

PLUGGED IN

FUN FOR KIDS

A COOPERATIVE PROJECT OF THE SANTA BARBARA NEWS-PRESS AND THE EDUCATORS' ROUNDTABLE, PUBLISHED MONTHLY TO PROMOTE LEARNING AMONG YOUNG READERS IN NATURAL SCIENCE, HISTORY, TECHNOLOGY, AND ART

This Month's Theme: Wild California

By Andrea Wisniewski and Christopher Horrigan, Santa Barbara Zoo

Wanted: Native California Wildlife

Reason: To demonstrate the unique and diverse habitats of California and the species that depend on them.

Suspect: Desert Tortoise

Range: South-eastern California, western Arizona, and extreme southern Nevada.

Habitat: Desert
Skills: Lives in burrows which keep it warm on cold nights, and cool on hot days. The burrows can be 33 feet long.

Challenge: How long is your room at home compared to the burrow of a desert tortoise?



Suspect: California Condor

Range: Along the West Coast from Canada through Mexico
Habitat: Mountains
Skills: Largest soaring bird in North America, with a 9.5-foot wingspan.

Challenge: With several friends, stretch out your "wings" (arms) from tip to tip. See how many of you it takes to create a 9.5-foot wingspan.



Suspect: Bald Eagle

Range: Found soaring over most of North America.
Habitat: Lakes and rivers
Skills: Has spiny scales on the soles of its toes, which, along with sharp talons, allow for excellent gripping of slippery fish, its main food.

Challenge: Find something slimy and slippery to hold on to. Is it easier to hold with your smooth flat hands or with your sharp fingernails?



Suspect: Channel Island Fox

Range: Restricted to the six largest of the Channel Islands.
Habitat: California Channel Islands

Skills: Can climb tall shrubs to reach berries and eat flying insects.

Challenge: Imagine you lived on an island. How would you find food and water?



Who's Been Here?

Wildlife biologists can answer many questions such as how many and what kinds of animals live in a habitat. They can tell what type of food an animal ate, or what it was doing, by studying its "leftovers." These "leftovers" can be anything from footprints and scat, to feathers and bones. Become a wildlife biologist. Use your detective skills to study the animal "leftovers" below. Now figure out which California native animals these items belong to.



A



B



C



E



D

True or False

- California condors are the largest soaring birds in North America. T F
- Desert tortoises live in forests. T F
- Channel Island foxes can be found across California. T F
- Bald eagles use long talons to catch fish. T F
- Wildlife biologists use footprints and scat to study animals. T F

Answers: 1.T, 2.F, 3.F, 4.T, 5.T

Answers: A. fox footprint, B. shed snake skin, C. human footprints, D. bald eagle feathers, E. desert tortoise burrow.

Take a Walk on the Wild Side!

You can view these beautiful and unique animals at the Santa Barbara Zoo. The California condor will be joining us after we complete construction of its new exhibit. You could also gather your family and friends and head out to our local forests, mountains, lakes, and deserts. Just remember, you are a guest in the homes of our wild animals, so treat them with respect. Go with an adult, keep your distance, do not litter or collect anything, and have fun. Pictures are a great way to record your wild adventures as you track native Californian species.

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