

# TEACHER GUIDE: Letter 1: Western Pond Turtle

## CONCEPTS COVERED

Plant Community-- Riparian or stream wetland

Characteristics

Tenajas

Representative animal--Western pond turtle

Characteristics

Food

Reproduction

Enemies

Surviving drought

Predator/prey

Omnivore

Cold blooded/Warm blooded

Vernal pools vs tenajas

Reserve history--

Vail Ranch

Protecting the Reserve and the animals that live there—

Stay on trails

Leave animals in their homes

Don't release pets into the wild

## CONTENT VOCABULARY

- camouflage—special coloring and shape that helps an animal blend in with its surroundings
- cold-blooded—an animal's blood and body temperature changes with the temperature of the air or water around it
- Ecological Reserve—a place that people set aside to protect the plants and animals that live there
- endangered—a title given to plants and animals when their population reaches a low number of individuals, and they are in danger of extinction
- extinct—when a plant or animal species can no longer be found existing or living on the Earth
- fossil—a remnant or impression of a plant or animal that lived long ago; usually found in rock
- habitat—the area or natural environment in which an animal or plant normally lives or grows
- omnivore—an animal that eats both plants and animals
- plateau—a large, raised area of land having a relatively flat surface
- predator—an animal that hunts for, catches, and eats other animals
- prey—an animal that is hunted, caught, and eaten by other animals

- reptile—a member of the class of cold-blooded vertebrate animals with dry scales or hard plates on its skin; most lay eggs with soft leathery shell; e.g. lizards, snakes, and turtles
- riparian or stream wetland—a habitat that has moving water, like a stream or river, at least part of the year
- species of special concern—a species of plant or animal whose numbers are shrinking
- tenaja—a deep, rock-lined streambed pool which often holds water year-round
- vernal pool—seasonally filled pools of water in shallow depressions of grassland on the Plateau
- warm-blooded—animals whose body temperatures remain constant regardless of the external temperature

#### OTHER WORDS TO KNOW

ancestors	fresh water	relatives
bank (of the creek)	illegal	rib cage
female / male	protect	shore

#### THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- What is a habitat?
- What is the name of the habitat where you will find the Western pond turtle?
- Why might it be hard to see a Western pond turtle when you visit the Reserve?
- Can you think of at least 3 things you learned about the Western pond turtle?
- Name two ways Western pond turtles protect themselves from predators.
- What enemies do Western pond turtles have on the Reserve?
- What do the turtles do when there is a drought and the tenajas dry up?
- Western pond turtles are a species of special concern. What does that mean?
- What can you do to help protect the Western pond turtle?
- What do omnivores eat?
- What is the difference between an animal that is a predator and an animal that is prey?
- Could an animal be both predator and prey? Name at least one.
- What does it mean if an animal is cold-blooded? Warm-blooded? Which are you? How do you know?
- What is a tenaja?
- What animals besides turtles live in the tenajas?
- The Santa Rosa Plateau Ecological Reserve was once part of a large ranch. What was the name of the ranch?
- What can you do to help take care of the plants and animals that live on the Reserve?

#### FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY FOR STUDENTS

After reading the letter, draw a picture of a Western pond turtle in its habitat on the Reserve. Include as many details as possible from your reading. When you visit the Reserve, see how close your picture was to the real thing.

Play “Quick Frozen Critters” created by Project Wild, 1992 Council for Environ. Education