

The American River Bike Patrol Is Making a Difference

In July, the American River Bike Patrol (ARBP) completed its first year of service on the American River Parkway.

The volunteer patrollers logged 1,149 patrols during that time, spending 2,917 hours riding 21,606 miles along the Jedediah Smith Memorial Trail.

They provided 3,154 assists to Parkway users, 78 of whom received emergency medical assistance. One person who was in full cardiac arrest was successfully given CPR.

They also repaired 230 bicycles, and initiated 22 – 911 calls, 47 – 311 calls and 13 calls to park ranger dispatch.

“The most common assistance given was advising 2,285 pedestrians on which side of the trail to walk,” according to Tim Viall who founded the volunteer patrol. “The next most common was giving directions to 134 trail users.”

The patrollers also counseled people on trail etiquette including pedestrians who were blocking the trail, bikers on the wrong side of the trail, bridge jumpers, people with off-leash

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Former campsite next to Bushy Lake

Fires!

BY STEPHEN GREEN

By early August, fires had destroyed more than twelve percent of the American River Parkway’s natural habitat.

The number and intensity of fires are far beyond those seen in any other fire season during recorded history. And we’re only halfway through the normal season.

We’ve lost vintage oak trees and vital habitats that wildlife depend upon in the Parkway, including an estimated 1,000 deer and 160 bird species.

A fire near Bushy Lake destroyed an academic project in habitat restoration that had been under development for five years by Sacramento State University students and faculty. After fire crews left the site, fire flareups and hot spots continued to burn for several days.

Western Pond Turtles (a species of concern) were in the peak of their nesting season when the Bushy Lake fire broke out. Their nests were destroyed as was the nest of a Swainson’s Hawk (a threatened species).

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Most of the fires occurred at or near homeless camps on the Parkway. Owing to a recent court decision, homeless people can’t be evicted from public places as long as there is no other place for them to be housed in a safe shelter.

Sacramento County ordinances do ban fires and incendiary cooking devices such as barbecues and gas stoves outside designated areas within county parks. Violators can be given misdemeanor citations and their cooking equipment can be confiscated (see the sidebar listing the ordinances).

Anyone biking or walking past homeless camps on the Parkway will see fire pits, stoves and bar-be-ques, and canisters of fuels that could explode if engulfed in fire. Homeless people are most at risk along with nearby neighborhoods. Former Regional Parks Director Ron Suter has said that if the fires continue there is high “probability of loss of human life.”

But the county is not enforcing the ordinances.

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Fires

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There have never been adequate numbers of park rangers to police the Parkway. The new county budget provides for hiring four more rangers. But it's a tough time to be a cop. Police agencies nationwide are finding it difficult to recruit officers.

In addition, there is a high rate of turnover on the county park ranger staff. Park rangers are paid less than police in nearby jurisdictions. When an opening occurs in the region, park rangers apply.

Park rangers are police officers and perform hazardous duties. They should have the same pay and benefits as county sheriff's deputies.

Park rangers should be teamed with sheriff's deputies and directed to conduct regular inspections of homeless campsite in parks.

During the pandemic, visits to the Parkway have increased. People come from throughout the valleys, the Bay Area and Lake Tahoe to enjoy and recreate in our Parkway. Unless county fire ordinances are aggressively enforced, the American River Parkway, it's habitats, wildlife and park users will continue to be in peril. ■

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SACRAMENTO COUNTY FIRE ORDINANCES

SCC 9.36.058 FIRES

- A. No person shall ignite, maintain, or use any fire, or ignite or maintain a fire using a gas or electric barbeque cooker, in any place within any park facility except in a barbecue cooker or other cooking device authorized by the Director for that purpose or when allowed by a permit issued by the Director.
- B. No person shall ignite or maintain a fire of material deposited in any can, box, trench, pit or other receptacle for the purpose of garbage disposal or incineration.
- C. No person shall ignite or maintain a fire using solid fuel such as charcoal, or other material except in areas designated as a picnic area or when issued a permit by the Director.
- D. Any person violating this subdivision is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction, shall be punished as provided in SCC Section 9.36.035.
- E. The presence of any barbeque or other incendiary device in any place within any park facility, except in designated picnic areas or when allowed by a permit issued by the Director, shall be unlawful and constitutes a public nuisance subject to summary abatement as an imminent threat to public health and safety. Any such barbeque or other incendiary device shall be seized and immediately removed from the park facility by the Department and, thereafter, stored in a secure facility subject to retrieval by the owner of such property under such administrative procedures as may be adopted by the Department. ■



Habitat near Bushy Lake scorched by fire in June

Bike Patrol

Continued from Page 1

dogs and children who were not wearing helmets.

The ARBP is affiliated with the National Ski Patrol which has some 640 units nationwide and more than 40 bike patrols on alpine trails and in urban areas.

The volunteers are asked to spend at least 48 hours annually on patrol. But most will average 100 hours, Vail said, and some devote 200 hours or more.

Thanks to their presence, the Jedediah Smith Memorial Trail is a safer place to ride and walk. Vail and his colleagues are looking for more volunteers to join the patrol. For more information about the ARBP, visit: AmericanRiverBikePatrol.org ■



Patroller helping on the trail

Plastic Waste Measure Makes the Ballot

A proposition aimed at reducing plastic waste in California has qualified for the November 2022 ballot.

Plastic waste currently accounts for about ten percent of the waste in California. Most of it ends up in landfills, but many plastic products litter streets, roads and landscapes, or enter streams and rivers where they can flow to the ocean.

The measure would require the state to adopt regulations reducing plastic waste, including:

- Requiring that single-use plastic packaging, containers, and utensils be reusable, recyclable or compostable.
- Prohibiting polystyrene container use by food vendors.
- Taxing producers of single-use plastic packaging, containers or utensils and allocating revenues for recycling and environmental programs including local water supply protection.
- Prohibiting the Legislature from reducing funding to specified state environmental agencies.

As the election campaigns begin to heat up next year, we can expect to hear much more about this measure. ■



Steve Flannery

MAY 24, 1952 – JUNE 2, 2021

In early June, we lost former Chief Park Ranger Stephen J. Flannery who served with the Sacramento County Regional Parks Department for 35 years.

“Steve was a gifted leader who did much to improve the professionalism of the ranger staff,” said Warren Truitt, vice president of Save the American River Association. “He wrote the ordinance prohibiting glass beverage containers within the American River Parkway. And he didn’t hesitate to go after a county judge who cut down or damaged heritage oak trees on the Parkway.”

After graduating from California State University, Sacramento, with a degree in Biological Conservation, Flannery joined the Regional Parks Department as a Park Ranger Assistant.

As he advanced through the ranks, Flannery engaged in all the police activity in the



Steve Flannery

Parkway. Among other challenges, he rescued people who were drowning in the American River, arrested vandals and muggers, and fought fires on the American River Parkway. He also shared his knowledge of the Parkway’s natural resources with visitors. In his spare time, he authored a bird book and built three houses.

“Steve will be greatly missed by his family and all who knew him,” Truitt said. “For all of us who treasure the parks, we were so fortunate to have his service.”



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WARREN TRUITT

In Memoriam

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

WILLIAM DILLINGER

STEVE FLANNERY

JAMES W. GREEN

JOANNA JENSEN

JON LITMAN

THOMAS YEATES

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. 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 contact the SARA office.**



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April — June 2021

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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).

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Thank you for your valued membership and for helping us become a greener organization!



"It's always easier to perpetuate the boondoggle than to confront the problem."

BRUCE BROWN

SARA Office Manager, Sara Stephens

BY WARREN V. TRUITT

In 2010, *Save the American River Association (SARA)* officially entered the 21st Century, administratively speaking, with the addition of Sara Stephens to serve as *SARA*'s Office Manager.

Born in Sacramento, Sara grew up in Stockton where her parents settled, after her father, while serving in the U.S. Air Force during Vietnam and her mother, employed as a flight attendant for World Airways, met in Japan.

Sara is a 5th generation Californian and a direct descendent of Donner Party survivor, Nancy Graves, who was nine-years-old at the end of that horrible 1857 ordeal. Sara's immediate family and large extended family always have enjoyed the outdoors and spent many weekends tent camping, hiking and exploring. From these experiences, Sara learned the importance of spending time in nature and the value of all living things. White water rafting trips with her father during her high school and college years strengthened Sara's love of rivers.

4-H was a major component of her life up to approximately age 15. Sara raised show rabbits and entered them in rabbit shows all over California. At one point, Sara had more than 50 rabbits in the backyard — it became a small business with a lot of responsibility.

Sara was from Lincoln High School in Stockton and went on to UC Davis, earning a degree in *Rhetoric and Communication*. She also rowed on the Aggie's women's crew team and worked at the university newspaper, *The Aggie*.

Shortly thereafter, Sara began an internship with Foundation Health, which led to a Product Analyst position at Health Net, where she met her husband, Chris. After several years at Health Net, Sara accepted a new position at VSP, switching her job focus to online communications, eventually serving as a Front End Web Developer. While loving her creative and challenging role at VSP, the arrival of sons Ryan and Noah, in 2003 and 2005 respectively, Sara's priorities changed and it became important to find an opportunity to spend more time with their boys.

The timing was a perfect fit for both Sara and *Save the American River Association*. Sara advises, "I am honored to work with this group of talented, committed and caring individuals and for an organization that has made such a positive and longstanding impact on our community."

SARA is more than thrilled to have Sara as our Office Manager, as in addition to her smiling and welcoming voice and personality, her extensive experience and skills have provided *SARA* with modern tools and approaches that make our organization, which is celebrating our 60th year in 2021, considerably more professional and effective.

Looking to the future, Sara states, "While I am still waiting on the free time that one expects to enjoy as children grow older, I do hope to eventually spend more time on the creative endeavors I love the most — drawing and painting. And, of course, more time hiking and exploring the American River Parkway." ■



Sara Stephens

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*

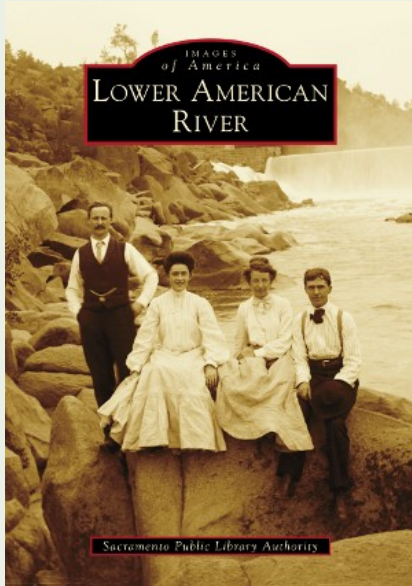
Where to Purchase Your Parks Pass

- Online through the American River Parkway Foundation Web site arpf.org/visit
- 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 ■

BOOK REVIEW

Lower American River

SACRAMENTO PUBLIC LIBRARY AUTHORITY,
ARCADIA PUBLISHING, \$21.99



The staff of the Sacramento Public Library Authority has produced a very interesting book on the history of the Lower American River with more than 100 historic photos from the Sacramento Public Library's collection. Some of the photos date from the 1850s.

Photos include floods in the village of Sacramento, levee construction, an early view of Sutter's Fort, people in camps, business and industries on the river banks, working gold dredgers and the vast tailings they produced, washed-out bridges, the Sacramento Valley Railroad, construction of Folsom Dam, inmates working in a quarry that provided granite slabs for construction of Folsom Prison and the state Capitol, and many, many more.

There also is a photo of an engraving depicting Nisenan Indians who lived along the river before being dispossessed by settlers. And there are photos of maps of the course of the river and diversions that were made.

For anyone who enjoys time on the Lower American River, this book is a find. They will be looking at the book periodically for years to come. ■

Skunks Like Living With Us

When skunks release that putrid smell from their anal glands, the spray can range up to ten feet. But the odor has been documented as traveling up to 1.5 miles depending on wind conditions. Juvenile skunks can begin to spray when only eight-days old.

But skunks usually only release their spray when threatened or defending their young. Before spraying they usually growl, spit, fluff their fur, shake their tail and stamp on the ground.

The Striped Skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*) is the most common of the four North American skunk species. They are found from southern Canada to northern Mexico and hang out in California anywhere from sea level to timberlines. But they avoid deserts.

Skunks have adapted well to human environments and can make dens under porches, decks and other structures. They also den in tree hollows, cavities in logs, crevices in rocks, brush piles and abandoned animal burrows. Some will dig their own burrows underground if no other shelter is available.

And even people who've been

skunked tend to agree that skunks are cute.

Skunks can range 20-to-30 inches long and weight six-to-ten pounds. Their average lifespan in the wild is four-to-seven years. They breed in the early spring and the gestation period averages about 63 days when up to four are born. The young stay in the nest for about two months before accompanying their mother for forage. Except when young are present, skunks are usually solitary animals. They are primarily nocturnal and can be active throughout the year. But may remain in a den during inclement weather.

Skunks are carnivores. They tend to prefer insects and grubs, but also feed on plants, bird eggs, fecal matter, human garbage, and small rodents. They also feed on wasps and honeybees and can attack beehives. They are immune to snake venom and are known to eat rattlesnakes and other poisonous snakes.

Skunks have poor eyesight, but strong senses of smell and hearing. If you encounter a skunk, it's recommended that you back away slowly and quietly and you should avoid being sprayed. ■



Striped Skunks at their den



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