

Wildlife in the Kyte Yard (in Moraga)

Residents: Known resident animals of this yard include western fence and alligator lizards, sharp-tailed snake, slender salamander, fox squirrel and various birds, including Nuttalls and Downy woodpeckers, red-breasted nuthatch, oak titmouse, chestnut-backed chickadee, spotted and California towhees, house finch, lesser goldfinch, Bewick's wren, Anna's hummingbird, mourning dove, and scrub jay. We have also planted the pond with goldfish, one koi, two crayfish, and three turtles.

Visitors: Other animals pass through and sometimes stop for awhile. These include black-tailed deer, striped skunk, raccoon, opossum, broad-footed mole, pocket gopher, meadow mouse, brush rabbit, gopher snake, and pacific tree frog. Favorite seasonal or occasional birds include fox sparrow, hermit thrush, Townsend's warbler, American goldfinch, pine siskin, black-headed grosbeak, California quail, western tanager and California thrasher. (Almost 100 bird species counted).

Predators: Attracting small birds and lizards and putting fish in a pond create a habitat for predators. Coopers and sharp-shinned hawks (and probably Red Shouldered hawks) as well as great horned owls have made kills in this yard, and a great blue heron has eaten fish up to 14 inches long from the pond. Raccoons and great egrets have fished the pond as well with less success.. Scrub jays also make life difficult for small birds and animals, coyotes have been heard, and fox droppings found. A few years ago, a deer was killed and eaten just behind our back fence. We believe a lion used one of the redwood trees we had planted for cover to make that kill. The yard can be an exciting place.