



Early Geology of the Lower American River

By Diane Shakal

The story begins about **300 million years ago**, when what is now Sacramento County was part of an extensive inland sea at the western edge of the North American Continental Plate. By the middle Mesozoic time period (about **170 million years ago**) the rock framework of the Sacramento region began to form on this plate as it was pushed westward from the Atlantic Rift Zone and over the expanding and submerging Farallon oceanic plate in the Pacific Ocean. (see Fig.1)

The terrific friction where the plates slide past one another generates intense heat, causing the rocky plates to melt. The resulting molten matter, known as magma, moves upward through cracks

and faults until it reaches the surface and erupts as volcanoes. At that time, the resulting chain of volcanic islands stretched for hundreds of miles along the edge of the continent. Great volcanic mudflows transported materials from these volcanoes, over time, into the marine trough. Lava flows also descended the slope into the water, and as the hot lava flowed into the sea, it detached into separate blobs which were forced over each other, settled and finally hardened. (Remnants of these unique marine lavas, called “pillow lavas,” can be seen today along the Cosumnes River west of Highway 49.) This process destroys most plant and animal fossils, but those that remain

indicate the presence of shelly marine invertebrates and a spectacular dinosaur group, the Ichthyosaurs. The extreme pressure that the volcanic deposits and marine sediments were subjected to as they built up changed their texture, appearance and chemical composition, and they metamorphosed into greenstone and green schist, remnants of which can be found in the foothills today.

The present Sierra Nevada range began to emerge between **150 and 140 million years ago** when the underthrusting of the Oceanic Plate seems to have gotten “stuck” while the Continental Plate continued its westward push. Volcanic deposits folded up, and marine sediments caught between them. These folds then sheared (or broke) into a series of eastward dipping slabs, which eventually became what we now call the Sierra Nevada Mountain Range. Pieces of these slabs are visible as “tombstone” rocks, which are exposed in the hillsides in the eastern part of the Sacramento valley.

About **140 million years ago** the plates began to move again, and the Oceanic Plate resumed its slide under the North American Plate. The emerging Sierra Nevada on the continental edge thrust upward as the new molten matter rose through, shattering the

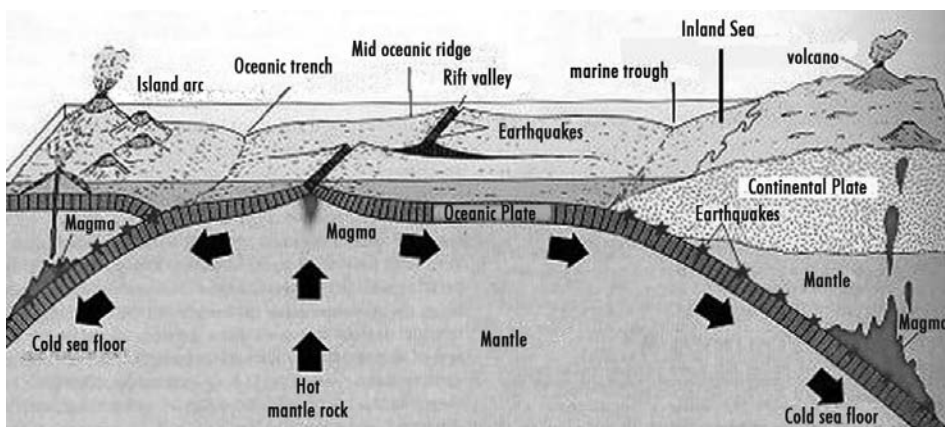


Fig. 1: Ever drifting continental plates (immense land masses of lighter material) converge on top of heavier under-sea oceanic plates that grow from spreading centers, or rift zones, where lava rises from the depths of the earth to the surface of the sea floor, spreads out, then submerges beneath the continental plate.

see “Geology,” page 3

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President's Message

"Every child is an artist; the problem is how to remain an artist after he grows up"
—Pablo Picasso

Have you ever touched a six-foot snake or looked a great horned owl straight in the eye or saw a deer running free in the woods? Do you remember when, as a child, you loved to play, explore, and discover the outdoor world? What better place for all of the above than at the Effie Yeaw Nature Center in Ancil Hoffman Park in Carmichael.

One of the best gifts that we can give our children is to put them in a place where they can use all of their senses and imagination. Introducing young minds to nature can start them on an adventure that will last a life-time. You don't have to wait until your child goes on a school field trip to visit the Nature Center; jump in the car on the weekend or after school, and take a hike through the nature preserve or join us inside and enjoy the exhibits. Come in and sign your child up for Spring Fun Days that are coming up the week of March 29 or for Summer Fun Days in that will begin in June. Making a connection with nature can occur at any age but the earlier the better. Programs at EYNC fit all ages and interests and all levels of education.

As Aristotle said, "Courage is the first of human qualities because it is the quality which guarantees the others." Getting into a new environment does take courage, but the rewards are great and can open up a whole new world of adventure and fun.

Some of the other events that are coming up at Effie Yeaw Nature Center are Non-instructional Art Workshops in February, Bird and Breakfast on March 13, and Painting Where the Wild Things Are on May 15.

Any one that looks at a screen or monitor and marvels at how real virtual reality looks needs to grab a friend or relative to go outside to see the real thing!

Larry Washington,
President, ARNHA



Effie Yeaw Nature Center Closing February 1 – 5 due to Funding Cuts

Visitors to the Effie Yeaw Nature Center and readers of this newsletter know about the recent massive cuts in funding for the Center. Almost all part-time rangers and naturalists are furloughed, school programs are reduced, and many public programs are cut. In yet another effort to make ends meet, the Center will be closed from February 1 through February 5. Closing the building will save the cost of heating and electricity as well as staff. Further closures may be necessary.

"Geology," from page 1

metamorphosed volcanic and marine rocks in the older magma layer, creating fissures in it. Superheated liquid, carrying gold and other minerals, welled upward from the molten intrusions, filling the fissures, and here and there forming veins and lodes in the metamorphosed layer. The intrusions (called plutons) began in the area of our present foothills and continued up to the current Sierran crest. They metamorphosed into great granitic basins.

Over **more millions of years**, another under-sea trough formed. It became the Sacramento-San Joaquin Valley. Sediments eroding from the still rising mountains slowly filled this trough forming a shallow sea, which in turn supported a great variety of marine life and another population of dinosaurs. Marine sediments built up on top of the Oceanic Plate were "scraped off" and piled up on the leading edge of the westward-moving Continental Plate, forming part of the Coast Ranges. These ranges, in turn, eventually rose enough to cut the valley off from the ocean, causing a great die-off of the marine life in the shallow sea. The remains of this marine life accumulated in the trough and were incorporated into the sediments from the eroding Sierra Nevada. The decay of these remains created the natural gas deposits trapped deep below the Sacramento-San Joaquin Valley.

Erosion wore away mountain rock, breaking away chunks large and small. Many of these tumbled down into the streams and eroded into small rounded boulders that were deposited in the river bottoms at the base of the mountain. As the gold veins were exposed, particles of the gold, occasionally in nugget-sized chunks, also were carried away down the mountain slopes to be deposited little by little in sandbars, gravel beds, and river bottoms—forming the rich placer layers that were destined to focus the world's attention on California in 1848.

The story continued with landforms

twisting, up-lifting, and eroding through ice ages and temperature change, and then humans reshaped the land for their own purposes.

The American River Today

Today, the American River begins its journey from the present Sierra Nevada range as three rivers—each over one hundred miles long, and each with its own major tributaries. The North, Middle, and South forks rush in deep canyons, twist, tumble over ledges, dash against great boulders, sweep through rugged and forested country, embrace some two thousand square miles, and carve their gorges ever deeper and wider.

Each fork drops 6,000 feet and passes through four life zones in less than half a day—from snow-fed streams that drain bald, windswept 9,000 foot-high granite domes dotted with hardy juniper, down through a maze of alpine springs, lakes and hardy pine, fir and hemlock zones, on through the deciduous forests and chaparral laden foothills, and finally onto the grassy lowlands dotted with Valley oaks in the Sacramento Valley. The Middle and South forks in recent times at several points at the higher elevations are dammed, and reservoirs slow the water flow.

Just outside the foothill town of Auburn, the North fork and Middle fork meet at the bottom of a wide, rugged canyon. From there, as "the North Fork," they rush on to the South Fork, now slowed in man-made Folsom Lake where it's doled out by Folsom Dam for flood control, irrigation, power, municipal, habitat, recreational, and industrial uses. About a mile downstream, it is

caught and further tamed by the Nimbus dam and power plant. From there, the river regains some of its spirit as it races over its rocky, gravelly and recently levee-contained course to meet the Sacramento River where it mellows and mingles with five other mountain river systems and numerous smaller streams. The waters that are not pumped down the Central Valley Authority aqueduct system and on to Southern California or to crop fields along the way, then head to the Suisun, San Pablo, and San Francisco Bays, and finally the outbound tides sweep them through the Golden Gate into the Pacific Ocean.

Today's American River is vastly changed from what it was just 150 years ago, especially in the last fifty miles, but that's another story.

Editor's Note: In 1999 a group of local citizens banded together to save Fair Oaks Bluffs, 4.5 acres on the north side of the American River, from development. They succeeded and this summer will dedicate a donors plaza, complete with interpretative panels. The above article details the topic of one of those panels. Future articles in The Acorn will address the topics of some of the other panels. ARNHA website will give even more details. For more information about The Bluffs, go to www.savethebluffs.org.

Diane Shakal was a member of the Citizens to Save the Bluff and is a member of the Fair Oaks Donor Plaza Committee. She is a Library Assistant at the Orangevale Branch of the Sacramento Public Library Library. ■

Ichthyosaur



Teen to Raise Funds for Effie Yeaw through Golf-a-thon

Ethan Brown has fun-filled memories of visiting the animals at Effie Yeaw Nature Center and attending the center's summer camps where he hiked the trails, rafted down the river, and learned how to identify poison oak, one of several important lessons he still practices today.

When Ethan heard about the impact of the budget cuts on Effie Yeaw Nature Center, he decided to raise money for Effie Yeaw through a golf-a-thon. On March 11, he will play as many holes as he can at Bradshaw Golf Course in Sacramento. He's asking people to pledge an amount per hole, or a flat amount. "I want as many people as possible to participate," says Ethan. "No amount is too small."

Ethan's goal is to raise \$1,000 for the Nature Center now, and to raise an additional \$2,500 to benefit Effie Yeaw in the future. As a bar mitzvah student at Mosaic Law Synagogue, Ethan chose the Nature Center for his mitzvah project. In Judaism, mitzvah means good deed, and as part of one's bar (boy) or bat (girl) mitzvah (at age 13), a young person accepts the life-long commitment of helping one's community.

Recently, Ethan and his family learned of an amazing opportunity. Contribute \$2,500 to the Jewish Community Foundation of the West, and an anonymous donor will give \$7,500, allowing a student to create his or her own \$10,000 endowment fund. Ethan was excited to learn how an endowment fund works—for the rest of his life, he will be able to give the yearly earnings from the initial money invested to any nonprofit organization (like ARNHA) of his choice. To make a pledge or learn more, visit www.ethanbrown.pledgepage.org.

From An American River Journal

Storm Senses

In the main, too much rain can be a pain. But it also can be a tonic to the senses, a dandy waker-upper as long as you're dressed for it and are not playing the little-Dutch-boy-at-the-dike role around the old homestead.

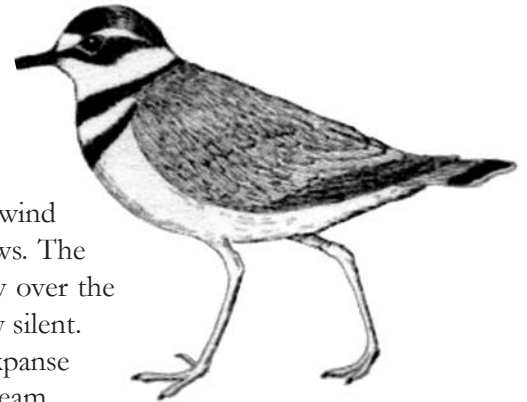
There's no fresher smell than the rain-washed air along the river, unless it's the licorice-like fragrance of crushed anise now sprouting forth. The sweet taste of raindrops and the springy feel of the water-soaked ground continue the awakening of the senses.

But strangely there is little sound, even as the strong wind buffets the bare branches of the cottonwoods and willows. The black and white wings of a killdeer flash as it sweeps low over the river, the shrill voice that calls its name uncharacteristically silent.

Several gulls sideslip into the wind, while on the muddy expanse of the high-flowing river, a little grebe is carried downstream, turning and twisting like a toy in the current. Occasionally it stops-in midstream to nibble on grasses that not long ago were flourishing on the dry river plain.

Raindrops dimple the water, dribble off bright red rose hips and patter on a hiker's slicker hood like hail on a tin roof. Wind-blown mistletoe covers the trail. The dun-colored derriere of a rabbit disappears slowly into a blackberry bramble.

And the mushrooms are out in force, peeking out from the long green grass. Some have flat, brown caps, looking like tiny pizzas. Others have yellow bell-shaped caps. The fleshy fungi mark the rain's life-giving essence, but in this case there is no overwhelming urge to test ones sense of taste.



From "An American River Journal," a new book published by ARNHA. It features drawings by the late Jo Glasson Smith, ARNHA co-founder, and nature essays by Peter J. Hayes, retired newspaper editor and ARNHA associate board member. It is available for \$9.75 at the Effie Yeaw Nature Center, ARNHA.org, and selected stores.

Spring Fun Days at EYNC for Families and Children

Spring Fun Days this year offer **Family Fun Days** as well as programs for children only,

Family Nature Programs are for children in kindergarten and up who must be accompanied by a parent or other adult. They cost only \$5 per person per program. These two attention-grabbing programs are scheduled:

Living in Water - Families will learn about water insects and pollywogs that can be found in our local ponds and rivers. They will have a chance to see these living creatures fresh out of the village pond in a “catch and release” activity. This program is on Monday, March 29, from 10:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon.

Beaks, Jaws, and Claws - Families will learn together about adaptations of reptiles, mammals, and birds in this fun program on Wednesday, March 31, from 10:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon.

Family Spring Crafting with Libby is another fun activity for adults or parents with children. Children in kindergarten and up, *who must be accompanied by an adult*, may come and create fun spring crafts that the whole family can enjoy. Each of the mornings will offer different crafts and are only \$7 per person, with all materials included.

A Fun Family Nature Walk will take place on Friday, April 2, from 10:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon; naturalists will show visitors a snake and a raptor and then lead everyone on a special nature walk looking for tracks, scat, and wild animals! Everyone will learn how to listen with “deer ears” for the sounds of nature. This program costs only \$3 per participant; all ages are welcome!

Children Only Programs are for children enrolled in kindergarten through 5th grade. They include a *Wonderful World of Color*, Tuesday, March 30, for children in kindergarten, *Rata-tat-tat, What Bird is That* on Monday, March 29, and *Dirt and Bugs Made My Lunch* on Thursday, April 1, for children in 1st and 2nd grades, and *Egg-citing? Egg-zactly!* for children in 3rd-5th grades. Each class will be from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon and costs \$21 per child.

Enrollment for these classes and programs opened to ARNHA members only January 25 through February 12, and then opened to the public. If you haven't enrolled yet, *do* call the Nature Center, 489-4918, *now* to reserve a place. These will fill quickly because space is limited! Go to www.effieyeaw.org for more information.

Sea Lion Spotted in River

For the first time in the 25-year history of ARNHA's American River Wildlife Count, a sea lion and a Clark's Grebe were spotted in the river on a cold December 5, Jack Hiehle, coordinator with Lea Landry, reported. Also listed were Virginia Rail and Sora Rail at Sailor Bar and a Long-eared Owl elsewhere in the Parkway.

A record 115 bird species were spotted by the mostly Sacramento Audubon observers, some in canoes. They also counted 13 mammal species, including 114 deer, mostly in Ancil Hoffman County Park; 10 coyotes; 1 river otter; 16 black-tailed hares; 28 ground squirrels; 74 gray squirrels; and 205 fox squirrels.

Focus on Fundraising in 2009

In its more than 28 years of existence, ARNHA has raised more than \$1 million in pursuit of its mission “to bring people to nature and nature to people,” mainly by supporting the Effie Yeaw Nature Center as it served some 100,000 children and adults annually.

Last year we mounted numerous initiatives to help the nature center meet the huge challenges created by drastic county budget cuts. Fundraisers included the following:

- **Bird and Breakfast**, in which expert birders guided mostly family groups through the Effie Yeaw nature area, pointing out resident bird species and nests, followed by a delicious breakfast prepared and served by ARNHA board members. It raised \$2,450.

- A rummage sale of donated furniture, household goods, toys, clothing, etc. coordinated by ARNHA board member **Mojgan Fischer**. Proceeds totaled \$3,500.

- A fundraising dinner benefiting EYNC that was organized by nature center volunteer **Kayloni Medina** in cooperation with her employer, **Jack's Urban Eats**, as her Rio American High School community service project. It raised \$1,330.

- The annual EYNC Discovery Shop Holiday Sale, which raised \$4,000. Among the best sellers were **Molly Keller's** note cards and paintings, and **Liz Williamson's** hand-knit hats. (See story, page 6)

- **Benefit/Ice Cream Social** held at the home of **Ted Robinson**, chair of the Sacramento County Recreation and Park Commission and World War II naval officer who helped save John F. Kennedy when his PT boat was sunk in battle. The event raised \$1,132.

- Neighborhood children set up a lemonade stand and donated their profits to the Nature Center.

- New ARNHA publications, *Common Birds of the Sacramento Region*, a brochure produced by **Lia Robertson**, and *An American River Journal*, with illustrations by **Jo Glasson Smith** and essays by **Peter Hayes**, netted ARNHA more than \$3,800.

ARNHA in Fundraising Drive for Nature Center

ARNHA is stepping up fundraising efforts in 2010 to soften the impact on the Effie Yeaw Nature Center of massive budget cuts that have resulted in major staff layoffs, canceled programs, and nature center closures.

Here is a rundown on an exciting array of events and activities planned by a committee of ARNHA members and nature center staff, coordinated by Lia Robertson of the ARNHA associate board and center staff. Check them out and make your plans to participate.

Painting Where the Wild Things Are

Save The Date, May 15, when ARNHA and the Sacramento Fine Arts Center will join in presenting a fine arts celebration of the American River Parkway. Artists will be invited to submit paintings of the Parkway to be judged by nationally renowned artist Gregory Kondos, to be followed by an evening gala with a light supper, music, and auction of award-winning paintings. ARNHA will receive a share of the proceeds. (See story, next page).

IMAX Movie Fundraiser

Take an exhilarating river-rafting adventure down the Colorado River in the Grand Canyon with a team of explorers who are committed to bringing awareness to global water issues. ARNHA will host a private showing of "Grand Canyon 3D" at the downtown IMAX theater on Thursday, February 25, at 6 p.m. The \$15 ticket price also includes a small popcorn, a small drink, and an EYNC-hosted native animal "meet and greet." Purchase your tickets before they sell out by calling 489-4918 or by visiting the Effie Yeaw Nature Center.

Raley's Quality of Life Card program

Started in 2009, this program continues to generate donations from the Raley's, Bel Air, Food Source, and Nob Hill stores when shoppers present the card when checking out. By mid-January it had brought in \$775 for the nature center, and ARNHA members are urged to continue using their cards or get one by calling 489-4918.

Teen Golf-a-thon

Twelve-year-old Ethan Brown hopes to raise money for the nature center by playing golf at Bradshaw Golf Course March 11 and is inviting people to pledge any amount per hole. He is a bar mitzvah student at Mosaic Law Synagogue, Sacramento, and has chosen the nature center as his mitzvah, or good deed project. To make a pledge go to www.ethanbrown.pledgepage.org or e-mail ethansbrown56@yahoo.com. (See story, page 4)

Bird and Breakfast

Whether you're an experienced birder or someone who sometimes wonders "What bird is that?", you'll enjoy this annual ARNHA fundraiser. Accompany Audubon Society birders on a walk through Effie Yeaw Nature Area oak woodlands Saturday, March 13, at 7:30 a.m. Afterwards, enjoy a tasty hot breakfast at the nature center. The cost is \$35 per person (age 12 and over, please). Call the nature center at 489-4918 to make reservations. Payment is required to reserve your place. (See story, next page)

Taste of Carmichael

ARNHA will receive 100 percent of the profits from tickets we sell for the Taste of Carmichael food extravaganza Saturday, May 22, from 4:30 to 8 p.m. Twenty food vendors and ten wine providers will offer their wares at the La Sierra Community Center, 5325 Engle Rd., Carmichael. Two musical groups, including Sister Swing and tentatively the Christy Minstrels, will perform, and there will be \$3,000 in raffle prizes and auction. Tickets can be purchased from ARNHA members, George White at 481-0196, and other sponsor groups like the Boy Scouts and Carmichael Chamber of Commerce. ■

Record Holiday Sale

The Effie Yeaw Nature Center Discovery Shop's annual Holiday Sale December 6 grossed \$4,000, the highest amount since 2000, EYNC's Lynne Pinkerton reported.

Best sellers included Molly Keller's wildlife paintings and note cards, Liz Williamson's hand-knit caps trimmed with depictions of owls, wildlife photographs by Guy Galante and Chris Knight, Libby Harmor's ceramic bowls and plates, and ARNHA's new book, *An American River Journal* by Jo Smith and Peter Hayes.

Jamie Washington, EYNC volunteer coordinator, offered interesting background on knitter Liz Williamson, who volunteers as a receptionist and animal care assistant at the nature center. "She knits when she's volunteering as a receptionist, and after seeing the cool owl cap she was knitting, Marilee (EYNC Director Marilee Flannery) asked if she would knit one for our sale. She knitted 33! They each take about five hours to knit, and she provided all the yarn. Our cost: \$0."

Other donations came from Chris Knight, who donated sixteen photographs, Peter Rogers, who donated four watercolor paintings, and one anonymous donor who gave fifteen hand-made bracelets to the sale. ■

Save the Date! May 15— Painting Where the Wild Things Are!

On Saturday, May 15, ARNHA and The Sacramento Fine Arts Center will present an all-day celebration of painting and auctions of paintings, topped by an evening gala with a light supper, music, and a live auction of award winning paintings.

The Fine Arts Center will request hundreds of artists to submit paintings of the American River Parkway. (see ARNHA.org for submission details.) Gregory Kondos, a nationally renowned artist, will choose 70 paintings to be displayed at the Fine Arts Center on Gibbons Drive, Carmichael, from April 27 to May 8. Special awards will be made to a few of the most outstanding. A portion of any sales will be shared by ARNHA for the Effie Yeaw Nature Center.

On May 15 the paintings will move to the Effie Yeaw Nature Center. Visitors to the Center can view the paintings during the day in preparation for the live and silent auctions in the evening.

Also, during the day many artists will be creating *plein air* paintings throughout the nature area. These will be in silent auction in the evening as well. A children's painting program will offer families the opportunity to purchase paper, paints, and brushes, and each child's finished product will be for sale with proceeds split between the child and the nature center.

Gregory Kondos will donate a large print for live auction, and Jian Wang, prominent Sacramento artist, will donate an oil painting!

Details of the event will be publicized soon. As of now—save May 15 on your calendar! You will enjoy the art, and the Effie Yeaw Nature Center will gain much needed funds to be able to offer great programs. ■

Bring Your Binoculars to Our Annual Bird and Breakfast

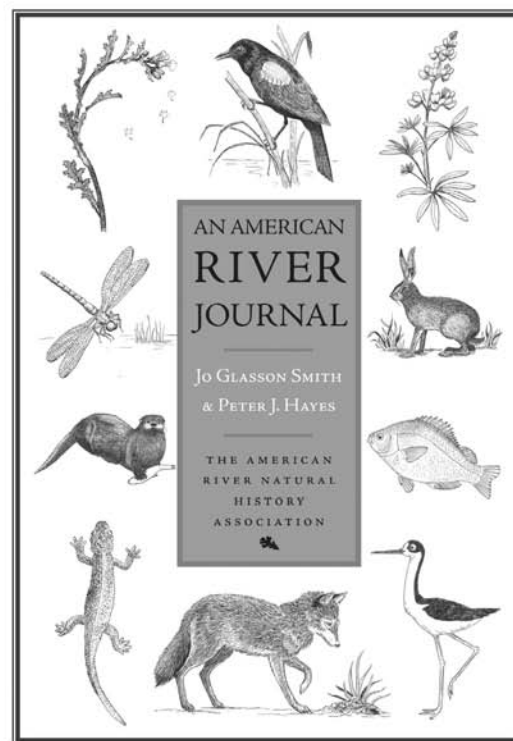
What bird's call is commonly used in the movies to characterize a bald eagle? Our own red shouldered hawk! And that raucous yellow-billed magpie? It's the only magpie in the world with a yellow bill, and it's on the upswing after a bout with West Nile virus.

Enjoy the subtle beauties of spring and learn more tips and tricks of birding by taking to the trails in small groups organized by our own Jack Hiehle and led by Audubon experts. Return to the nature center for a delicious hot breakfast hosted by ARNHA.

This popular event begins on Saturday, March 13th at 7:30 am at EYNC. The cost is \$35 per person (age 12 and older, please). Call the nature center at 489-4918 to make reservations. Payment is required to reserve your place.

Held rain or shine, the annual Bird & Breakfast celebrates a new season of birding while raising funds for nature programs. ■

NEW from ARNHA Press **An American River Journal**



Jo Smith and Peter Hayes

capture the beauty and peace of a walk
along the American River,
joining drawings and essays
from their observations of nature's rhythms
through the seasons.

\$9.75 at the Effie Yeaw Nature Center,
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ARNHA Calendar of Events

- **IMAX Movie Fundraiser**
Thursday, February 25, 6 pm (see page 6).
- **Ethan Brown Golf-a-Thon**
Thursday, March 11 (see page 4).
- **Bird and Breakfast**
Saturday, March 13, 7:30 to 11 am at EYNC (see page 7).
- **Spring Fun Days**
Monday, March 29 – Friday, April 2 at EYNC (see page 4).
- **Creek Week**
April 9-17. See www.creekweek.net or phone.
454-4544 for more information.
- **Creek Week Clean-Up**
Saturday, April 17, 9 am to noon.
Celebration in Carmichael Park from noon to 2 pm.
- **Great American River Clean-Up**
Saturday, April 17. See ARPF.org for additional information.

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- In Honor of Jack Heihle