, Plumas County, CA, 2013. (D) Merlin (*Falco columbarius*), Fisherman Island National Wildlife Refuge, VA, 2010. All Photos by Joe Medley.

Fifty Years

Jeff Davis, Chapter Representative; jdavis@colibri-ecology.com

2016 marked the 50th anniversary of the San Joaquin Valley Chapter of The Wildlife Society (TWS). In 1966, Reed Sanderson, a USDA Forest Service research biologist working at the San Joaquin Experimental Range, arranged a few meetings in Visalia to discuss forming the Chapter. In attendance were several other TWS members, including Chuck Graves and Gene Peabody from the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG), Paul Shields from the Sierra National Forest, Don Duncan from the San Joaquin Experimental Range, and a few others. TWS officially approved the Chapter on July 11, 1966. Although Chapter members elected Reed Sanderson as the first president, he did not serve in that capacity because he moved to West Virginia. As the elected vice-president, Chuck Graves filled the position of our first Chapter president. Chuck worked for DFG for nearly three decades. His last position was as assistant chief of DFG's Natural Heritage Division. Coincidentally, his daughter, Cynthia Perrine, has been a leader in the Western Section of TWS, serving as Section president from 2005-2006, more recently as Section representative, and in other roles. On the topic of the Western Section, several of our Chapter presidents went on to become Section presidents. They include Scott Frazer from 1990-1991, Marti Kie from 1994-1995, Mike Chapel from 1995-1996, and Julie Vance from 2007-2008.

For 50 years we have been sharing information, networking, providing professional development opportunities, and promoting sound stewardship of wildlife resources throughout the San Joaquin Valley. One of our crowning achievements is our annual Natural Communities Conference (NCC). This one-



Fifty year certificate presented to the San Joaquin Valley Chapter by The Wildlife Society.

day conference highlights current wildlife and botanical research, conservation, and management activities in natural communities in the San Joaquin Valley. Brian Cypher, Associate Director and Research Ecologist with the Endangered Species Recovery Program, and Larry Saslaw, retired Wildlife Biologist with the Bureau of Land Management, have expertly spearheaded the NCC every spring since 1998. This year's conference was held on March 17. The NCC along with a blunt-nosed leopard lizard workshop held May 5 and June 3 are emblematic of who we are as a Chapter. I can't think of a better way to have celebrated our 50th anniversary than to have provided these opportunities to wildlife professionals in the San Joaquin Valley.

I must say that I am proud of the success of the Chapter. I check your web page now and then and newsletter just to see what is happening. Once in a while a thought grows into something great! Thanks to everyone for making it a success.
—Reed Sanderson, TWS San Joaquin Valley Chapter Charter Member

Western Wildlife Journal Update

Howard O. Clark, Jr., CWB®, Website Coordinator; howard.clark.jr@gmail.com

The Western Section's journal, *Western Wildlife*, is wrapping up its 3rd volume. A total of five papers have been published this year. The complete volume is available on the website (<http://bit.ly/2hz5Zg3>), including a table of contents and an Annual Meeting Review from the Section meeting held in Panama, CA, this year. Western Section appointed officers representing the journal are Bridget Sousa and Howard

Clark. Please consider submitting your manuscripts to *Western Wildlife*. The journal is open-access and peer-reviewed. Original research, notes, reviews, perspectives, and correspondence on the ecology, natural history, management, and conservation biology of animals are considered for publication. Submit materials to David Germano at dgermano@csu.edu. Papers will be peer-reviewed and then published on-line once accepted.

Reed H. Sanderson's Retrospective on the 50th Anniversary

Reed H. Sanderson, The Wildlife Society—Chair of Retired Wildlife Professionals

Greetings Kris,

How I wish I could join you for this event [Courtright Reservoir camping trip]. It is a bit hard for me to believe that 50 years ago there were several wild-lifers sitting in a Visalia class room organizing the San Joaquin Chapter. The strange event that occurred during that meeting was a minor earthquake. I had my chair tilted back on the rear legs when I felt a slight movement. I looked at the shadow cast by the hanging light on the wall and saw a slight movement to verify what was happening. I don't think anyone else felt the quake because there was no mention of it from anyone!

I was the pusher to organize the Chapter and honored to be the first president. But I only served for that initial meeting and Chuck Graves, as VP took over the position, and I transferred to West Virginia to study the effects of even-aged management on wildlife species. However, I kept an eye on the Chapter; occasionally visiting your webpage. I have carried one of the Chapter canvas briefcases with me

to many meetings. It thrills me to see the success of the San Joaquin Valley Chapter—especially when so many chapters are struggling.

Now, I am retired from Forest Service Research (1989) and from The University of Arizona (2007) plus serving 7 years as the volunteer manager of the Santa Rita Experimental Range when it was transferred from the Forest Service to Arizona State Lands with the UA as the taking institution. I am still active in TWS as the Chair of the Retired Wildlife Professionals. However, my tent is getting awful thin; there are a few holes and tears. I think I will soon have to fold it up for the last time before too long.

I would be honored if you would pass on my congratulations for keeping this Chapter going and so very active and successful. It will be a small bit of me that will live on in the wildlife community. Keep up the great work and have a great celebration.

Sincerely,

Reed

Chapter Student Research Grant Award Winner

Lori Bono, Granting Committee Chair; Lori.Bono@wildlife.ca.gov

This year the Chapter awarded a \$500 research grant to Lee Nelson, a master's student at California State University, Fresno, to help support her thesis research project characterizing the microbiome and antimicrobial resistance found in corvid feces. The central hypothesis of the thesis is that birds roosting in urban environments will have more pathogenic and antimicrobial resistant organisms in their feces than birds in rural environments. Lee's pilot study has al-

ready identified multiple antibiotics in which bacteria from American crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*) fecal samples grew readily. With the completion of Lee's thesis project she will have a greater understanding of the microbial composition and antimicrobial resistance of this highly human associated and mobile bird species. Lee has used the Chapter research grant to help pay for some of her DNA sequencing and is continuing to collect and analyze samples from a variety of locations throughout the San Joaquin Valley.



Blunt-nosed Leopard Lizard Workshop attendees begin their search for BNLL at Semitropic Ecological Reserve. Photo by Renée Robison.

Message from the Outgoing President

Kris Robison, President; kristofer.robison@gmail.com

With 2016 drawing to a close, I can't help but think about how unbelievable this year has been. Our Chapter was involved in many great events that brought our members together to educate about the important natural resources that are often hanging on by a thread in the SJV. The knowledge and skills we gain as a group through workshops, networking, and field trips hopefully strengthens our collective resolve to build on the work of those who came before us.

With the unbelievable results of a tumultuous U.S. presidential election now beginning to seep in to my consciousness, finally, I can't help but feel worried. I'm concerned for wildlife biologists that depend on federal funding as part of their budget and trust in the integrity of their mission; I'm afraid of losing the progress that has been made over decades' time. And although I know the roof won't necessarily crash down come 21 January, we are in for a long, hard road for the next four years, at least. How in the heck did we arrive at this discouraging transition...? Regardless of the condition of the road ahead and the darkness of storm clouds on the horizon, we must keep traveling, and continue to look at the challenges in front of us with determination.

As I drive from jobsite to jobsite and stare into the sea of irrigated agriculture that is now the vast majority of the San Joaquin Valley, I realize that this Chapter and its hard working members are more important now than ever in helping raise awareness to pressing issues and in continuing to support those individuals and groups on the "front lines" of conservation by being a voice for our profession. We the members are the ones tasked with protecting natural resources,

acquiring knowledge and disseminating it accurately, and working hard every day for values that support wildlife and conservation. So to that end, I encourage each of you to get involved and volunteer to help *your* Chapter in the years ahead, because after all, this Chapter is organized entirely by volunteers. Attend a board meeting and participate in a discussion on how to move the Chapter forward; email your Chapter president and ask about organizing an event that will make us all better biologists; offer to lead a hike that will bring people together; or let us know of your favorite pub where we can enjoy delicious beers and get to know one another. After all, we members need to stick together, and the San Joaquin Valley Chapter is one of many in a truly great organization that requires our continued support.

If the Bush-years were any indication, I think we have at least a theoretical idea of the kind of turmoil we could witness in the next four years (and if the latest presidential cabinet choices are no indication — "End of the EPA? Trump taps climate change denier and fossil fuel ally Scott Pruitt to head agency", DemocracyNow.org, 12/08/2016). We collectively have a lot to lose including potential degradation to some of the things we hold sacred like real wilderness, clean air and water, and healthy populations of wildlife (not to mention human health). But this Chapter and TWS at-large is an outlet for advocacy as it pertains to environmental policy affecting wildlife conservation, ecology, biodiversity, and more. For 2017 and beyond, please get involved and help make this Chapter *your* voice.



Western honey bees (*Apis mellifera*) on Matilija poppy (*Romneya coulteri*), northern San Diego Co. Photo by Howard Clark.

Message from the Outgoing Past-President

Erin Tennant, Past President and Program Development; erin.tennant@gmail.com

Raise your glasses—my tenure on our Chapter board is coming to an end! I think a little recap is in order:

I started as Secretary for our Chapter in, I believe, 2010, and served for almost four years. Then, at former president Lori Bono's request, I took over as president for Rick Perry when he moved to greener pastures in Washington State. First of all, in true outgoing elected official style, I have to say that I'm so proud of all of the things our little Chapter has accomplished during the time I've been on the board. I've been part of two Blunt-nosed Lizard workshops, two sensitive small mammal workshops, a wildlife tracking workshop, social hours, our annual Natural Communities Conference, and every TWS Western Section conference since I joined the board. Whew! But, honestly, it has been a joy and a privilege to contribute to our Chapter. I'm also proud that during my time on the board we have helped sponsor environmental education programs with the Forest Service and The Wildlands Conservancy's Windwolves Preserve. We have also made small donations to conservation organizations working in our Chapter area like Working Dogs for Conservation, River Partners, Tu-

lare Basin Wildlife Partners, and Sequoia Riverlands Trust. I'd also have to say that one of the best parts of being on the board is simply getting to know colleagues better, whether it be learning about their personal triumphs and frustrations or just discovering that we all share so many of the same conservation objectives. Especially in times of change, either politically or ecologically, I find it invaluable to have a network of conservation minded professionals to gripe or grin with. Thus, I'd encourage anyone reading this to get involved with our Chapter and society in any capacity. Even just a simple email to the incoming president with an idea for an event or activity would be a great way to get started.

There are so many opportunities for continued growth of our Chapter, and I'm excited to see what's next. So, in closing, I'd like to offer many thanks to all the board members, and all of the Chapter members I've met and gotten to know over the last few years. Until next time, I'll see you all on that dusty, loamy, I'm actually using my windshield wipers to cut through the dust, San Joaquin Desert road (that's my summer office; I'd love to hear about yours at the next Chapter event).



Burrowing owls (*Athene cunicularia*), Calipatria, Imperial County, California. Photo by Howard Clark.

San Joaquin Valley Chapter and CSU, Fresno Biology Department Host Student-Professional Luncheon

Ryan Lopez, Treasurer; rlopez@natural-resources-group.com

In partnership with the Department of Biology at California State University, Fresno, the San Joaquin Valley Chapter of The Wildlife Society hosted the first Natural Resources Student-Professional Luncheon (10/24/2016, Fresno, CA). This event brought together undergraduate and graduate biology majors with local scientist professionals from a wide variety of organizations (government, NGO, consultant, business, agriculture, mitigation) to share tips they used to transition from student to working professional. It was also a great opportunity for students to ask questions on topics ranging from career advice to networking. The event was a success with a free flow of ideas, a productive discussion, a great turnout, and delicious pizza. For the professionals attending, it was refreshing to interact with a group of young, intelligent, and interested students who asked thoughtful questions and appeared to appreciate the opportunity to interact with scientists working “in the field”. The wide variety of topics discussed included online re-

sources for job searching, events and organizations to get involved with for professional networking (hint, hint...TWS), and recommended college courses that are useful for biological professionals.

We would like to thank all attendees for taking time out of their busy schedules to participate, including:

John Battistoni – *CA Department of Fish & Wildlife*

Lori Bono – *CA Department of Fish & Wildlife*

Luther Carson – *Monsanto*

Jeff Davis – *Colibri Ecological Consulting*

Ann Huber – *Sequoia Riverlands Trust (NGO)*

Ryan Lopez – *Natural Resources Group*

Justin Sloan – *U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service*

Heyo Tjarks – *River Partners (NGO)*

Big thanks to Lori Bono (CDFW) and Dr. Paul Crosbie, Ph.D. (CSUF Biology Department Chair) for organizing this event, and we look forward to hosting another Student-Professional Luncheon in the future.



Erin Tennant releasing a collared blunt-nosed leopard lizard. Photo by Renée Robison.



Workshop attendees begin their exploration of Semitropic Ecological Reserve. Photo by Renée Robison.

Uncommon Bedfellows; Two Reptiles Sharing the Shade or Hired Help Guarding the Gate?

Ryan Lopez, Treasurer; rlopez@natural-resources-group.com

It's the small details and the slow progression of change, punctuated with extremes, that is most interesting for biologists and nature enthusiasts in California's deserts—especially those that you find just below the surface. This was true one clear hot day in mid-July when biologists from the Natural Resources Group, Inc., who were at the new West Mojave Conservation Bank checking camera traps for Mohave ground squirrel (*Xerospermophilus mohavensis*), peered into a burrow and saw the menacing horns (supraoculars) of the Mojave Desert sidewinder (*Crotalus cerastes cerastes*) [Side note: it is these supraoculars that give the Mojave Desert sidewinder its nickname, the “horned rattlesnake”]. The sidewinder, while venomous, is not particularly aggressive so getting a closer look was definitely in order. Using cell phones to reflect sunlight into the burrow revealed that this attractive adult snake was not alone, but rather was nestled up against an adult desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*), both seemingly enjoying a respite from the heat.

Tortoise burrows are used by many forms of wildlife, some of which depend on tortoise burrows for shelter and survival (burrow commensals). Consequently, finding another animal, such as a sidewinder, within a tortoise burrow is not uncommon. It is seem-

ingly uncommon behavior for a tortoise and burrow commensal to be using the burrow at the same time and in such close proximity. This behavior may not be surprising though, as these species pose no direct threat to each other and do not compete for resources. In fact, for a tortoise, having a venomous snake between itself and the exit of a burrow might have a mutualistic behavioral advantage in the form of a predator repellent, increasing its chance for survival. For the sidewinder, having tortoises around creating burrows is essential, so protecting the opening of a burrow is a welcome tradeoff.

The biologists at Natural Resources Group, Inc., used an iPhone 6 and the app GIS Kit (hat tip to Jeff Davis) to capture the photo and record geographic data. This chance encounter was documented at an elevation of 1,992 feet above sea level, within creosote bush scrub habitat co-dominated by *Ambrosia dumosa* and *Larrea tridentata*. Ground surface temperature in the shade was 125° F, and the temperature of the tortoise's shell in the burrow registered as 105° F. Temperature was measured using the Etekcity Lasergrip 1022 non-contact Digital Laser Infrared Thermometer. The proposed West Mojave Conservation Bank is located approximately 12 miles north of California City in eastern Kern County, CA.



Mojave Desert sidewinder (*Crotalus cerastes cerastes*) with an adult desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*); courtesy Ryan Lopez.

Blunt-nosed Leopard Lizard Workshop Recap

Howard O. Clark, Jr., CWB®, Website Coordinator; howard.clark.jr@gmail.com

The 2016 Blunt-nosed Leopard Lizard (BNLL) Workshop was a huge success. The classroom portion was completed on Friday, May 6, however, the field portion was postponed to June 3, 2016, due to poor weather. On June 3rd, four instructors and 20+ students arrived at the Semitropic Ecological Reserve in Kern County (near Lost Hills, CA) and set out to survey for BNLL (following the BNLL survey protocol established by the California Department of Fish and

Wildlife). Instructors showed students how to take soil and air temperatures, how to scan for lizards and other reptiles, while at the same time not stepping on rattlesnakes. Surveys were conducted between 08:30 and 12:00. Each group detected anywhere from 1 to 6 BNLL, as well as other lizard species, including Tiger Whiptails and Common Side-blotched Lizards. In all, it was a successful workshop, albeit in two parts. See below for some photographic highlights of the field portion of the workshop.



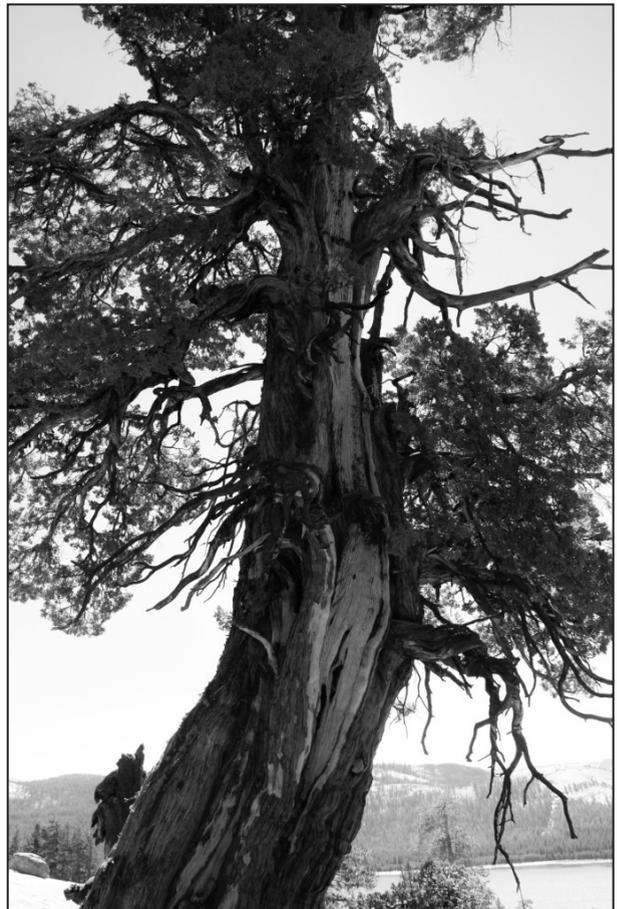
Blunt-nosed leopard lizards (*Gambelia sila*), from the Semitropic Ecological Reserve. All photos by Howard Clark.

50th Anniversary Celebration Camping Trip—Trapper Springs Campground

Kris Robison, President; kristofer.robison@gmail.com

To commemorate our Chapter's 50th Anniversary, a dedicated group of wildlifera trekked to Courtright Reservoir in the high Sierra August 5-7 for a weekend of relaxation! We stayed at Trapper Springs Campground on the northwest side of the lake where we found an abundance of nature within a short walk of base camp...an active Osprey nest with two full grown young perched atop a large snag with a perfect view! Not to mention our very own granite dome

right next to camp that granted us an amazing night of stargazing!! Thank you, Perseid! With all our busy schedules, we took this time to take it easy, have a swim in the lake, and catch up on good stories around the campfire. Did I mention smores.....with bacon?! Oh yes, it was amazing. To top it all off, our Chapter provided a carne asada taco fiesta con cerveza to boot! It was quite the trip, and I think everyone had a great time! Hope to see you next year, because this is one trip we're gonna have to replicate!



All photos by Kris Robison.

Membership Management Software Update

Renée Robison, Membership Coordinator; renerobison929@gmail.com

During our June 4th Chapter meeting I introduced the idea of using membership management software. After subsequent discussions among the Chapter Board and research into management software services, the Board has decided to move forward with transitioning to a cloud-based membership management system via the Member Planet website. Our goal in using this low-cost software is to not only allow for more collaboration among board members but to better serve you, our members, and make your experience more enjoyable. The software provides the

potential to streamline communication, provide a platform to more easily track and organize membership information, and to allow the option for online registration and payment for Chapter membership and events. We plan to begin use of this software in early 2017. As we begin using it, expect to see some changes in our communications and registration options. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your Chapter membership, continue to contact me at renerobison929@gmail.com. Thanks and best wishes for a happy holiday season.

Mammal Tracking Workshop Summary

Renée Robison, Membership Coordinator; renerobison929@gmail.com

On November 14-15, 2015 Jim Lowery and Mary Brooks of Earth Skills led a two-day workshop entitled *Special Training in Mammal Tracking*. The workshop was held at the 93,000 acre Wind Wolves Preserve in Kern County, nestled at the mouth of a rugged canyon at the northern foot of the Transverse Range. The workshop provided attendees the opportunity to camp and be completely immersed in

learning Jim and Mary's tracking techniques. The essentials of mammal tracking and sign identification were covered in both a classroom and field setting. Track identification and aging, gait and pattern analysis, and field research methods were among the topics covered. The workshop concluded with participants using their new skills to track a mountain lion that had passed along Emigdio Creek just the night before.



Jim Lowery explains the fundamentals of tracking.



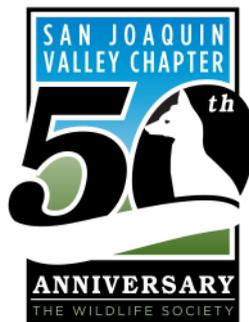
Jim Lowery helps workshop attendees to decipher tracks in a wash at Wind Wolves Preserve.

All photos by
Renée Robison.



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Various versions of our new 50th Anniversary logo—design by Robin Phanco.

The Goals of the Society and the San Joaquin Valley Chapter

- Develop and maintain professional standards for wildlife research and management.
- Enhance knowledge and technical capabilities of wildlife managers.
- Advance professional stewardship of wildlife resources and their habitats.
- Advocate the use of sound biological information for wildlife policy decisions.
- Increase public awareness and appreciation of the wildlife profession.

