



ACORN

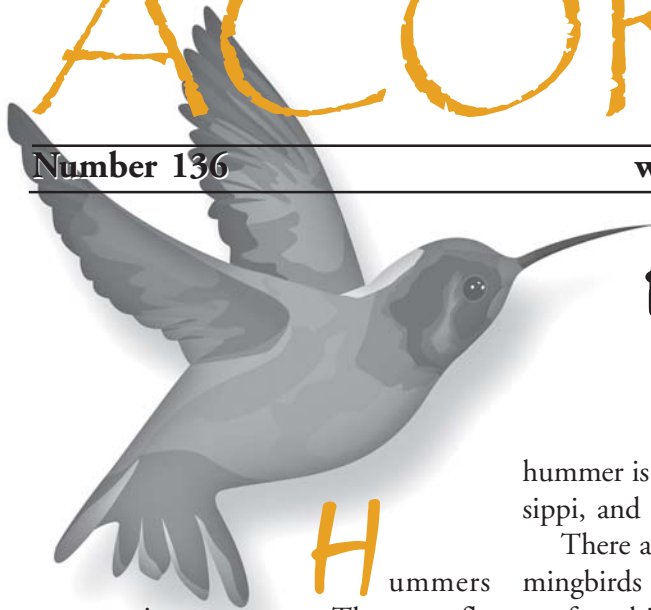
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Summer 2006

Hummingbirds

by Ed Littrell



Hummers are amazing creatures. They can fly straight up, straight down and in all directions. And they can hover. They can be scary if they are trying to chase you away from their nests, or if a male is displaying for a potential mate. The males zoom up and down in a U-shaped pattern maybe 50 feet up, buzzing as they go. The females usually just watch. Male hummers are beautiful with their prismatic feathers reflecting shades of green, red, and blue. Their color is mostly in the way light bounces off their feathers, not actually a pigment in the feathers. Some of the female and young birds are extremely difficult to tell apart.

California and Sacramento are home to several species of hummingbirds. The California Department of Fish and Game lists a dozen hummingbirds as residents in California. I have seen the four species common to our area – the Anna's, the black-chinned, the rufous, and the Allen's - and one less commonly seen species – the Costa's. Others have seen the Calliope. The Anna's hummingbird is resident year-around. It is the largest of the hummingbirds commonly seen here. Only one species of

hummer is common east of the Mississippi, and that's the ruby-throated.

There are over 300 species of hummingbirds worldwide, and all of them are found in the Western Hemisphere. The smallest is the Cuban bee hummingbird. A bumblebee is about the same size. The largest is the well-named giant hummingbird. It occurs along the western South American coast from sea level to 7,000 feet. It's about 7-1/2 inches long.

Hummingbirds in our area like to be around waterways. Some of the best places to see them are along the Ameri-

can and Sacramento Rivers and small local watercourses like Chicken Ranch Slough and Arcade Creek. They also venture to suburban backyards. There they can find their favorite red and other brightly colored flowers. In this region they like bottlebrush, "hummingbird bush" (*Grevillea sp.*), salvia, and fuchsia, as well as sugar-water filled feeders provided by their human admirers. Bright flowers usually provide nectar as a pollination attractant to the birds and bees, while white flowers often have a strong odor to attract flies for pollination.

see Hummers, page 3

American River Parkway Funding Forum Set for July 13

ARNHA will sponsor a public forum on behalf of the American River Parkway Coalition to explore ways to improve the shaky financial health of the Parkway, ARNHA President Noah Baygell announced.

The meeting will be held July 13, beginning at 7 p.m., at the Effie Yeaw Nature Center Assembly Building in Ancil Hoffman County Park. The other members of the coalition, the Save the American River Association and the American River Parkway Foundation, are collaborating with ARNHA in the program.

Ron Suter, County Parks Director, will be a featured speaker. Others are Larry Kaplan, Los Angeles area director of the Trust for Public Land, an expert in land conservation finance, and Jerry Meral, former deputy director of the state

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Department of Water Resources and former director of the Planning and Conservation League.

“We want to review where we’ve been, where we are and where we’re going with funding this community treasure,” Baygell said. “The focus will be on the status quo and alternative funding options.”

Suter, who is retiring in August, and other speakers are expected to review a recently released update of a 2000 financial needs study prepared by the Dangermond Group, Sacramento consultants, for a citizens group and County Parks.

The report says budget reductions stemming from the state Proposition 13 property tax cuts and ups and down in the California economy “left the County of Sacramento Department of Regional Parks without adequate funding for ongoing maintenance and operations with the result that facilities became outdated or fell into disrepair.”

The consultants suggested two primary alternatives that can provide ad-

equate and reliable funding and that it said appear to be supported by County residents.

“The first is a county-wide special benefit assessment district with earmarked funding exclusively for the Parkway. This requires a 50 percent weighted vote by property owners. The second alternative is a 1/8th cent sales tax increase which is estimated to bring in over \$26 million annually county-wide to be shared among County Parks, the cities and the special park and recreation districts.

It would be utilized for the entire County Park system, including the American River Parkway, as well as all the cities and special park and recreation districts within the county. This would require a two-thirds majority vote.”

The report emphasized the importance of exploring with “appropriate agencies in the County their support and willingness to participate” in any new funding initiative. ■

Parkway Hearings Critical

Those who want to see the American River Parkway preserved as untrammelled open space should make their feelings known this summer and fall as the final draft of the updated Parkway Plan is presented to community councils, various hearing bodies and boards, city councils, and the County Board of Supervisors.

After these public hearings, the plan, last updated in 1985, will undergo environmental review and then go through the formal adoption processes of the various local governments and agencies involved. The last step will be adoption by the State Legislature.

The entire process should be finished by the end of 2007 or early in 2008, according to Sunny Williams of the County Parks Department, manager of the parkway plan project.

A citizens advisory committee has debated many recommendations since last year. ARNHA’s representative, Past President Lou Heinrich, has said only a few members of the committee were environmentally-oriented and expressed concern that pressure for intrusive recreational activities such as allowing dogs to run off-leash would receive final approval.

“This approach,” he said, “ignores the long-established principle that the primary purpose of the Parkway is to preserve and protect it as a natural area, with other uses permitted only when compatible with this primary purpose.”

The final version of the committee’s recommendations was expected to be available this summer. Check www.arnha.org for any developments. ■

Hummers, from page 1

Darrah Creek, in Tehama and Shasta Counties, is the home of Darrah Springs State Fish Hatchery. There are

twelve residences there.

When I lived there, several of the twelve residences had feeders out for the many hummingbirds there. Three homes had two, one-quart feeders out, and all of them were continuously visited by birds.

These two quarts of feed had to be refilled every day or so! Males took a liking to these feeders and tried to claim them as their own. They would “guard” these feeders and would try to keep all other birds away by displaying their plumage and “buzzing” at the other birds. They couldn’t, of course, keep the feeder as their own. Often, so many birds crowded around these feeders that some hummingbirds could be coaxed to perch on a finger next to the feeder.

Authorities disagree on whether to use a red-dyed hummingbird food or uncolored sugar water. Some say red dye attracts the birds, while others say a clear sugar solution is fine as long as the feeder itself has a little red color on it. Most authorities recommend a solution of four parts boiled and cooled water to one part of household sugar. There are commercial mixes available at grocery, pet and birding stores.

Some debate whether to leave a feeder up through the winter. Most ref-

erences state that the Anna’s is resident year-around. The winters here are not too severe for them, so leaving the feeder up won’t entice

them.

They’re planning to stay on anyway. The other species probably react to the shorter days in the fall and instinctively move on. When our local species start nesting in the spring they take a lot of insects, and when the young are hatched they are also fed insects. So activity at your feeder might be low in the early spring. After a bit, they switch to feed on more nectar, so your feeder would be more attractive in the summer.

Hummers will use soft materials to line their tiny nests. For the last two years, I have seen a hummer pulling cat-tails apart to get at the fluffy seeds to use as a nest liner. They make a very small cup nest in a bush or tree and lay two eggs per clutch, with a second clutch after the first. Incubation is about three weeks; the altricial (poorly developed) young take about three more weeks to fledge (have the ability to fly). The female will stay with them another couple of weeks. Males don’t sit on the eggs or feed the young in most species.

With their rapid wing beats of 50 times a second, buzzing flight and rapid movements, the beautifully attired hummingbirds are quite a wondrous sight along our creeks and in our backyards.

Ed Littrell is a retired State Fish and Game biologist and current member of the ARNHA Associate Board of Directors. ■

ARNHA is saddened by the passing of Shirley Merrick, board member since 2000. Shirley worked tirelessly as ARNHA coordinator of the annual Salmon Festival and as insurance consultant, among her many contributions.

Welcome New Members

Veronika Anysenko
Cole Bakken
The Berry Family
The Bischel Family
The Boesen Family
The Bosley Family
The Breisbach Family
The Buchmiller Family
Kelly Cohen
The Concklin Family
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Abbioe Scrivner
Taylor Skala
The Stassi Family
The Taggart Family
Finlay Thomson
Linda Titherington
The Treiterer Family
The Walker Family
The Waraas Family
The Watley Family
The Weichert Family
The Willey Family
The Wilson Family
The Zeller Family



Sunrise in Fog (color)



Turkeys in Morning Light (color)



Turkeys on the Move (color)

Photographer and Gallery Donate to ARNHA

World-renowned photographer Lewis Kemper and Appel Gallery are donating a total of 20% of the profits from their new show to ARNHA for support of EYNC. Entitled “In our Backyard – Images of Effie Yeaw Nature Center,” the photography show will be held at Appel Gallery, 931 T Street in Sacramento. An opening reception at the gallery will be held on the Second Saturday, August 12, from 5-9 PM and a closing reception will be held on the Second Saturday, September 9, from 5-9 PM. Regular gallery hours and days are Thursdays through Sundays from 1:00 to 6:00 PM., other days and times by appointment. Telephone: 916-442-6014. Web page: www.appelgallery.com.

The exhibition will feature approximately 25 images, mostly in the 16 x 20 size for exhibit, along with a multimedia slide show that will be continuously running, on Kemper’s Canon digital projector, showing hundreds of images taken over the past two years.

Kemper says, “The Center offers a unique beauty. I’ve traveled from the arctic to the tropics, and these images taken at the Center are some of my favorites.”

Lewis Kemper has been photographing the natural beauty of North America and its parklands for over 27 years. He is one of 60 photographers sponsored by Canon’s Explorer of Light program. His work has been exhibited and published in magazines, books, and calendars worldwide.

He is the author of *The Yosemite Photographer’s Handbook* and *The Yellowstone Photographer’s Handbook* and is the photographer for *Ancient Ancestors of the Southwest*, published by Graphic Arts Center Publishing.

His photographs appear in many private collections as well as in the permanent collection of the Baltimore Museum of Art and Kaiser Permanente. His work has been shown nationally in galleries and museums such as The Cornell Museum, The Frederick S. Wight Gallery, The Baltimore Museum of Art, The Princeton Gallery of Fine Art, The Popular Photography Gallery, The Ansel Adams Gallery, Photographer’s Gallery and the Yosemite Valley Visitor Center.

Lewis is a contributing editor to *Outdoor Photographer* and *PC Photo*, where his column “Outside/Inside” appears. ■

ARNHA Donors Make the Difference

- JaNahn Scalapino Family - donation to support of the Effie Yeaw Nature Center
- Philip & Deborah Brune - donation in honor of volunteer Irene Liong Brune
- Leif & Linda Flak – a bag of abalone shells for use in the Maidu Cultural Heritage Programs
- Vicki Behringer - donation to ARNHA for the support of the Effie Yeaw Nature Center
- Carmela Ruby - donation to ARNHA for the support of the Effie Yeaw Nature Center
- Jon Beck family - donation to ARNHA for the support of the Effie Yeaw Nature Center
- Lewis Kemper – an Epson professional 24” color printer and cartridges
- Bruce & Peggy Kennedy - donation in memory of Berniece Yagadich

- The Sacramento Bee - \$2,500 awarded to ARNHA for the Effie Yeaw Nature Center to develop a new summer program for groups. The “American River Aquatic Adventures Program” will be conducted at Goethe County Park and will be marketed to year-round schools and to day camp programs run by local park districts, the YMCA, childcare facilities, church groups etc.
- KPMG LLP - in honor of EYNC staff member Irene Liong for winning the Chairman’s Award as an outstanding employee and community volunteer
- Hilda Sadigh - to ARNHA in support of the Effie Yeaw Nature Center
- Breathe California of Sacramento-Emigrant Trails

- Pamela Elmore - for support of the Effie Yeaw Nature Center
- William & Elaine Brickford - for support of the Effie Yeaw Nature Center
- Michael Turner
- Edie Lehman of the Loomis Basic Equestrian Center – a box of used horseshoes for the Gibson Ranch Living History Program
- Elkhorn Bait & Tackle – crickets, night crawlers and wax worms for animal food
- Christian & Louis Kaufman & Family - in honor of Trey Mahla’s birthday
- Isaiah Anyimi & Family - in honor of Trey Mahla’s birthday

see *Donors*, page 8

Jack Hiele Named Outstanding Volunteer of the Year for Parks and Recreation Department

When it comes to a command of the world around the Effie Yeaw Nature Center and its plants, animals and birds, it would be hard to equal Jack Hiehle's knowledge — or his energy. Now the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors has recognized the fact, naming him Outstanding Volunteer of the Year for the Parks and Recreation Department.

The board singled out Hiehle on April 18 and presented him with a resolution in thanks for 21 years and 3,600 hours as a volunteer resource ecologist and environmental educator at Effie Yeaw. Among other things, he has coordinated the birding tours at ARNHA's popular "Bird and Breakfast" fundraiser for years.

"Jack does it all," said Marilee Flannery, Nature Center Director. "He can lead a fascinating tour, find that hidden bird no one else knows is right there in a tree. And then he's in there pulling the non-native plants and protecting the young oak trees from the deer."

Hiehle, 85, a retired biologist with

Jack Hiele always smiles while he works!

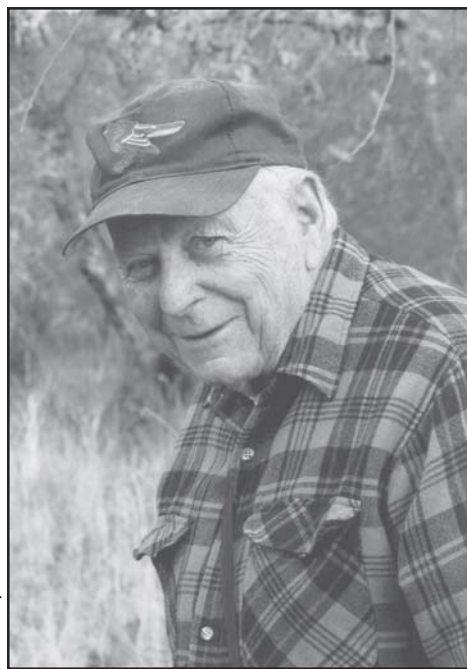


photo by Linda Thomas

the state departments of Fish and Game and Parks and Recreation, leads plenty of tours, but the big job facing volunteers these days is the non-native plant species, he says.

"We've pulled 17,000 French broom and Spanish broom plants since 1988,

and there's pampas grass and water hyacinth," he said. "Right now it's red sesbania, and the Weed Warriors are doing a heck of a job on that. You can get ahead of non-natives with a lot of work." ■

—by Walt Wiley

PAGES FROM THE ALMANAC



PARTNERS

An ever-moving black fragment swoops and darts, silhouetted against the blue sky over Folsom Lake. Suddenly it alights on the glowing, orange head of a western wallflower to sip nectar and carry pollen to another plant to create the seed that will grow into yet another plant. You see that the butterfly's wings are not black at all but an iridescent blue-green with orange spots.

It's the pipevine swallowtail butterfly, a prime example of how an insect's life cycle can interlock with that of a plant. For this beautiful swallowtail has established a partnership with another interesting northern California native, the Dutchman's Pipe. This vine spreads 5 to 10 feet along the ground and up and around a tree and shrub. And it boasts a spectacular blossom, curved to resemble a Dutchman's pipe.

Spring has been a little late this year and many wildflowers are behind their customary blooming period. But not the Dutchman's pipe, whose blossoms started appearing in March. The pipevine swallowtail will select this plant on which to lay its eggs from May through July. Then comes the marvelous metamorphosis to larva, or caterpillar, then pupa and finally adult butterfly. The tender leaves and stem pods of the vine provide breakfast, lunch and dinner for the hungry black caterpillars with orange spots.

Our valley's warm summer months hurry the pipevine swallowtail through two or three life cycles. It's a short life but a merry one for this fluttering jewel and we should hope that nothing threatens the Dutchman's pipe, the butterfly world's perfect host.

Reprinted from ARNHA's "An American River Almanac: Reflections on nature throughout the year," with essays by Peter J. Hayes and color photographs by Tom Myers and George Turner. It can be purchased for \$19.95 at the Effie Yeaw Nature Center and selected book stores.

American River Natural History Association

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ARNHA Calendar of Events

- **Summer Fun Days**
June 12 -August 18
- **Ancil Hoffman Park Clean Up**
July 8 (8-10 am) Story below
- **FORUM: Parkway Funding**
July 13 (7 pm) Story on page 1
- **Labor Day Community Outreach**
September 3 – Monday (ARPF)
- **Great American River Clean-Up**
September 16 – Saturday (ARPF)

Donors, continued

- **Trey Mahla & Family** - \$50 in honor of Trey Mahla's birthday
- **Doug Bush and his 3rd grade class** at Silva Valley Elementary School - a bag of Abalone shells for the EYNC's Maidu Cultural Heritage Program
- **Jennifer Kerr** - five Abalone shells to help with the EYNC's Maidu Cultural Heritage Program
- **Stephen & Jean Kashiwada** - six Abalone shells to help with the EYNC's Maidu Cultural Heritage Program
- **Harry Kashiwada** - 40 Abalone shells to help with the EYNC's Maidu Cultural Heritage Program
- **Deborah Moskovitz** - \$100 donation to ARNHA to support the EYNC
- **Stephanie Wiman** - a kit for studying astronomy called "The Sky at Night, Your Guide to the Heavens" to help with the Fun Days programs
- **Daniel Hulholland** - \$30 donation to ARNHA to support the EYNC
- **Kathleen Kinney & Steve Sherman** - \$15 donation to ARNHA to support the EYNC
- **California Native Plant Society** -16 slide carousel trays containing wildflower photos taken by Mr. LaDou, for use in exhibits and programs ■

July 8 – Join in the American River Clean-Up

Somebody told me once that leaving trash on the American River Parkway is like painting a moustache on the Mona Lisa! Well, ARNHA is proud to join with dozens of other community groups in the ongoing campaign to get rid of trash, junk, and debris that despoil our magnificent Parkway. We have joined the Adopt-a-Mile Clean Up program sponsored by the American River Parkway Foundation—and we need you!

On Saturday, July 8, beginning at 8 a.m., we will set out from the picnic area across the parking lot from the Ancil Hoffman Golf Course Clubhouse to mount a "Big Clean Up" following the Fourth of July celebrations in the park and on the river. Our assignment is Mile 16 of the Parkway, including the picnic area, beach, both sides of the road leading to the California Avenue entrance, parking lots, the Game Field next to the Entry Kiosk and the Horse Trail around the perimeter of the park. Park staff will take care of the golf course and California Conservation Corps members will spruce up the Effie Yeaw Nature Area.

We will provide trash bags, but recommend that participants bring work gloves and wear closed shoes, long sleeved shirts and long-sleeved pants, hat and bring water, sun screen and mosquito repellent. If we get enough volunteers, we should finish the job by 10 a.m.

Please let me know at phayes99@aol.com or (916) 485-4005 if you can make it. If I hear back soon enough I will mail you a one-day parking pass for the work day.

Join, renew or up-grade your ARNHA membership online using your credit card—it's quick and easy at www.arnha.org.