Trail Tuesday:

February 2, 2021

Captivating Critters

Featuring

Coyote

Community Services & Parks

TRAIL TUESDAY:

CAPTIVATING CRITTERS

Parks Make Life Better!

Coyote (Canis latrans)

Coyotes are present in nearly every U.S. city.

While coyotes prefer open space or wilderness they have learned to adapt to urban areas as well.

Coyotes play an important role in the ecosystem, helping to keep rodent populations under control.

Coyote Fun Facts

- Coyotes are naturally diurnal & crepuscular (meaning to hunt at dawn & dusk), but urban coyotes often become more active at night (nocturnal) to avoid humans.
- Coyotes are good swimmers, have a strong sense of smell & keen hearing.
- Coyotes can run up to 40 miles per hour.
- Coyotes are highly social animals that form extensive family packs.
- Coyotes are monogamous & stay together until the death of their mate.
- Even when there is a lack of resources or pressure from other coyote packs, a mated pair will stay together year after year.
- Only the alpha pair in a pack will mate each year, typically around February.

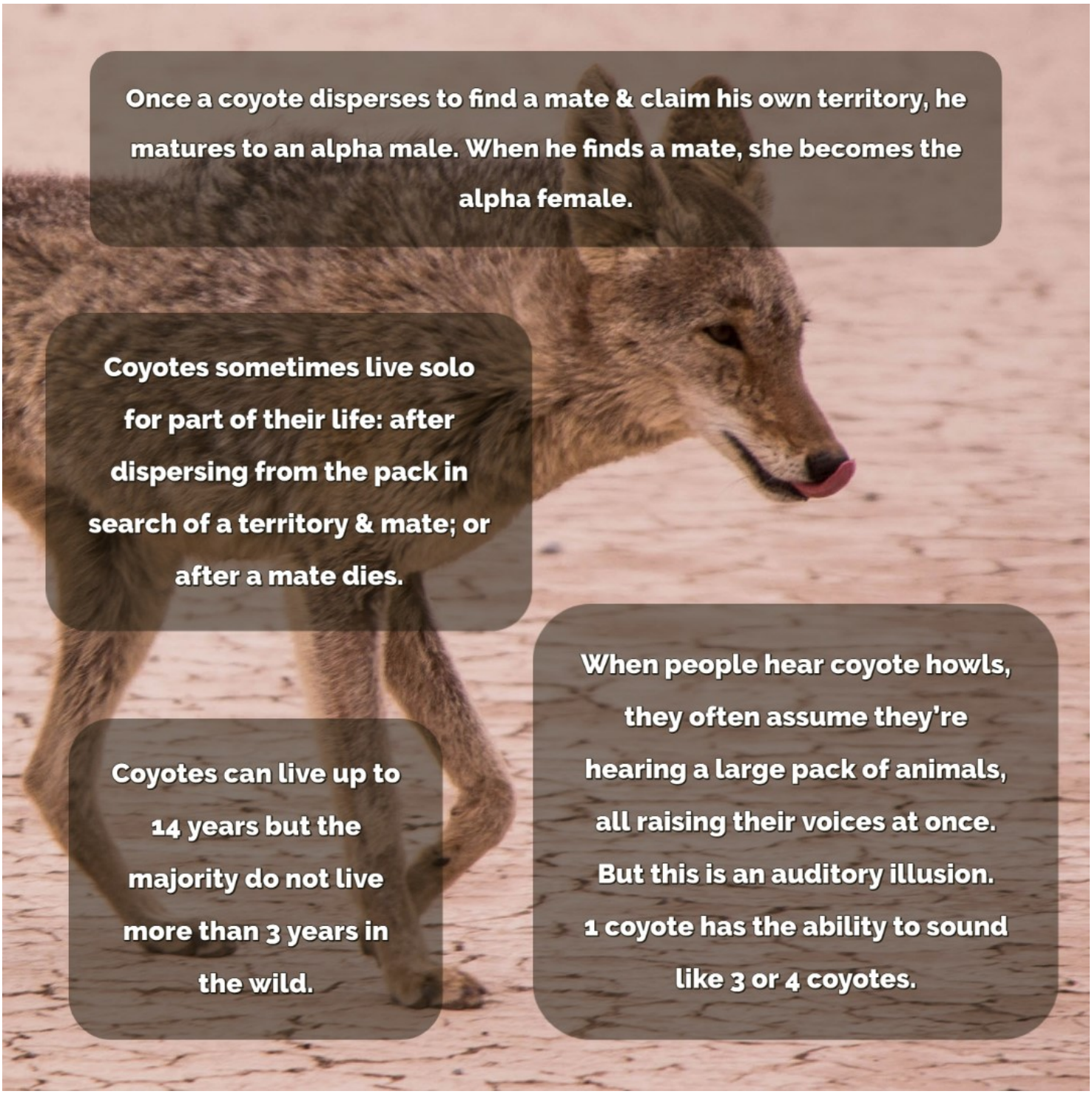
More Coyote Fun Facts

During pup season coyotes will use a den; otherwise, coyotes usually sleep above ground in the open or in cover.

Litter sizes often range from 4 - 7 pups. Coyotes have the ability to adjust their litter sizes based on food abundance & population density.

Pups stay in the den for about 6 weeks & then begin traveling short distances with adults.

Coyotes usually disperse from the family unit at about 1 year of age. However, some coyotes remain with the pack & help raise the next litter. Males & females that remain with the pack do not mate & do not have litters.


Once a coyote disperses to find a mate & claim his own territory, he matures to an alpha male. When he finds a mate, she becomes the alpha female.
Coyotes sometimes live solo for part of their life: after dispersing from the pack in search of a territory & mate; or after a mate dies.
When people hear coyote howls, they often assume they're hearing a large pack of animals, all raising their voices at once. But this is an auditory illusion. 1 coyote has the ability to sound like 3 or 4 coyotes.
Coyotes can live up to 14 years but the majority do not live more than 3 years in the wild.

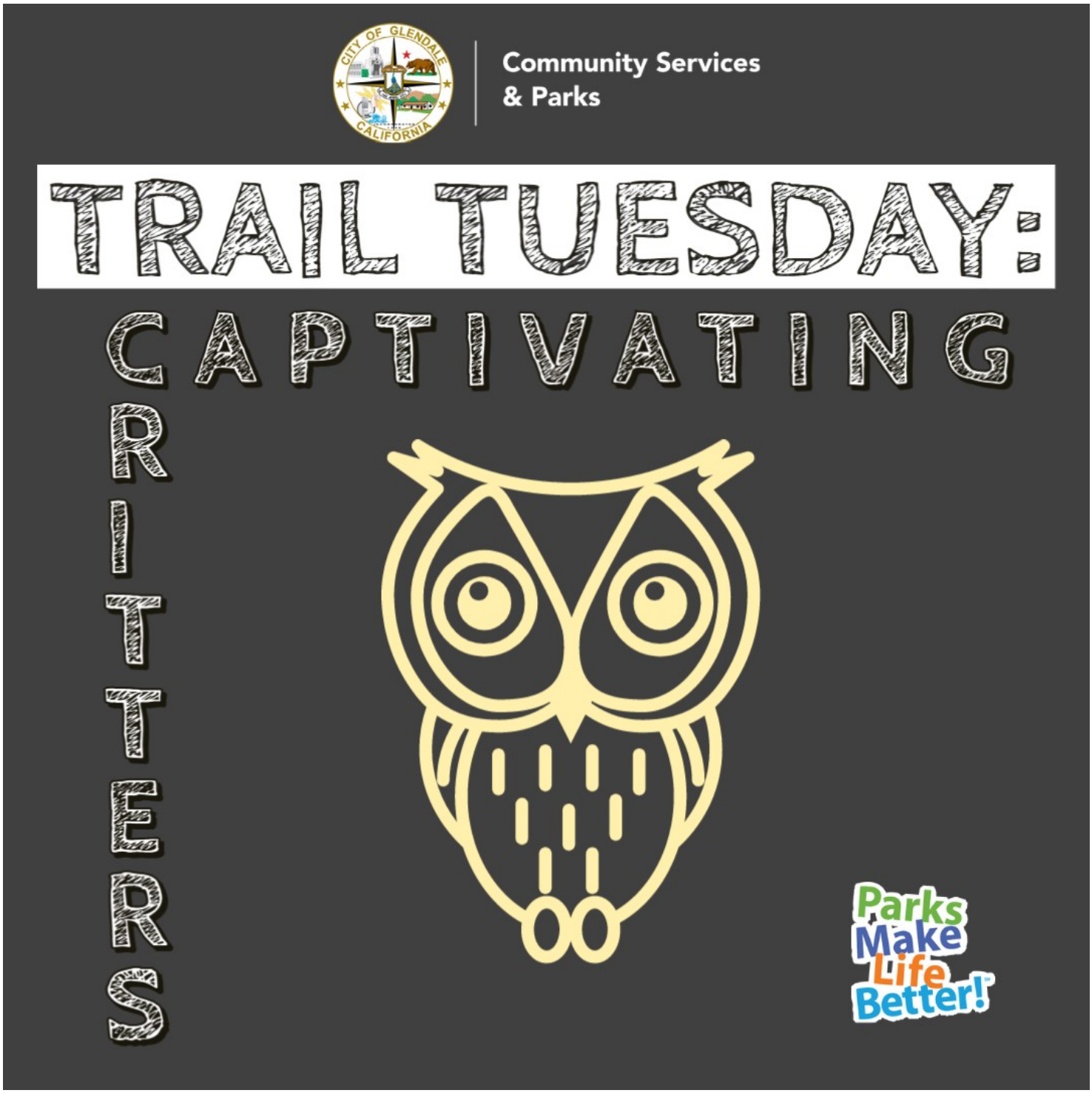
Trail Tuesday:

December 29, 2020

Captivating Critters

Featuring

Great Horned Owl



Great Horned Owl

(Bubo virginianus)

Photo Credit: Johanna Turner

The Great Horned Owl is one of the most common owls in North America. It is quite diverse & can live in deserts, wetlands, forests, grasslands, backyards, cities, & almost any other semi-open habitat between the Arctic & the tropics.

Great Horned Owl Fun Facts

They have large yellow eyes & a mottled grey, brown & tan body with white chin plumage.

They have tall feather tufts, called Plumicorns, that look like ears or horns.

The average wingspan for a fully grown Great Horned Owl is between 3 to 5 feet. The female is slightly larger than the male.

Great Horned Owls roost in trees, snags, thick brush, cavities, ledges, & human-made structures. They are active mostly during the night—especially at dusk & before dawn.

Great Horned Owls are fierce predators and can take prey larger than them, including raptors & other owls. Their diet consists of 70% mammals (rabbits & rodents) & 10% birds. They less frequently eat insects, reptiles & amphibians.

Great Horned Owl's strong talons require a force of 28 pounds to open. With this grip, they can sever the spine of large prey.

More Fun Facts

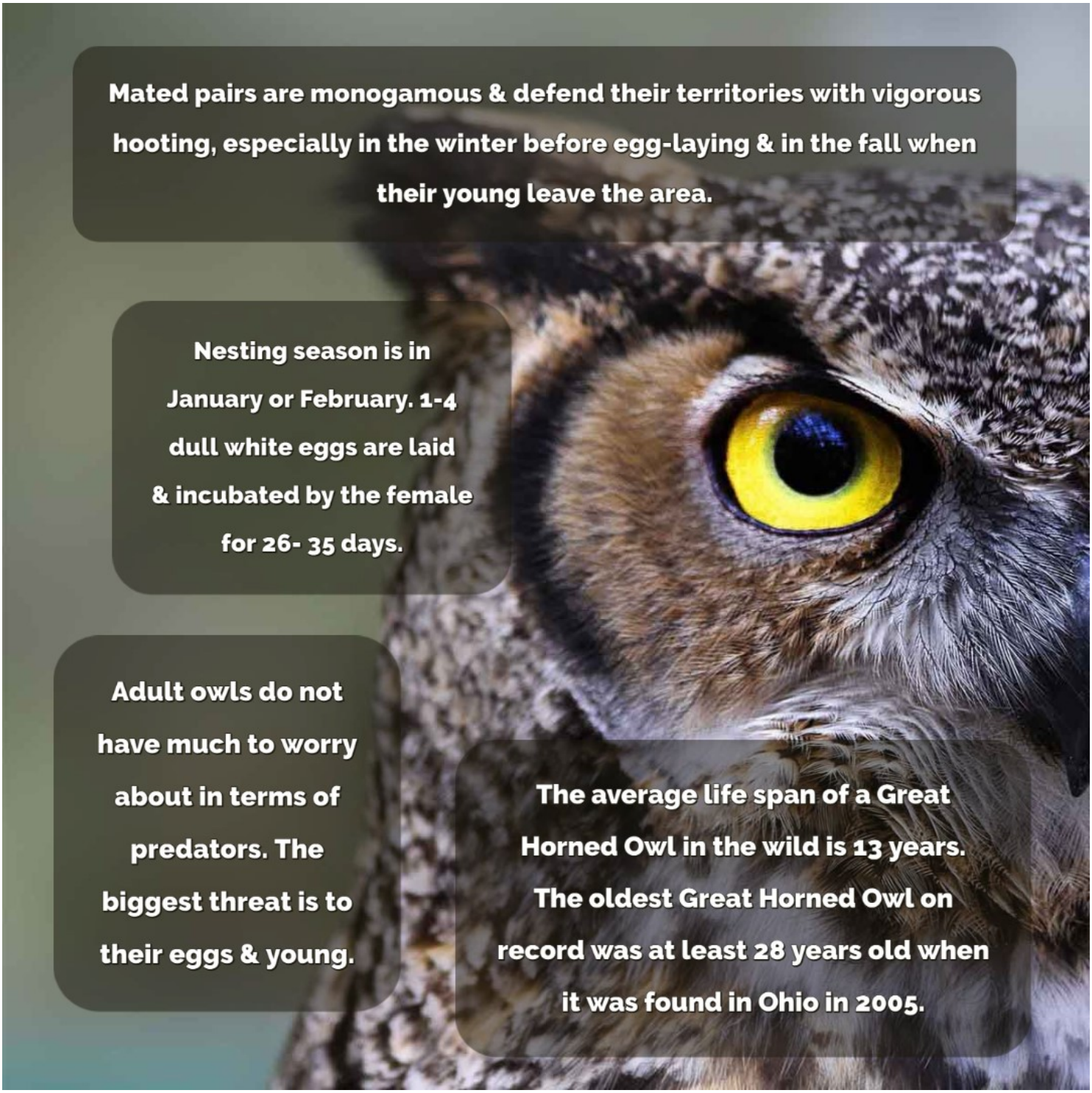
Great horned owls do not drink water. They obtain all the water their body needs from the food they eat.

Great Horned Owls have a gizzard that allows them to break down & absorb the proteins, fats & liquids they need, while leaving the harder to digest material. The remains (bones, feathers, fur) are compressed into a dry pellet that the owl can regurgitate. Scientists use these pellets to determine what the owls have been eating.

Great Horned Owls have excellent night vision. Their eyes don't move in their sockets, but they can rotate their head 270 degrees. They also have highly-sensitive hearing.

Even though females have a larger body size, the male has a larger voice box. This makes his hoots much deeper in pitch.

Pairs often call together, in duets, with audible differences in pitch. They can also make a wide variety of noises from "barking" to "screeching".


Mated pairs are monogamous & defend their territories with vigorous hooting, especially in the winter before egg-laying & in the fall when their young leave the area.
Nesting season is in January or February. 1-4 dull white eggs are laid & incubated by the female for 26- 35 days.
Adult owls do not have much to worry about in terms of predators. The biggest threat is to their eggs & young.
The average life span of a Great Horned Owl in the wild is 13 years. The oldest Great Horned Owl on record was at least 28 years old when it was found in Ohio in 2005.

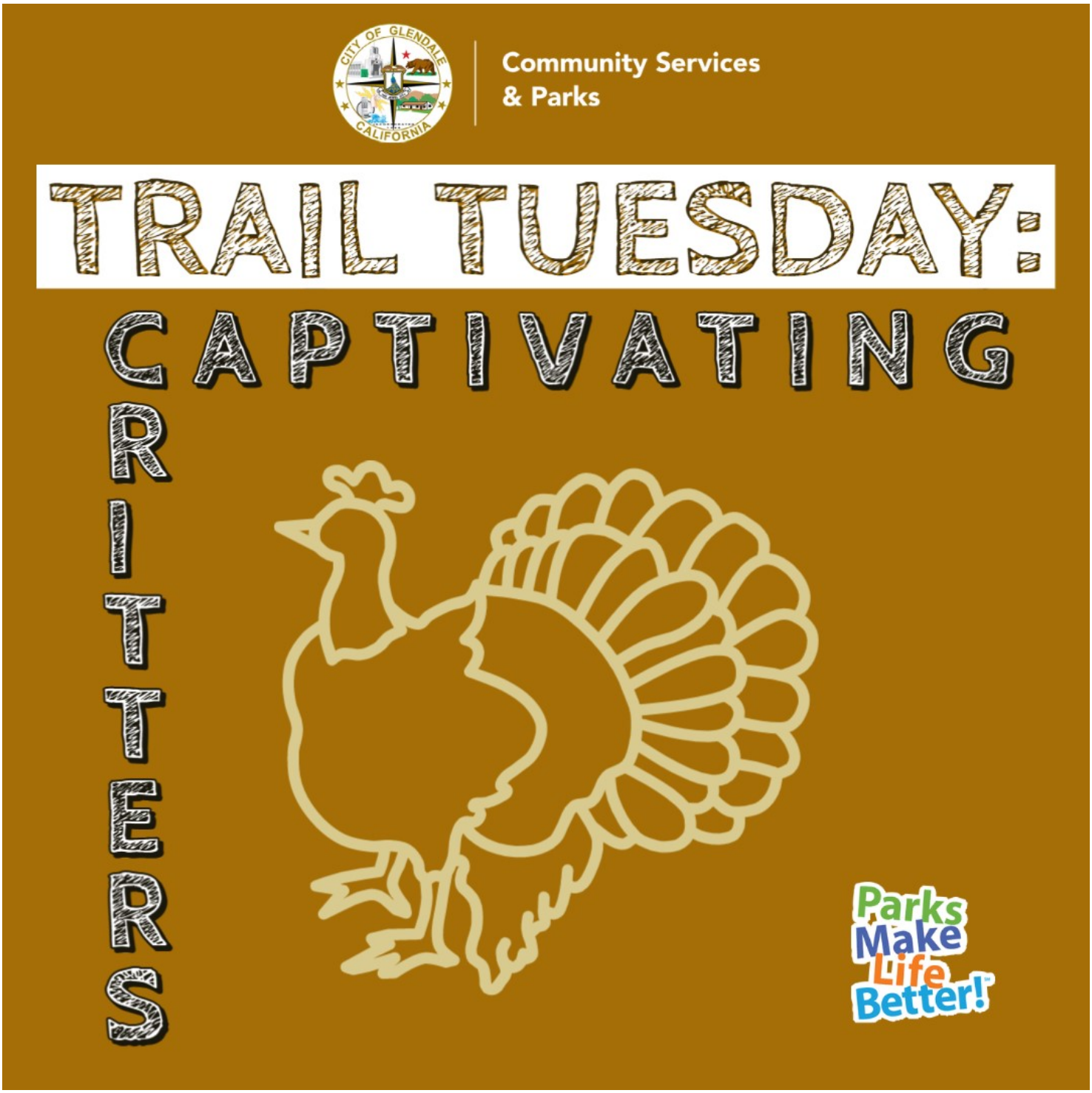
Trail Tuesday:

December 22 2020

Captivating Critters

Featuring

Turkeys



(Meleagris gallopavo)

Turkey

"I'm more than a Thanksgiving Feast!"

Domesticated turkeys are descended from wild turkeys but have been bred to have larger, meatier, breasts.

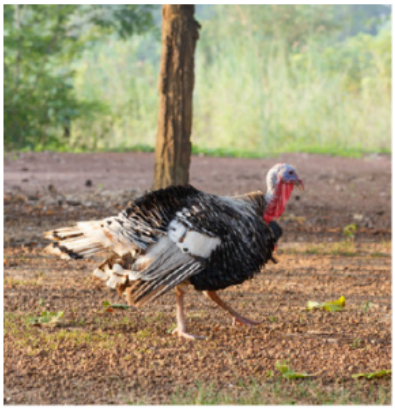
Turkeys are intelligent & sensitive animals that are highly social. They create lasting bonds with each other & are very affectionate.

Individual turkeys have unique voices. This is how turkeys recognize each other.

Turkey Fun Facts

A turkey's gender can be determined from its droppings. Males produce spiral-shaped poop while females produce J-shaped poop.

Wild turkeys roost in the trees.



Wild turkeys are able to fly at up to 55 mph, however only for short distances. Most domestic turkeys however are unable to fly due to being selectively bred to be larger.

Turkeys can run at speeds of up to 25 miles per hour.

Turkeys have the ability to learn the precise details of an area several acres in size.

Male turkeys puff up their bodies and spread their elaborate feathers to attract a mate.

Turkey Fun Facts

Male turkeys are called gobblers, after the distinctive gobble sound they produce, that can be heard up to a mile away. Males gobble to announce themselves to females, which are called hens.

An adult gobbler weighs 16 to 22 pounds on average. His feathers have areas of red, purple, green, copper, bronze & gold iridescence. He also has sharp spurs on his legs for fighting.

When a male turkey is excited, his head will turn blue. When he is feeling stressed, his head will turn bright red.

A hen is smaller, weighing around 8 to 12 pounds, is dull in shades of brown & grey & has no spurs.

Both genders have a snood - a dangly appendage on the face, a wattle - the red dangly bit under the chin, and only a few feathers on the head.

When a hen is ready to make little turkeys, she'll lay about 10 - 12 eggs, one egg per day, over a period of about 2 weeks. The eggs will incubate for about 28 days before hatching.
Baby turkeys, called poults, are unable to fly for the first few weeks of their life. During this time, the mother stays with them at ground level to keep them safe until they can roost in the safety of the trees.
Baby turkeys eat berries, seeds & insects, while adults have a more varied diet that can include acorns & even small reptiles.

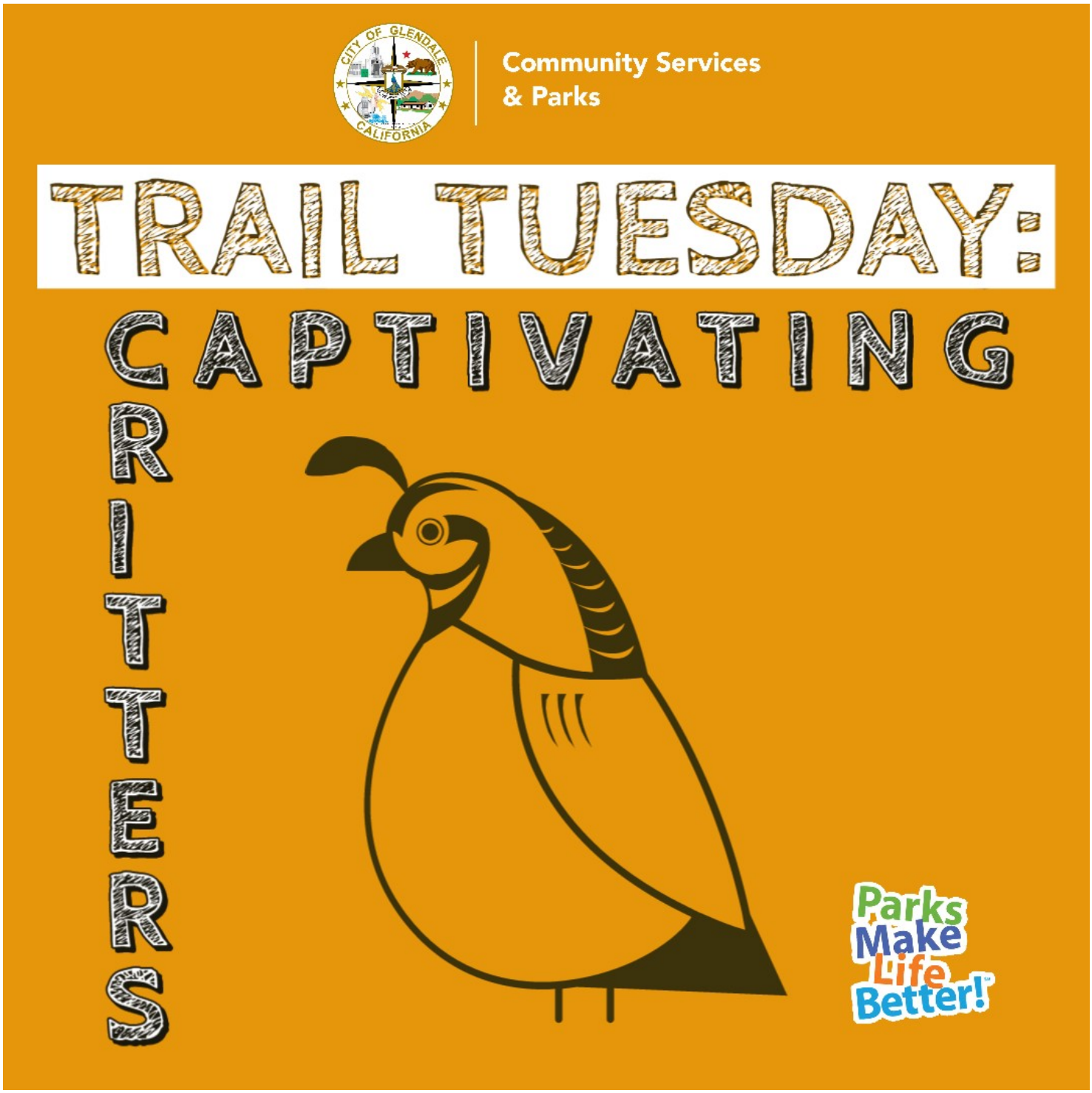
Trail Tuesday:

December 1, 2020

Captivating Critters

Featuring

California Quail



California Quail

The California quail, also known as the valley quail, is a small ground-dwelling bird.

They have a curved plume, made of six feathers, that droops forward. The plume is black in males & brown in females. Males have a black face. The flanks of the quail are brown with white streaks.

Fun Facts

They nod their heads as they strut. If disturbed, they burst into a fast low flight on whirring wings.

The California Quail's main call consists of three syllables & sounds like the bird is saying Chi-ca-go.

Quail have adapted well to the increasing human population, & are often found around well-wooded suburbs & even large city parks.

California Quail live in coveys during most seasons, which can number up to 75 individuals.

Their habitat is streamside chaparral, coastal scrub, oak woodlands, foothills, parks & farms.

Quails feed on a wide variety of seeds, leaves, flowers, catkins, manzanita & poison oak berries, acorns, & invertebrates like caterpillars, beetles, mites, millipedes, & snails.
During breeding season, males call loudly to advertise their territory.
In courtship, a male postures with wings drooped, tail spread; & head bobbing, & may rush at the female.

A nest site is usually on the ground, under a shrub or brush pile, or next to a log or other cover. Typical nest on the ground (built by the female) is a shallow depression, lined with grass & leaves. Sometimes quails nest above ground, on a broken-off branch or in the old nest of another bird.

The average clutch size is 10 – 16 eggs of a dull white to buff color variegated with brown. They generally have one brood per year, two in years with good food supply. Two females sometimes lay eggs in the same nest.

Incubation is by females only, about 18-23 days. Hatchlings are covered in brownish down. They can walk, follow parents, & peck at the ground immediately after hatching. They can fly short distances by the age of 10 days.

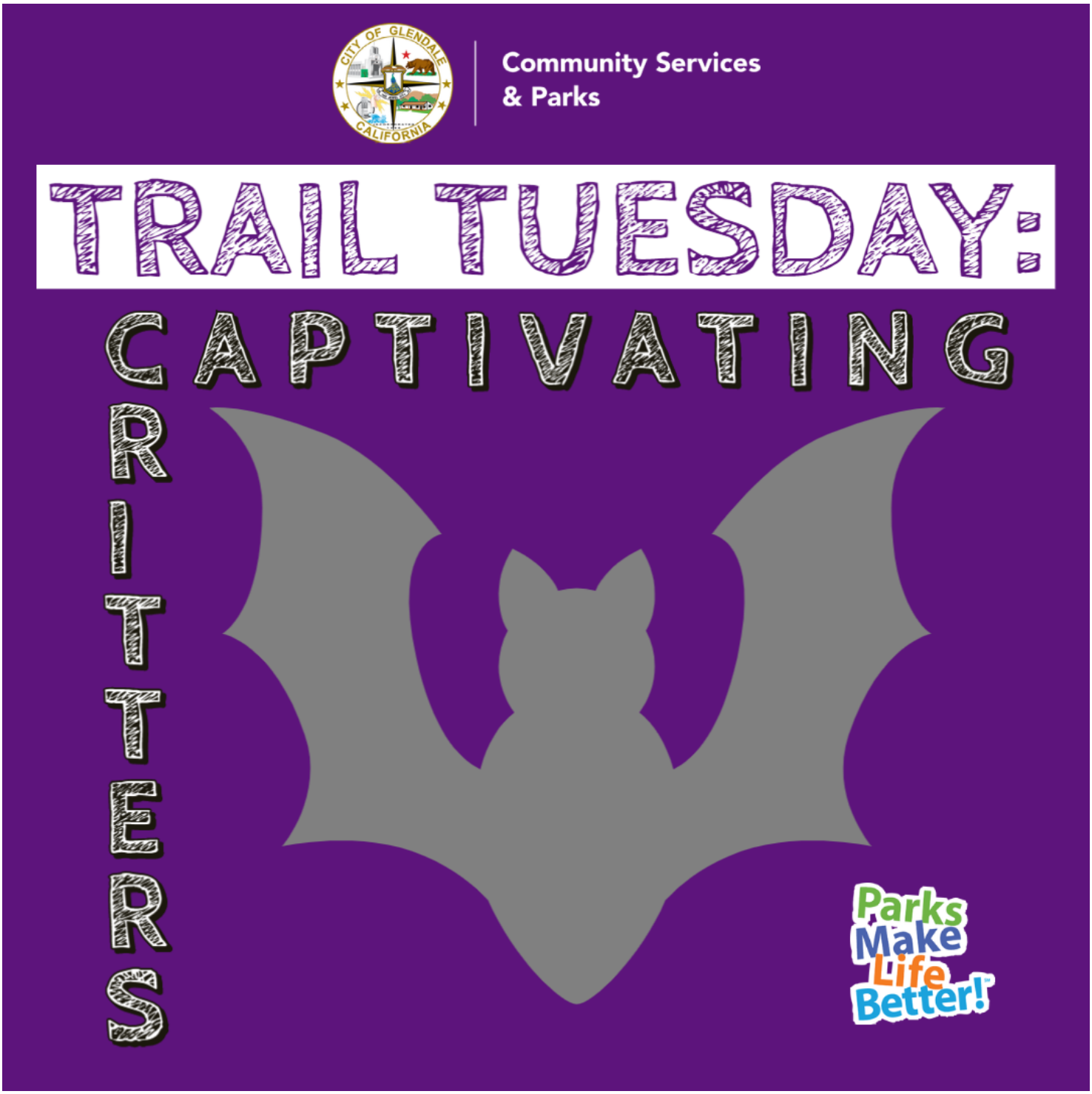
Trail Tuesday:

October 20, 2020

Captivating Critters

Featuring

Bats



Bats

Bats get a bad rap & we need your help dispelling myths about bats. Learn more about bats, & share what you learn with family or friends. Bats are fascinating & beneficial animals.

Did you know there are over 1400 species of bats? They can be found on nearly every part of the world except the hottest deserts & the polar regions.
There are at least 25 known species of bats in California. About 24 of these are in Southern California, which has the largest & smallest known bats found in the United States.

Fun Facts

Bats are an important species to our ecosystem. They pollinate our favorite fruits & flowers and eat pesky insects. Some can eat their weight in insects in a night.

Over 300 species of fruit depend on bats for pollination including mangoes, avocados & bananas. Bats help spread seeds for nuts, figs & cacao -- the main ingredient in chocolate.

About 80 medicines come from plants that rely on bats for their survival.

Bats are the only mammals that fly. While the flying squirrel can only glide for short distances, bats are true fliers.

If a wing gets a hole, it can heal.

More than 6.5 million bats have died so far from White-Nose Syndrome, a fungus on the muzzle & wings of bats.
You can help by avoiding places where bats are hibernating.
If you go in a cave & see bats, decontaminate clothing, footwear & gear.

Fun Facts (Part 2)

Bats range greatly in size. The smallest bat – The Kitti's hog-nosed bat (also called the Bumblebee Bat) weighs less than a penny, making it the world's smallest mammal. It lives in western Thailand.

In California the smallest bat is the Canyon bat, also known as the western Pipistrelle. Its body is about 2-4" long and its wingspan is 7-9" long. It weighs a little more than a penny. They can live up to 13 years and they are the first bats to come out at night.

The largest bats are the flying foxes, which can have a wingspan of up to 5 feet. They are found in California as well.

Owls, hawks & snakes eat bats.

The oldest known lifespan of a wild bat is over 40 years.

How fast a bat flies depends on the species, but they can reach speeds over 100 miles per hour according to new research. Cheetahs can only reach speeds of 75 mph on land.

Baby Talk & more

The oldest known lifespan of a wild bat is over 40 years.

Baby bats are called pups, and a group of bats is a colony.

Bats reproduce slowly. The average female bat rears only one pup per year.

Like other mammals, mother bats feed their pups breastmilk, not insects.

The mating season of most local bats is in the fall before entering hibernation during winter.

Bats that echolocate produce anywhere from one to a few hundred pulses per second. Contrary to the saying "blind as a bat," they have decent vision.

With echolocation, they can figure out pretty much anything we can with our eyes, except color. They can also determine things we cannot see, such as the wing-beat frequency of moths.

Even though bears and bats are the two most well-known hibernators, not all bats spend their winter in caves. Some bat species like the spotted bat survive by migrating to warmer areas when the weather turns cold.

Bats have been reported to have rabies, but it is extremely rare for that to impact humans. Less than 1/10 of 1 percent of wild bats have rabies. A bat must be sick with the disease to pass it to another animal through a bite.

The mere presence of bats does not pose a health threat to humans.

If you see a dead or injured bat, do not handle it with bare hands. Contact your local animal control to dispose of it.

Trail Tuesday:

October 6, 2020

Captivating Critters

Featuring

Cooper's Hawk

Cooper's Hawk *(Accipiter cooperii)*

A medium-sized hawk with the classic accipiter shape: broad, rounded wings & a very long, rounded tail with thick bands. In Cooper's Hawks, the head often appears large.

The Cooper's Hawk is from 14-21 inches long, with a wingspan of from 27-36 inches.

Male Cooper's Hawks are about the size of a crow, but females are notably larger.

Cooper's Hawk Fun Facts

- Adult hawks have bluish-gray backs, reddish-barred chests, and reddish eyes. They have a darker cap with a gray nape. The tail has a distinct white terminal band. Underparts are pale with dense reddish barring. Bill is fairly small and strongly hooked.
- Young Cooper's hawks have brown upperparts that contrast with white underparts that have brown streaking and a yellow eye.
- Cooper's hawks prefer to nest in tall trees with extensive canopy cover. They nest in coniferous, deciduous, and mixed woods. They are common in suburban neighborhoods, parks, and golf courses.
- Steady fliers, adept at soaring and using powered flight.
- They eat birds and small mammals, such as robins, jays, flickers, squirrels, mice, and bats. Sometimes they eat reptiles or insects. They sometimes hunt at backyard feeders.
- It hunts by stealth, approaching its prey through dense cover and then pouncing with a rapid, powerful flight.

Fun Facts (part 2)

They have good depth perception for hunting and catching prey while flying at high speeds.

The secretive traits that allow the Cooper's Hawk to surprise its prey also make it difficult to observe by humans.

Cooper's hawks Migrates from the northern limits to the south in colder climates.

They will harass larger raptors and other threats during the breeding season. The alarm call is a series of sharp "cak"s.

The Cooper's hawk breeding range extends from southern Canada to central Mexico.

Courtship display consists of slow, exaggerated, wing beats by both the male & the female.
The male Cooper's Hawk builds a platform nest of sticks and twigs from 20-60 feet above ground level in a tree located in a wooded area. Sometimes he is assisted by the female in building the nest.
The male feeds the female for up to a month before she begins laying eggs.
After the eggs hatch, both parents tend the young who leave the nest after 4-5 weeks. Parents continue to provide food until the young become independent at about 8 weeks.
The female lays & incubates from 4-6 bluish white eggs, that hatch in about 5 weeks. Incubation is mostly by the female. The male brings food to the female, & then incubates for a few minutes while female is eating.

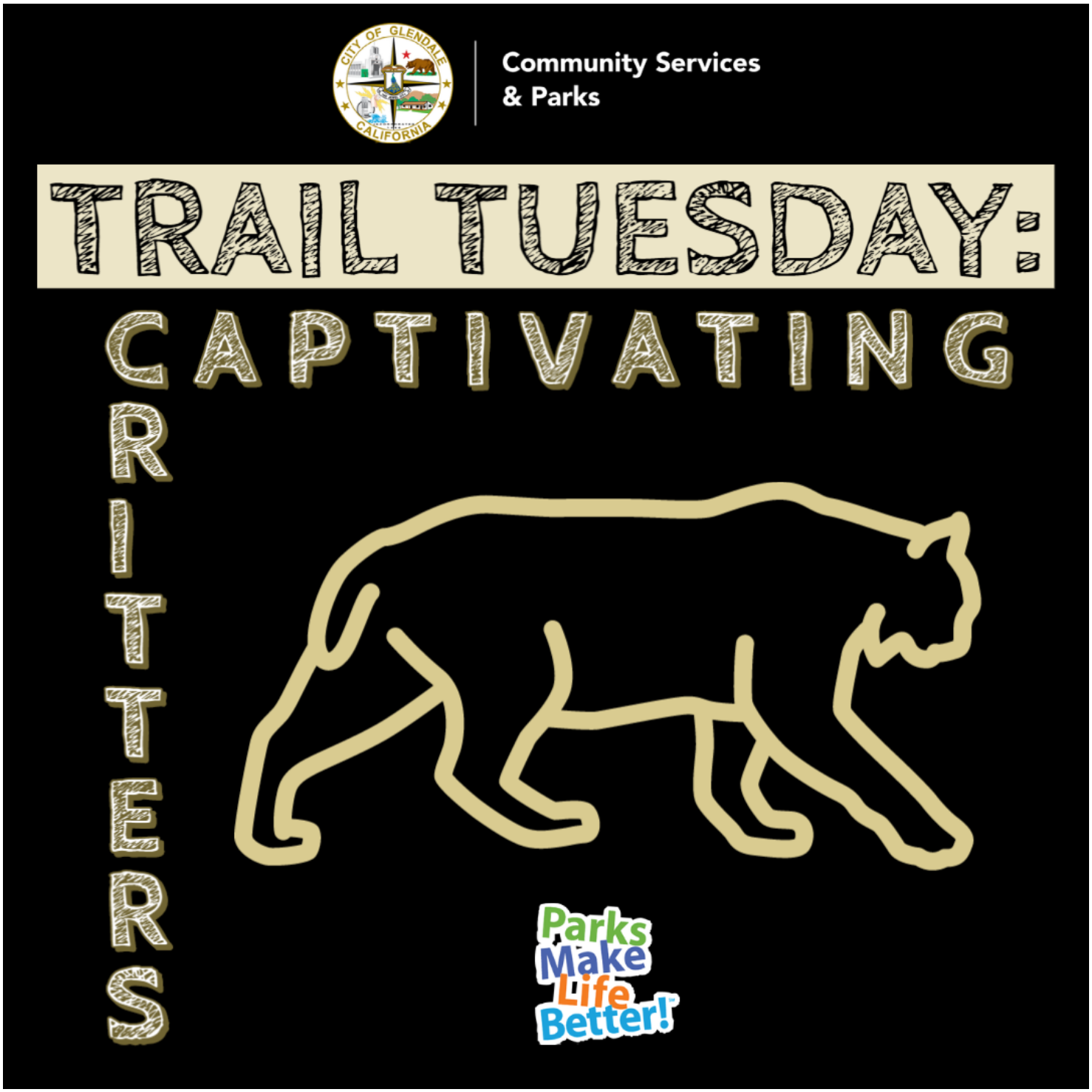
Trail Tuesday:

September 22, 2020

Captivating Critters

Featuring

Bobcat



Bobcat *(Lynx rufus)*

The elusive bobcat, rarely seen or heard

Bobcats are named for their tail which appears to be bobbed & can be 5 – 7 inches long.

Bobcat Fun Facts

A bobcat's coat can be various shades of brown with varying patterns of dark brown spots & stripes. It is like a fingerprint, it is unique to the individual & can be used to identify them.

Their ears are tufted and the back of their ears is black with white patches. Their short tail has a black tip, and they have ruffs of hair on the sides of their head. They are about twice the size of a housecat at an average of 3 feet in length, & weigh from 10 – 35 lbs.

Bobcats are nocturnal.

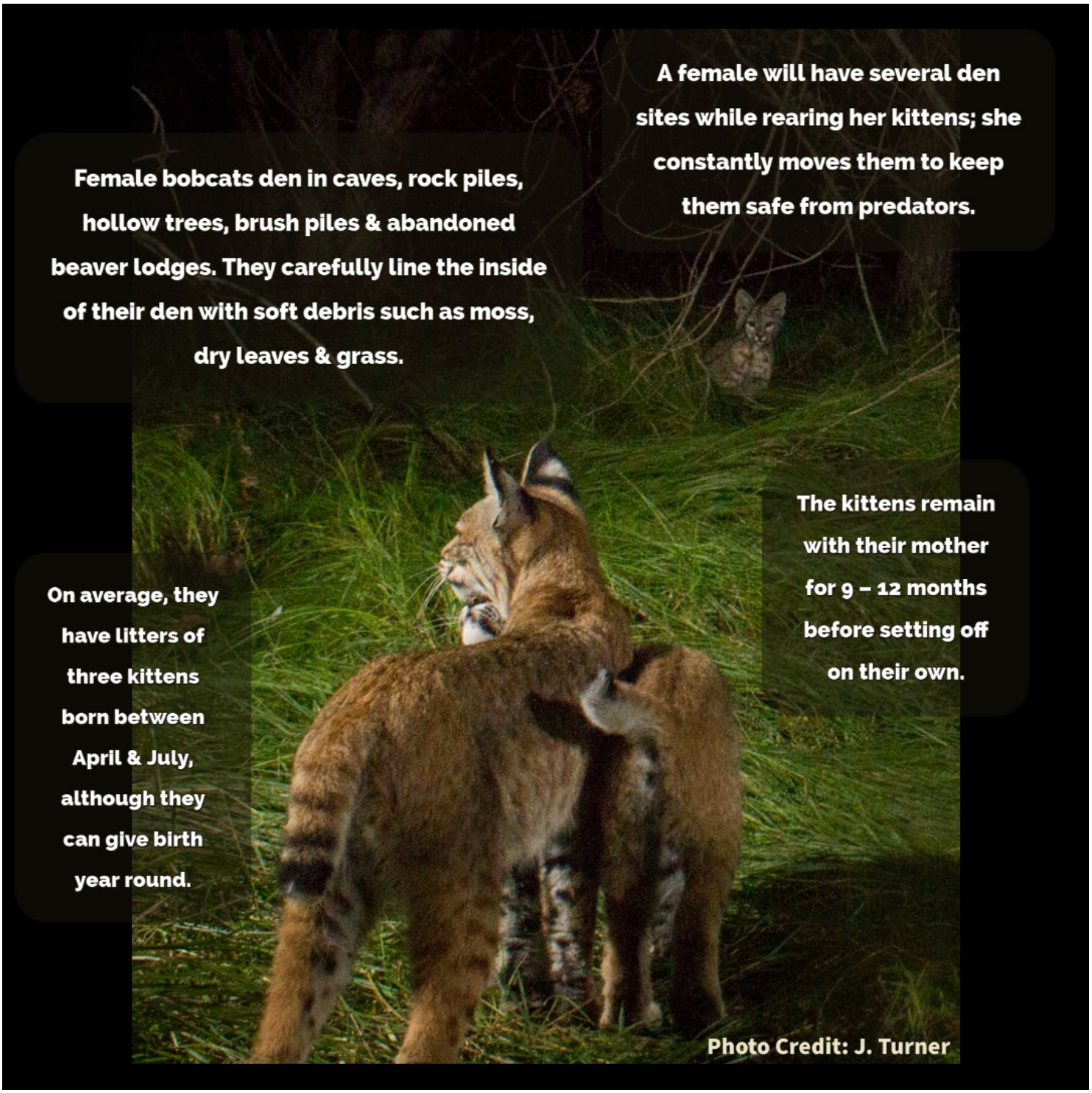
Fierce hunters, bobcats can kill prey much bigger than themselves, but usually eat rabbits, birds, mice, squirrels, & other smaller game.

The bobcat hunts by stealth, but delivers a deathblow with a leaping pounce that can cover 10 feet.

Photo credit: Progressive Animal Welfare Society

Fun Facts (part 2)

- The range of a male bobcat can be as large as 20 sq. miles.
- Bobcats are solitary animals except during breeding season.
- Bobcats rarely vocalize but they can produce loud growls & snarls. During the mating seasons screams & hisses can be heard.
- Bobcats are territorial. Females never share their territory with each other but male territories will overlap with several females. They establish their territories with scent markings.
- The average lifespan of a bobcat in the wild is 10 - 12 years.


A female will have several den sites while rearing her kittens; she constantly moves them to keep them safe from predators.
Female bobcats den in caves, rock piles, hollow trees, brush piles & abandoned beaver lodges. They carefully line the inside of their den with soft debris such as moss, dry leaves & grass.
The kittens remain with their mother for 9 – 12 months before setting off on their own.
On average, they have litters of three kittens born between April & July, although they can give birth year round.
Photo Credit: J. Turner

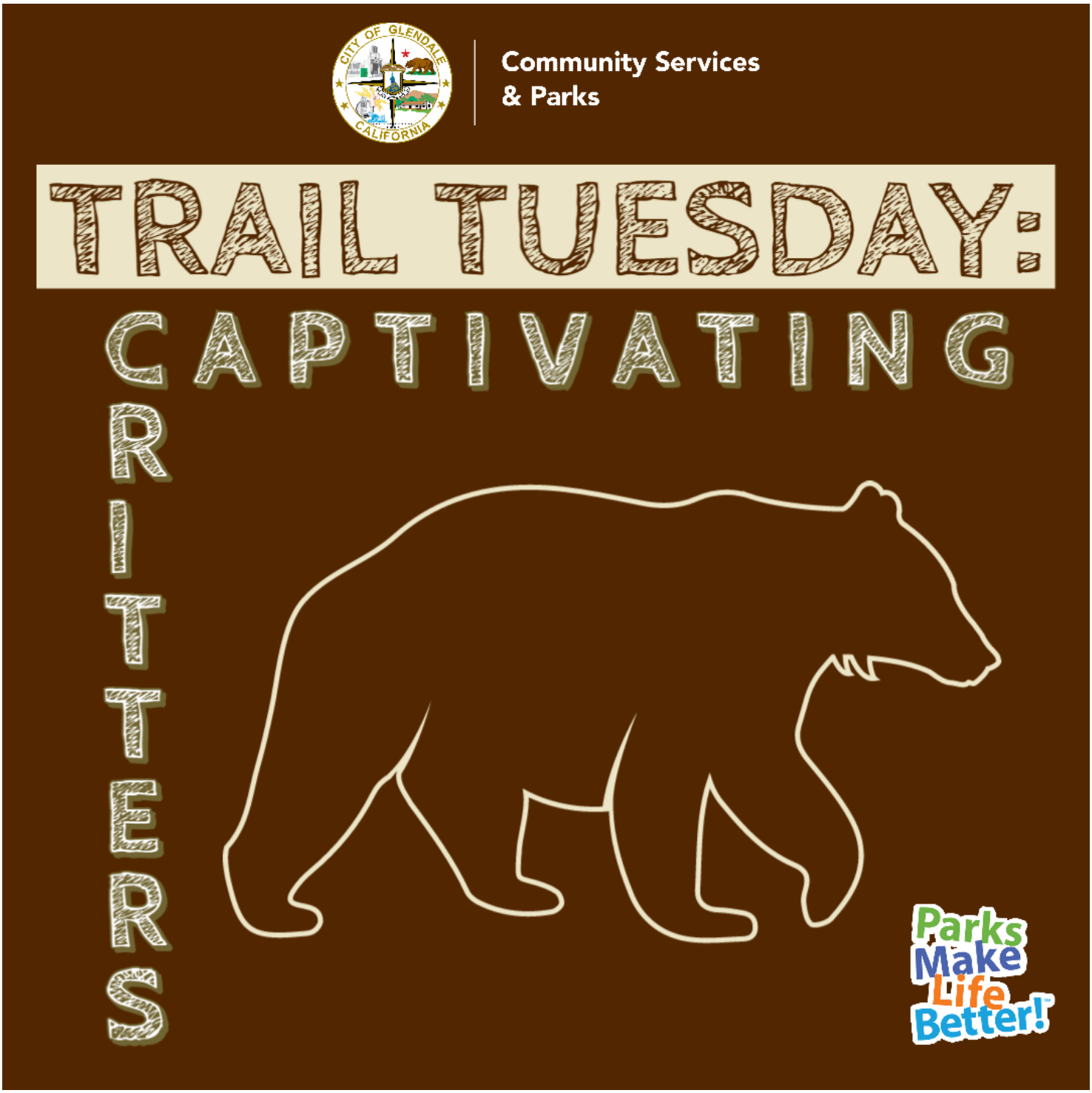
Trail Tuesday:

September 15, 2020

Captivating Critters

Featuring

American Black Bear



American Black Bear

Bear with us!

Despite their name, American Black bears, can be brown, blue-gray, blue-black, blond, cinnamon or even (very rarely) white.

American Black Bear Fun Facts

- Black bears are intelligent, creative & resourceful. Bears in general have the highest brain-to-body mass ratio of all carnivores. Black bears are capable of great insight & planning. If there is a way to get into that dumpster, they will figure it out.

- Bears have excellent senses of smell, sight & hearing. They can smell food, cubs, a mate or predators from miles away. Their excellent eyesight allows them to detect when fruits are ripe. A bear can smell seven times better than a bloodhound, known for tracking lost people.

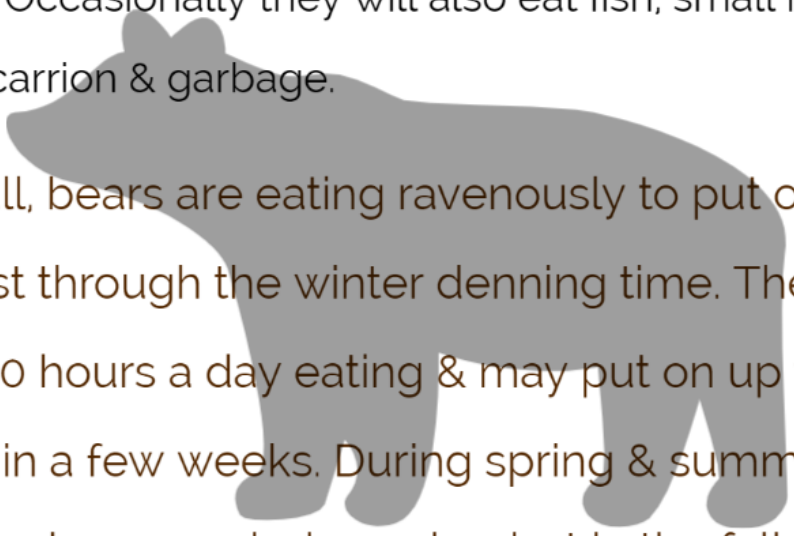
- Black bears are surprisingly quick & agile. They can sprint up to 35 mph & climb 100 feet up a tree within 30 seconds. They are excellent swimmers.

- Black bears are strong & muscular with record weights over 800 pounds. Male black bears typically weigh between 130 - 500 lbs., while females weigh 90 - 350 lbs.

- The oldest wild black bear lived 39 years, but it is more common to find female bears living into their 20's. Bears that eat a lot of non-natural human food tend to die earlier.

Fun Facts (part 2)

- Bears eat both meat & vegetables, which makes them omnivores but 95% of their diet is plant based. They feed on herbs, grasses, roots, buds, shoots, honey, nuts, fruit, berries & seeds. Occasionally they will also eat fish, small mammals, insects, carrion & garbage.



- Every fall, bears are eating ravenously to put on enough fat to last through the winter denning time. They may spend 20 hours a day eating & may put on up to 100 pounds in a few weeks. During spring & summer, bears eat around 5,000 calories a day, but in the fall, they are trying to eat up to 20,000 calories every day.

- Some bears are active mainly at night to avoid people or other bears.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU ENOUNTER A BEAR

The key is to stay at a safe distance.

NEVER run from a bear or turn your back on a bear. Quietly back away and leave the area.

NEVER approach a bear. However, if a bear approaches you, make yourself look big, make loud noises, clap your hands, & continue to back away.

Black bear attacks are extremely rare. Most bears will retreat before you are even aware of their presence. That said, always stay alert in bear country & know the best ways to avoid encounters.

A FED BEAR IS A DEAD BEAR

Never let bears get into birdseed, garbage or other human food. Food & food odors attract bears, so don't reward them with easily available food or garbage. Once they know a place to get food, they will return regularly. The best way to avoid conflicts with bears is to secure garbage cans with a latch & remove bird feeders. Birdseed & grains are very attractive to bears. Bears prefer their natural foods, but some may overcome fear of humans if their explorations are rewarded with unsecured trash, pet food, or greasy barbecue grills.

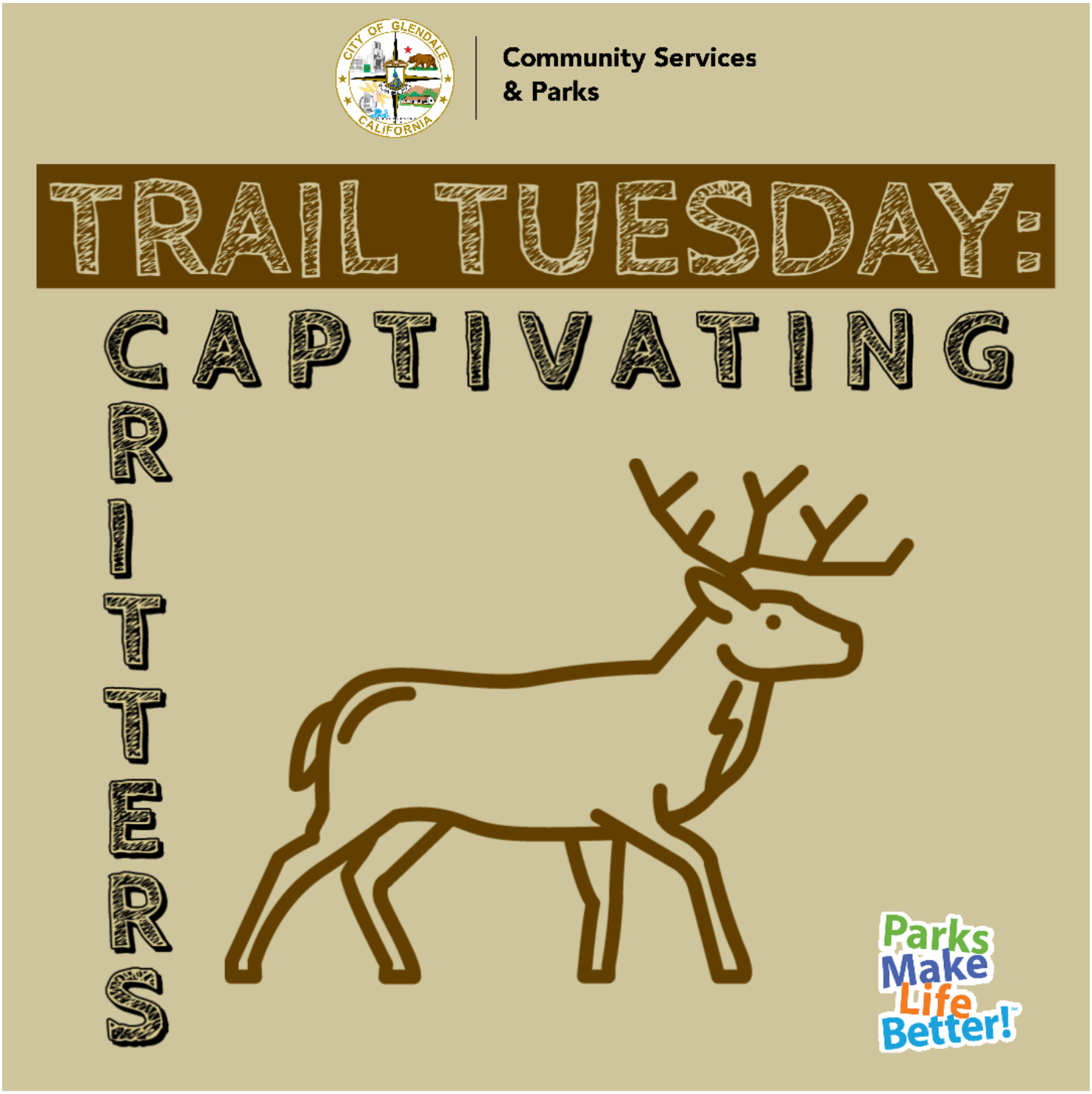
Trail Tuesday:

September 8, 2020

Captivating Critters

Featuring

Mule Deer



Mule Deer

(Odocoileus hemionus)

Oh, Deer!

They are named for their large ears that can move independently & allows them to survey their surroundings for sounds of potential danger.

Mule Deer Fun Facts:

**Mule deer have a 310-degree view because of the positioning of their eyes on the sides of their head.
**Mule deer are a light tan to brown in summer & grayish brown in winter. They have a white rump patch, & a small white tail with a black tip.
**Mule deer range from 3 to 3.5 feet tall at the shoulder, 4.5 to 7 feet long, & have a tail that is five to eight inches. They can weigh between 130-280 pounds. Female deer are smaller than the male.
**They have larger feet than other deer, which allows it to claw out water as deep as two feet, which it detects with its keen sense of smell.
**Female deer are called does & male deer are called bucks. Up to 1-year-old are called fawns & yearlings refer to a deer between 1 - 2 years old.
**They are herbivores, feeding on plants, berries, mushrooms, & the leaves & twigs of woody shrubs. They have evolved ways to break down compounds in plants that are often toxic to other mammals.

More about Mule Deer!

**They are called ruminants because they are able to acquire nutrients from plant-based food by fermenting it in a specialized stomach chamber prior to digestion.

**Mule deer have four chambers to their stomach. The first chamber, called the rumen, is for storage. The rumen allows the deer to gather a lot of food at once & then digest it later.

**They are called ungulates because they are hooved mammals.

**When running, they bound in a motion called “stotting,” also called “pronking”, in which all four hooves push off the ground at the same time.

**Mule deer can reach speeds of up to 45 mph while running, & are capable of changing direction in a single bound.

& More Info!

**Mule deer bucks grow antlers that they shed annually at the end of winter. While the antlers are growing back they are covered in a fine tissue called velvet. The velvet supplies blood to the antlers to assist in growth.

**During spring & summer antlers grow up to ¼" per day.

After the antlers have stopped growing, the buck will rub them on trees to remove the velvet. This happens in late August & then the antlers harden.

**Mule deer mate from October to November. The gestation period is an average of 6.5 months. The average litter is two fawns, usually born in May or June.

**Fawns are born with spotted backs. They are weaned between 60 and 75 days at which time they lose their spots. A fawn will stay with its mother for a year before venturing out on its own.

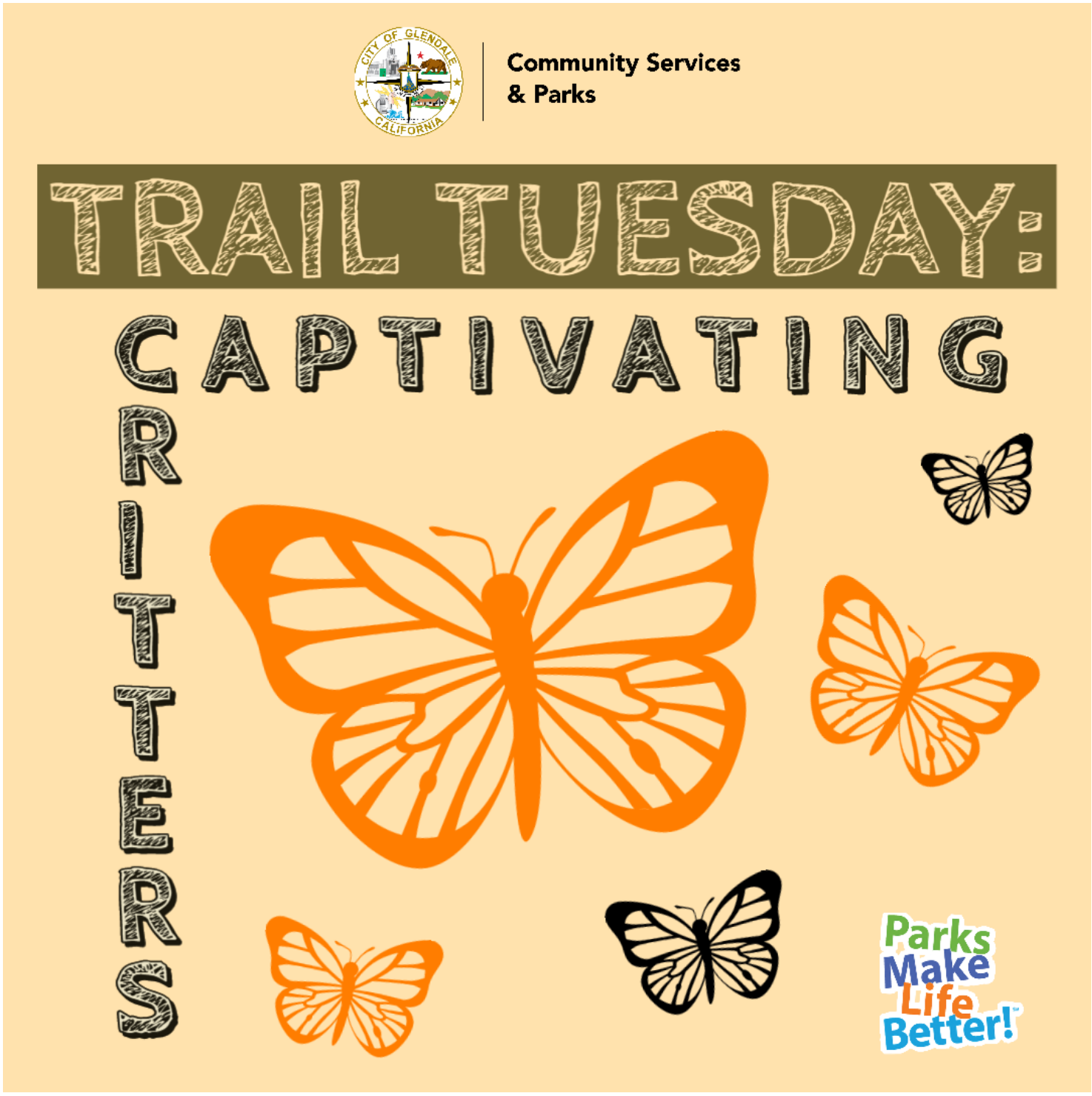
Trail Tuesday:

September 1, 2020

Captivating Critters

Featuring

Monarch Butterfly



Monarch Butterfly

We are famous for our seasonal migration. Every fall, millions of us head south to overwinter in California & Mexico. In the spring, we return to the Northern U.S. & Canada – a journey of 2,000-3,000-miles each way!

FUN FACTS:

**Monarch Butterflies are mildly poisonous to animals that eat them. They absorb glycosides from the milkweed they eat. Birds, frogs, & lizards that taste food before swallowing it will spit out a Monarch. Species that are able to regurgitate food, will do so after eating a Monarch. Species that neither taste nor vomit will seem sick after eating a Monarch, usually survive, but will not be interested in eating another Monarch Butterfly.

**Butterflies are thought to use their antennae to smell and their feet (tarsi) to taste. They pollinate flowers while extracting flower nectar with a long coiled hollow tube, called the proboscis or “tongue."

**Monarchs flap their wings about 5 to 12 times a second, which is about 300 to 720 times a minute.

More About Monarchs

**Monarch Butterflies fly more slowly than other butterflies do, “sailing" along at 12 to 25 miles per hour.

**During its migration, each butterfly relies on the huge volume of food it ate when it was a caterpillar for fuel.

**Monarchs use the sun to stay on course, but they also have a magnetic compass to help them navigate on cloudy days.

**A special gene for highly efficient muscles gives them an advantage for long-distance flight.

& More!

**The adult female will lay 300-500 eggs over a 2 - 5 week period. She lays her eggs on the underside of milkweed leaves, which are extremely toxic to other animals.

**The caterpillar hatches from its egg several days later & survives on these milkweed leaves.

**The monarch caterpillar & adult butterfly retain the poison from the milkweed leaves, protecting it from being eaten by predators.

**They also have antennae in the front and in the back to confuse predators.

**The caterpillars eat their fill for about two weeks, & then they spin protective cases around themselves to enter the pupa stage.

**About 10-14 days later, they emerge from their cocoon as a fully formed, black & orange adult monarch butterfly.

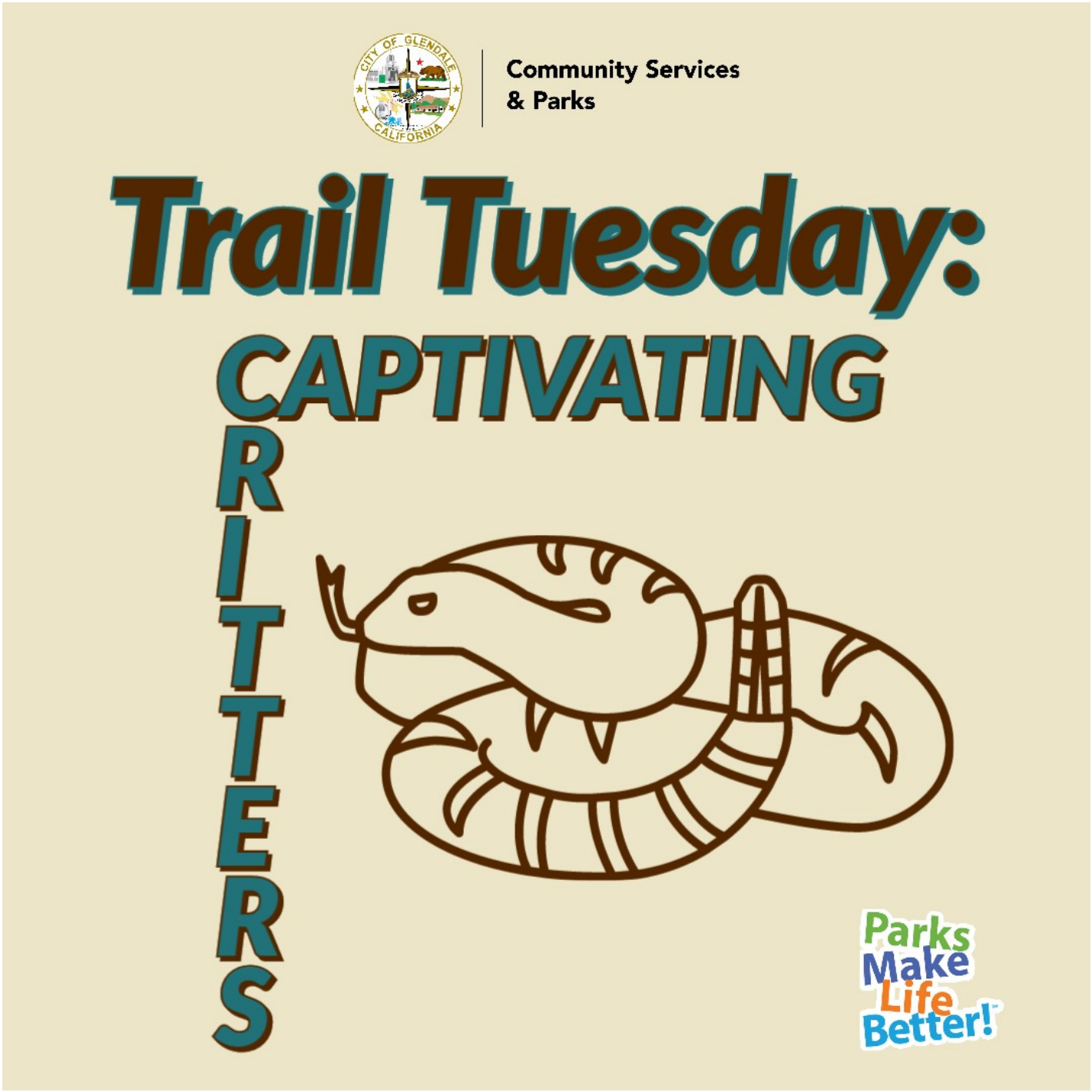
Trail Tuesday:

August 25, 2020

Captivating Critters

Featuring

Southern Pacific Rattlesnake



Southern Pacific Rattlesnake

Rattlesnakes are important members of the ecosystem. We keep the balance of rodents in check.

Southern Pacific Rattlesnake FUN FACTS:

Rattlesnakes are venomous & their bite is dangerous but they are not aggressive. As long as you give a rattlesnake plenty of room to escape, it will quickly leave to avoid confrontation.

*Rattlesnakes bite for food & to defend themselves. They do not want to waste their venom which is used to capture & digest a meal. You can avoid a snakebite by giving them distance & respect.

*The color pattern of a Southern Pacific rattlesnake consists of a pale brown, gray-brown, or yellowish brown ground color overlaid with a series of large, dark brown, diamond shaped dorsal blotches outlined in a lighter color. They have a triangular head and a rattle on the end of their tail which they use to warn predators but not always. Sometimes they will remain silent in the hopes that a prey animal is passing by.

Rattlesnake MYTHS:

**MYTH: Juvenile rattlesnakes inject more venom than an adult. While an adult rattlesnake can control the amount of venom they inject, even when an adult does not inject the full amount of venom it has available, it most likely injects more venom than a juvenile. Rattlesnakes can also control how much venom they deliver from the moment they're born, & can even decide which fang or fangs to deliver the venom from. But a bite from any rattlesnake is an emergency & you must seek medical treatment promptly.

**MYTH: A rattlesnake must be coiled to strike

How to avoid being bitten by a rattlesnake:

*Never try to pick up or handle a snake

*Always look before reaching around a bush

*Avoid tall grasses, climbing over rocks & wood piles without first looking to see if a snake is there

*Wear boots and long pants when hiking or working outdoors

*Wear leather gloves if handling brush or debris

IF YOU ARE BITTEN BY A SNAKE:

*Call an ambulance or get to a hospital right away

*Remain calm & try not to panic

*Avoid the snake

*Leave the snake bite treatment to the professionals

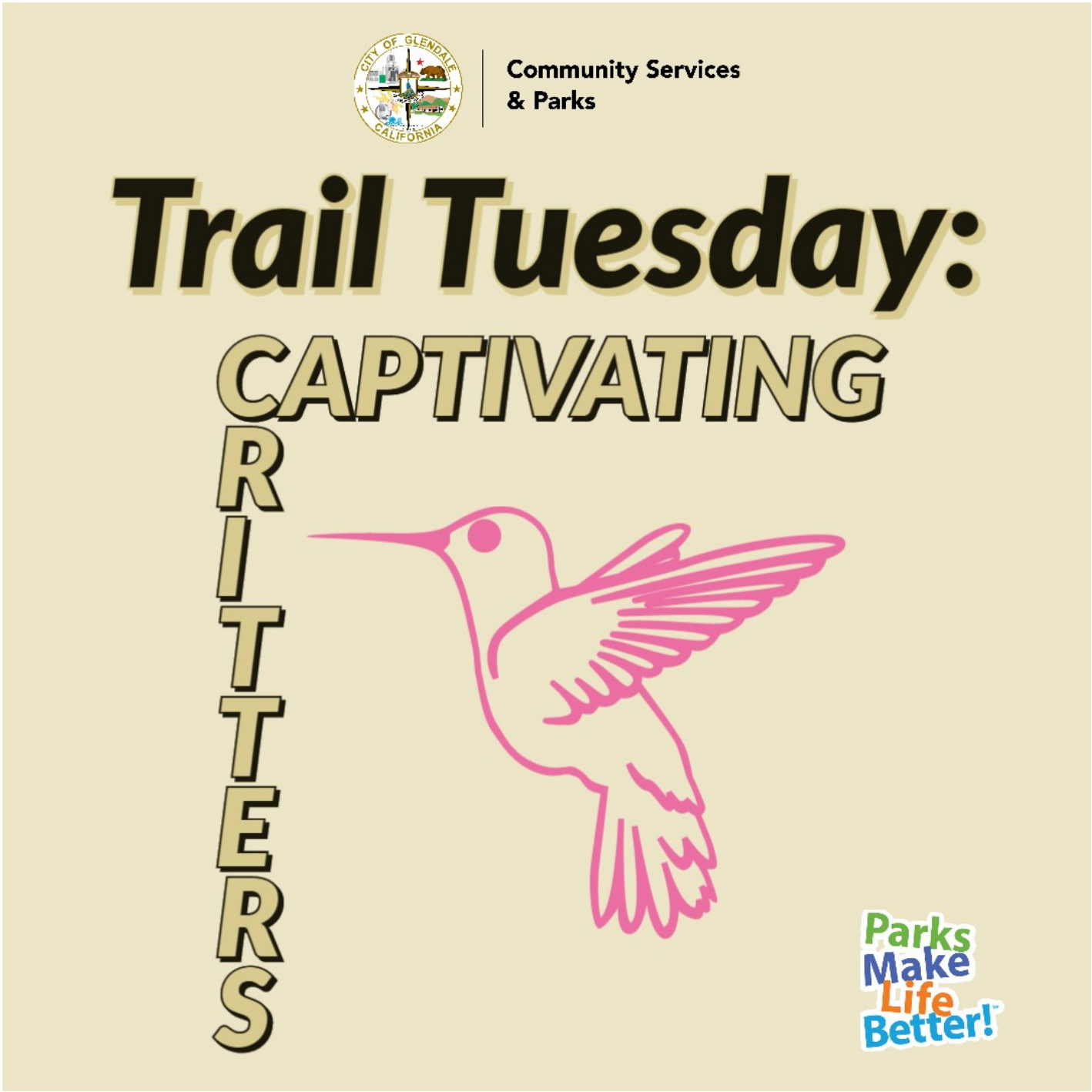
Trail Tuesday:

August 18, 2020

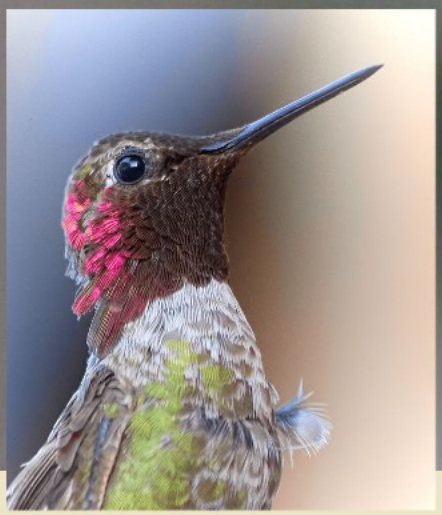
Captivating Critters

Featuring

Anna's Hummingbird



Anna's Hummingbird



(Calypte anna)

We are no larger than a ping pong ball yet we beat our wings up to 80 beats per second!

Anna's Hummingbird FUN FACTS:

*The most common hummingbird in California. One of three hummingbird species native to California.

*Named for a 19th century Italian Duchess, Anna Massena, The Duchess of Rivoli.

*Anna's Hummingbirds are mostly gray and iridescent green. Males have an iridescent magenta throat (called a gorget) that extends over their head like a bonnet. These same feathers can appear to be dull brown or gray without direct sunlight. Females have a small patch of red on their gorget.

*A flock of hummingbirds is referred to as: a glittering, a bouquet, a hover, a shimmer, or a tune of hummingbirds.

Courtship Behavior

Males display courtship behavior by flying up to 130 feet in the air and then plunging in a near vertical dive to the ground (in front of the female). The speed of the plunge produces a unique sound made by air passing through their tail feathers and described.

Also, as part of their courtship behaviors, the male perches above the female and swings back and forth while keeping his body horizontal and his head down by the female and singing a song.

The female chooses the nesting site and builds the nest. She may use cattail, willow, leaves or small feathers bound with spider webs or insect cocoons. She will sometimes decorate the outside with lichen and paint chips. She will lay an average of two eggs that will hatch in 16 days. The hatchlings are born with eyes closed, very little down, and completely dependent on Mom. They remain in the nest for another 20 days.

More Info:

**Anna's hummingbirds get nectar from native California plants such as golden current, bitter gooseberry, & manzanita. They are especially attracted to red flowered plants.

**The eat insects as well.

**They also like Eucalyptus trees.

**They nest in oak savannahs, chaparral & open woodlands & they especially like Eucalyptus trees.

**Anna's hummingbirds do not migrate far. If you grow the plants they love they will visit your garden regularly.

**Anna's hummingbirds are altitudinal migrants: they move to higher elevations in summer & lower elevations in winter.

Trail Tuesday:

August 11, 2020

Captivating Critters

Featuring

Opossum

Give us a break! We are harmless & good for your garden. Please respect us.

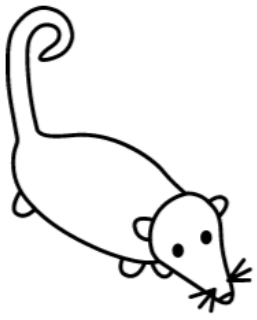
Opossum FUN FACTS:

*Opossums are North America's only marsupial.

*Opossums are hairless and blind when born. They immediately crawl into Mama's fur lined pouch where they nurse for about 3 months. When they emerge from the pouch, they crawl onto Mama's back & learn about feeding & survival skills for another 2 months.

*Opossums only live 1 - 2 years.

*The opossum can eat up to 5,000 ticks a day, but do not contract or carry Lyme disease.



More Info:

Opossums are beneficial for your garden. They eat snails, slugs, insects & even small rodents. They clean up spilled garbage & fruit that has fallen off trees. They kill & eat ticks. You are not likely to have ticks if you have an opossum nearby. Opossums have been found to be immune to the venom of rattlesnakes & will eat them. Where opossums reside, rattlesnakes do not. Opossums have a remarkable spatial memory. In experiments, they do well in mazes because they can remember where they've been. This is why they also remember the house with the cat food.