

The American River Natural History Association

ACORN

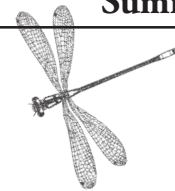


Number 128

www.arnha.org

Summer 2004

Dragons and Damsels Along the American River



By Tim Manolis

Everyone knows what a dragonfly is. A stick figure of one drawn in the dirt — long, straight line for the body, two big circles for eyes, and four long wings — will almost certainly be recognized by folks anywhere in the world.

Not only are dragonflies distinctive and unique, they are large, colorful, active, and totally harmless — at least to humans. Both the aquatic larvae, also called nymphs or naiads, and the flying adults are voracious predators of insects and other small organisms (large larvae will even eat small fish and tadpoles). These striking creatures are eminently watchable creatures, but be careful — watching dragonflies can become addictive!

The insect order Odonata includes what we in North America call the dragonflies (suborder Anisoptera) and damselflies (suborder Zygoptera). Damselfly species in general (but not always) are smaller and more slender and delicate than most “true” dragonfly species, and they typically (but again, not always) rest with the wings pressed together over the abdomen, rather than spread out to the sides as in the “true” dragonflies. But the structural similarities of the two groups outnumber their differences and in many parts of the world they are all simply called dragonflies.

Dragonfly larvae have a unique feeding structure — a hinged lower jaw

armed with projecting hooks, teeth and spines at its tip, that can be projected outward with blinding speed to capture prey. Larvae of “true” dragonflies have rectal gills and the ability to “jet” along by propelling water out their tail ends. Damselfly larvae have three external, fin-like gills that they can use to “fish tail” their way through water. Larval life spans vary from a few weeks in those species that live in vernal pools to a few

years for larger species that grow slowly in high mountain lakes. The final larval stage climbs up out of the water onto shore or vegetation nearby, its skin splits along the top, and the fragile new adult, called a teneral, emerges. This is a vulnerable time in a dragonfly’s life, because the soft teneral is easy pickings for birds and other predators until it is able to harden-up and fly.

see Dragonflies, page 3

AMERICAN RIVER PARKWAY FUNDING

By Peter J. Hayes

There’s a new kid on the block in the campaign to safeguard the integrity of the American River Parkway.

The American River Parkway Coalition, made up of representatives of ARNHA, the Save the American River Association (SARA) and the American River Parkway Foundation (ARPF), has set its sights on achieving stable, long-term funding that would end repeated perils-of-pauline budget crises that beset the priceless resource.

The coalition was formed last spring to rally opposition to plans for 20 percent revenue cuts in the County Parks Department budget that threatened to slash Effie Yeaw Nature Center open hours, parkway maintenance, and ranger patrols. The threat largely eased — temporarily — last May when county officials came up with one-time funding from the sale of land and other sources that reduced the anticipated 2004-05 parkway shortfall from \$4.2 million to \$665,000.

County Parks Director Ron Suter heaped praise on the big turnout of parkway supporters — alerted by coalition e-mails and phone calls — at the crucial May 13 Board meeting at which supervisors left the new parks budget intact.

see Coalition, page 2

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The ACORN is published quarterly by
ARNHA, a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization

"Coalition" from page one

But parkway supporters weren't cheering yet because Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's revised 2004-05 state budget included major cuts to counties, among others. If those cuts remained in the final version of the spending plan when adopted this summer, they could impose renewed pain for the budget of Sacramento County, including the parks department.

Meanwhile, the new parkway steering committee was staying in business, seeking to enlist support from affinity organizations such as cycling and nature groups in efforts to expand its clout with the county Board of Supervisors. ARNHA Board member Pam Maybury, a member of the coalition, estimated that such groups represent 20,000 to 30,000 local residents.

"Our three organizations have a distinct user overview and fiscally responsible history of advocating for the parkway," Pam said. "We want to end up with a large enough voter base to be able to tell the supervisors, 'don't put us at the bottom of the food chain.' We want them to know we are a powerful organization of people who love the parkway and want to fight for it."

While focusing on the need for assured, long-term funding of the parkway, the coalition was closely studying a suggested Sacramento Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce proposal to create a separate parks authority that would fund parks in Sacramento, Yolo, El Dorado and Placer counties. Funding would come from benefit assessments on property owners if they approved a proposed district on a simple majority vote.

Other coalition members are ARNHA's immediate past president, Lou Heinrich; President Alan Wade and Betsy Weiland of SARA, and President Bjorn Gregersen, Warren Truitt and Executive Director Anne Marie Vincent of ARPF.

— Peter J. Hayes is ARNHA Vice President — Publications



BIRD & Breakfast

The annual ARNHA Bird & Breakfast fundraiser at the Effie Yeaw Nature Center March 13 raised \$2,105 from the 77 participants. Jack Hiehle, who has coordinated the event for 11 years, said 58 bird species were recorded as volunteer Sacramento Audubon Society trip leaders escorted participants through the nature area in Ancil Hoffman County Park.

Numerous Anna's Hummingbird, Bushtit and Oak Titmouse nests were observed, along with mating Wild Turkeys and White-tailed Kites. Other bird highlights: Marsh Wren, Savannah Sparrow, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Hutton's Vireo, Red-breasted Sapsucker, and White-throated Sparrow. Also seen were several Western Pond Turtles and a beautiful Pipevine Swallowtail butterfly emerging from its chrysalis.



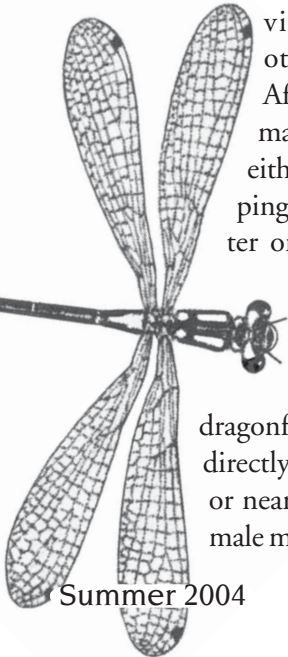
“Dragonflies,” from page one

Adults live relatively short lives, from a few weeks to a few months. They spend the first few days or weeks feeding, often far from water, and maturing. Some dragonflies “hawk” for flying insects in the manner of swifts or swallows. Other sally out after prey from a perch, like flycatchers do. Many damselflies feed like hummingbirds and kinglets by hovering and gleaning insects from vegetation.

When fully mature, males go to breeding sites to wait and watch for females, which they aggressively pursue with almost comical intensity. Mature males are often strikingly patterned in black and white, or brightly colored in blue or red, an indication to females and other males of their breeding status. Mature females are often duller and cryptically patterned.

The mating behavior and structures of dragonflies are unique among insects. Males have claspers at the tips of their abdomens with which they grasp females (behind the head in “true” dragonflies and on the foreparts of the thorax in damselflies). The captured female curls her abdomen forward to attach to mating structures at the base of the underside of the male’s abdomen, to form a closed loop (called the “wheel” position). The complex male mating structures are used not only to inseminate females but to remove any sperm from previous mating with other males, as well!

After mating, the female deposits her eggs, either by simply dropping them into the water or on the surface of drying pond beds in some species, or, in the case of damselflies and some dragonflies, inserting them directly into vegetation in or near the water. The female may lay her eggs alone



Summer 2004

DRAGONFLIES PUBLIC FORUM ON JULY 27

Tim Manolis, author and illustrator of the article on dragonflies in this issue of the ACORN will give a video presentation at an ARNHA public forum at 7 p.m. Tuesday, July 27 in the Effie Yeaw Nature Center Assembly building.

Tim, who has been a longtime member of ARNHA and the Sacramento Audubon Society, is the author and illustrator of the newly-published “Dragonflies and Damselflies of California” in the Natural History Guides Series of the University of California Press. The nature center gift shop will make the book available at the meeting for purchase and signing by the author.

Tim is a free lance author, artist and biological consultant, and has a Ph.D. in Biology from the University of Colorado. He is currently working on the illustrations for another book in the same UC Press series, “Butterflies of the San Francisco Bay Region and the Sacramento Valley, to be authored by Arthur Shapiro of UC Davis.

or guarded by the male. In some species males guard laying females by remaining attached to them, while in others they may hover nearby to chase off other males.

The American River Parkway is an excellent place to watch dragonflies. Dragonfly nymphs of different species often live in different habitats including small temporary pools, deep ponds, backwater lagoons, small creeks, and the swift, rocky rapids and quiet, muddy or sandy pools of larger creeks and rivers. The wide variety of these habitats found along the Parkway allow it to support a rich and diverse dragonfly fauna.

The first person to survey the American River for dragonflies was Clarence Kennedy in July 1915. Kennedy’s vivid accounts of this and other trips he made through the Pacific states are considered classics of the North American dragonfly literature to this day, and his descriptions of Sacramento and the American River make for fascinating reading. Of a common local dragonfly, the Blue-eyed Darner (*Rhionaeschna multicolor*), he wrote, “This species was observed catching insects on the market street of the city at twilight. They flew among the wagons and buggies entirely indifferent to the numerous passers-by.”

Are the dragonflies that Kennedy observed along the American River still present today? He listed 16 species, and

I am happy to report that all still occur along the Parkway today. In addition, there are a number of species which Kennedy failed to find along the river or any of the other sites he surveyed in the Sacramento Valley, but which today are among the most common summertime species in the region. It seems unlikely that he would have missed them, and indeed the historical evidence suggests that the ranges of these species have expanded northward in the Pacific States in the last 100 years.

Perhaps something like global warming is at work here, but it is also worth mentioning that these species (Familiar Bluet, *Enallagma civile*; Widow Skimmer, *Libellula luctuosa*; and Spot-winged and Wandering gliders, *Pantala hymenaea* and *Pantala flavescens*) are frequently associated with bodies of water created or modified by humans, including drainage ditches, artificial ponds and rice fields.

In any event, of the 51 species of dragonflies and damselflies that are known to occur in Sacramento County, at least 41 species have been found along the American River Parkway so far, and others may yet be found. I urge you to look for these eye-catching inhabitants of the Parkway trails on your hikes, because many interesting discoveries about them are yet to be made.



Cycling at the ARNHA Forum



Today's cycling enthusiasts who are pushing for a network of bicycle paths to make cycling a viable alternative form of transportation in the Sacramento area might look to the exploits of such early day biking heroes as "High-Bike Louie" Breuner.

Breuner, a member of the prominent

Sacramento furniture retailer family, was in the vanguard of 19th century cyclists who made up one of the most powerful political forces in the city, Jim Henley, manager of the Sacramento Archives and Collection Center, told an ARNHA members forum May 4.

"By 1887 bicycles were present in

numbers that caused the organization of clubs such as the Capitol City Wheelmen," Henley said. "The club promoted clean streets, modern pavements such as asphalt and development of new paved paths just for bicycles. They coordinated with other groups and by the end of the 19th century they achieved much of their agenda."

Henley brought an interesting collection of vintage photographs, drawings, and newspaper articles to the forum in the new Effie Yeaw Nature Center Assembly Building. He also displayed from the city's collection a little bicycle, believed made in about 1872, that was found in 1969 in the loft of a Grass Valley foundry that was being torn down. It is made of wrought iron and has wood wheels and iron rims.

Louie Breuner, a leader of the Capitol City Wheelmen, rode a "high bike," or "Boneshaker," with cranks and pedals on the front wheel. It had a front wheel of 60 inches diameter and a rear wheel of about 16 inches.

"Great speed could be obtained on the high bike but a small rock or twig in the path could cause the rider to take a nasty header," Henley said.

Between 1876 and 1894, the "safety" bike with sprocket, chain and equal-sized wheels evolved.

In the late 1890s, the Capitol City Wheelmen promoted and helped pay for a bicycle cinder path, called the Capitol City Wheelway, from 31st and J streets in Sacramento to Folsom. A speed record for the route was one hour and two minutes before farmers found that the path was superior to the county roads and made it unfit for cyclists.

But initially, the path was so popular, it promoted new wheelways from Sacramento to Stockton and Sacramento to Galt.



PAGES FROM THE ALMANAC

State Bird

A friend reports seeing a pair of California quail shepherding six offspring across a street off busy Eastern Avenue. The family made it safely across the street, but there's no telling how they fared thereafter. Since a normal brood numbers 13 to 17, those six were apparently the lucky survivors.

Whether these quail grow up will depend on whether their striped and downy coloring escapes the eyes of predators, as nature intends. If no cover is available, baby quail do have a last resort — the trick of "freezing" so they blend into natural surroundings like spotted fawns in the woods.

This species, *Callipepla californica*, California's state bird, is a personal favorite because it sometimes raises its family out where people can see them, in suburbs and parks. As summer progresses, several families may join forces in a covey that moves like a company of camouflaged troops through the underbrush as members forage for seeds and insects.

The adults, gray-brown with white trim, also know something about protective coloration. And there's no mistaking the California quail with its bobbing topknot, shaped like a large, black comma. Or is it an apostrophe?

The parents gather their scattered flock with a rapid clicking call that sounds like a series of "giddy-up" signals to a horse. In a few months the young will be able to fly up into trees to avoid some of their predators. But with their short, round wings and long legs, they spend more time on the ground like their cousins, barnyard chickens. Their call is a loud *chi ca' go*.

At one time, California quail were one of the most common birds in the state, but unlimited bags by market hunters drastically reduced their numbers. They've made a comeback since before the beginning of the 20th century, thanks to clearly defined hunting seasons and bag limits. So that's something to be thankful for — that our state bird has not gone the way of the passenger pigeon.

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 for \$24.95 (less 10 percent for ARNHA members), at the Effie Yeaw Nature Center and selected bookstores.

A Glimpse of the Geology of the American River

by Dick and Kristin Hilton • Sierra College

THE AMERICAN RIVER flows through some of the most interesting geology in the world. Its headwaters begin in granitic rocks which, on the American River, outcrop sporadically all the way from the Sierra crest to the base of the foothills at Folsom. These rocks form the core of the Sierra and represent the internal underpinnings of a previous mountain range that once bordered the eastern Pacific Ocean when dinosaurs roamed the earth.

This Mesozoic mountain range stretched from the tip of South America to Alaska and its modern remnants include the Cascades and the Andes. Back when dinosaurs roamed the planet (including the Sierra) the granite was intruding into the heart of the range in the form of masses of liquid magma miles below the surface. Here it cooled slowly and grew large crystals of quartz, feldspars and micas. Some of this water-rich magma, however, escaped in violent volcanic eruptions from mountains rivaling Mt. Shasta and Mt. Saint Helen's that were perched on the range much like the Andean volcanoes of today.

Dick Hilton currently teaches geology and paleontology at Sierra College and is also a paleontological consultant. He is chairman of the Sierra College Natural History Museum and a board member of the California State University, Chico, Geoscience Board and The Northern California Natural History Museum. He has published numerous scientific articles in the field of vertebrate paleontology and is the author of "Dinosaurs and Other Mesozoic Reptiles of California," published recently by the University of California Press. Dick and his wife, Kristin, have led numerous natural history trips to South America, the Galapagos Islands, Africa and Alaska. Kristin was curator of birds at the Phoenix Zoo and currently works as a biology lab technician at Sierra College. She has a Bachelor's Degree in horticulture while Dick has a Bachelor's Degree in geology and a Master's Degree in earth science..

The hot fluids from these magmas also melted quartz, and when these fluids passed through sulfide-rich rocks on their way upward they sometimes leached gold from them. When these fluids cooled in the cracks away from the heat of the magma the gold and the quartz crystallized separately but as a single mass. This became the Mother Lode, the source of most of the gold in the Sierra. It was the same gold that, as the mountains weathered and eroded, became concentrated in the river bottoms; the same gold that Marshall found at Coloma; and the same gold that changed the west forever.

The liquid granite intruded older rocks, some of them approaching a half billion years in age. But they ranged from this ancient age to as young as about 100 million. These rocks were ocean floor basalts that had been heated and pressed so that the black minerals metamorphosed to green minerals and changed the rock from basalt to the one we know as greenstone. This is the rock that Auburn and El Dorado Hills sit on, and is the same rock that forms many of the ridges in the Mother Lode country. Often sea floor muds rested on these rocks, and they were heated and pressed into the slates and phyllites that we see outcropping along the river when we do our rafting of the three forks. Sometimes we even see limestone like at the quarry at Cool. These limestones represent coral reefs that once surrounded islands even before the dinosaurs roamed the earth.

Occasionally we find the fossil ghosts of sea lilies, urchins, mollusks, and corals in the slates and limestones.

So the older rocks of the Sierra have a long and complicated story, involving drifting ocean basins, island arcs and continents - far too complex to explain here. But part of the story represents violent earthquakes and those earthquakes continue to this day. The foothills are riddled with faults and many are still active, leaving our brick and stone buildings at risk and posing grave danger to those who live and work in their con-

continued next page

fines. These active faults halted the Auburn Dam. The lakes behind existing dams pose a hazard of triggering earthquakes that may topple our stone and brick buildings that are our Gold Rush era heritage.

Over time, the original ancestral Sierra eroded down to a flat rolling plain. The remnant of that plain is where I-80 and 50 slowly ramp their way up the Sierra. The incline is because that original plain has been breaking in the Tahoe

area and the whole range tilting to the northwest. While Tahoe falls and fills, the Sierra tilts along a set of faults more risky

than even those of the Mother Lode faults on the east side of the range that may trigger landslides and monster waves in Tahoe; and faults that may play havoc with the stone and brick of Reno.

Cut into this ever-tilting plain are the canyons of the American River. As the Sierra rises it intercepts the rain that once fell in Nevada. It traps the moisture that falls as snow and heavy rain. Four times as much rain falls in the mid-Sierra as falls on the valley floor. And the water flows and cuts through the rock. Deep V-shaped canyons are etched by river erosion at low elevations and wide U-shaped canyons cut by glaciers are at higher ones. But, at lower elevations where the river hits the flatness of the valley the sediments it carries spread out during floods and are deposited.

Older sediments can be seen in the bluffs between Folsom and Fair Oaks. Here we have rounded rocks and sands, some of which were deposited 10 million years ago. Beneath these one can find the dinosaur-age sediments that eroded off the original Sierra, 70 million years ago. They are full of sharks' teeth and seashells and even the occasional

turtle or mosasaur (giant sea-going lizards) bone. Pat Antuzzi, a local fireman, even found a bone from a carnivorous dinosaur whose carcass floated to the sea in one of the ancestral rivers.

Farther downstream, the American River occasionally floods the Sacramento Valley. Yes, even in modern time, the entire Valley can flood end-to-end, side-to-side. It last happened in 1862 when the foothills received over 110 inches of rain by mid-January (read William Brewer's account in "Up and Down California"). Our dams won't save us from this inundation of water.

As the valley floods, it preserves the past. Today our floods preserve beer bottles and chicken bones, but not long ago the bones of antelope, bear, and elk were trapped in the sediments. And just twenty feet down in a pit beside Arco Arena, the bones of camels, horses, giant ground sloths, mammoths, and mastodons, give us a picture into the ice age valley.

So the American River continues to tell its geologic story. And in geologic time, it is inevitable that the remains of the once-great city of Sacramento will be buried in the sediments too.



While this article focuses on American River geology, this accompanying photo contains a critical plant habitat issue. It graphically depicts, in the lower left corner, invasive, non-native Pampas Grass, a target in the campaign led by the Weed Warriors to eradicate exotics to prevent them from crowding out native species.

American River Parkway supporters should think big and seek to enlist Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and first lady Maria Shriver in their cause.

That was one of the messages California Oak Foundation President **Janet Santos Cobb** conveyed at a joint meeting of the boards of ARNHA, Save the American River Association, and American River Parkway Foundation on May 12. ARNHA President Noah Baygell invited the boards of the sister organizations to hear Ms. Cobb at a regularly scheduled ARNHA Board meeting.

“Showcase the river,” Ms. Cobb said. “Ask the governor and Maria to go downriver with you. Get them to be advocates for protecting the river.”

The Oakland-based leader also urged the groups to keep working on the Board of Supervisors and planners. “Be aggressive. Keep asking for money. In a future bond issue, try to insert a line item to help the American River.”

Ms. Cobb asked the groups to get behind her pet project, SB 1334. It would help protect stately oak woodlands that are under increasing threat from conversion into vineyards and other agriculture use, housing projects and industrial development. The measure, introduced by state Sen. Sheila Kuehl, D-Santa Monica, would require that a county oak woodlands management plan or ordinance require mitigation of any conversion of oak woodlands. It would include a monetary contribution to the Oak Woodlands Conservation Fund.

She said her group also was pressing for conservation easements from ranchers and other landowners who control 85 percent of oak woodlands land.

Nature Bowl Winners

“Their knowledge and enthusiasm for nature is just fantastic. I wish everybody could see it,” ARNHA board member **Paula Baldi** said after working 11 hours at the finals of the 19th annual Nature Bowl May 15 at CSUS. Eureka School, Granite Bay, and Lake Forest School, El Dorado Hills, tied for first in the 3rd-4th grades category, and Patwin School, Davis, won in 5th-6th grade competition.

Paula, who has volunteered at the environmental science competition for 15 years, registered and arranged prizes for the 120 participants from 18 schools from Yuba City to Benicia. ARNHA has been a sponsor from the beginning, serving as treasurer.



Busing to Nature

Effie Yeaw Nature Center Director **Marilee Flannery** thanked ARNHA for providing a \$2,500 grant for schools that could not afford transportation to pay for bus service for students to attend EYNC programs. Fourteen bus trips from January to June provided naturalist-led outdoor experiences for 482 students, plus approximately 75 parents and teachers.




Outstanding Volunteer

ARNHA Treasurer **Roberta Wilner** was honored by the Board of Supervisors April 20 as one of Sacramento County’s Outstanding Volunteers of 2003. Roberta was recognized for having volunteered more than 3,500 hours to date, including her ARNHA work and regular stints as Effie Yeaw Nature Center receptionist and for assisting in the management of the Discovery Shop. EYNC nominated her for the honor and the Department of Regional Parks, Recreation and Open Space selected her to be recognized. Congratulations, Roberta!



Summer 2004


AMERICAN RIVER NIGHTFALL
By Tom Goff

We reached the American River at dusk, in time
to savor the almost-fullness of the moon.
The river repeats the lunar white like rhyme
but interrupts its image. Like a spoon

stirring the peaceful liquid that breaks it in two,
the moon dips moon medicine in sky-lilac water.
The swirlful current scowls, yet has to swallow
the white dose as it dissolves. Wet silver scatters

dark reflections making off with silt slurry,
erases remembrance of egrets in trees. Such fever’s
not unheard of: bright cold surge in a hurry

in early June. Black oak trunks—floodgate levers
the warm gusts tug—unleash crowbursts that skitter
past. Then a great blue heron, pterodactyl of worry.

*Tom Goff, author of “Field of the Cloth of Gold,” from Poet’s
Corner Press, lives in Carmichael.*

American River Natural History Association

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EVENTS CALENDAR

- **June 14 to August 20** Effie Yeaw Nature Center (EYNC)
Summer Fun Days
- **July 27** 7 pm ARNHA Public Forum: Tim Manolis'
Dragonflies video presentation, EYNC Assembly Building
- **October 2** Maidu Indian Day , Effie Yeaw Nature Center
- **October 9-10** Salmon Festival, Nimbus Fish Hatchery
- **December 4** Holiday Sale, Effie Yeaw Nature Center
- **December 4** ARNHA Wildlife Count, American River Parkway

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

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Arthur Williams
Kristy Wormald & Family



Donors

ARNHA member **Linda L. Sweetman** came up with a worthy beneficiary for the \$152.30 vehicle license fee rebate she received after Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger signed an executive order in November repealing the tripling of the car tax levied earlier in 2003. She donated it to ARNHA.

“I enjoy Ancil Hoffman Park, Effie Yeaw Nature Center, and William Pond Park,” she said. “I think ARNHA will know best how to use the money. I saw the donation as a way to apply my tax dollars locally.” Thank you, Linda!