

Large Events in the Parkway Threaten People and the Environment

On May 15, more than 17,000 people gathered in Discovery Park on the American River Parkway for 102.5 Live, a hip-hop concert sponsored by radio station KSFM. Midway through the concert, a deep-fryer ignited propane tanks in a food vendor's booth and exploded, causing a fire. Three people were burned.

The explosion set off a stampede. People were knocked to the ground and trampled. Three of them needed hospitalization.

A short time later, two men got into a fist fight at another food/beer booth and one later died.

Save the American River Association (SARA) representatives have been telling the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors that raucous, environmentally damaging events like 102.5 Live are prohibited by the American River Parkway Plan. The plan was approved unanimously by the county supervisors and entered into state law.

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Confluence of the American and Sacramento Rivers near Discovery Park

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SARA Urges a "NO VOTE" on Measure B

BY BETSY WEILAND

On the November election ballot, Sacramento County voters will be asked to approve Measure B – a county-wide, half-cent sales tax increase that would raise \$3,614,000,000 over 30 years for transportation projects.

Save the American River Association's Board of Directors urges county residents to vote NO!

Measure B would help fund a new bridge for automobiles, bicycles, light rail and pedestrians starting on Sequoia Pacific Blvd. in Sacramento City's River District, crossing the American River, cutting through Discovery Park, and finally joining Truxel Road.

The construction would destroy five acres of prime riparian habitat in the American River Parkway. It would cut through the heart of the greatest old growth riparian forest anywhere near Sacramento. Because this type of forest is green all summer when much of our other native vegetation is golden and resting, it's a magnet for wildlife and far more significant for providing them prime habitat. Colorful song birds that winter in tropical rain forests return each summer to this Parkway forest because it is just large enough to provide the security and peace they need to nest successfully.

Funding from Measure B would destroy these secure and quiet nesting places. And just as important, this new bridge

would destroy one of the rare places in our hot and dry region where residents and visitors alike can escape the pressures of an urban environment, finding cool, restful hiking and biking experiences. The Parkway preserves some of the last remaining five percent of this distinct and critical habitat in California.

There is a much better option for improving transportation for autos, light rail, bicyclists, and pedestrians in the immediate area.

A little more than a mile upstream, four bridges cross the Parkway on State Route-160. Caltrans' studies found that one of the bridges needs to be replaced and the other three require major rehabilitation. Measure B promises to prioritize the repair and replacement of aging bridges to ensure the safety and reliability of major pieces of infrastructure.

What it really does is help fund a \$70 million-to-\$100 million in today's dollars new auto bridge over the American River through Discovery Park that will include bicycles and pedestrians and FUTURE light rail? FUTURE light rail? Huh? Originally, the bridge at this location was justified as a light rail/pedestrian/walking bridge; an alternative to air pollution and traffic congestion. It is even identified as such in the American River Parkway Plan 2008.

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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.

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Vehicle + Horse trailer	\$75
Vehicle and small watercraft:	\$80
Parks supporter pass*	\$50

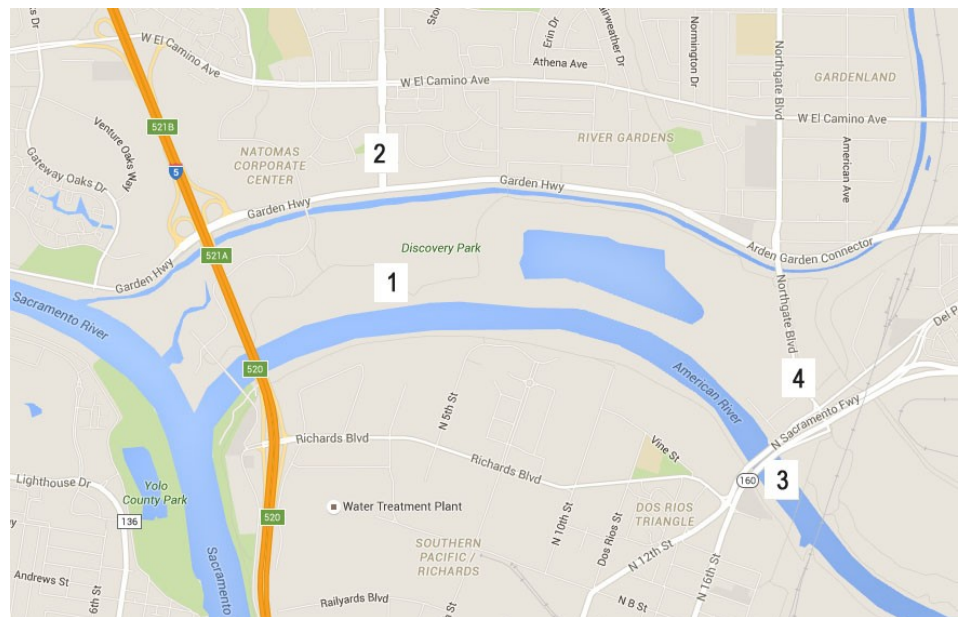
** This pass is for those who want to support Parks but do not drive to Parks facilities*

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

Measure B

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Measure B would finance a bridge crossing through Discovery Park, taking out five acres of prime riparian habitat. (1) Route of the Discovery Bridge crossing (2) Truxel Road (3) Location of the four SR-160 bridges in need of replacement or upgrading (4) Northgate Boulevard

Somewhere along the way automobile lanes appeared as part of the project, and now, if you read Measure B, the new “American River bridge to South Natomas” is described as a bridge with “autos and bike lanes and FUTURE light rail (the author’s emphasis),” according to Sacramento County Measure B Transportation Sales Tax Expenditure Plan, (2017-2047), Page 6). Somebody had better decide exactly what this bridge is supposed to accomplish before we spend between \$70 million and \$100 million dollars to deprive us all of the heart and soul of Sacramento, the American River Parkway.

Besides Caltrans’ findings that the SR-160 bridges are in need of serious rehabilitation and replacement, the Sacramento City-sponsored 2012-13 American River Crossings Alternative Study concluded that there would be other significant benefits to investing in the SR-160 bridges.

- There would be improved and safer access for all modes of transportation – autos, light rail, bicycles and pedestrians.
- Northgate Boulevard would be elevated, connecting it to SR-160 with a

full access at grade intersection and providing full access to both directions on SR-160. Today, access is limited to one eastbound off-ramp from SR-160 to Northgate Blvd. and westbound on-ramp from Northgate Blvd./Del Paso Blvd. to SR-160. These improvements better connect the communities of Natomas, North Sacramento and the Central City.

- The long-time problem of how to complete the Two Rivers Trail running underneath the SR-160 would be solved.
- The flooding problem causing Northgate Blvd. to close when the creeks and/or the American River overflow would be eliminated. The City has delayed solving this problem for 20+ years, exposing the citizens of Sacramento to mobility and economic hardships. An all-weather Northgate Boulevard also provides more flexibility in moving people between flood basins, possibly saving lives.
- A troubled area of the American River Parkway would be cleaned up and Downtown Sacramento would get a new gateway entrance showcasing its

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Measure B

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“crown jewel.”

- If light rail to the airport is the desired end goal of this “American River bridge to South Natomas,” this project could accomplish a connection with all travel modes to Truxel Road via Garden Highway. It is a feasible alternative to destroying irreplaceable recreation and nature areas of the American River Parkway. To date, no replacement property of equal value and usefulness has been identified as required by law.
- This project would accomplish the completion of transportation fixes (remember Measure B’s promise to Fix It First?) developed during the 2012-2013 American River Crossings Alternative Study stakeholder committee process deemed worthy of implementation.

Unfortunately Measure B, the 30-year, \$3.6 billion dollar sales tax, was put together without the benefit of any stakeholder process in the tradition of the voter-approved Measure A in 2004, the 30-year extension of a 20-year transportation sales tax first passed by citizens in 1988.

For Measure B, elected officials from the County of Sacramento, City of Sacramento, Folsom, Elk Grove, Rancho Cordova, Citrus Heights, Galt and Isleton put together their wish lists of priorities with some polling that indicated the public has very little stomach for grand and expansive road and transit projects, but prefer instead an increased sales tax that invests in our existing transportation infrastructure. In other words, take care of what we have.

This polling led to the Measure B Fix It First sales pitch and a supposed investment priority for years 1-5 of the 30 years in the maintenance and operations of existing transportation assets such as streets, roads, bridges, and improvements to enhance safety

and access for pedestrians, bicycles and transit users. This commitment to Fix It First maintenance and rehabilitation might give voters confidence that their taxes will be spent on THEIR priorities if the elected officials did not immediately write an escape clause to the Fix It First requirement by stating: “Alternatively, the City Council or the Board of Supervisors, by a 2/3 vote, may authorize the reduction in the 75% Fix It First commitment to maintenance and rehabilitation for the purpose of directing a higher share of the jurisdiction’s allocation to specified high-priority roadway or transit capital projects.” (Sacramento County Measure B Transportation Sales Tax Expenditure Plan, (2017-2047), Page 3), and “Alternatively, the SRTD Board of Directors (Sacramento Regional Transit District), by a 80% vote, may authorize a reduction in the 75% Fix It First commitment to vehicle replacement, maintenance, operations and security for the purpose of directing a higher share of the funds from this program to specified high priority transit capital projects.” (Sacramento County Measure B Transportation Sales Tax Expenditure Plan, (2017-2047), Page 4).

Is this indicative of a real commitment to the public regarding their desire to take care of what we have? What, if any, public process will happen when these elected officials begin making decisions about transportation projects that have a higher priority, in their minds, than maintaining and operating the existing systems? Voters are left to wonder whether billions of dollars in taxes will actually result in solutions to our mobility woes.

Towards that point, 30 years is an excessive amount of time for this half-cent sales tax increase. By reducing it to 10-15 years, the success of the Fix It First projects, and this includes employing the latest Intelligent Transportation System (ITS)

technology, can be measured and a more realistic picture will have emerged as to what mobility looks and feels like in the future. We all realize it’s a rapidly evolving landscape.

Over and over again, locally elected officials have scorned SARA’s and other transportation advocates concerns regarding Measure B as unfounded and unrealistic. Repeatedly, we were told: “Measure B isn’t perfect, but it is better than doing nothing.” Really? That’s a reason for taxpayers to invest billions of dollars in our future for something that is little more than nothing?

I wonder if we would have the American River Parkway today, the reason why many people live in Sacramento, if those early citizens who worked so hard to make the Parkway a reality believed it was only just better than nothing instead of a legacy, a real gift to generations of Sacramento’s residents? It’s up to us whether we will continue to protect and preserve this treasure. Will we let the elected officials scare us into voting for Measure B with visions of doomsday scenarios? Remember that Measure A, the one-half cent sales tax extension voters approved in 2004 does not expire until 2039. Measure A money can and should help us continue to upgrade our transportation infrastructure until we can pass a sales tax increase that will be a lot more than a little more than nothing. How about a transportation sales tax that rivals the American River Parkway in its vision and ultimately creates a transportation system that generations will come to regard as another reason why they live in Sacramento?

More information on Measure B is posted on the Sacramento Transportation Authority website: www.sacta.org. ■

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will actually result in solutions to our mobility woes.*

Large Events in the Parkway

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But they don't get it.

The following weekend, they allowed another concert at Discovery Park with 40 food trucks, beer and wine gardens, and up to 25,000 people. Similar events are being scheduled including the Monster Energy Aftershock Festival in October which is expected to host 22,000 people.

The carnage at the 102.5 Live concert provided conclusive evidence that events of that sort cannot be adequately policed in the Parkway. The events threaten the Parkway environment, scare wildlife, leave mountains of trash behind and interfere with use of the Parkway by people wishing to picnic, ride horses, view nature or otherwise enjoy Discovery Park. Finding parking or getting a boat to the boat ramp can be a challenge. Safer, more appropriate venues at CalExpo and Raley Field are readily available.

SARA's Board of Directors urges people who live within Sacramento County to contact their county supervisors and demand that events such as 102.5 Live and Aftershock should not be permitted on the Parkway.

The Parkway Plan was updated in 2008. Among the goals of the plan are:

"To preserve, protect, interpret and improve the natural, archaeological, historical and recreation resources of the Parkway, including an adequate flow of high-quality water, anadromous and resident fishes, migratory and resident wildlife, and diverse natural vegetation.

To provide public safety and protection within and adjacent to the Parkway."

The plan also mandates the practice of resource protection through:

"Limitation of the use of the Parkway through design and management tools to prevent overuse of the Parkway and preserve the environmental quality, thereby ensuring the integrity of the Parkway for future users."

Before commercial operations are permitted on the Parkway, the plan states:

"Services or sales shall not attract customers who would not otherwise be Parkway users. Services or sales shall be dependent upon the Parkway environment and be consistent with its stated purpose."

"facilities to accommodate large groups should not be provided unless thorough study and public hearings have been conducted to determine the impacts and needs."

AMERICAN RIVER PARKWAY PLAN
2008, CHAPTER 7: LAND USE, LAND
USE DESIGNATIONS

Another provision of the plan declares:

"Events should occur at a level and occasional frequency so as to not damage or degrade the natural resources."

And finally, here's the clincher in the plan.

"The intended user groups in the Developed Recreation areas are the family, the small group, and the medium group. It is anticipated that occasional large group and special events will occur as well, but facilities to accommodate large groups should not be provided unless thorough study and public hearings have been conducted to determine the impacts and needs."

The county does not do any studies of potential impacts nor does it hold public hearings prior to scheduling events like 102.5 Live or Aftershock.

In 2008, the board of supervisors agreed to develop a Resource Impact Monitoring Plan for events on the Parkway. In the eight years since, county efforts to develop that plan have been stop and go. No firm date has been set to have the plan in place.

On April 9, 2013, the county supervisors directed the Regional Parks Department and the County Counsel to develop a formal appeals process for special-events permits issued by the Parks Department for events in the American River Parkway.

To date, no appeals process has been developed. ■

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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).

In Memoriam

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

Bill Griffith

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. ■**



Gary Eblen, left, presents a generous check from **Kiene's Fly Shop** on Marconi Ave. in Sacramento to SARA President Stephen Green.

The money came from part of a fee Kiene's charged for a fly-fishing clinic at Sacramento Bar on the American River.

SARA gets regular support from area businesses and organizations that appreciate our advocacy on behalf of the Lower American River.

Contributors so far this year include:

ORGANIZATIONS

California Fly Fishers Unlimited
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Kiene's Fly Shop
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More Dams Won't Get Us There

Five dam projects currently being pushed by dam proponents promise to increase California's average annual water supply by some 134 billion gallons.

Sounds big. But that would increase water supplied to California farms and urban areas by about one percent, according to a 2015 study by the Public Policy Institute of California.

The cost? About \$9 billion, assuming there are no cost overruns — which is a big assumption.

The proposed projects would raise Shasta Dam in Shasta County, \$1.2 billion; build Sites Reservoir in Colusa County, \$3.8 billion; raise Los Vaqueros Dam in Contra Costa County, \$1 billion; build Temperance Flat Dam in Madera and Fresno Counties, \$2.5 billion; and raise San Luis Dam in Merced County, \$360 million.

Many cheaper more productive options have been advanced for increasing California's water supply. Fixing leaks is one of those options.

A 2010 study financed by the California Public Utilities Commission estimated that ten percent of the state's urban water supply is lost through leaks in aging infrastructure. Many cities, counties and water districts are running water through pipes that have been in the ground for 50-80 years.

The study found that 40 percent of that water could be cost-effectively recovered through pressure management, leak repair and pipe replacements. That would produce an estimated 114 billion gallons yearly. ■

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Yellow Starthistle: A Nasty Weed

Yellow Starthistle, *Centaurea solstitialis*, is a nasty, invasive weed that now inhabits up to 15 million California acres, according to a University of California study. It is very prevalent on the American River Parkway despite annual efforts to eradicate it.

The thistle is native to Eurasia and made its way to California via South America around 1850. It forms dense infestations and deprives native plants of moisture in the soil. Spines on the stems poke people and animals as they walk through thistle patches and it is poisonous to horses, causing a nervous disorder called chewing disease.

It is usually found below 7,000 feet elevation in drier areas of the state. The gray-green stalks and yellow heads can grow anywhere from five inches in height to five feet. They put out thousands of seeds from fall to spring. Most germinate immediately, but some stay viable in soil for three years or more.

Mowing or whacking off stems can help reduce the spread of seeds. But if that is done early in the growing season, new stems branch out from the base of the plants. Goats eat the plants without being harmed even when the spines have grown out. And they have been busy on the Parkway this summer.

Volunteers with several organizations and homeowner groups regularly go after the thistle each year, and both prison inmate and probation crews have been deployed at times.

Staff and volunteers at the Effie Yeaw Nature Center have been able to dramatically reduce the thistle in the 100-acre nature study area over the past five years. "We've seen significant improvement in the starthistle problem since the first year," said Paul Tebbel, the center's executive director. "But we'll never really eradicate it, just control it." ■



Adopt an Animal

The Effie Yeaw Nature Center takes care of more than a dozen non-releasable animals native to the American River system. These animals cannot be returned to their native habitat. In many cases, they have been injured, orphaned or grown too accustomed to people.

There are five birds: a Northern Saw-whet Owl, Sophia; a Great Horned Owl, Echo; a Red-tailed Hawk, Tanner; a Red-shouldered Hawk, Skye; and an American Kestrel, Rocky.

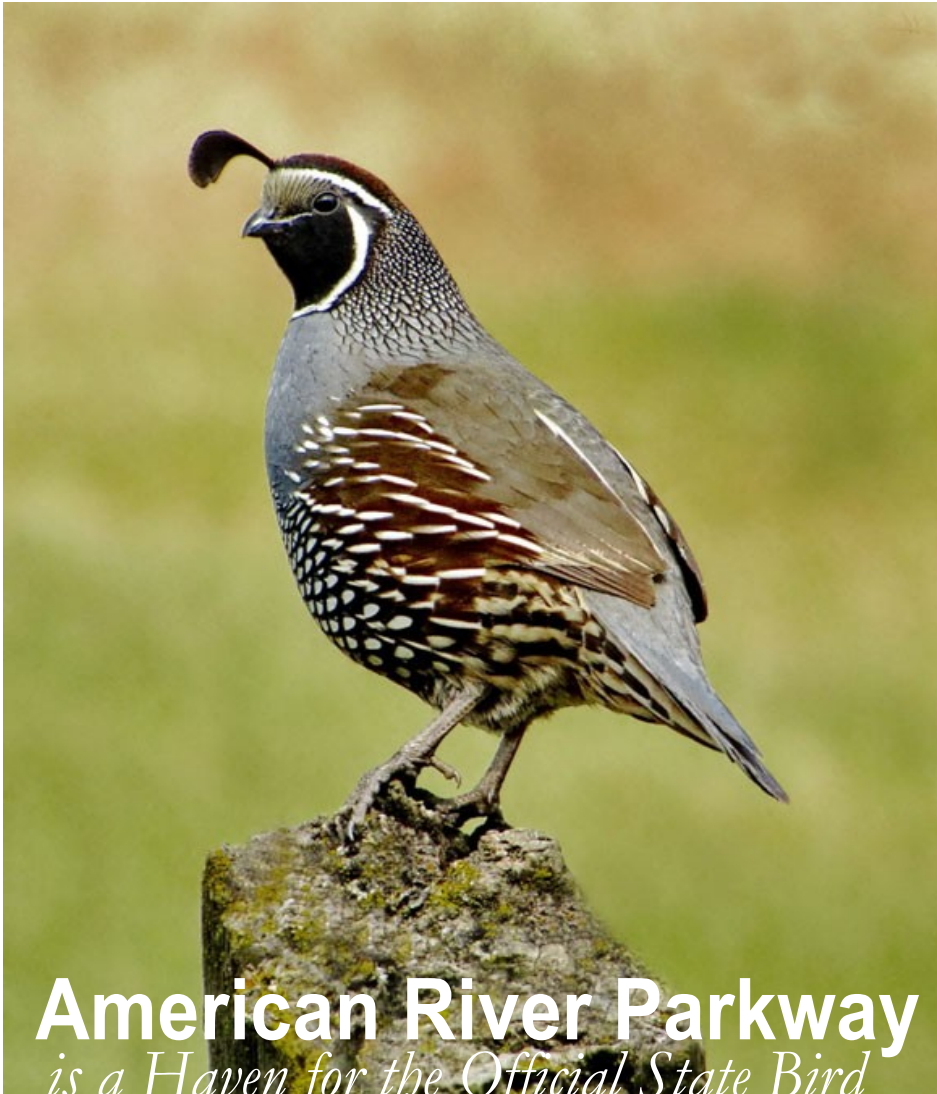
The birds are tamed to the glove and act as animal ambassadors, visiting schools, taking part in programs and helping in the Nature Center's educational efforts.

The Nature Center also has reptiles and amphibians on display in the lobby and the Discovery Room. They include a Western Pond Turtle, Clem; a Skink, Gilbert; a Western Fence Lizard, Blue; a Rattlesnake and several Gopher and King Snakes, Tree Frogs, and Toads.

Proceeds from the adoptions help pay for the care and feeding of the critters. To find out how you can adopt one, visit the Effie Yeaw website: www.sacnaturecenter.net. ■



Tanner, a Red-tailed Hawk



As California's Central Valley has been plowed for farms and paved over for development, the American River Parkway's riparian habitat has become an important homeland for the official state bird — the California Quail.

California Quails prefer woodland-brushy habitat interspersed with grassy areas and near water. When they are not nesting or caring for hatchlings, they roost at night in tall bushes and trees.

Frequent visitors to the Parkway and nearby residents often see them strutting around and hear their

melodious *Chi-ca-go* call. They are a gregarious bird, but always are on the lookout for predators. Some bird populations have declined in response to the ongoing drought. But not the California Quail, according to state wildlife officials. So far, they have adapted well.

Males tend to be 9.5-to-11 inches long and are more colorful than females. Their black throats are circled with a white line. The tops of their heads are brown with a plume of black curved feathers. Most of the rest of their bodies are brownish gray, streaked or scaled with white, and there's a brownish patch on their stomachs. The

females are a little smaller and have a shorter plume.

From late summer thru winter, family groups often join together and form a covey. Some coveys can attract 50-to-100 birds. Wherever the covey roams, sentinels will be keeping watch for predators.

In early spring, they pair up and begin looking for nesting sites under protective cover such as brush, logs or weeds. The female produces 10-to-15 eggs which incubate in up to 22 days. Hatchlings leave the nest as soon as they dry off. Both parents keep them close until they are ready to make it on their own. Their diet consists mainly of weed seeds during drier seasons and greens in winter and spring.

The California Quail's range includes the Central Valley, coastal areas and even the Channel Islands. There are two other quail species in the state. Gambrel's Quail lives in the southeastern deserts. The Mountain Quail inhabits higher elevations stretching from Mexico to Oregon.

In 1931 at the request of state officials, the National Audubon Society nominated 25 birds that might serve as the state bird. The Legislature chose the California Valley Quail. A few years later, the bird's name was changed to California Quail (*Callipepla californica*) by the American Ornithologists' Union, the official bird-naming organization.

Despite being honored as the state bird, California Quail and the other two species are still hunted.

As a result, the Parkway habitat has assumed even greater importance for the California Quail. Hunting is not allowed on the Parkway. ■



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