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First of three Twilight events presented by John Muir Land Trust

By Jennifer Wake



Western Screech Owl bigstock images

Nearly 60 bird enthusiasts joined the Zoom webinar, "Twilight - Meet a Screech Owl," May 20, sponsored by the John Muir Land Trust - which protects and cares for open space with more than 3,500 acres and 17 properties under stewardship - and featuring Lindsay Wildlife Experience Youth Programs Coordinator Matee Manakitivipart, who facilitated the interactive discussion.

Lindsay Wildlife Experience is home to over 70 "Animal Ambassadors," including Cypress - a Western Screech Owl, which is one of the smallest owl species in North America. Cypress came to Lindsay at three days old in July 2018 and was raised with seven other screech owls, which have since been returned to the wild, but Manakitivipart said Cypress became accustomed to people and is therefore non-releasable. And while Cypress' name would suggest a loud screeching call, she makes soft hoots and is perfectly camouflaged against

mature tree bark in her natural forest habitat. A cavity nester, screech owls wait for their food to come by and dine on small rodents, bats, insects, crayfish and even rabbits, Manakitivipart said.

"Most owls have very soft feathers to dampen sound as they fly," Manakitivipart added. "But [the feathers] break more easily than other birds."

Manakitivipart said Red Shouldered Hawks are nesting right now and you can find these hawks or White Tail Kites in Marsh areas, such as the Pacheco Marsh on Suisun Bay and other bird species at the Point Reyes National Seashore. The Merlin Bird ID app is a great way to identify different species of birds, Manakitivipart said. "If you have a picture on your phone, you can upload the photo on the app and it will tell you the likely species of the bird." Xeno-Canto is also a great source for birdcalls, he added.

Manakitivipart reminded participants about how to help keep wildlife safe, such as reducing our environmental footprint by limiting consumption, reusing and recycling, and to leave only footprints when visiting parks. He also implored participants to not use garden netting and sticky traps to kill rodents, as he has seen hawks, owls and snakes get caught in them.

There are two more free JMLT Twilight events planned: The first on May 27, where participants can take a virtual visit to Family Harvest Farm in downtown Pittsburg, and the second on June 3 where folks can see what's up in the night sky and learn about the "Red Planet" Mars with the Astronomical Society of the Pacific. To register, visit <https://jmlt.org/calendar-events/twilight-2021/>. For information about Lindsay Wildlife Experience, visit lindsaywildlife.org.

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