

CREEK WEEK – Arcade Creek, Brooktree Creek and Chicken Ranch Slough are only a few of many Sacramento area waterways that volunteers of all ages will improve and enhance by collecting and removing debris and invasive exotic plants during Creek Week 2006 activities April 21-28. The creeks are especially important to the health of the local environment since they eventually flow into the Sacramento and American rivers.

Participants in the 16th annual event, sponsored by the Urban Creeks Council, can also learn about the benefits afforded by local creeks and aquatic life in at least 14 activities. For instance, Effie Yeaw Nature Center naturalists will describe the plants and wildlife in a walk along Carmichael Creek on April 22, and tell why water striders, backswimmers and diving beetles are so important to the health of a creek on April 29.

For a full schedule of activities, visit www.sacto-ucc.org/cw05/.

Swainson's Hawk at ARNHA Forum – With strong wings, hooked bill and sharp talons, the Swainson's Hawk is a formidable bird of prey. But because historically much of its foraging wetlands have been drained for farming and other uses, the California Department of Fish and Game has declared it threatened. As a result, it is often the center of habitat vs. development controversies in the Natomas and Elk Grove areas.

Biologist Mike Bradbury, a member of the local Swainson's Hawk Technical Advisory Committee, presented an overview of the long distance flyers to an ARNHA public forum Dec. 6. Between 700 and 1,000 breeding pairs live in California, an estimated 10 percent of the historic population. Most are found in Sacramento, San Joaquin and Yolo counties. The majority winter in western Mexico as well as in Colombia and as far as northern Argentina.

The biologist believes survival of the hawk and other animal species can be important indicators of potential threats to environmental health, such as by pesticides.

Fair Oaks Bluff Update – County Parks Director Ron Suter says the oak-studded Fair Oaks Bluff will continue to be protected in its natural state once it is formally added to the American River Parkway following a successful fund drive to buy the 4.5-acre promontory. Situated 140 feet above the river, the bluffs offer panoramic views of the Sierra to the east and Mt. Diablo to the west.

Victory came after a seven-year fund drive spearheaded by Citizens to Save the Bluffs raised \$1,279,000 from the state, county, Fair Oaks Park District, foundations and 1,484 "Stepping Stone," "Heritage Oak," and other individual donors from 25 communities. The grassroots group also is raising funds for a Donor Recognition Plaza at the site at the foot of Bridge Street near the bike trail on the historic footbridge in old Fair Oaks Village. Call Tracy Martin Shearer, at (916) 961-1729 or Marty Maskall, (916) 967-2742 for information.

Suter said the bluffs would be incorporated into the parkway following adoption of a Parkway Plan update, expected in May or June. Meanwhile he urged visitors to the site to exercise caution making their way up the trail to the top. "People should understand that it is a bluff," he said. "There are safety issues and they should be diligent."

Visitors to www.savethebluffs.org were invited to welcome the Moonrise at the Bluffs from the nearby Fair Oaks Footbridge once a month. A 2006 schedule listed the next Full Moon at 8:10 p.m., PDT, Thursday, April 13. "It's a beautiful place and a beautiful sight," according to the website. "When the mood strikes, some sing moon songs. Bring hors d'oeuvres, libation, and friendly conversation."

Parkway Public Opinion Survey – The draft report of a new public opinion survey of uses of the American River Parkway showed that nearly half of the respondents believe the purpose of the parkway is for fish and animal habitat and for "a place for enjoying scenery and nature." About a third selected "recreation" as the most important purpose and 6.7 percent picked flood protection.

The survey, funded by ARNHA, was made by the California State University, Sacramento, Institute for Social Research. Telephone interviews were conducted with 714 residents in an area surrounding the parkway in August, 2005. Margin of error was plus or minus 3.7 percent. Extrapolating from the sampling, the surveyors estimated that 732,169 people from the sampling area visited the parkway over the past 12 months.

"These visitors can be estimated to account for over 17 million separate visits to the Parkway over a year's time," they said.

The most popular event in terms of attendance was the Salmon Festival, which ARNHA co-sponsors with the state Department of Fish and Game and others. Most popular activities in order were walking for fun and fitness, bicycling, swimming, and kayaking, canoeing or rafting.



Hey, look at our new website now! – With primary goals of attracting new members and of marketing American River Natural History Association publications, www.ARNHA.org has undergone a major makeover.

The months-long project, shepherded by ARNHA webmaster Georgia Jones with the professional expertise of Ms. Marty Maskall of Attitude Works Web Design, brings exciting new features and a streamlined look to our site. There you'll find many of the stunning nature pictures from our previous site, along with new pictures that enhance our look. Visit the website where you can:

- Rediscover ARNHA's mission, the reason you joined in the first place.
- Browse through descriptions and excerpts of ARNHA's outstanding publications on local natural and human history.
- For the first time, use your credit card to order publications; or purchase with our order form.
- Use your credit card to renew or upgrade your ARNHA membership; or send a link of our website to friends to invite them to join online.
- Download the colorful Member Benefits Flyer featuring generous new gifts, including one-of-a-kind adventures for higher-level memberships.
- Plan nature activities at Effie Yeaw Nature Center and elsewhere on our Events page and the Parkway Events Calendar.
- Download the December 2005 American River Parkway Wildlife Count results.
- Find articles you want to read again—download recent issues of the Acorn from our membership page.

We plan to use our website to alert members of fast-breaking developments that threaten the health of our precious parkway and the nature center, such as budget crises requiring quick citizen action. You can help. We can e-mail calls to action and provide advance notification of sign-up privileges for special events at Effie Yeaw Nature Center children's camps. **Please send us your E-mail address, using "contact the Webmaster" link on our Welcome page.**

72 **Wildlife Count** – On a cold, crisp December 3rd, on foot and in canoes, 46 observers recorded 103 bird species, 12 mammals species and four other animals in the American River Natural History Association's 21st annual Wildlife Count. The purpose of the event is to check on wildlife trends on the 4,600-acre parkway, such as the steady movement of Wild Turkeys downstream from the foothills into the parkway.

14 For only the second time in the history of the count, observers spotted a Lewis's Woodpecker and Ross's Goose during the census according to Jack Hiehle, retired state wildlife biologist who once again coordinated the event.

46 The observers, mostly Sacramento Audubon Society members, reported 72 deer, 14 Ground Squirrels, 46 Gray Squirrels, 126 Fox Squirrels, 5 Coyotes, 2 River Otters, 10 Black-tailed Hares, (jackrabbits), 2 Cotton tail Rabbits, 2 Beaver (plus some heard within a beaver lodge), a Striped Skunk, and 8 house cats. The skunk and rat were firsts in the 13 years that non-bird species have been counted.

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