

THE ACORN

American River Natural History Association Members' Magazine
Fall 2018

Building Tule Houses • Gala Wrap-up • Under the Oaks



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P.O. Box 579 • Carmichael, CA 95609
916-489-4918 • www.SacNatureCenter.net

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Here it is, fall again. I don't know about you, but this year went by faster than any other. While every season is amazing at the Nature Center, fall is delightful, partially due to seeing how much the young animals that were born in spring have grown. And, of course, the color changes.

Fall also brings the ARNHA Annual Meeting. It will be held Wednesday, September 12, 6:00 p.m. In accordance with our bylaws, we hold a general meeting once a year to give all members a chance to get together. The meeting is held outside on a lovely fall evening. We have had Sandhill Cranes fly over on occasion, and there is yummy food. At the meeting, in addition to honoring our volunteers and special people who make ARNHA and EYNC happen, we will report on progress toward updating the main building and aviary. If you haven't already, this will be a great chance to meet and get to know Torey Byington, our new Executive Director, and Christine Johnson, our new Volunteer Coordinator. You will be able to meet your board members, as well as our newest animal ambassadors. And, last but not least, you will have the opportunity to ask questions and give your input on how things are going. I hope to see you there.

Be sure to mark Sunday, October 7, on your calendar for NatureFest at EYNC. Bring your children, grandchildren and the young-at-heart to EYNC for a fun day of activities, animals, and nature information from EYNC and a variety of local organizations.

Lastly, have you thought about what you could do to ensure that the Effie Yeaw Nature Center continues as the premier provider of nature and environmental education along the Lower American River? I know that the first question that a prospective member may ask is "What do I get with my membership?" But I suspect that the reason you joined was because you care about protecting a 100-acre piece of wildness in the midst of the burbs. Here are a few suggestions for taking your passion to a new level. When you renew your membership next time, make it a recurring gift. Give the gift of time by helping out at events or volunteering. Include us in your legacy planning. If you have a business, or are close to someone who does, perhaps consider a sponsorship?

But most of all, be here. Come and walk the trails, sit on the benches and take some time to reconnect to nature. Visit our animal ambassadors and talk with our naturalists. Learn from the exhibits. Talk to the turkeys and let your spirit soar with the hawks.

Of all the paths you take in life, make sure a few of them are dirt. – John Muir



Photo by Kari Bauer

Cover Photo: Looking at the sky from inside a tule hut under construction.
Photo Settings: Canon EOS 7D; Canon EF-S 18-135mm; ISO 400; 18mm;
f/8; 1/250. Photographer: Kari Bauer

Building a Tule House

by Margaret Leavitt

If you've ever built or remodeled a house, you know that a lot of materials go into it. How about constructing a shelter with just two or three items, readily found all around you? The Valley Nisenan do just that – and five people had the chance to try their hand at it under the supervision of former Effie Yeaw Nature Center Naturalist and Cultural Educator Vince La Pena, during a class he taught recently at EYNC.

Before the arrival of Europeans, the local Valley Nisenan lived in villages on the bluffs overlooking the American River, safely above the annual river floods. The homes were partially underground, with mud and thatched roofs to keep out the rain. The roof had a hole in it to permit smoke from cooking fires to escape, as well as to provide an entryway.

In warm, dry summer months, and once the river had receded from the high spring-melt flows, most of the villagers, except the elderly and the pregnant women, moved down next to the river to be closer to the seasonal abundance of life along its banks. There they created temporary summer homes.

The method for making these shelters is still alive in the Nisenan culture. Effie Yeaw Nature Center staff use those methods to construct the tule houses you see in the Maidu Replica Village today. One of those houses needed to be replaced, and it was the framework for that house that Vince and his students were going to build.

Tule shelters are built using three materials – willow, tule and grapevine, all of which are found in many places along the parkway. Willow makes the frame, tule provides the siding, and grapevine helps secure the tules. Vince had located a promising source of willow growing at the edge of the American River, and he led his band of students down to the river to harvest some.

It was a sunny morning in early summer, with the promise of heat later that afternoon. Across the river, geese were honking, and a cormorant flew low over

the sparkling water. Evidence of the abundance of nature was everywhere. Vince took a moment to talk about the Nisenan respect for their surroundings. The Nisenan approach harvesting willow as they do the use of any other natural materials – with reverence and gratitude. They believe that every object has a spirit. Vince cautioned, “Take what you need, and use what you take.” Before cutting the willow, he said, take a moment to be thankful for its existence.

There are some challenges to harvesting willow today. Willow is a renewable resource, amenable to thinning. The Nisenan tended the willow, managing it for best growth, and the results were long, straight stalks that made good poles. Today, the willow along the river grows in thick patches, and it is a challenge to find the 10- to 12-foot straight branches that will make good frames, and cut them out of the thicket.

Early summer is the time to harvest willow branches. Sap is still running in it, so the branches are flexible enough to work with. Vince told the group to look for branches that were about 2 inches in diameter, with no visible sign of insect damage. The group pushed their way into the thicket, looking for likely candidates, and cutting those they chose.

As some people continued to hunt for the perfect branch, others began cutting away side shoots from the selected branches. These cut shoots were not wasted. Some were planted at the edge of the river where they would quickly root and form new willows; others were brushed into a loose pile that could provide a retreat for small birds or other animals.

After all the branches had been selected, cut and trimmed, a fun and satisfying task began: peeling the willow bark. Fresh willow has a thick bark that separates easily from the stem in long ribbons, sliding over the nubs of the cut-away shoots, and leaving a silky, light-colored, flexible stem, still moist from the sap. Vince and his students



Photos by Kari Bauer

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carried the willow branches and ribbons of bark up to EYNC and put them in the EYNC Maidu Replica Village pond to remain pliable until they were needed.

The Nisenan create round shelters with earthen floors. A circular trench is dug, outlining the area of the shelter, and the earth inside is cleared and packed down. In early summer the earth is still loose and easy to work with.

A willow house frame consists of two rounded parallel supports about two feet apart, and two additional parallel lines running perpendicular to the first ones. To create each support, the end of a peeled willow is buried in the ground along the perimeter of the shelter, and another is located across the circle from it. The two are bent toward each other and secured by wrapping



bark ribbons around them to create an upside-down U-shape, the height that the shelter will be. A second support is constructed about two-feet parallel to the first, and then perpendicular supports are constructed and lashed at right angles to the first ones.

Working together, some holding the supports upright while others lashed them to one another, the group was

able create a freestanding framework of supports. This team work, a cooperative effort among a group of people, is an important value of the Nisenan culture, Vince explained. Plus, it made the job go much more quickly.

Once the upright supports were in place and secure, the group began putting in place the rungs that would hold the tules. Starting at either side of two of the supports, so as to leave an opening for entry to the shelter, long willow branches were placed horizontally around the framework at a height about two feet from the ground, and tied to the uprights using the long, thin strips of willow bark. A second perpendicular rung was secured about two feet above that, and then a third rung. The framework was complete!

The entry of the house was typically set to face east to the rising sun, with the back of the house shielding the interior from the hot western afternoon sun. But, Vince explained, the Nisenan often did not inhabit the houses or shelters, but rather used them to store possessions. Instead, in the warm summer months, they cooked at communal fires in the village and slept outside under the stars.

Vince's class was done for the day. The framework would set and dry while EYNC staff and volunteers cut and prepared tule to drape over the willow rungs, creating the siding. Green, living tules, at least 5 feet tall, would be cut just above the roots, allowing the root to regrow. The tules would dry for a week or two to strengthen them, and then be soaked in the pond for a few hours to make them pliable enough to work with.

Once the tules are dried and soaked, they are bent in the middle and hung over the rungs of the framework with the ends of the tules secured either in the circular trench dug in the dirt



around the perimeter of the house, or by a lower rung. Then two strings of grapevine, which grows in seemingly endless lengths, are tied around the tules to secure the outside. All in all, tule house construction requires about 120 people hours to complete a house, or about 15 people working for a day.

The arrival of the salmon in the river, and the ripening of the acorns signaled fall and the coming of winter, time for the Nisenan to return to their winter homes on the bluffs. When they had retrieved their possessions from their summer homes, they set the structures on fire to release the spirits of the materials that had provided shelter all summer, and to keep the area clean, erasing all evidence of their summer presence. But they would return the next summer, and all the materials they needed to construct new summer homes would be waiting for them.

Building a tule house is a tempting project, but remember that no plants or other items can be removed from the EYNC Nature Study Area or anywhere along the Parkway without a special permit. Instead, please visit EYNC and enjoy the tule houses in the village and inside the Center.

Margaret Leavitt is a volunteer docent and receptionist and a member of the Media and Publications Committee.

Another Inspiring and Successful Gala!

by Barbara Lezon

ARNHA's ninth annual Art Where Wild Things Are Spring Gala and Art Auction was held on June 9, 2018, in perfect weather! This wonderful event, a collaboration with the Sacramento Fine Arts Center brings together art, music, food, wine, and happy guests mingling and laughing.

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But I have a very favorite part of the event.

As a staff member who works the check-out station each year, I am granted a unique vantage point from which to view the live auction. Each year as the Raise the Paddle bidding begins, I leave my station and walk out onto the porch of the Assembly Building to watch, breathless with anticipation. I can survey it all from my perch. I see 350 seated guests, eyes locked on the stage. A hush falls over the tables. And as the auctioneer begins to speak, there is something happening, something building.... After 6 years, I now know the feeling well. It is a surge of kindness and generosity from a crowd, and there is nothing like it. The first bid cards are raised at "\$4,000!" Then at "\$2,000!" "\$1,000!" "\$750!" and it continues... dozens of people. And then at "\$100!" the cards are flying up, again and again. More and more... enough to make your head spin. At least mine anyway.

As I scan the sea of bid cards raised high, tears inevitably well in my eyes and goosebumps appear on my skin. I wonder what each donor is thinking about, what they are donating for.... Is it the resident animals, like Sophia the little owl? Is it to keep our



Photos by Kari Bauer

weekend programs affordable for families? Or is it for the child who will venture into nature for the first time, thanks to the free program we can offer her class?

Whatever it is, and whatever the



amount, each donation is an incredible gift from the heart. And to see so many of these gifts in such a short amount of time is almost too much for my heart to bear. As the last few bid cards rise into the air and the Raise the Paddle segment comes to an end, I always turn back to my station, wiping away the tears and rubbing my arms to try to calm the goosebumps. And I am re-inspired for another year to keep doing what I do, so that the Effie Yeaw Nature Center can keep doing what it's been doing for 42 years. It is clear to me - we are ALL a part of this legacy.

This year's Raise the Paddle continued on page 8





Under the Oaks

by *Pete the Parkway Coyote*

Everyone is welcome at the ARNHA Annual Meeting, Sept. 12, from 6 p.m. until dusk. Exciting new plans for the Nature Center will be revealed and light refreshments will be served.

As fall approaches, nesting season has ended and Sandhill Cranes are heard overhead. Many cranes winter from late October to mid-February in the wetlands of the Central Valley. Grasses are golden and the first small acorns are falling from the trees. Larger plump acorns of higher nutritional value will fall later in the season. Ground-nesting Yellowjackets are present on or near the trails, mainly in the meadow and near water. The two coyote pups and five fawns (including two sets of twins) that were spotted in the Preserve over the summer have grown and are getting ready for their first winter.

Photos by Kari Bauer

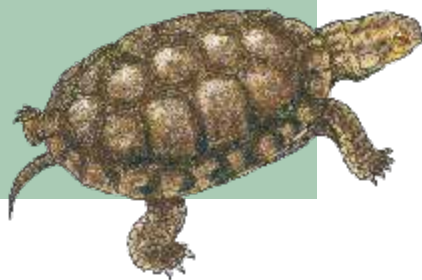


After 6 years as an EYNC Naturalist, Melanie DuBoce has accepted an exciting position with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, collecting data on Chinook Salmon. Melanie coordinated EYNC's Aquatic Studies program, leading over 150 Pond and River field studies and labs, bringing thousands of kids into the water to learn about the importance of clean water to local aquatic habitats.



Summer Camps were well attended; young nature enthusiasts enjoyed hiking, rafting, fishing, games and crafts such as "edible rock cycle." Camp photos show pinecone bird feeder and sifting acorn meal.

During the day, Clem, the Western Pond Turtle, enjoys his new outdoor enclosure in front of the entrance to the Discovery Shop.



Three new Nature of Things adult classes will take place at EYNC: "Intro to eBird," Aug. 18; "Golden State Snakes," beginning Sept. 13; and, "Beginning Birding – Fall Session," beginning Sept. 17. See sacnaturecenter.net/education/adult-programs/nature-of-things for more information and to register.

Look for Fall and Winter Nature Camp information on our website sacnaturecenter.net/education/nature-camps. Camps fill quickly so it is important to sign up when registration opens.

The "Animal Caretakers" had an unusual experience. A sharp-eyed camper spotted an Iguana high in an oak tree. This finding sparked quite a discussion about non-native animals and whether they would survive or harm the ecosystem. Ultimately it was decided to capture and rehome the Iguana. A ladder was brought from the Nature Center and the Iguana was easy to approach. All were surprised to find it was made of plastic!

American River Natural History Association presents

NatureFest logo by Ariel R. age 11

Save the date!

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I hope to see you at the Nature Center soon.

Pete's curious nature, sharp eyes, and keen sense of smell make him a great ambassador for the American River Natural History Association.



Gala, continued from page 5

segment at the Gala raised more than \$35,000 in support of the Nature Center's educational programs, including free programs to Title I schools and other special needs students. This generous gift ensures that our mission Bringing people to nature and nature to people continues. A heartfelt thank you to the donors, sponsors, guests and volunteers who make this possible – year after year.

Barbara Lezon is EYNC's Marketing and Communications Coordinator.



Photographer's Corner



Photographer: Ralph Heim

Fall on the American River Parkway. Camera Settings: 1/100 sec, F9, 70mm, ISO 200.

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Jamie Washington Retirement



In early July 2018, the ARNHA and EYNC board, staff and volunteers bid a heartfelt farewell and happy retirement to one of the Center's longtime employees, Jamie Washington. After more than 12 years serving as the Center's Volunteer Coordinator, which included managing a volunteer force of over 200 people, serving as the planner for staff and volunteer events, being the unofficial "counselor" for her co-workers and wearing any number of hats on a given day, Jamie was finally ready to pass the torch!

Jamie's experience as a teacher enabled her to excel in this position, where she used her knowledge and passion to impart the philosophy of the Effie Yeaw Nature Center to eager volunteers. She is loved for her compassion and friendly manner and her willingness to make time to listen to any volunteer or co-worker. Jamie truly exudes the Effie Yeaw spirit!

Jamie is looking forward to taking art classes, traveling (especially to visit her daughter and grandkids in Dana Point), and volunteering – at where else? The Nature Center! While the board and staff will miss her greatly, we wish her all the best in her new journey and hope to find her walking the trails of the Nature Preserve soon!

Picture by Kari Bauer. Retiring Volunteer Coordinator Jamie Washington and incoming Volunteer Coordinator Christine Johnson

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- Susan Recely
- Karin Richardson
- Shelley Richardson
- Beth Richtman
- Ruth Rezos
in memory of Bill Dillinger
- Joyce Rietz
- Mary Ann Robinson
- Jason & Amy Rogers
- Cindy Rogers
- Margaret Rogers
- Ilana Rub
- Sharon Ruffner
- Susan Russell
- Paula Ruud Kuhlman
- Meredith Ryan
- Kathleen A Sabatini
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- Sacramento Regional
Community Foundation
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- Arnold & Kathleen Samuels
- Thomas Sapunor
- Donald Saterlee
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- Anita Scuri
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- John & Julia Serences
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- Kristie Stevens
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- Linda & Thomas Sweetman
- Tanya Ta
- Masoud & Norma Tabatabai
- Veronique Tache
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- Kevin Tanner
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- Jonathan & Jaclyn Teofilo
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- Anne-Christin Trost
- Warren Truitt
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- Martha Ture
- Colleen Ann Uhlenhop
- United Way California
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- Lucille van Ommering
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- Jian Wang
- Cheryl & Thomas Ward
- Ella Warloe
- Kristi Warren
- Tanya Washington
in honor of Jamie Washington
- Nick & Sabrina Washington
- Jamie Washington
- Dustyne & Larry Weaver
- Susan Bernard Webb
- Eric Webb
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- Jane R. Wheaton
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- Lynn White
- Ramsay "Buzz" Wiesenfeld
- Mary Wilkinson
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- Liz Williamson
- Amy Williamson
- Shiomi Wilson
- Mary Jess Wilson
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- Randy Won
- John Woodling
- Lucinda Woodward
- Dorothy & James Woodstrom
- Gilbert & Nanci Woody
- Lois Wright
- Beverly Wright
- Lynne Yamane
- Bill Yeates
- Bruce Young
- Mernie Younger
- Your Cause

*Thank
you!*

Ask a Naturalist

Q: Why do bucks rub their antlers against trees?

A: Naturalist Sara Tabatabai replies: There are several reasons why bucks rub their antlers against trees. Antlers emerge in spring, covered with "velvet." By late summer, the velvet has dried, and you may see bucks rubbing their antlers on trees to remove the dried velvet. That signals the approach of the rutting, or mating season.

"When in rut, male deer have an increased testosterone level, aggression, and of course, interest in does. When the bucks rub their antlers and forehead against trees, they are leaving a strong and odorous message. The scent they deposit proclaims dominance in an area, which will attract potential mates and send a challenge to competing bucks. The rut for black-tailed deer generally occurs from November to December so you can expect higher activity among the bucks as well as the does during this time. In addition to bark rubs, bucks will self-anoint (cover themselves with scents such as their own urine) and chase after does. The most notable rutting behavior is the intense battles between bucks fighting for mating privileges. "Next time you're out on a hike and you see buck rubs, keep an eye open for a buck looking or fighting for mates. You'll be amazed at how incredible their duels can be. Remember to keep a safe distance if you stick around to watch!"



American River Natural History Association
P.O. Box 579
Carmichael, CA 95609-0579
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ARNHA Calendar of Events

Intro to eBird

Saturday, August 18, 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
Effie Yeaw Nature Center

ARNHA Annual Meeting

Wednesday, September 12, 6 p.m. to dusk
Effie Yeaw Nature Center

Golden State Snakes

Seminar, Thursday, 9/13, 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.
Field Trip, Saturday, 9/15, 10 a.m. to noon
Effie Yeaw Nature Center

Beginning Birding – Fall Session

Seminars, Mondays, September 17 & 24 and
October 1 & 8, 1:30 p.m. to 3 p.m.
Field Trips, Fridays, October 5 & 12,
8 a.m. to 11 a.m., Effie Yeaw Nature Center


NatureFest

Sunday, October 7, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Effie Yeaw Nature Center


New Members April thru June

- Peggy Buckner
- Valari Byrn
- Christopher Callahan
- Claudia Kenney Carey
- Shauna Chatters
- Kim Clark
- Nader Darab
- Daniel D'Arcangelis
- Marian Darmsted
- Jean Dodd
- Makaeva Druecker
- Suzanne Eaker
- Ruby Sharon Evans
- The Bigelow-Walker Family
- Jo Fischer
- Pam Giarrizzo
- Darian Giusti
- Shawnda Grady
- Nyonnoweh Greene
- Katie Hardy
- Mark and Julie Healton
- Dan Hester
- Samuel Hodges
- Richard Hyde
- Catherine Johnson
- Dana Katz
- Matt Kubicek
- Kathryn Lincoln
- Thomas Louis
- James Melville
- Michael O'Connell
- Shirley Paulson
- Elizabeth F. Petzold
- Jessica Plaut
- Margaret Porto
- Maureen Pryor
- Alice Ramirez
- Brad and Stacy Rivera
- Robin Robinson
- Linda Rose
- Kathleen Saenz
- Teresa Santarosa
- Lisa Sapra
- Gwenda Schoen
- Teresa Siebert
- Patty Smith
- Nate Solov
- Eileen Spoor
- Marilyn Starrett
- Jill Stevens
- Chris & Bill Swars
- Marjorie Tuckerman
- Beta Tuigilai
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