

FIELD OBSERVATION REPORT

By Mary Wilson

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Bobcat Fire—started September 6, 2020 and by November 2nd it was 100% contained. It burned 115,796 acres and by September 17th the fire rapidly expanded to include the Antelope Valley in the Juniper Hills area. The Nature Center at the Devil's Punchbowl Natural Area was burned and it was reported that the fire burned 90% of the area. Animals from the sanctuary, including snakes, tortoises, the barn owl and screech owl were evacuated and the staff relocated for everyone's safety. The Devil's Punchbowl Natural Area is closed until further notice.



The sign at the entrance is gone and the road is now closed.



After leaving the Devil's Punch Bowl I took Longview Road that curves and becomes Juniper Hills Road where



some homes were saved but the Joshua trees and vegetation burned and



some homes were burned.



GRAY FOX

Urocyon Cinereoargenteus

On a trip to the Devil's Punch Bowl, prior to the Bobcat fire, I was heading north on a trail and I spotted a Gray Fox going south. We both stopped and looked at each other and decided we would just go on our own ways, however, it was exciting to see this beautiful animal and I was amazed at how small it was. They weigh 7 to 13 pounds, can be 14 to 16 inches in height, the head, body and tail 31 to 44 inches, and has shorter legs than other foxes. It can have a reddish color on its lower sides, along the chest, back of the head, and under the tail. The eyes are oval with a

thick black stripe running from the corner of the eye down to its mouth. There is white on the throat and belly while the rest of the body is gray. The tail has a black strip down the tail and a prominent black tip at the end. Their life span is up to 16 years.

These foxes are nocturnal and are known as solitary animals except during the winter when they will be seen socializing in order to find a mate and will also socialize with their offspring. They are picky when choosing their mate as they will mate with them for life. If a mate dies it will take them several years before they find another mate to live with. Favored den sites include woodlands and spaces among boulders on the slope soft rocky ridges. It prefers dens in cliffs, small caves, rock piles, hollow logs and hollow trees. For the best chance at survival the young are born during the warmer time of the year. The mating is usually in the months of January through May. The gestation period is about 51-63 days so the female gives birth to the litter in late March or early April. The size of the litter can be from one to seven pups. The pups tend to remain in the den with their mother until they are about three months old, during which time the male will bring the female food. When the pups are about three months old they will emerge from the den and they start to figure things out on their own. Within a month after that they are on their own, will leave their parents territory and find their own place to live. Their parents will go their separate ways until the following mating season.

The gray fox likes to swim so they are often found living by bodies of water. There is another purpose for living by water, they have a hunting method where they chase their prey into the water, the prey drowns and the fox goes into the water to retrieve it. They can run more than 28 miles per hour with ease and won't be tired when they get to the water but the prey will be exhausted. It is an omnivore and its main diet consists of rodents, rabbits, voles, shrews, and birds, but in certain seasons they will eat nuts, berries and fruit. In the summertime they will eat crickets and grasshoppers.

This fox has sharp semi-retractable claws that stay sharp and enable it to grasp tree trunks. The purpose of having these sharp claws is for them to use in digging of dens, gathering any food that may be under the ground, and climbing trees, which is a feature that is unique to only them. They also have the ability to rotate their forearms and climb up a tree by grasping it and pushing up against the tree with its hind feet. To get down from the tree they run head first down the vertical tree with their head up to create balance, then lower themselves down by their front limbs. They will climb as high as 50 to 60 feet and will jump from branch to branch so that they can rest, forage, or escape from other predators.

Predators are the coyote, bobcats, great horned owls and the Golden Eagle. Another predator are humans which enjoy hunting them for sport. In some areas there are specific hunting seasons. At this current time gray foxes are not a threatened species, however, the loss of their land and homes have required them to adapt and they now are living closer to humans and industrial places. There is a sport called fox penning where blood hounds are released into a pen of captive gray foxes where dog fighting ensues that can kill the canines. The Humane Society of the United States is working to end this barbaric sport.

FIELD OF HEALING AND HONOR

Through November 11th at Pelona Vista Park

This display of 2,020 flags are in the park field to honor troops, veterans, firefighters, law enforcement and health care workers. How beautiful to see our American flags waving in the breeze. It is a time to find peace, respect our flag, and reflect on all the people who put their lives on the line for the rest of us to have health and the freedoms we have in America.



NATIVE AMERICAN INDIAN HERITAGE MONTH

On August 3, 1990, President George H.W. Bush declared the month of November as National American Indian Heritage Month, there after referred to as Native American Heritage Month.

When the settlers came to America from Europe they made new relationships with the Wampanoaga Native Americans. The Native Americans made several contributions to the society with foods such as corn, pumpkins, and sweet potatoes. They were also the first to raise turkeys for food and discovered several medicinal uses from natural items. They shared with the settlers and helped them survive the cold winter when they arrived.

Thanksgiving was a time when the Pilgrims came together to celebrate new relationships with the Wampanoag Native Americans who had given them food during the first winter when supplies brought from England were insufficient. It was celebrated after the first harvest in the New World on October 1621 and lasted three days. The colonists would celebrate “thanksgiving” with days of prayer thanking God for blessings they had received.



HISTORY OF PUMPKIN PIE

By Mary Wilson



Archaeologists discovered the oldest domesticated pumpkin seeds in the Oaxaca Highlands of Mexico. Pumpkins are believed to have originated in Central America over 7,500 years ago. They were also the first crops grown for human consumption in North America. Pumpkin was one of the earliest foods the first European explorers brought back from the New World. The first mention of the orange gourds in Europe dates to 1536, and a few decades later they were grown regularly in England.

The pumpkin is a variety of winter squash, a member of the gourd family, and comes in a variety of sizes, shapes, and colors. The fruit grows on vines and is ready to be harvested in early autumn. If you have ever tasted pumpkin baked or boiled you will find that it is very bland and really doesn't have much flavor. The origin of pumpkin pie occurred when the colonists sliced off the pumpkin top, removed the seeds, and filled the insides with milk, spices, and honey to make a custard, then roasting the pumpkin whole in hot ashes. There probably was not a pie crust because the fledgling colony lacked the butter and wheat flour necessary for making pie crusts.

The settlers took the seeds back to Europe and were able to grow the pumpkins there. One of the first American pumpkin recipes was in John Josselyn's "New-England's Rarities Discovered", published in the early 1670s. The recipe was for a side dish made from diced ripe pumpkin that had been cooked down in a pot over the course of a day. Once the pumpkin was cooked butter and spices were added, much like the recipes for mashed sweet potatoes. Also in 1670 the English writer Hannah Woolley's wrote the "Gentlewoman's Companion" advocated a pie filled with alternating layers of pumpkin and apple, spiced rosemary, sweet marjoram and a handful of thyme.

It wasn't until the mid-19th century that pumpkin pie rose to political significance in the United State as it was injected into the country's tumultuous debate over slavery. Sarah Josepha Hale, an abolitionist who worked for decades to have Thanksgiving proclaimed a national holiday, featured the pie in her 1827 anti-slavery novel "Northwood," describing a Thanksgiving table laden with desserts of every name and description—'yet the pumpkin pie occupied the most distinguished niche.'

Abraham Lincoln made Thanksgiving a national holiday in 1863. After the Civil War, Thanksgiving and the pumpkin pie, extended its national reach. There were write-ups in women's magazines for pumpkin pie.

In 1929 Libby's meat-canning company of Chicago introduced a line of canned pumpkin that soon became a Thanksgiving fixture replacing the need for roasting and straining the squash.

Today's pumpkin pies come in a flaky pie crust, lots of wonderful spices like cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger, cloves, allspice and milk to give it a wonderful flavor. So have a slice of pumpkin pie and you might want to add a bit of whipped cream!

