



Sierra Wildlife Coalition

Promoting humane and Practical Solutions for living
with beavers, coyotes and all our local wildlife

Happy New Year everyone.

January 2012

This is a good time to share with you our latest projects and progress, review the year's accomplishments and announce the new inroads our group has made for our area's wildlife. We also have several important volunteer opportunities.

Sierra Wildlife Coalition has come a long way from its origin at Griff Creek, begging a government bureaucrat to spare the lives of four beavers. Placer County has since asked us to do tree protection at the site, and readily agreed to purchase all of the materials required.

Tahoe Donner was the location of our area's first flow device, installed to ease neighbors' fears of flooding. We are so grateful to our anonymous donor for the funds she contributed to purchase all of the materials required, and a big thanks to her husband as well, for putting on his waders on that cold and snowy day to help with the installation. Thanks also go to Bill Houdyschell, the Tahoe Donner Forester, for his willingness to work with us and for also showing up on that cold day with his waders.

Thanks to the many of you who wrote letters, showed up, and spoke at the Truckee Town Council meeting. We got the Town Council's attention, they heard our concerns, and in return they directed their engineers to work with us during and after the upcoming Trout Creek Restoration Project to protect the beavers, rather than "remove" them as originally planned. We learned that a flood of polite public input was a great way to get attention and enact change. Work has begun on the segment behind the lumber yard. Beavers are active and living just downstream from this phase, and may move back into the restored section, so let's keep an eye out for them.

At the request of the Army Corp of Engineers in Martis Valley, we painted more trees with the gritty mixture of paint and sand. Wow! Suddenly *we* are being asked to help.

In addition, Placer County and the engineering group monitoring the water quality of Martis Creek for upstream development at Lahontan and Martis Camp called and asked for our help. We met them at the site and found a location for their stream monitoring gage in an area which would least likely be affected by present or future beaver activity.

We were very happy to respond to a call on the Truckee River referred to us by Truckee Animal Control and the Town of Truckee. A family's aspens and willows were starting to disappear, and we made a home visit armed with tree and scrub protection information. At last report the beavers had moved downstream – a happy ending for all.

Another call came in from a Truckee River resident reporting a pesky porcupine gnawing on his and a neighbor's deck. We drove out to meet the family, and determined the salt residue used as snow melt during the winter was attracting this animal. We supplied a salt block with instructions to gradually move it further and further into the wilderness, and problem solved. These homeowners also reported seeing the willows next to their deck being chewed and drug off by a beaver as they sat there! Then we started hearing more of the same stories from this area, and our next project was launched.

We obtained a list from the assessor's office of homeowners along the Truckee River from Tahoe City to Truckee, all 110 of them. We wrote a letter of introduction and offered our help with beaver related problems, and supplied referrals to other groups such as BEAR League and Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care in an effort to help with any wildlife issues they may be experiencing from either the woods or the river or the skies. We included our "Living with Wildlife" and beaver brochures, along with all the specifics for tree protection.

We were thrilled when Madonna Dunbar from Incline Village General Improvement District Department of Public Works contacted us for help this fall. Beavers love to block culverts; their damming instinct kicks in when they sense rushing water. In this case a sewer line was in danger of being undermined as a result of a culvert blockage, and the area required constant maintenance to keep the water running freely. Madonna and the near-by Tyrolean Village residents were very fond of their beaver colony and sought a permanent solution to their dilemma. IVGID reimbursed us for all materials, and even insisted on paying for Ted's time to install a Beaver Deceiver, a fencing structure designed to keep the animals far enough away from the culvert to prevent them from detecting the water flow. Madonna went on to write a column in the November issue of Moonshine Ink, complete with photos, to announce the completed project.

More big news! Beavers are back at Snow Creek, and have ponds on either side of the highway in Tahoe Vista. We have our suspicions that CalTrans had them killed last year due to their constant fear of flooding. This entire area is owned and was restored by the California Tahoe Conservancy. The beavers built a new dam on the lake side of the road, and also plugged the Conservancy's older-style flow device. When we called the Conservancy, they seemed unsure of our intentions, but they met us at the site. We gave them current information and research on flow devices, and they have actually asked us to consult and assist with installation of an improved flow device in the spring. They are also eager to have us monitor any changes, since they are headquartered in South Lake Tahoe. Scott Carroll is in charge of this and other watershed projects at the Conservancy. Please email him scarroll@tahoe.ca.gov (or call at 543-6062) as a member of Sierra Wildlife Coalition to thank them for their willingness to work with us and do what's best for the beavers, our water quality, and for maintaining all the benefits of a beaver created wetland. They are well aware of the public uproar created after the Griff Creek beavers were killed, so please let them know you care.

One volunteer opportunity involves providing school presentations. We will work with you and provide you with as much information as you can absorb. We have a beautifully photographed and narrated IMAX movie that tells the story of two beavers, and their amazing transformation of a seasonal creek into a lush wetland, where water is stored, and countless species began to live and thrive. The beaver's role in filtering sediments and nutrients is vital to maintaining water purity and clarity, especially here at Tahoe. Ponds make neighborhoods for many other creatures. This is a simple concept for the children (and even some adults) to grasp. We need to continue to get the word out that these gentle animals are an integral component of our ecosystem's general health. Education is the key to stop the routine eradication of beavers as it is practiced now.

We would also love to have you join us in our booth at Earth Day and/or Truckee Thursdays, and we expect more trees will need painting and protecting too. Let us know if you can help or if you have any suggestions or concerns. Thanks, together we can do this!

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P.O. Box 7763, Tahoe City, CA 96145 SierraWildlifeCoalition@gmail.com