

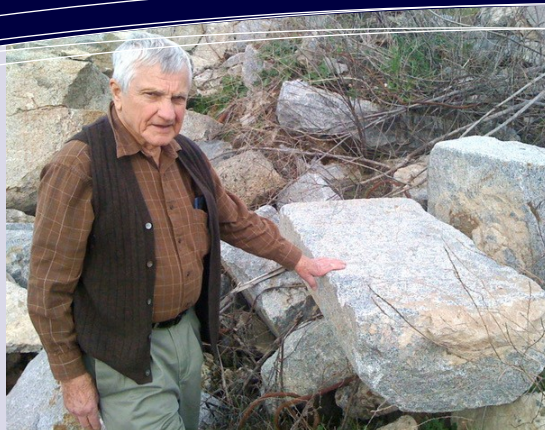
Fires, Campers Threaten the Parkway

From January thru November of 2016, there were 79 fires in the 22-mile segment of the American River Parkway from Nimbus Dam to the river's confluence with the Sacramento River.

Those were the most fires recorded in at least five years and they consumed 260 acres, according to the Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District. But that figure doesn't account for all of the riparian habitat that burned, since the district doesn't keep records on fires burning less than one acre.

Between the summer of 2015 and last November, investigators from the Sacramento Fire Department found that illegal campers were responsible for at least 46 of 86 Parkway fires. The cause of 28 of the other 42 fires hadn't been determined, but some undoubtedly were due to deliberate arson. In the last five years, Sacramento Fire found that at least 14 Parkway fires were intentionally set.

It is estimated that about 2,700 people are living in parks, alleys, parking lots, storefronts, cars and other outdoor locales in the Sacramento Region. More of them have been



"Parkway Father" Frank F. Cirill. Photo by George Nyberg

Frank Cirill: Guardian of the American River Parkway

For nearly half a century, the American River Parkway's most dedicated and inspirational guardian was Frank F. Cirill.

Cirill, who left us in January at age 94, did more than any other person to preserve and enhance the Parkway's ecosystems, wildlife habitat, waterway and recreation resources.

"My dad's main goal was to preserve the Parkway for future generations," said his daughter, Lisa Cirill. "That's what drove him to maintain this jewel from any commercial destruction. People take advantage of that Parkway. They don't understand the work that went into it to make it a world-renowned public entity."

Had it not been for Frank's dedicated involvement, the Lower American River would look much different than it does today, said Stephen Green, president of Save the American River Association.

"He showed great ability to recruit community leaders to assist in his

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advocacy. They took on elected officials who wanted to line the Parkway with commercial establishments, parking lots and subdivisions."

Thanks to their tireless efforts, Green added, "today we have a 29-mile riparian corridor stretching along the Lower American River from Folsom Dam to the river's confluence with the Sacramento River. The American River Parkway has become a model for urban parkways nationwide."

Green recalled that Cirill would tell his children: "There are two types of people in the world: people who make things happen and people who wait for things to happen. Don't ever wait."

Cirill, an avid runner, cyclist, kayaker, fly fisherman and Nordic skier, joined Save the American River Association (SARA) in the 1960s a few years after the Parkway's creation. Over the years, he served in a number of SARA offices

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"There are two types of people in the world: people who make things happen and people who wait for things to happen. Don't ever wait."

FRANK CIRILL

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Fires

Continued from Page 1

settling in the Parkway since last fall when City of Sacramento Police began rousting people holding up in the vicinity of the new Golden1 Center. Some have migrated to wooded areas near Lake Natoma and Folsom Lake, and creeks running through Roseville.

Increasingly, people have stopped visiting middle and lower reaches of the Parkway where the largest population of illegal campers are present. When homeless people were surveyed by Sacramento Steps Forward, 80 percent said they had been in jail.

The American River Natural History Association conducted their 32nd annual Wildlife Count on the lower American River on December 3, 2016. For the first time, they made no observations in Discovery Park. Their observers don't feel "comfortable navigating terrain shared by homeless and loose dogs," a spokeswoman said.

Yet to date, the region's elected officials have taken only minimal actions to help the destitute, mentally ill and drug-or-alcohol-addicted people who live outdoors in their jurisdictions. That could change with the inauguration of Sacramento Mayor Darrell Steinberg in December. Steinberg has pledged to help those in need to gain housing, drug-and-alcohol treatment, and access to health services.

When temperatures dropped to freezing levels in late December, Steinberg allowed homeless people to spend warm nights at the pool house in Sacramento's Southside Park. Only two people showed up the first night. Numbers increased in subsequent days but the pool house

never filled up because there was no organized effort to tell homeless people it was available.

The warming center can't benefit many people. The pool house only accommodates up to 40 people and is only open on nights when outside temperatures are below 40 degrees or when there are heavy rains storms. And all of the people who seek refuge there must leave the pool house by 6:30 a.m. each day.

Communities that have had success connecting homeless people with housing and other services have hired "navigators" to go out where the homeless are and talk to them about options that are available. Sacramento County created a position for one navigator last year. That person is accompanied by one

or more park rangers when reaching out to homeless people in the Parkway.

In 2015, Sacramento County reported spending \$1.1 million on rangers and maintenance crews to deal with illegal camps in the Parkway. They cleaned up 1,474 trash sites that campers had created.

"Law enforcement can't solve homelessness," said the county's Chief Ranger Michael Doane. "You can't separate out the fact there is a segment of the population who does not want to be homeless and have no place to go."

Local elected officials have been told repeatedly that housing is the first step for getting people off the streets and out of the parks. Once in a safe

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CHARACTERISTIC	PERSONS
Sheltered	1,711
Unsheltered	948
Chronically Homeless Individuals	466
Chronically Homeless Families	13
Persons in Chronically Homeless Families	36
Homeless Families	238
Persons in Homeless Families	697
Veterans	313
Adults with Serious Mental Illness	581
Chronic Substance Abuse	553
Persons with HIV/AIDS	37
Victims of Domestic Violence	335
Transition Age Youth (18-24) in Households	51
Unaccompanied Transition Age Youth (18-24)	240

A 2015 survey of 2,659 homeless people in Sacramento County by Sacramento Steps Forward found the above characteristics of the population.

Fires

Continued from Page 2

place to live, it's much easier to connect people with health and mental services, and even assist them in finding employment.

But that's not cheap. Elected officials have been reluctant to fund housing programs. Many existing residents and business owners don't want housing for destitute people in their neighborhoods. The homeless problem has been with us for years. But Sacramento County Supervisors only recently asked their staff to develop a proposal for a housing program.

Sacramento County compiles a report on the number of people who die on the streets and riverbanks each year. From 2002 to 2015, 705 men, women and children died, or the equivalent of one person every seven days. There were 32 homeless deaths in 2002, but that number grew to 78 in 2015.

During that period, the suicide rate among homeless people was 16 times greater than the general population. The homicide rate was 31 times greater. The average age of death for homeless women was 47 years during that time and 49 years for men.

The facts are indisputable: we have a social problem in the Sacramento Region involving people who live outdoors. They are subjected to suffering and early deaths. Some engage in crime and the destruction of property. They can cause fires, trash environments and destroy critical wildlife habitat.

The question remains whether our region's elected leaders will make a serious effort to join Mayor Steinberg in addressing the problem. ■



At SARA's annual meeting in December, Assembly Members Ken Cooley and Kevin McCarty, and legislative advocate Corey Brown were honored for their work on legislation establishing a Conservancy Program on the Lower American River. SARA President Stephen Green (center) presented Cooley (right) and Brown (left) with photos of the Parkway. McCarty also received a photo, but was unable to attend the meeting. Photo by George Nyberg

Support County Parks — Buy An Annual Pass

The Pass pays for itself in 10 visits and all funds go directly towards maintaining and operating the 15,000-acre system. For as little as \$50 per year, you can have unlimited access and parking in the parks.

Pass holders receive free daily entry into Regional Parks and annual passes are valid for one year from date of purchase.

Pass Fees Are Based On Use:

Vehicle:	\$50
Vehicle + Trailer or oversized vehicle (over 22 feet):	\$100
Vehicle + Horse trailer:	\$75
Vehicle and small watercraft:	\$80
Parks supporter pass*	\$50

** This pass is for those who want to support Parks but do not drive to Parks facilities*

Where to Purchase Your Parks Pass

- Online through the Sacramento County Web site www.regionalparks.saccounty.net
- At REI stores in Sacramento, Roseville and Folsom
- Patriot Cycles in Fair Oaks
- Effie Yeaw Nature Center at Ancil Hoffman Park
- Regional Park offices and park kiosks
- American River Parkway Foundation Office at the William B. Pond Recreation Area

www.sarariverwatch.org

Cirill

Continued from Page 1

including president and, in recent years, as president emeritus.

He promoted bond issues and fundraising efforts to acquire land for the Parkway and remove a sewage plant, a trailer court and a tavern.

For 21 years, Cirill led the battle to prevent the East Bay Municipal Utility District from taking American River water from the Folsom South Canal – a diversion that would have reduced the lower stretch of the river to a trickle. Many local people thought SARA would never prevail. But Cirill persisted, raised more than \$700,000 for legal costs, and the diversion never happened.

Cirill persuaded a local State Assembly member to drop legislation that would have allowed development of a golf course, 40-acre parking lot and other facilities at Bushy Lake on the river's flood plain next to CalExpo. He derailed plans for another golf course at Mississippi Bar on Lake Natoma.

And he initiated a lawsuit to stop encroachment that would have blocked public access to the Fair Oaks overlook where the best views of the Parkway can be seen. An additional 4.5 acres were eventually acquired at the overlook and added to the Parkway. That cost nearly \$1 million.

In 1985, Cirill organized the Lake Natoma Community Task Force which sued successfully to stop the creation of a recreational vehicle park and other commercial development on the

shoreline of Lake Natoma.

He served on the Sacramento County Parks and Recreation Commission and helped guide the updates of the American River Parkway Plan.

Among other endeavors, he organized a group of joggers, the South Side Striders, and spent decades on the organizing committee for Eppie's Great Race, the annual triathlon on the river. Cirill designed the original race course and was the first Iron Man in the age-60-plus division.

During his 27-years with Continental Heller Construction Corp., Cirill was one of the chief engineers overseeing the \$68 million restoration of the State Capitol from 1975-81.

"By far the most interesting project I've ever been involved in," Cirill told a Sacramento Bee reporter in 1993. "We were dealing with a building from the 1860s, so we had to do a lot of investigative work to even decide how to go about the restoration. The original plans had been destroyed in the San Francisco 1906 earthquake."

In February of 2016, Cirill's achievements were recognized by the California Parks & Recreation Society which inducted him into the society's Hall of Honor. "He is truly an inspirational leader," said Charlie Willard, a former SARA Board Member who introduced Cirill to members of the society.

Cirill was born in Buffalo, N.Y., on Nov. 8, 1922. His parents were Italian

immigrants whose last name was Cirillo, a name he later shortened. The family moved to San Diego when he was 15. After the outbreak of World War II, Cirill took an early graduation from high school and enlisted in the Merchant Marine where he served until 1949.

During the war, he told the Bee reporter, he encountered "everything from collisions to groundings and fires on board. We were in the Atlantic and the Pacific and areas of North Africa... I made two round trips of the world. After the war ended, I was involved in the Marshall Plan. We were providing foodstuffs and rebuilding material to Europe up till '49."

After leaving the Merchant Marine, Cirill settled in Sacramento. For many years, he lived in the River Park neighborhood near the American River where he was active in community affairs and projects.

He is survived by his wife Doris who worked in support of his many endeavors during their 56-year marriage. In addition to Lisa, he is survived by his son Curtis Cirillo who took back the original family name; son-in-law Kevin Shirley; daughter-in-law Soussan Cirillo; and grandchildren Rose, Wolfgang and Levon.

The family cremated Cirill's remains and plans to scatter them at sea from the Liberty Ship SS Jeremiah O'Brien. An outdoor celebration of his life will be held when the spring weather returns. ■



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DONATIONS MADE IN HONOR OF:

James Brownell
 Judy Sohl

SARA appreciates the support of our generous members. Without your support, SARA would not be able to continue our role as *Guardians of the American River and Parkway since 1961*. New and renewing members are listed in *RiverWatch* according to their preference (indicated on the SARA membership/renewal form).

In Memoriam

Save the American River Association has received donations honoring the memory of the following friends:

Frank Cirill

Bill Griffith

Donald A. Kenmonth

Carolyn Lorraine Smith

Jack Sohl

Save the American River Association frequently receives donations in memory of lost loved ones, many of whom were users and supporters of the American River Parkway. Some donors give names. Others prefer to remain anonymous. SARA notifies family members when donations are made and those people are always very appreciative. The money is used to further SARA's advocacy work on behalf of the Parkway.

Contributions may be made by check or online via SARA's website. **SARA also has a Legacy program. For information on the program, please call the SARA office (916) 482-2551. ■**

*"Whatever befalls the
 earth, befalls the people
 of the earth. Man did
 not weave the web of
 life; he is merely
 a strand in it."*

CHIEF SEATTLE

111 Bird Species Counted on the Lower American River

The American River Natural History Association conducted its 32nd annual Wildlife Count on the Lower American River on December 3.

Sixty-seven volunteers scouted eleven locations between Hazel Avenue and an area between Gristmill and Watt Avenue. They observed 111 bird species and 18 mammal species in addition to a scattering of reptiles sunning themselves and six feral cats. Two new bird species were spotted: a Mute Swan and a Common Raven.

A total of 187 bird species have been identified on the Lower American over the years. The most birds seen in recent years were 123 species in 2010.

For the first time, no scouting was done in the Discovery Park area during the December count. A decision to exclude Discovery Park was made because of the prevalence of illegal campers and loose dogs in the area, said Rachael Cowan, a certified naturalist at the Effie Yeaw Nature Center who calls herself a “birdnerd.” She hopes they can return to Discovery Park next December.

The observers had a good day for the count. Weather was clear with a light wind and the temperature was 38 degrees in the early hours.

The data collected helps track the emergence or loss of a species and also provides critical information about

population changes, such as the drop in Yellow-billed Magpie numbers due to West Nile Virus.

The late Jack Hiehle started and organized the Wildlife Count for more than 20 years. He was one of the most productive and revered volunteers on the Parkway. In recent years, the count organizer has been William Avery, professor of ornithology at California State University.

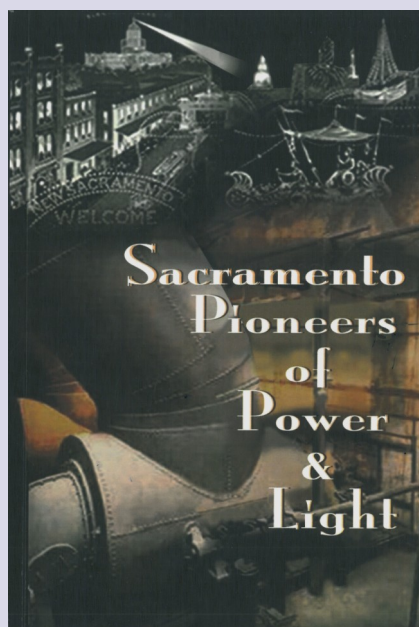
The 2017 count will be conducted on December 2 and new volunteer observers always are welcome, Cowan said. ■

BOOK REVIEW

SACRAMENTO PIONEERS OF POWER & LIGHT

Published by the Sacramento County Historical Society

\$10



When the Folsom Powerhouse came online in 1895, it was the world's most powerful powerhouse. It began transmitting electricity 22 miles to downtown Sacramento and generated international news stories heralding what was perhaps the longest transmission in the world.

Pioneering efforts in the development of power and light occurred in the Sacramento area during the 19th Century. This book contains three chapters chronicling the significant events and the efforts of people responsible for them.

The first chapter by Robert Livingston is a history of gas lighting in Sacramento which began in 1855 and was caught up in political infighting for decades.

Chapter Two by Rowena Wise Day is a history of the Folsom Powerhouse and the “Carnival of Lights” celebration that followed the arrival of electricity in Sacramento.

The final chapter by Daniel E. Winkelman describes the masterminds who developed the Folsom Powerhouse's advanced electrical system and the impact their work had on the creation of modern electric power systems. They included Albert Gallatin, Horatio and Charles Livermore, Almarian Decker, Charles Steinmetz, Elihu Thomson, Louis Bell and William Stanley, Jr.

Their work is on display at the Folsom Powerhouse State Historic Park, 9980 Greenback Lane in Folsom. Hours are noon-to-4 p.m., Wednesday-Sunday. Group Tours may be scheduled, 916-985-4843. ■

Parkway Turkeys had Prehistoric Ancestors

Most visitors to the American River Parkway and nearby neighborhoods probably have heard that the wild turkeys are not native. While it is true that they were introduced, turkeys also had ancestors in California that disappeared 10,000-to-12,000 years ago.

For decades, scientists have been digging turkey bones out of the hardened asphalt at the La Brea Tar Pits in Los Angeles. The prehistoric turkeys were a little smaller than those now foraging in the Central Valley and foothills, but are otherwise indistinguishable from today's wild birds. Researchers suggest the ancient birds probably migrated from Asia across the Bering landbridge when Alaska was connected to Eurasia eons ago. Why the turkeys disappeared from what is now California isn't known, but it probably had to do with climate change and hunting.

California was without turkeys until 1877 when two ranchers introduced them to Santa Cruz Island as game birds. Other attempts to introduce turkeys were made in the 19th and early 20th Centuries without much success.

Then in 1959, state Dept. of Fish and Game employees began transplanting turkeys to establish a new game bird in California. Most came from Texas and Mexico where the genus *Meleagris gallopavo* is prevalent. Transplants continued until 2004 when the California Native Plant Society sued to stop their import. Turkeys, the society's suit said, were denuding whole areas of wildflowers and taking the habitat and food sources away from California Quails and other native birds.

Today, it is estimated that there are at

least a quarter million turkeys in California and they are thriving – especially in areas like the oak-studded Parkway where hunting isn't allowed and there are few predators. Frequent Parkway visitors have seen turkeys taking after coyotes that intruded on their turf.

Male turkeys can grow to 3.8-feet in height and weigh up to 18.8 pounds. The gobblers have dark iridescent plumage.

“...it is estimated that there are at least a quarter million turkeys in California and they are thriving.”

Flight feathers are black with brown stripes and white bars. They have a fleshy lobe called a wattle that hangs down from the chin or throat. Heads are red, blue or white depending on the season.

Hens are smaller and duller in color than males, and most have nothing resembling a wattle. They have a grayish head and feathered neck.

Turkeys can live 10-to-12 years. They roost in trees but forage on the ground for insects, green plants, seeds, acorns, fruit and even small snakes, lizards and frogs.

Mating occurs whenever the males can get away with it. But most of it occurs from February to late spring. The courting is fun to watch. Males gobble and strut around spreading their tail fans, drooping and rattling their main flight feathers, and swelling their heads.



A male gobbler courts an indifferent female on the Parkway

Females appear to be largely indifferent, but eventually four-to-six will join a breeding flock with a dominate male.

After the courtship, females sneak away and are secretive about where they nest. They create a shallow nest and line it with leaves and grasses. They can lay from 4-to-17 eggs and some hens share nests. Some even dump a few eggs in another hen's nest.

The eggs are incubated for about 28 days. Hens aggressive protect the hatchlings. But within two or so weeks, all are roosting in trees. Hens tend the young alone and many will stay together until next breeding season.

When young males leave the brood flock they tend to form separate, all-male flocks. A lot of fighting occurs while dominance is determined in the flock. Rival flocks also engage in vicious fights involving wings, spurs and beaks. Fights can last for extended periods and sometimes there will be a fatality.

Once the fight is over, turkeys return to their gregarious nature. And life is good.





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