



Construction Critters: Wildlife during Construction

Construction typically disrupts wildlife use, but some animals continued to visit the construction site, even during construction, and were frequently seen, including white-tailed kites, herons, egrets, barn owls, white pelicans, cormorants, turkey vultures, coyotes, black deer, river otters, and even bobcats and seals.

The ease with which many animals adapted to the construction process attests to the level of everyday disturbance that most wildlife species have become habituated to, even in rural and relatively pristine areas.

Friendly pelican looking for good home

Creature: California brown pelican

Location: Dairy Mesa – near construction staging area

Story: Construction staff notified park that a bird was “hanging out” near the staging area even when trucks were pulling in and out. The bird even went underneath the water truck and started drinking dripping water. Avian biologist Jules Evens assisted with capturing the bird, which turned out to be a juvenile brown pelican, and the bird was transported to a local employee of Wildcare.



Okay, I'll leave, but I don't have to like it



Creature: Muskrat

Location: Northern Levee

Story: Muskrat was sleeping on top of levee. When staff approached, muskrat went into hole. Eventually extracted from hole, but not happy about being woken up from siesta.

Conclusion: Muskrat captured and successfully relocated to new – and soon to be much drier -- home.

Frequently Observed Visitors



Construction Makes Odd Bedfellows...



Creature: Coyote

Location: East Pasture

Story: Coyotes hung around construction areas, having apparently learned that construction can mean a free meal. Coyotes often came close to working equipment. To show that equipment wasn't the only odd bedfellow acquired



by these intrepid canines, at least one coyote was observed hanging out next to two deer, who were apparently unconcerned about their new neighbor and even chased him away at a later time. Coyotes will probably continue to visit the restored wetlands, but frequency of visits will drop after construction.

Not what you typically expect to find in a cow pasture....

Creatures: Leopard sharks, bat rays, and the odd shrimp

Location: East Pasture

Story: Mother Nature jumped the gun on the construction process in early July by breaching the levee in the central portion of the East Pasture during a very high tide. During the night, female leopard sharks and bat rays moved into the former dairy pastures and, unfortunately, became stranded when the levees caused the waters to pond in areas throughout the pasture, thereby preventing these animals from sensing the outgoing tide. Many of them were found in small depressions, former hunting ponds (see photo below), and the drainage ditches.



What Happened?: NPS staff and others spent a frantic day rescuing as many sharks and rays as possible. At least 7 to 9 of the 3.5- to 5-foot sharks were rescued and returned to Lagunitas Creek. See other posters for more pictures and details.



Why did the turtle cross the road?

Creature: northwestern pond turtle

Location: Ranch road – far from water

Story: Construction manager noted that the large hauling trucks had come to a halt in one location. Went to investigate and found that one of the drivers had seen the turtle crossing the road and stopped, wondering what should be done with the turtle. Meanwhile, the turtle continued to blithely cross the road, unaware that he was causing hauling mayhem.

What Happened?: Turtle captured and successfully relocated to new, much wetter home.



The cab is nice and warm.....

Creature: snake – exact species undetermined

Location: Cab of construction equipment

Story: One of the construction personnel returned to the cab to find an unwelcome visitor. A snake had climbed in, apparently lulled by the warmth of the equipment, OR interested in helping out with the restoration project. The snake in the photo was found warming himself in one of the recently removed levee areas.

