

The American River Natural History Association

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Share Your Passion for Nature: Join the EYNC Docent Team

text and photos by Georgia Jones

Docents at the Effie Yeaw Nature Center enjoy an exciting, richly rewarding job. Following in the footsteps of Effie Yeaw, they take small groups of school children on the same quiet, secluded trails she hiked with her kindergarten class discovering joys of nature more than 40 years ago.

On a blustery March morning a small group of energy charged first graders crowd the heels of docent Lynn White. They barely constrain their urge to sprint ahead, to run free along the nature trail at EYNC. Suddenly Lynn halts in mid-step. She points toward the meadow. “Deer,” the kids whisper

in unison, eyes wide and shining with discovery.

Why Should You Become a Docent?

Unique to the region, EYNC is a microcosm of the area’s riparian and oak woodlands as it was 175 years ago. As the Sacramento region rapidly becomes developed, the Nature Center is one of the few places children get hands-on experience with nature, where they are introduced to the beauty and diversity of natural areas. Here children learn the importance of conserving and preserving our natural resources before they become decision-making adults. Docents have the opportunity to share their love and knowledge of nature with some of the hundreds of children who visit the Nature Center each week. They assist in the presentation for pre-Kindergarten through Sixth Grade tours—tours which comply with the State Science Framework



Docent Debbie Moskowitz introduces Ringo, Nature Center’s popular and friendly king snake, to wide-eyed first graders eager to learn the right way to touch him.

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President's Column

As ARNHA moves into its new year, we can look back on the last 12 months with pride. We are grateful for the help of many generous donors of both large and small gifts.

ARNHA completed many projects this year. Our Forum Series continued with talks about dragonflies and damselflies by Tim Manolis and about Native American uses of plants by Renee Shahrokh. This fall, look for an evening discussion by the California Indian Heritage Museum folks on the archeology of the river.

The design and installation of a new sign above the entry to the Effie Yeaw Nature Center, the gift of an anonymous generous donor and the landscaping around the new Assembly Building look great.

We helped with Nature Bowl in May, and both Maidu Indian Day and the Salmon Festival in October. The American River Parkway Winter Wildlife Count in December recorded the second all-time highest bird count, and Bird and Breakfast in March had the highest attendance yet.

New editions of both *The Outdoor World* and *The History of the Lower American River*, now entitled *The Lower American River: Prehistory to Parkway*, were completed, and a special section of the Winter 2004-05 *Acorn* detailed retired county parks director William B. Pond's role in the formation of the Parkway. The *Acorn* continues to reach members four times a year.

We worked with others interested in the American River Parkway. We sponsored free busing for children to enjoy the American River Conservancy in Coloma. Save the American River Association (SARA), the American River Parkway Foundation (ARPF), and ARNHA are continuing our coalition to craft a plan to secure funding for the Parkway and in updating the Parkway Master Plan. We commissioned CSUS Professors to survey parkway users to aid parkway planners.

Most importantly, we continued to support the Effie Yeaw Nature Center with \$75,340 in grants. We are committed to maintaining the Center, bringing school children for workshops, and additionally to the giving of grants. Over 70,000 visitors came to EYNC in 2004. We are forever proud to have our alliance with the EYNC.

Now into our next ARNHA year, we're embarked on a complete overhaul of our website and the launch of a membership drive. We urge members to recruit at least one new member for this organization of volunteers who love and value the Parkway. If each of our members talks to a neighbor, we could easily grow our membership.

Won't you help us carry out our mission? Talk to your friends and neighbors, especially those who love and use the Parkway, and ask them to join ARNHA, the organization dedicated to "Bringing People to Nature and Nature to People."

Noah Baygell
ARNHA President



LEFT: Docent Lynn White shares first graders' excitement as they spot deer on the EYNC nature trail.

Here's what four Docents say about their experiences:

I was attracted to the EYNC Docent program to learn more about the environment of our beautiful American River Parkway. Sharing the excitement of students as they experience nature, be it spotting wildlife or pondering medicinal plants used by native Nisenan Indians, has captivated me for more than five years. But most satisfying of all is knowing that I help students learn to treat every aspect of our environment with care and respect.

—Lynn White, EYNC Docent

After 11 years, I find that each tour at the Nature Center is still one of fun and discovery. It's a symbiotic educational experience—my learning from the kids and their learning from me. I continue volunteering at the center because of the flexibility the Docent program allows me.

—Walter Dong, EYNC Docent

For me, being a Docent has always been an interesting and educational activity. Not only do I teach the children about animals and nature, but I share my enjoyment of nature, the plants, geology, and animals. It's important to get young children interested in nature . . . to appreciate and take care of the environment. I've learned a lot about particular flora and fauna in the area, and it sure is fun to impart that information to an eager audience. Learning how to handle snakes and other animals has been a real advantage to this job. Needless to say, I'm not scared of them anymore!

—Deborah Moskowitz, EYNC Docent

I lived less than a ten-minute walk from the Effie Yeaw Nature Center for thirty years and almost considered it my back yard. . . . in 1997, I signed up for the Docent Training and started leading tours . . . it has been a joy ever since—constantly learning more and sharing what I know with young people. I love seeing the changes that take place there on both a short term and a long term basis. On a Thursday in March of last year, a class of first graders found that it took seven of them to reach around the trunk of a three hundred year old valley oak. On the following Tuesday, the tree came down in a windstorm. We see that tree becoming part of the soil that will nurture other plants in the future. . . . It is exciting every day!

—Dave Rosenlof, EYNC Docent

and new Science Standards, making them popular with regional and local school districts.

Further, Docents are essential partners of Nature Center staffers in their educational mission. As Senior Naturalist Stephanie Wiman put it, "It would be impossible to offer school tours at the current frequency and level of excellence without our dedicated group of Nature Center Docents."

What is the personal lure to become a Docent at EYNC?

EYNC Docent Training—How do these and other Docents learn to do their job skillfully and with such obvious enthusiasm? EYNC Naturalists give individualized instruction that prepares each Docent trainee to assist with school tours. Trainees learn:

- The natural and cultural history and ecology of the American River Parkway,
- Techniques for working effectively with young children, and
- Methods of interpreting nature and handling and introducing live animals to these children.

Additionally, trainees "shadow" Naturalists inside the nature center and on the trail to learn interpretive techniques. Shadowing gives trainees a chance to "try on" the job—to practice mentally the role of tour leader.

This non-competitive training is interesting and exciting. New Docents quickly become part of the unique family of EYNC workers, who seem truly to love their job.

No fee is charged for Docent Training; a \$25 fee is paid at the time of registration to become an ARNHA mem-

continued next page

ber. ARNHA funds most of the Nature Center's Docent Training costs.

Docent Qualifications—Love of nature and the outdoors is key to success. Docents must enjoy working with children and be able to maintain discipline in small groups. Further, Docents have to be at least 18 years old and physically able to hike the gentle Nature Center trails.

Fingerprinting is required before training begins. The Parks Department uses these fingerprints to verify that a prospective Docent has not been convicted of a felony or misdemeanor involving violence, sexual or physical abuse of any adult or child, or any felony narcotic offense. Denise Booth, Volunteer Coordinator, will provide information about meeting requirements for this process.

Commitment—Docents sign up for at least two school tours each month during the school year. Tours last for two hours and are scheduled Monday through Friday at 10:00 a.m. and 12:00 noon. Docents are asked to assist with Nature Center school tours for at least eight months after training.

Sign Up Today—Docent Training classes will start in August 2005 with open and continuous enrollment through March 2006. However, training slots are limited—it's not too early to contact Denise Booth, Volunteer Coordinator, about sign-ups. She will be happy to describe the EYNC Docent Training program and answer your questions. Contact Denise at (916) 489-4918, x224 or dbooth@sacparks.org. ■

“Each child's thought is uniquely his own. Though I may be able to anticipate his ideas, I will hold my tongue. I will cherish with him the moment of his discovery.”

—Author Unknown

Thanks to Aerc Pacific Inc (API), the landscape at the Effie Yeaw Nature Center is installed: over twenty-six varieties of native trees, bushes, grasses, and plants, including Western Red Bud, Valley Oak, Interior Live Oak, Blue Elderberry, and California Wild Rose.

Frantz Nursery in Hickman, California; United Green Mark in Rancho Cordova; and Bitterroot Restoration in Loomis donated plants and the Valley Oak tree in the courtyard. The Sacramento Tree Foundation donated trees that will be the backdrop to the courtyard.

In addition to planting, the installation included an irrigation system, landscape cloth and protective barriers around plants and trees susceptible to damage from animals, and mulching.

“We're happy to donate our time and effort to programs like those at Effie Yeaw Nature Center. We need programs, especially to help kids,” said Robert Houck, of API. API has a history of helping the Effie Yeaw Nature Center. They're the ones who, several years ago, constructed the Nisenan village at the Center. ■

Many thanks to HLA Group, Landscape Architects and Planners, Inc., for their generous contribution to fund the Urban Nature Project programs in the 2004-2005 fiscal year and to Give Something Back Business Products.



Artist Narca Moore-Craig, who created the beautiful drawings for ARNHA's “Birds of the American River Parkway” booklet, has turned her talents to a new animal form: a dazzling horse named *Horsefeathers*. The six-foot tall, nine-foot long, resin-cast horse is coated with acrylic feathers modeled from a parrot, toucan,

hummingbird, pheasant, ptarmigan and woodpecker. The birds are portrayed on its base.

Narca, who with her husband Alan moved from Sacramento to Portal, Arizona in 1982, painted the distinctive pony as one of 150 horses created under the aegis of “The Trail of Painted Ponies,” a public arts project. Based in Scottsdale, AZ, the project is aimed at spotlighting the work of prominent Southwest artists and raising money for charities. (www.trailofpaintedponies.com).

The sponsors of *Horsefeathers* designated Malpai Borderlands Group (MBG) to be the charity receiving the lion's share of proceeds from the pony's eventual sale. MBG is a noted consortium of ranchers, scientists and environmentalists seeking solutions to land use problems in the Borderlands.

A new edition of *The Birds of the American River Parkway* with Narca's drawings and text by Steve Flannery was published last year and is available for \$3.95 at the Effie Yeaw Nature Center Discovery Shop and selected bookstores.. Narca, a frequent traveler, can best be reached via E-mail at narca@vtc.net. ■

Folsom Lake Trail Extension

By Merick Chaffee



Your excellent article by Fred Gunsy telling about the major role William Pond, (*Acorn*, Fall 2004, #130) former county park director, played in getting land for the American River Parkway from Discovery Park all the way to Sunrise Boulevard and beyond to the Fish Hatchery at Hazel Avenue gives people a great picture of how this wonderful local jewel was brought into existence. Without Bill Pond's efforts, the Parkway, that contributes so much to the quality of life in this city, would not be available to us.

However, there's another part of the parkway: the state managed extension from Hazel Avenue up to Beal's Point at Folsom Lake. Acquiring and developing that segment was just as hairy as was developing previous segments. And there's another cast of characters that played significant roles in pulling off the many coups required to make this segment a reality.

Sacramento's State Legislator Gene Gualco (chair of a key committee in the Assembly) and his staff, Clyde Macdonald and Bill Fishman, worked with State Park's management and the Department of Finance's budget wizards. In the late 1970s they obtained many of the \$-millions needed for trail extension land acquisition and development. A young (at the time) landscape architect Robert Baxter came up with the idea of how to build the trail at the bottom of Orangevale Bluffs rather than going up and down the bluffs themselves (which was strongly opposed by the neighbors along the bluff top and would have been dangerous for trail-users).

Another problem was acquisition of a corridor extending from the Rainbow Bridge in Folsom up the canyon to property near Park Headquarters off Folsom-

Auburn Road, Correction's Director Jerry Enomoto absolutely wouldn't allow use of the "haul road" just across the river and in full view of the prison yard. So at the end of the 1970s, State Park staff had to buy a narrow piece up the canyon and build an expensive bridge to give the developer access to his property. Then they convinced the Park Director to go to court to condemn the "Olive View" property between the bridge and Park headquarters rather than pay the developer for a narrow strip plus two more costly bridges. We got it for only \$600,000—today that land would cost millions, but it'd be full of houses. In fact, if the actions necessary to obtain that segment hadn't been successful at that time, trail users would be out on Folsom-Auburn Road. With the condition of government finances now, nobody would be able to connect that part of the trail to Folsom Lake, ever.

The latest part of the American River Trail System is the completion, in the late 1990s, of the segment along the Folsom side of Lake Natomas, making possible a loop trip around the lake. As a regular user of the trail, as a bicyclist and hiker, I think that this loop is the most scenic and most popular part of the whole trail. Charlie Willard, working with ranger staff as well as with local Folsom trail supporters, obtained the monies and oversaw the design and implementation of the trail (with the bridge across Alder Creek) to complete this important part of the system.

These extensions of the American River Trail System into park property offer users a seamless facility all the way from Old Sacramento to Folsom Lake. Altogether, this wonderful asset will grow in value and importance as surrounding urban blobs proliferate and population booms. ■

Merick Chaffee is a native Californian. Except for a variety of the jobs people get while going to school, including being a longshoreman in Alaska on a large construction job, he was a bureaucrat in State government, mostly for three agencies: Finance, Water Resources and Parks and Recreation. In Finance, he was one of the Budget Wizards. In Water, he was part of a team that made radical improvements in the way the agency was managed to prepare for the State Water Project. He went to Parks to accomplish similar improvements but wound up in a number of other roles, including being part of the group who extended the American River Trail System to Folsom Lake

He writes, "I'm impressed every time I bicycle up to the lake, which I do often, how important it was to have succeeded with the extension so many years ago."

THE DELTA POEM (excerpt)

Where I am most ardent
small birds perch
three now are jewel
to the hemlock stalk
behind which
the river bends
are they lost chorus
or emissaries
of some future
loveliness?

Julia Connor© 1987, 2005

Julia Connor has recently been named Poet Laureate of Sacramento 2005-2007. More information will be available shortly at www.juliaconnor.com. She can also be reached via the Sacramento Metropolitan Arts Commission.

Red-shouldered Hawks Often Serenade Nature Area

By Bruce Swinehart

Wow! What is that noise? This is a comment often made by people hearing the shriek of the Red-shouldered Hawk. This bird, often heard long before it is seen, likes wooded areas along creeks and rivers. They sit inside the branches of tall trees rather than out near the edge. The shrill call is often described as “kee-yoo.”

Although the Red-shouldered Hawk is perhaps not quite as easily distinguished as the Red-tailed Hawk with its very red tail, it is quite easily told by its strikingly black and white banded tail edged in white at the end. The striped wings often show translucent crescent shaped “windows” (an ornithologist’s term) underneath. While the Red-tailed Hawk will glide for long periods without flapping its wings, the Red-shouldered Hawk will glide and flap, glide and flap. Its 16-inch body and 40-inch wingspan are a little smaller than those of the Red-tail.

A pair typically stays together all year. When you find one, there is most likely another. Some think they pair for life. They like to nest on a platform of sticks in taller trees along our creeks and hunt from a perch in a tree-top. The young do have the banded tail but lack the buffy color of the breast and wing linings.

The Red-shouldered Hawk is found in the Eastern United States and along the western edge of California but is conspicuously missing from middle America. In days of yore when all hawks were considered bad, they were called the derogatory name, chicken hawks. The Red-shouldered Hawk helped give hawks a good name because they eat mostly small things often found near water and along our creeks, like mice, rats, and squirrels. Farmers could often observe this food choice and recognize the Red-shouldered’s value.

Watch for it. It is a hawk you can positively identify on your own.

Bruce Swinehart is a past president of the Sacramento Audubon Society and a past president of the Sacramento Science Center. He was a Summer Supervising Naturalist for California State Parks and state park naturalist for 17 years, spent 6 months on a sail boat doing bird research on the offshore islands of Mexico, taught environmental conservation and natural history classes at American River College for 40 years, taught summer field classes at Fallen Leaf Lake in the Tahoe Basin for University of California and American River College for 10 years, and was an area leader for the Sacramento Audubon Society Annual Bird Count for 25 years. ■

PAGES FROM THE ALMANAC

River’s Edge

The river slides quietly through the suburbs, a slender shadow of its former self. But there’s enough sun-splashed water so that a rubber raft full of happy teenagers and plant and animal life crowding the shore provide business-as-usual in the natural world of the riparian woodland.

A host of dragonflies, their legs arranged to form a handy basket, pluck insects from the air. Spiny yellow star thistles are everywhere, seemingly with few redeeming features until it’s noted that they are visited by nectar-seeking bees. The blue flowers of a member of the mint family play a similar role for an orange and black painted lady butterfly.

A placid pool comes alive as egg-sized tadpoles are disturbed and thrash their way into deeper water. Nearby are peers that have developed the long hind legs, along with a fully-formed, bulging-eyed bullfrog.

A husky brown flicker lands in a blue elderberry, performing gymnastics on a slender branch as it picks off clusters of blue-black berries. Burbbling finches likewise enjoy the shrub’s berry smorgasbord.

Wildflowers thrive under the benign influence of moist soil and the July sun. Here are snapdragon-like yellow monkey flowers, tiny but fragrant sweet clover, and the remarkable evening primrose, with 6-foot or higher stems with bright yellow blooms that open at dusk but shrivel under the next day’s sun

There’s no slowing the pulsing cycle of life at home on the floodplain.

From ARNHA’s “An American River Almanac: Reflections on nature throughout the year,” with essays by Peter J. Hayes and full-color photographs by George Turner and Tom Myers. It can be purchased at the Effie Yeaw Nature Center and selected bookstores.



ARNHA BRIEFS

Richard Horgan, Volunteer Extraordinaire!

On June 8, at ARNHA's annual meeting, Richard Horgan received a special Award for Service for his contributions to the Effie Yeaw Nature Center, especially in the construction of exhibits. With over 8,000 hours of volunteer time, Richard spends more time at the Nature Center than some of the part-time staff!

From the moment a visitor walks through the doors of the Effie Yeaw Nature Center, the magic touch of Richard Horgan is evident. A dedicated volunteer at the Center since 1993, Richard has been lead builder of four major exhibits, including "Wild About Wetlands," which is currently in progress.

Richard's unique skills were acquired during his years in the Navy during World War II and later as a television repairman and electronics worker at McClellan Air Force Base. His amazing abilities as a handyman have shined brightly at the Nature Center as he built and repaired everything from a custom opossum exercise wheel to a children's crawl-through log exhibit to a push-button information sound box. Richard is



Richard Horgan and his trusty Makita.

energetic, resourceful and creative. After being presented with a hastily prepared drawing or cardboard mock-up, he'll emerge from the workshop with a working version that often makes use of leftover materials from previous projects. When consulted about a new exhibit idea, his suggestions and experience are invaluable, and he is good-natured and patient about working the bugs out of a new creation.

Richard started doing community volunteer work shortly after retiring because he enjoys keeping busy, and he says golf and fishing just aren't for him. He has also volunteered thousands of hours at the Sacramento Discovery Museum Challenger Learning Center, and his long list of recognitions include the 2001 President's Service Award, Outstanding Volunteer of the Year recognition from the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors, Community Hero Olympic Torchbearer, and DOVIA Volunteer Spirit Lifetime Achievement Award.

These days you'll see Richard working on the exhibit in the Nature Center's new Assembly Building. You can check out his latest handy work when the exhibit opens in late August.

Have You Got Your Passport Yet?

That's "Passport," as in the Sacramento County Parks Department's new program for the American River Parkway and other County regional park services encouraging park users to purchase an annual pass giving you unlimited day-use of all park facilities.

The permit—good for 12 months—is \$40 per vehicle/park supporter and \$60 for small watercraft and horse trailer, or \$80 for boat trailer/oversize vehicle. Fees go to operation and maintenance of county parks.

And if you buy your passport by July 31, you will receive a bonus pack of valuable discounts from American River Raft Rental, Gold River; Ancil Hoffman Golf Course, Carmichael; Cherry Island Golf Course, Elverta; Mather Golf Course, Mather; REI Inc., Sacramento, Roseville, and Folsom; and River Rat Raft and Bike, Fair Oaks.

Purchase your Passport at the Effie Yeaw Nature Center, online www.sacparks.net; REI stores; Rangers & Operations, 4040 Bradshaw Rd.; County Park entry stations at Gibson Ranch, Delta Parks at Sherman Island and Hogback Island; American River Parkway at Discovery Park, Howe Avenue Access, Watt Avenue Access, Harrington Access, William B. Pond Access, Goethe Park, Lower Sunrise, Sailor Bar, and Sacramento Bar.

For further information, call 916-875-6672

Forum Reveals Nisenan Uses of Native Plants

Did you know the early Nisenan used a fire-hardened digging stick to pry brodiaea bulbs from underground, removed the bulblets, ate the bulb and buried the baby bulbs to eat next year?

This was just one example of how the Nisenan lived in harmony with the land, as recounted by Renee Shahrokh, American River College Biology Professor, on April 20 at another in a series of ARNHA public forums. She wore a light brown necklace of Gray Pine nut seeds as she presented her informative, entertaining slide program to a receptive audience at the Effie Yeaw Nature Center Assembly Building.

She said that the natives made tea from rose petals and ate the rose hips; used Yerba Santa shrub leaves—shiny side down—as sort of Band-aids for cuts; cooked Elderberry fruit for stomach aches; and ground up Soap Plant and made paste to line baskets in which they collected seeds.

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American River Natural History Association

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EVENTS CALENDAR

Saturday, August 6,

Down River Day

• • • •

Saturday, September 17,

Great American River Clean Up

• • • •

**For more information on these events,
visit www.ARPF.org**



The new sign at the Effie Yeaw Nature Center

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

- Jim Alford
- Sandra M. Aubry
- The Bearson Family
- Amanda Blake
- The Bolland Family
- The Caslín Family
- The Coughlín Family
- The Dadigan Family
- The Fahn Family
- The Fraízer Family
- Anne Marie Gallagher
- Gail Hancock
- The Harlow Family
- The Harris Family
- Noah Howard
- The Kerfoot Family
- The Kirkpatrick Family
- Suzanne Kremp
- The Kruithof Family
- The Kurzrock Family
- The Locke Family
- The Miura Family
- The Moore Family
- Dominique Patrick
- Ingrid E. Puglia
- Randles/Schoenthal
- Sally Riggs
- The Shapiro Family
- The Sheehy Family
- Miriam Silliman
- The Srinivasan Family
- The Stachniuk Family
- The Thalhammer Family
- The Tooley Family
- The Vroman Family
- The York Family

Briefs, from previous page

And of course, they enjoyed the tender, green disks and stems of Miner's Lettuce long before the Forty-niners discovered it. In the case of Brodiaea, she noted that the flowers of most are usually blue or purple and shaped like an umbrella, while the poisonous Death Camas' white flowers grow along the stalk.

"Local native culture in California is alive and thriving," said Shahrokh, who teaches ethnobotany in her ARC classes as well as at Point Reyes National Seashore and Yosemite National Park. She recommended "News From Native California" magazine (Calindian.org) for its calendar of native celebrations, storytelling, and traditional skills classes. Other sources of native culture she cited were the California State Indian Museum at Sutter's Fort (www.parks.ca.gov) and Roseville's Maidu Indian Museum (www.roseville.ca.us.parks/parks). ■