

From Grade School to College – Students Learn at EYNC

Long before there was an Effie Yeaw Nature Center, there was a kindergarten teacher named Effie Yeaw, who used the area where the center is today as a place to teach children about nature.

For 15 years before her death at age 69 in 1970, Effie Yeaw made education the main activity in those woods. Students were the principal visitors. And that still is the case today. The difference is in the numbers and in the fact that college students these days are among the students studying there.

Effie called the place the Deterding Woods, after the family who owned the property. It was there she had her "Listening Log" upon which she let her students sit silently and listen to the sounds of the woods. There were woodpeckerriddled snags and an "owl tree" that was surrounded by the pellets and other evidence that owls felt at home there. There were the trails and pathways through the landscape itself where the children got close to the plants and animals that were at home there beside the American River. And there were the actual creatures and plants themselves.

Today, the woods form a 77-acre nature area in the middle of which is the Effie Yeaw Nature Center, all part of the county parks system complete with a uniformed staff and some official park buildings that include a visitor center, book store, and gift shop.

by Walt Wiley

But make no mistake: this is no typical regional park. Teaching children about nature is still the principal activity by far, and the only difference from the way things were in Effie's day is that now a lot more children use the area each year. That, and college teachers now are using the area right alongside grade school and high school classes.

At least 100,000 individuals visit the center yearly, and fully half of them are children on school trips. Plus: of the remaining 50,000, half of those are children, too, says center director Marilee Flannery.

**EYNC is "a very nice resource" for teaching everything from cell level through evolution and ecology?"

Kathy Bradshaw, American River College Biology Professor

"This place is still about educating people, and our largest program is school children – really children and all ages, kindergarten right up through college," Flannery says.

For grade-school teachers, the nature center and woods constitute a dream come true, says Molly Keller, who from 1996 to 2005 taught second and third grade at Creekside Elementary, a school where most of the children qualify for the free lunch program.

"I'd see these little tough guys whose idea of outdoors was the parking lot of their apartment building. But get them out in the woods, and they were suddenly very quiet, in awe, and they'd hold my hand tightly," says Keller, now a member of the ARNHA Associate Board and a teacher at nearby Deterding Elementary School, from where she often leads her second and third graders on walks to the center.

"But those children learned. You'd ask one to write about his last birthday party, and he couldn't. He'd never had a birthday party. But if he'd just studied ants at the nature center and you asked him to write about ants – well, watch out."

Beyond nature is the study of how native people used nature, and the Maidu Summer Village on the grounds of the center is fertile ground for that, says Debbie Gravier, who teaches third grade at the high-achieving Leonardo da Vinci Elementary School.

"What a way to teach: the students spend their day there the way Maidu children would have when they inhabited the area," she says. Her students gather acorns, crack them, and grind them; make things such as twine and rope; craft dice from walnut shells and

see EYNC Students, page 3

Free EYNC Program every Saturday and Sunday at 1:30

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Grants and ARNHA Budget Funds EYNC Programs for 2007-2008

At the July 11 meeting of ARNHA's Board of Directors, the 2007-2008 budget was approved. It includes \$49,000 in support for the Effie Yeaw Nature Center. Fun Days supplies, EYNC speakers, and the extended day care program benefit from part of these funds.

At the September meeting, the Board will consider additional EYNC funding to accommodate more students for Summer Fun Day programs. This year many students on the waiting list were turned away from summer programs.

Also announced was that half of a \$5,000 grant from the friends and associates of Illa Collin in honor of her retirement and a \$2,500 grant from *The Sacramento Bee* will fund the Urban Nature Project. This Project funds field trips to the Effie Year Nature Center for students from under funded schools.

The other half of the Illa Collin grant will fund other EYNC programs.

The ARNHA budget also allocates funding to repair some of the Parkway kiosks and the printing of an updated Nature Activity Book.

Twilight Debuts at EYNC

Twilight is the newest star at the Nature Center. A western screech owl (*otus kennicottii*), she made her first appearance at the center on June 13 when she was about three months old.

A sad history: Twilight was rescued from a family cat and taken to the California Foundation for Birds of Prey. Since both eyes were permanently damaged, the Foundation could not return her to the wild. She lives at the Nature Center because she cannot survive on her own.

The good news: Twilight is loved by visitors and staff at the center where she captures hearts daily from her prominent



glass enclosure in the Discovery Room. Here she plays an important part in helping children and adults learn about the life cycle and needs of animals in the wild and their vital role in our ecology.

Twilight flies about her home and responds to attention even during the daytime, a rarity since the western screech owl is one of the most strictly nocturnal of North American owls. Mice, shrews, and insects make up a majority of its diet but this dainty owl is not afraid of tackling prey that outweighs it. Although this owl is a predator, it may itself fall prey to other predators, like hawks, snakes, raccoons, cats, or even larger owls.

Do screech owls screech? No! Its call is very different from the *hoot* associated with owls. Instead, it's a descending series of whistled notes that ends with a short, *bouncing* trill—nothing like screeching.

Come meet Twilight anytime. Or you could meet her and learn all about the life of owls at the *Tender Twilight* program scheduled for 1:30 p.m., Saturday, September 29, at EYNC. Call 489-4918 or visit our website www.arnha.org for information about other upcoming weekly events.

-By Georgia Jones, Photo Betty Cooper

EYNC Students, from page 1

clay; and assemble bull-roarers – wood and string noise makers that emit a frightening roar as they are whirled around the head, lasso fashion.

"We get a lot of parent participation, too," she says. "We build fires, cook, and eat acorn mush – sometimes salmon – tell stories, try to live that Maidu life."

Lately, the center's appeal – both for the native culture features and the animals and vegetation – has been moving up through the educational grades, so that a few college-level classes study there.

That trend is exemplified by American River College biology professor Kathy Bradshaw, who just happens to be a former member of the Effie Yeaw staff. "I teach a biology survey class–everything from the cell level through evolution and ecology, and this is a very nice resource," she says. "I want my students to be familiar with this because they're going to be teachers and they'll be able to just walk out in these woods any time and put these ideas to use."

Bradshaw brings her whole class to the center, where they hear a lecture from center director Flannery. Then they go on a sort of scavenger hunt, where they seek to identify the concepts and topics they have been discussing.

"They might see a pipevine swallowtail, or-in November-salmon. Maybe an example of insect metamorphosis, predation, life cycles, specialization," Bradshaw says. "It's all around them: meiosis, mitosis, wild grapes using the oak trees to reach sunlight, riparian corridor."

On the other end of the spectrum, Mary McCarthy Hintz uses the nature center to acquaint her students with the science behind native medicine and cultural practices. Hintz, a chemistry professor at Sacramento State University, teaches a class using the Nisenan culture to study science from a different perspective.

Working with the center's cultural programs director, Vince Lapina, she has put together a course that translates



CSUS professor Dr. Winston Lancaster and his mammology class students trap (with humane traps, of course) small rodents and then key them out with their books.

modern science and traditional native practices.

"The Nisenan language doesn't have a word for science, but they have a way for understanding the natural world," Hintz says. "It's maybe not as formalized as our science, but it's every bit as valid."

For instance, Nisenan people–and many other cultures–chewed willow bark to relieve headaches and other pain. The active ingredient is the same material chemists started from in creating aspirin.

"Aspirin and willows-that's been known for eons. Now, we're looking for new modern applications for ancient knowledge," she says. "Take California mugwort, for example. It's been shown that Chinese mugwort treats some cancers in mice, so one of our native American students suggested we do some studies with California mugwort."

see Mugwort, page 6

ARNHA Stays Visible in the Community

To create awareness of ARNHA and its good work, several ARNHA representatives attended community events in May.

On May 5, Lee and Roberta Wilner attended the American River Parkway Foundation half-marathon run. A fundraiser, the event included sales and food booths at William B. Pond Park.

On May 12, Peggy Kennedy and Pete Hayes took their turns at an ARNHA information table at Walk on the Wild Side, an annual event held at the Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge. They recruited members for ARNHA and the Nature Bowl, explained ARNHA's mission, and sold items from the Discovery Shop.

On May 18, Betty Cooper staffed a booth at the Taste of Carmichael event, where three lucky raffle participants won ARNHA publications. In addition, several members of the ARNHA Board attended the event.

Community outreach is a valuable opportunity to reach hundreds of people who might not otherwise be aware of ARNHA and its efforts to support education on the Parkway. Personal contact with the public creates a lasting impression that can bring rewards in the form of new memberships and recognition. And representing ARNHA at community events is fun because the events are worth attending and the public is appreciative. If you would like to attend community events on ARNHA's behalf, please contact Jamie Washington at 489-4918, x224.

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Maidu Indian Day Set for Oct. 6

Ever wondered how the Nisenan Maidu people who lived along the American River wove their beautiful baskets, crafted rope from tule, and created abalone shell decorations? To learn the answers, come with your family to the annual Maidu Indian Day celebration at the Effie Yeaw Nature Center in Ancil Hoffman County Park, Saturday, October 6, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Hands-on activities and demonstrations highlighting the culture of the Nisenan Maidus and dancing, food preparation, crafting of walnut dice and pine nut beads, and story-telling will be part of the program.

Admission is \$3 per person. Parking is \$4 per car, free for ARNHA members. Funds generated will provide important financial support for the Maidu Cultural Heritage Program and will help the nature center staff continue providing educational experiences for all throughout the year.

Flannery Team Will Present September 20 Forum

ARNHA members can enjoy a special treat Thursday, September 20 at 7 p.m., when Effie Yeaw Nature Center Director Marilee Flannery and her husband Steve, Supervising Park Ranger, will present a PowerPoint program titled "Exploring the American River Parkway" at the nature center in Ancil Hoffman County Park.

The free event, one of ARNHA's regular public forums, will feature beautiful photographs of the American River Parkway, including various sections of the Parkway and its animals. The show includes aerials of the River as it meanders through Sacramento's metropolitan area. In addition, Marilee and Steve will offer colorful stories and historical context in the program featuring the aesthetic, ecological and recreational values of each portion of the 23-mile-long parkway. Light refreshments will be served.

Maidu Indian Day Volunteers Needed

Be a volunteer for the Maidu Indian Day celebration on Saturday, October 6, at the Effie Yeaw Nature Center, 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. (A.M. and P.M. shifts available). Minimum age for a volunteer is 14, with Volunteer Training on Thursday, October at 4, 6:30 til 8:30 p.m.

- Teach visitors to make crafts
- Sell refreshments
- Hand out samples of Native American food.
- Teach Hoop and Lance
- Help with set-up and clean-up.

To sign up, contact Volunteer Coordinator Jamie Washington, at 489-4918, x224.



Salmon Festival Promises Fun and Education

All hail the regal Chinook Salmon, whose return to its American River origins will be celebrated on October 13 and 14 at the Salmon Festival at the Nimbus Fish Hatchery and Lake Natoma State Park at U.S. 50 and Hazel Avenue.

ARNHA helps sponsor the annual event that features more than fifty activities wellcalculated to appeal to young and old. They include "hook 'em and cook 'em" culinary demonstrations, fishing tip clinics, salmon fun run and walk, salmon barbecue, fly-tying and casting demonstrations, and boat and raft trips.

The festival is free, but expect to pay \$8 to park if you bring your car. There will be free shuttles from the parking lots, and festival-goers who arrive by bike get free valet parking.

ARNHA, along with the Save the American River Association and the American River Parkway Foundation, works with the state Department of Fish and Game and State Parks, plus the Federal Bureau of Reclamation and Fish and Wildlife Service to produce the Salmon Festival.

ARNHA's "Passion and Commitment" Praised

Sacramento County Parks Director Gary Kukkola thanked the American River Natural History Association for its "passion and commitment" at ARNHA's annual meeting on June13 at the Effie Yeaw Nature Center.

The director saluted immediate past president Noah Baygell and ARNHA corresponding secretary Paula Baldi, who was honored as the parks department 2006 Volunteer of the Year for having donated more than 4,000 hours over 25 years. Noah was praised for his efforts to preserve the Oat Hill open space above the nature center and for organizing a public forum last year to explore ways to assure long-term, stable funding for the American River Parkway. Nature Center Director Marilee Flannery presented him with a handsome walking stick on behalf of ARNHA.

Gary also acknowledged the \$52,000 check that ARNHA president Larry Washington and past president Greg Voelm presented to the County Board of Supervisors last Spring. It represented the donation of funds in the past year for outdoor lighting along the walkway from the parking lot to the nature center, EYNC Summer Fun Days supplies, bus transportation for children from schools to the nature center, and funding for some EYNC staff positions.

"I thank you for your passion and commitment that keeps this facility alive," Gary said. "We couldn't do it without you."

ARNHA officers elected were Larry Washington, president; Lee Wilner, vice president/membership; Peggy Kennedy, vice president/publications; Claudia Hulbe, recording secretary; Paula Baldi, corresponding secretary, and Roberta Wilner, treasurer.

Twenty-three volunteers were honored for their efforts benefiting the nature center (See sidebar for names)

Seventy-seven persons, not counting nature center staff, attended the meeting on a comfortably warm evening in the center's Indian village after having enjoyed delicious salmon, cheeses, fresh fruit, and wine that were provided primarily by Peggy and Bruce Kennedy, Katie Baygell, Roberta and Lee Wilner, Linda Thomas, Paula Baldi, and Carol Thomas.

Parkway Clean Up Due Sept. 15

ARNHA members are urged to participate in the annual Great American River Clean Up Saturday, Sept. 15, from 9 a.m. to noon by joining the team zeroing in on Ancil Hoffman County Park, home of the Effie Yeaw Nature Center.

Signs will direct volunteers to the starting point where clean-up directions and trash bags will be provided. Volunteers should bring gloves and sunscreen and wear sturdy shoes, coordinator Pete Hayes said.

Ancil Hoffman is one of 21 sites on the 23-mile long parkway targeted for the post-Labor Day Clean Up. Ridding this priceless natural resource of debris prevents pollutants from entering the watershed, pollutants that harm wildlife or create hazards for recreational users of the Parkway. The event is held in conjunction with the Coastal Cleanup Day sponsored by the California Coastal Commission. It is sponsored locally by the American River Parkway Foundation.



Volunteers Honored

A highlight of ARNHA's annual meeting June 13 was recognition and honoring of volunteers who have contributed in so many ways to making Effie Yeaw Nature Center's programs successful. Nature Center Volunteers Director Jamie Washington introduced the following honorees:

- Marjorie Denhart, Receptionist; Pete Hayes, ARNHA Board Member, Publications;
- Richard Horgan, Exhibits; Caitlin Johnson, Animal Care Assistant; David Rosenlof, Docent; Roberta Wilner, ARNHA Board Member, Treasurer

Also recognized were these volunteers who recently reached new benchmarks in their volunteer hours:

- 100 hours: Kelly Cohen, Sylvia Gude, David Jackson, Caitlin Johnson, Justin Knowlton, Carolyn Sandie,
- 160 hours: Mojgan Fischer, Eva Gramyk, Barbara Parker,
- 250 hours: Karen Eggen, Margaret Rogers,
- 500 hours: Pete Hayes,
- 1000 hours: Walter Dong,
- 2000+ hours: Marjorie Denhart, Ardell Nagle, Nancy Oprsal, and Greg Voelm.
- 3000+ hours: Paula Baldi, Carol Doersch, Richard Horgan, Lee Wilner, and Roberta Wilner.

For the Friend Who Has Everything—An ARNHA Gift Membership

Mugwort, from page 3

It turns out that California mugwort was used by the old timers especially for women's medicine. They believed it killed breast cancer cells, helped to bring on menstruation, and helped ease menopause.

"Now we're looking forward to doing some antiviral assays on the things they used for colds and sniffles," Hintz says. "We want to learn what is going on, what is the active ingredient – not to make anyone rich but so that everyone can have it growing outside their kitchen doors."

In the course of such programs at Effie Yeaw, Hintz's minority students are becoming fired up about their own cultures—and their own educations.

"They'll say to me, 'I'm going to grad school,' and they mean it. I've got a couple in Ph.D. programs right now. Another had me 'hood' him just last week when he was awarded his master's.

"Education programs at Effie Yeaw? — I'll say there are."

Walt Wiley, a retired Sacramento Bee reporter and columnist, is a member of the ARNHA Board of Directors.

Water for the Nature Pond – An Update

As reported in the Fall 2006 issue of the *Acorn*, there is at least one positive consequence of groundwater contamination created by the Aerojet Corporation decades ago: the Nature Pond at Effie Yeaw Nature Center will get more water.

Currently, the plume of polluted water has spread its toxins into the area north of the American River where the Carmichael Water District pumps its water from wells. This District provides water for Ancil Hoffman Park and its facilities, including the golf course and the Effie Yeaw Nature Center.

A legal settlement in the matter of the pollution required the construction of a water purification plant off Tarshes Drive, just inside the park entrance. The purified water is to be used for the various park needs, with priority going to the golf course. Some water, however, will be made available to add new water to the Nature Pond, which is dependent on supplemental water in the summer and fall, when there is no natural runoff. The District used to provide this water, but when the price got too high, the County ceased purchasing it and the pond has suffered.

It is anticipated that, once the purification plant had been completed, the needed supplemental water would be provided to the nature pond at no cost. This new water was to have been available in the current year, 2007. However, due to delays in obtaining the various approvals, construction of the plant has not yet begun. The current "schedule" calls for the new plant to be completed and its water to be available late in 2008. Or perhaps in early 2009, just to make this prediction on the safe side.

During this period, there will be considerable trenching along one side of the park's main road, allowing an upgrade of the pipes that will move the water to various places in the park. Also constructed will be a million-gallon water storage tank on the grounds of the golf course. The bulk of the newly purified water will be used on the golf course at night, with some of the water that is available during the daytime hours going to the nature pond. Park users eagerly await the new water and the benefits it will bring to the pond.

Jeepers Starred at ENYC for 16 Years

Jeepers enjoyed a long starring role at the Nature Center. Dumped from the nest by a big wind in 1981, he was rescued along with two other scrub jay hatchlings. When they reached maturity, their rescuer successfully released one jay into the wilds. But Jeepers and the other jay refused to leave and lived as pampered pets for 10 years. Jeepers joined the center's educational animals in 1991, where he delighted children and other visitors with his perky activity and animated curiosity.

Jeepers was a California scrub jay (*Aphelocoma californica*), uncrested members of the blue jay family. Long known for their intelligence, new research shows that this remarkable bird even plans for the future. Not only does it store food in a place where it knows it will be hungry the next morning, but caches a particular food in a place where that type of food won't be available the next morning. If another bird sees it storing food, the jay returns later to hide it in a different place.

Scrub jays seem to know the "shelf life" of specific caches—retrieving a stored mouse within a day or two but saving nuts and seeds to eat over time. In fact, they are capable of storing as many as 100,000 nuts in 30,000 different caches and recall what, when, and where they stored them months later!



These new findings challenge the notion that only humans have the ability to plan for the future—so do scrub jays. We like to think Jeepers was planning for his future—his role helping EYNC visitors learn about birds—when he refused to leave captivity all those years ago, \blacksquare —*By Georgia Jones, Photo Betty Cooper*

Donations Fund Enlarging Homes for Birds of Prey - Volunteers Help Restore Nature Area – Endangered Species Exhibit Returns

Thanks to the generosity of ARNHA members and animal lovers, the Nature Center has enough donations to begin work on enlarging the homes of our birds of prey.

The expansion project will start this fall, and much of the work will be done by volunteers. Are you handy with a hammer and saw? We'd love to have your help! Please call our Volunteer Coordinator, Jamie Washington, at 489-4918, x224 if you can lend a hand.

Volunteers are needed also to help reduce fire danger and restore the beautiful Nature Preserve. Staff Interpretive Specialist Vince Lapena has been working diligently this summer to remove hemlock, Himalaya blackberry, pokeweed, and star-thistle to make room for native grasses, flowers, shrubs, and trees. If you want to help on Weeding Wednesdays, call Jamie Washington to set up an orientation session, so you can join Vince and the team under the oaks in this rewarding work.

The exhibit *Endangered Species of California's Central Valley* is returning to the Nature Center starting August 22. This popular exhibit features a crawl-through kit fox "burrow," giant condor wings to try on, and much more.

Willie Argante Eizinger dies at 101

Willie Argante Eizinger, a staunch supporter of ARNHA and the Effie Yeaw Nature Center, died April 5 in a Grass Valley nursing home at the age of 101.

Ms. Eizinger joined with a small group of environmental activists to organize the American River Natural History Association in 1981 to help keep the Nature Center open when county funding was cut. She continued to give financial support to ARNHA and donated the large portrait of the nature center's beloved namesake that hangs in the entryway way to the EYNC exhibit room.

"Willie's enthusiasm and commitment to promoting environmental causes were contagious," said Jo Smith, her longtime friend and an ARNHA founder. "After just a few minutes in her presence, you would be involved in community activities from bird counts to classes in natural history, but this infection she spread always came with kindness, good cheer, and great optimism."

Ms. Eizinger also was a charter member of the Sacramento Audubon Society founded in 1950, a Girl Scout leader, and helped organize the Sacramento Junior Museum, now called the Discovery Museum, Science and Space Center.

With the passing of her husband, Sam Argante, she married fellow Audubon member Ben Eizinger, and they lived for many years in Willits, Mendocino County. He died in 2000. Survivors include a daughter, Jonda Friel, of Tahoe City, and a son, Tod Argante, of Ft. Bragg, and two grandchildren.

Butterflies

More than forty percent of the butterflies in the Sacramento region no longer have native plant hosts, so markedly



changed is the environment in the low-elevation areas from what existed before the Gold Rush.

Still, butterflies are doing well some places, not so well in others and are disappearing altogether at an alarming rate in many, many places.

And all in all, the butterfly fauna is in trouble. That was the message of Arthur M. Shapiro, the man who knows Northern California butterflies, as he spoke before a full house at the Effie Yeaw Nature Center meeting hall June 20. He and co-author-illustrator Tim Manolis were on hand for an

ARNHA forum on their new book, *Field Guide to Butterflies of the San Francisco Bay and Sacramento Valley Regions.*

Shapiro, a shaggy, bearded, sun-baked U.C. Davis biology professor, spends 200 days a year in the field studying butterflies. Since 1971 he has specialized in the butterflies of the Bay Area and the Sacramento Valley.

"Some species are going away regionally. It's not a purely local situation," he said. He compared the situation to the global decline of amphibians. "There always seems to be an explanation, but the explanations are not always the same. There is no pattern."

But if anyone is looking for evidence of global warming, Shapiro said some species of Northern California butterflies are emerging as much as a month earlier in spring than they did 30 years ago, when he first began his studies in the area.

Those forty percent of the butterflies that no longer have known native hosts have adapted well to non-native hosts, he said, and he speculated that many would have native hosts in the tule marshes.

Tule marshes covered much more of the landscape before the Gold Rush and naturally would have been the habitat of many butterflies found outside marshes today, he said.

-Walt Wiley

American River Natural History Association

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• Great American River Clean-Up September 15, 9 am to noon see story page 4

• ARNHA Forum September 20, 7 pm Marilee and Steve Flannery Effie Yeaw Nature Center *see story page 4*

- Maidu Indian Day October 6, 10 am to 4 pm Effie Yeaw Nature Center see story page 5
- Salmon Festival Sat. & Sun., October 13-14, 8 am to 4 pm see story page 5

Welcome New Members

- Nicholas Alvarez
- Steve and Sonja Atkins
- Becky Barnhart & Katrina Barch
- Kenneth Bender & Nancy Lapp Family
- Paul Bethel & Kathryn Fleming
- Julie Blanford
- Rebecca Breen
- Majorie Brock-Pett
- Matthew Carrie & Max McGregor
- Julie Chriss
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- Charleen Stockdale
- Rebecca Whitehead
- Carol & Ray Zelinski
 - In Memory of Russell DeBont

Volunteer Opportunities

- Weeding Wednesdays from 9 am to 2 pm
- (See story on page 7)
- Clean-up on Saturday, September 15
- (See story on page 4)
- Maidu Indian Day on Saturday, October 6 (See story on page 5)