

*Sutter Creek
Community Benefit
Foundation*

August Newsletter, 2024

Our Most Iconic Native The California Grizzly Bear

This month we turn the newsletter spotlight onto one of our most iconic native critters.



This is as close as I want to get to a grizzly bear!

Amador County and the Mother Lode is home to an incredibly diverse animal population. We'll take a look at one of the most famous – and overlooked - Californians that we will never see, and most are not even aware of.



A real – though stuffed – California grizzly bear in a museum.

One of the animals you will never see outside of a museum is the fabled California grizzly bear (*Ursus Arctos Californicus*).



California grizzly in his “habitat”.

The main reason you won’t see one of these terrifyingly magnificent creatures is that they were hunted to extinction in the early years of the 20th century. The last California grizzly

bear was reportedly shot in Tulare County in 1922.



1850's artist's rendition of a California grizzly bear from life.

Today, the only way to see a California grizzly is to take a look at the State's flag.



The bear as a symbol of our State. The California grizzly was seen as a symbol of ferocity and indomitability.

The flag was designed in 1846 in Sonoma during a failed breakaway attempt from Mexico.



This is a photograph from 1890 of the original bear flag that flew over Sonoma in 1846.

At that time, the California grizzly was so populous here that it was considered representative of the Bear Flag Republic and future State.



Spanish territory including New Spain – California – in 1794.

Before the Spanish began to settle into New Spain, which became California, in the mid-1700's, it is estimated that 10,000

to 15,000 grizzly bears inhabited the area.

The first documented sighting of a California grizzly was in 1603 when a Spanish explorer wrote of huge bears coming out of the hills to feed on the carcasses of whales stranded on a beach near Monterey.



Grizzlies feasting on whale carcasses.

During the 1700's, as Spanish settlement spread northward into New Spain, the cattle industry flourished – and so did the bear population.



Spanish long horn cattle.

The large cattle herds were easy prey for grizzlies and the grizzlies then became hated enemies of California Rancheros.



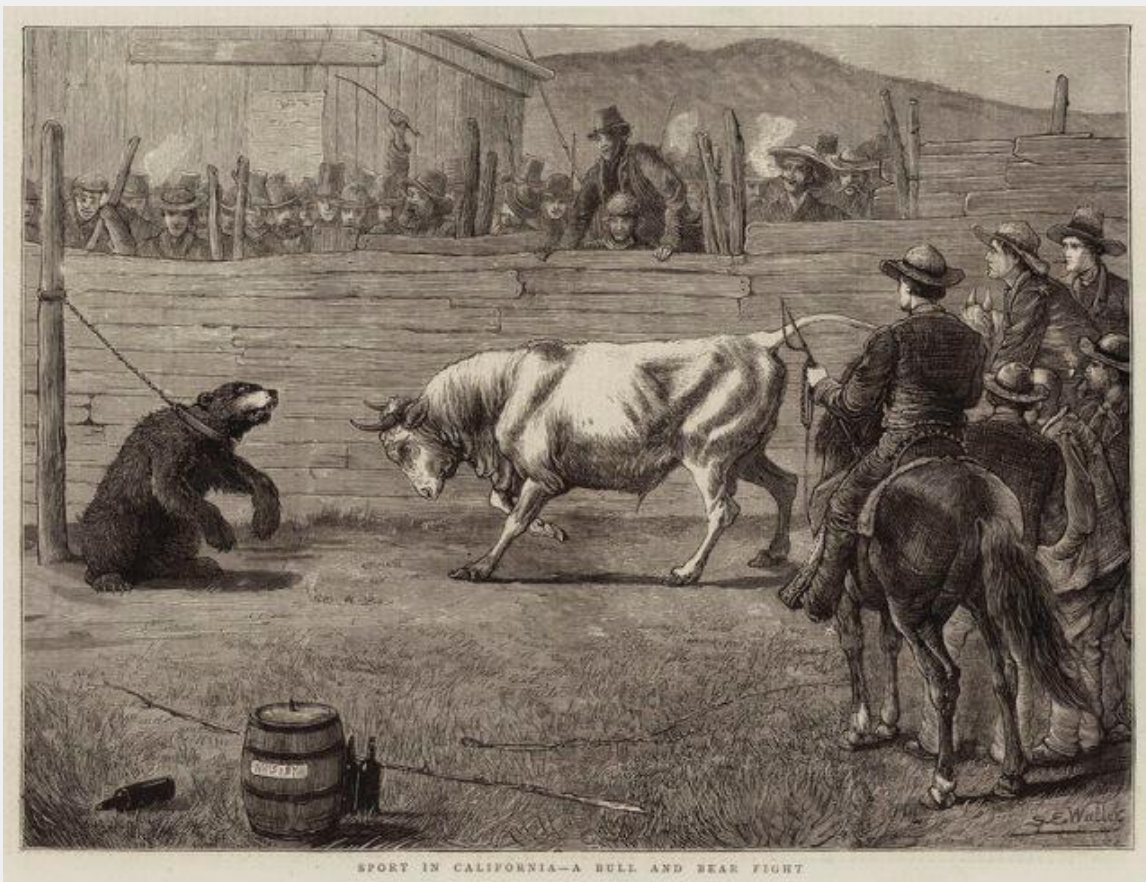
California vaqueros lassoing a California grizzly.

Vaqueros hunted them, often roping and capturing them alive to be put into the ring against large wild bulls in public battles.



Wild cattle such as this long horn fought California grizzlies to the death.

These bull and bear fights were a favorite “sport” enjoyed in early California and makeshift arenas dotted the State. The Calaveras Chronicle, published in Mokelumne Hill, reported a match in 1852 with spectators numbering over 400.



Bull and bear arena such as the one in Mokelumne Hill and common in early California.

Incredibly, this brutal and cruel blood-sport was a favorite family Sunday afternoon entertainment into the 1880’s at the arena in

Moke Hill. As a side note, a Mokelumne Hill resident in digging a footing for a carport (about 5 years ago), believed he had located a portion of the old arena. He donated the pictured chains and links to our local museum believing they once secured (?) the bear to a post in the middle of the arena.



Chains thought to be used in the Mokelumne Hill arena.

Adult California grizzly bears ranged from 400-500 pounds upward and were frequently reported to top 1,000 pounds.



A grizzly in the 1,000 – 1,200 pound range.

However, in 1866, a California grizzly was killed in San Diego County. He measured a truly monstrous 2,200 pounds and stood over 8 feet tall.

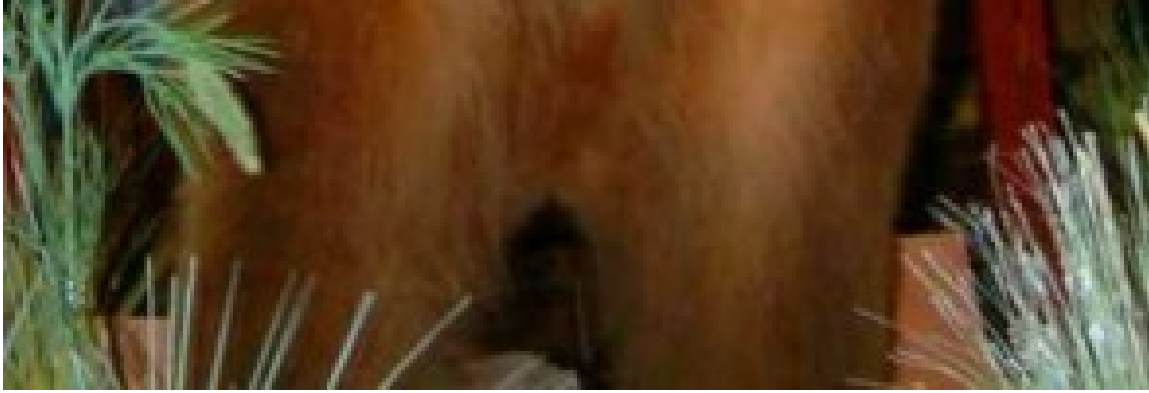


Now that's a big bear!

He resides today in a museum in Valley Center, CA in San Diego

County.





California grizzly of 2,200 pounds and standing over 8 feet tall.

California grizzlies are thought to have been the largest bears on the continent, if not the world.

All in all, it only took 75 years after the beginning of the Gold Rush for this symbol of California to be pushed out of existence.



This ferocious apex predator who once inhabited mountains, hills, and valleys of early California had only one real enemy...



The modern human.

Sutter Creek Fire Dinner Dance "Fireman's Ball"



Labor Day Weekend

August 31, 2024

Doors open: 5:30

Dinner: 6:30 Tri-tip and Spaghetti

Dancing: 7:30-10:00

350 Hanford Street

Tickets:

DARIN SEXTON AND HIGHWAY 49

Adults \$40

Children Under 12 \$15



Tickets available:

Online

suttercreekfoundation.org

The Fire Station



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Sutter Creek



Volunteer Fire Department

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SCCBF is funded primarily by public contributions and memberships. If you have an interest in preservation, history, or are looking to be involved in the community, [email](#)

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SCCBF's current renovation project is the Historic Sutter Creek Grammar School which is rich in Gold Rush history. This beautiful building is California's second oldest two-story brick schoolhouse. There are four rooms within the Historic Grammar School that can be rented. Contact the City of Sutter Creek for information on rates and availability - (209) 267-5647 ext. 230 or email info@cityofsuttercreek.org / website - cityofsuttercreek.org



The Sutter Creek Community Benefit Foundation (SCCBF) is dedicated to the restoration, preservation, and development of the community's historic assets both now and for future generations. (nonprofit 501(c)3 – Tax ID #87-1825043)

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