

THE ACORN

American River Natural History Association Quarterly Magazine - Summer 2025



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President's Message, Summer 2025



Greg Dewey

I stood looking out over the crowd about to greet them for our annual "Bird and Breakfast" event. They were having a good time, enjoying lively conversations and a good robust breakfast served by our cadre of dedicated volunteers. The group had just returned from birding tours of the nature area (again led by dedicated volunteers) and everyone seemed to be content. The event had sold out and we were at our capacity of 80 admissions, same as last year. It all seemed very normal. One would hardly have suspected that we had narrowly escaped a financial collapse just four months ago.

It rained long and hard the day before our event. I feared that this would carry over to the next day and we would have a dismal turnout. But when "Bird and Breakfast" arrived, the clouds had parted and patches of blue were appearing.

I told the crowd that this was a portent of Effie Yeaw's future. We had weathered stormy days and though it was not yet sunny, there were clear patches of blue sky above us.

The clouds began to break for EYNC last December and January when donations both large and small came in. The donors believed we could make it through the storm, and they made a commitment. Volunteers also came back, again in both large and small roles, and committed their time and effort to moving us forward. These community efforts in addition to a staff that persevered through tough furloughs and a Board committed to fiscal discipline laid the foundation for financial stability. Our cash reserves, which fell below \$100,000 in June of 2024, are now almost \$600,000 higher than they were in 2022.

Cash reserves do not ensure sunny days by themselves. We need to move forward with organizational and programmatic changes that prevent such a financial collapse from ever happening again. We have a six-month plan (Jan. to Jun. 2025) that stabilizes us and allows us to advance to the next phase. This plan has the following elements: Board Development and Governance, Executive Leadership Development and Fiscal Control and Oversight.

A key player on our path to self-improvement has been Sacramento County Regional Parks. The County commissioned a report to study our compliance with the Lease Agreement and with the 2010 business plan. Although the report did not find any evidence of fraud, misappropriation or malfeasance over the past years, it did identify areas for improvement. We need to improve financial oversight, record keeping and control. These are areas that we are addressing with the six-month plan and changes are currently being implemented. Having an independent review of our internal processes has been enormously helpful and allows us to quickly move to remedy these problems.

The six-month plan and the County's feedback position us to survive the crisis. But beyond this, we seek not just to survive but to thrive. To make that transition, we are developing a three-year plan that not only makes us a sustainable operation but transforms us into a robust and dynamic organization. The three-year plan is a work in progress, and we will ask all of you to be part of this formative, exciting stage. We ask you to be innovative and to try out new ideas. Our plan will include a growth of membership and supporters. We need to bring more people and new perspectives into our community. We need to extend our educational mission from our excellent children's programs to include naturalist education for all. We will remain true to our current efforts in education and conservation and better integrate and expand those efforts.

We have a compelling mission, an extraordinary facility and incredibly committed staff and community. A sunny day is in our hands.

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Flame Skimmer. © Dennis Eckhart.

Nurturing Biodiversity in the NSA by Removing Invasive Stinkwort

By Dennis Eckhart

This is a story about a personal journey of discovery and about the ongoing efforts of dozens of volunteer “weed warriors,” who have toiled for the past eight years to rid the Nature Study Area (NSA) of an unwelcome plant called stinkwort.

When I enrolled in the California Naturalist (Cal Nat) class at EYNC in the fall of 2017, I had already been volunteering with the American River Parkway Foundation (ARPF) for several years as an invasive plant steward. Until then I had focused on removing non-native plants such as red sesbania and Spanish broom from the American River Parkway. Although stinkwort had been added recently to the list of weeds we pulled, my relationship with stinkwort began in earnest when I noticed thousands of mature plants growing near the river in the NSA. That’s when I decided to make tackling that infestation my Cal Nat capstone project. (My affiliation with ARPF’s invasive plant program allowed me and those who helped me to tackle stinkwort. ARNHA’s encroachment permit from the county does not list stinkwort as one of the non-native plants ARNHA can remove from the NSA.)



Stinkwort growing in the cobbles; ©Dennis Eckhart

Rated a “high-risk invasive” by the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture and a “noxious weed” by the California Dept. of Agriculture, stinkwort is a relative newcomer to California, having first been documented in the state in 1984. But since then, stinkwort has spread widely, infesting roadsides, construction sites and hiking trails—literally, sprouting anywhere the soil has been disturbed, either naturally or by human activity.



Plants with seeds; ©Dennis Eckhart

Stinkwort (*Dittrichia graveolens*), also known as stinkweed, is an annual in the Asteraceae family. The species’ common names derive from the fact that, frankly, it stinks. Although a few people I have met find the odor pleasant, most commonly people describe the odor as a combination of camphor/pine-sol and butane. In addition to its olfactory assault, the oil in the stems and leaves can cause contact dermatitis. Stinkwort is not palatable to livestock (and likely also to wild ungulates, such as the Columbian black-tailed deer that inhabit the NSA).



Stinkwort in bloom; ©Dennis Eckhart



Very large plant; ©Dennis Eckhart

Mature plants can reach three feet in height and girth. The shape is sometimes reminiscent of small Christmas tree with small yellow flowers that look like ornaments. Although a large stinkwort can resemble a Russian thistle—a common tumbleweed that is sometimes found with stinkwort—mature stinkwort plants do not detach from the soil to be driven by the wind across fields and highways. Stinkwort seeds

are dispersed by the wind, but like dandelions and other plants in the Asteraceae family, the plants themselves stay put.

Stinkwort is a ruderal species – that is, it grows on rubble, even on sites where heavy metals have been mined. The seedlings grow fast and don’t need much in the way of nutrition or moisture from the soil. Sprouting in late summer, each plant, even a small one, produces a massive number of seeds. Once stinkwort gains a foothold in an area, if left unchecked, a monoculture can soon result, crowding out native plants. And, because the plants only live a few months, their desiccated “skeletons” provide lots of fuel for fire. I have become quite familiar with this non-native, invasive plant that I now cannot unsee wherever I notice it growing.

That first fall, 2017, I recruited some of my Cal Nat classmates to help me pull mature stinkwort at the north end of the cobble area beside the river. We stuffed over 30 large trash bags with thousands of plants and hauled them away. Some of the plants were so big, we could only get a few in a bag. It was difficult work, but the result was dramatic.



Stinkwort Infestation, NSA, fall 2017;
©Dennis Eckhart

For the next few years, the work continued with help from my grandson, several stalwart EYNC volunteers, a Boy Scout troop or two, local high school students, and, one year, fifth graders from Mission Avenue School. Since 2022 EYNC’s Habitat Restoration Team has included stinkwort removal as part of its fourth-Saturday work days. Counting as we pull both mature plants and new sprouts, we have racked up some impressive numbers. The highest pull count was in the fall of 2019: almost 25,000 plants!

2017	5439
2018	6000*
2019	24682
2020	7646
2021	147**
2022	15885
2023	16659
2024	16629
Total	93,087

*Estimate
**Salmon habitat construction prevented access to the infested area.

The year 2021 brought big changes to the NSA, changes that significantly affected the stinkwort eradication effort. In October of that year – when stinkwort removal efforts would have been in full swing – the Sacramento Water Forum initiated a habitat enhancement project for salmon and steelhead. The areas where we would have looked for stinkwort to pull were off-limits because of the construction. Thousands of tons of cobbles were sorted on site, and 15,800 cubic yards of fist-sized rocks were dumped into the river to encourage returning adult fish to create Redds (nests) and lay their eggs. In addition, a side channel with woody material was constructed where young fish can hide from predators.



WF-AH-Aerial-Lower-Res-3; ©John Hanson

While the salmon-habitat project has been a great success, encouraging many more adult salmon and steelhead returning from the ocean to spawn in the river that flows beside the NSA, the loaders and dump trucks disturbed acres of soil, and, as we later discovered, that led to finding stinkwort where it had not been seen before.

Just last fall, an infestation of stinkwort was discovered on the gravel bar created by the Water Forum’s project. Although a few large stinkwort had been seen growing on the bar in 2022 and 2023, they were washed away by high river flows in the winter. Access to the bar was restricted by the side channel, but low flows in 2024 allowed us to reach the bar, where we pulled about 12,000 plants. With those invasives removed, along with a few Spanish broom, which we also removed, native plants are thriving on the bar.

In addition to the challenges that followed completion of the Water Forum’s project, the plants themselves have a few tricks up their stalks, so to speak, which we learned about the hard way.

One particularly tough lesson came after we had decided to let small plants decompose on site after we pulled them. At the time that seemed like a way to save time, and other in-

vasive plants on the Parkway are routinely pulled but not removed, if seed pods have not yet appeared. What we did not realize about stinkwort is that if flowers have appeared, the plant has enough moisture and energy stored in its stems to produce seeds even after it is pulled and left to rot in the sun. When we discovered this, we went back and bagged as many of the dead plants as we could. To our dismay, many of the seeds had already dispersed.



Seed heads; ©Dennis Eckhart

While the enormous infestation we found in 2017 is gone, persistence is key to keeping things that way. Like other invasive weeds, stinkwort grows quickly, especially in disturbed soil, produces lots of seeds, and spreads rapidly. Eradication is our goal, but control may be the best we can achieve. Every stinkwort we pull means that native plants have a better chance of survival.



slender centaury;
©Dennis Eckhart

Dennis Eckhart volunteers at EYNC as a member of the Habitat Restoration Team and is team leader for invasive plant removal in our NSA. He is also an active member of the American River Parkway Foundation's Invasive Plant Management Program, a nature lover, and photographer, and he coordinates the Effie Yeaw NSA & Ancil Hoffman Park project in iNaturalist.

Upcoming Events at the Nature Center

Nature Fest - June 8

Feast in the Forest Gala - Sept. 28

SOME GENERAL INFO:

Summer Camps

Pollinator Week is June 15-21- Activities to be announced

National Moth Week - July 19-27 - watch for activity announcements

ONGOING EVENTS:

Nature of Things Speaker Series

Mighty Acorns on the second Tuesday of most Months

Nature of Reading program second Saturday of the month

Please check our [website](#) for updates on events and follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) to keep up with the latest information.

As vacation plans take shape for summer and throughout the year, we can be mindful of how vacation activities affect our carbon footprint. A carbon footprint is an estimation of how our activities contribute to CO₂ and other greenhouse gases trapping heat near Earth's surface. These include gases resulting from fossil fuel combustion used for travel; housing; and production, distribution, and disposal of food and goods. The impact of combustion products other than CO₂ (such as methane, water vapor, and nitrous oxide) is converted into the amount of CO₂ yielding similar warming, and the total impact is usually expressed in tons of CO₂ per person per year. While carbon footprints are approximations, they are useful in depicting the relative effects of different lifestyles. For example, according to the University of Michigan Center for Sustainable Systems the average carbon footprint is 14-15 tons of CO₂ per person per year for Americans, versus 4-5 tons of CO₂ per person per year worldwide.

According to a 2024 article in the journal *Nature* CO₂ emissions from tourism account for about 8% of global carbon emissions, with contributions coming mainly from modes of transportation, accommodations, and travel goods. A comparison of emissions from different transportation modes is summarized in figure 1, provided by Our World in Data. It is

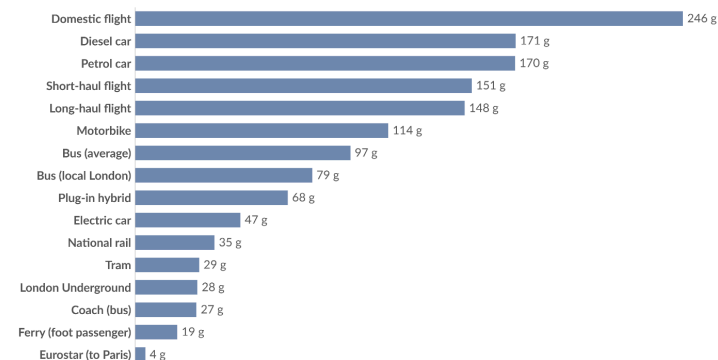
readily apparent that flying over long distances is most impactful, while driving, riding trains, and using public transport are much less so. Similarly, accommodations featuring air conditioning, pool pumps, and daily washing of linens have larger carbon footprints than more rustic arrangements. Further, personal choices, such as selecting locally sourced foods and products, minimizing waste, and selecting ecologically mindful attractions can help reduce a vacation's carbon footprint.

Numerous websites can help in planning a vacation to maximize your experiences while minimizing your CO₂ emissions. They can also suggest ways of offsetting those emissions (a topic to be addressed in a later "Climate Corner" article). From one such website a rough estimate for a week-long trip from Sacramento to Paris, with a stay in a 3-star hotel, and 200 miles of driving is 2.45 metric tons (MT) of CO₂, as shown in figure 2. This amounts to about two-months' worth of the "average American's" yearly carbon footprint and about six-months' worth of the average global citizen's CO₂ output. On the other end of the scale, a round-trip drive of 200 miles and a traipse through a nature area like the Effie Yeaw nature study area would have a carbon footprint of 0.04 MT, over 60 times less impact. Happy mindful travels!

Carbon footprint of travel per kilometer, 2022

The carbon footprint of travel is measured in grams of carbon dioxide-equivalents¹ per passenger kilometer. This includes the impact of increased warming from aviation emissions at altitude.

Our World
in Data



Data source: UK Government, Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (2022)

OurWorldinData.org/transport | CC BY

Note: Official conversion factors used in UK reporting. These factors will vary across countries depending on energy mix, transport technologies, and occupancy of public transport. Data for aviation is based on economy class.

1. Carbon dioxide equivalents (CO₂eq): Carbon dioxide is the most important greenhouse gas, but not the only one. To capture all greenhouse gas emissions, researchers express them in "carbon dioxide equivalents" (CO₂eq). This takes all greenhouse gases into account, not just CO₂. To express all greenhouse gases in carbon dioxide equivalents (CO₂eq), each one is weighted by its global warming potential (GWP) value. GWP measures the amount of warming a gas creates compared to CO₂. CO₂ is given a GWP value of one. If a gas had a GWP of 10 then one kilogram of that gas would generate ten times the warming effect as one kilogram of CO₂. Carbon dioxide equivalents are calculated for each gas by multiplying the mass of emissions of a specific greenhouse gas by its GWP factor. This warming can be stated over different timescales. To calculate CO₂eq over 100 years, we'd multiply each gas by its GWP over a 100-year timescale (GWP100). Total greenhouse gas emissions – measured in CO₂eq – are then calculated by summing each gas' CO₂eq value.

Figure 1. Information on carbon footprints of different transportation modes compliments of Our World in Data. [To convert g/km to pounds/mile multiply by 0.0036.]

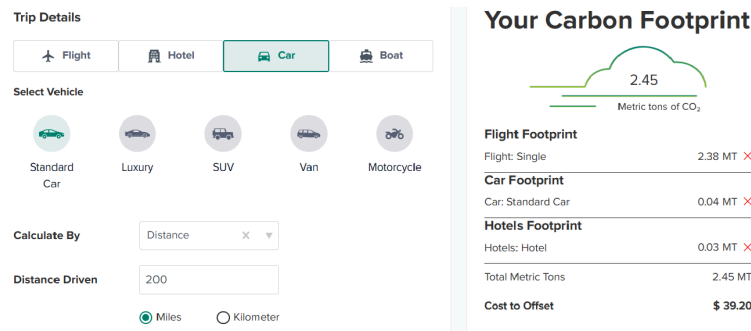


Figure 2. Screen shot of results from a vacation carbon footprint calculator for a hypothetical week-long trip from Sacramento to Paris, including up to 200 miles of ground travel in a car and 6 nights in a 3-star hotel.

Melanie Loo is a retired Professor of Biological Sciences at Sacramento State University. She enjoys supporting the Nature Center as a trail steward, habitat restoration team member, occasional writer, and special events volunteer.

2025 Bird and Breakfast at the Nature Center

By Mary Howard

Bird and Breakfast is the Nature Center's oldest community engagement event. How old is it, you ask? Well, one of the nine volunteer bird guides from Sacramento Audubon Society was five when he first attended this popular event. Now he is 40! But the event actually began over 45 years ago on the back porch of the Center. Only 30 attendees could cram into that small space for breakfast, which was staged in the old animal care area off the lobby!

How times change. On March 15, there were 80 participants, including a few children. Many of them had attended one or more of three separate bird talks leading up to the event; Jack Gedney, Chris Conard and Rich Howard entertained their audiences with tales of birds who live in the oak woodlands, insights on owls and nightjars and looks at birds around the world at the family level.

On the Saturday of the actual event, each guide took up to 10 people out on the trails for about two hours. Most participants brought binoculars, but there were plenty to lend out for those who didn't have them. Volunteers were stationed throughout the nature study area with scopes trained on nests. This year's attendees could see a red-shouldered hawk on her nest on the bluff, a well-camouflaged bushtit nest, hanging from a branch, an Anna's hummingbird on her tiny nest and a cavity nest occupied by starlings. The American River is always busy, so a scope was also set up to view aquatic birds.

As is often the case when a guide takes people birding, the participants end up spotting birds. The more eyes looking, the better. About 50 species were seen that morning. The birds were very active and present in large numbers. Two hummingbirds were viewed scoping out a possible nest site. One group saw turkeys flying low across the river. Everyone was relieved that the weather cooperated after a wet week.

Walking the trails early in the morning makes one hungry and the groups were rewarded for their activity with a scrumptious breakfast. Local businesses provided frittatas (Howe It's Done) and donated coffee (Fast Cat and La Bou). Volunteers baked muffins, scones and nut breads. There was also fruit salad and oatmeal. The Assembly Building was abuzz with talk of bird sightings and how to further one's knowledge of birds. Thanks go out to Betsy Weiland, staff and the 22 volunteers who made this year's fundraiser a success. Since this event typically sells out, as it did this year, mark your calendars for next year's Bird and Breakfast!

Mary Howard is a long-time docent at Effie Yeaw.



Planned Nature Center Improvements

By Dick Shanahan

The American River Natural History Association (ARNHA) and County of Sacramento plan to make some improvements and upgrades at Effie Yeaw Nature Center (EYNC). The museum building (which includes the administration offices and animal care area) was constructed in 1976 and needs refurbishment. This article summarizes the ARNHA and county plans.

County Upgrades

The county owns the nature center land, buildings and facilities. ARNHA manages the nature center under a lease. In 2019, the county assessed the condition of its buildings and facilities and prepared a report listing many needed upgrades and improvements. The potential work may include disability access improvements, flooring replacement, new doors, electrical panel improvements, and bathroom improvements. The county plans to undertake this work within the next year and currently is evaluating the project scope and details. County staff are collaborating with EYNC staff on the project scope and timing. The county regional parks department has budgeted \$732,000 for this work.

Aviary Center Project

ARNHA received a \$112,000 grant from the Lower American River Conservancy Program, which is a program of the California Wildlife Conservation Board, to prepare construction-ready plans for a new aviary. Lionakis Architects, a local architectural firm, completed the plans in March 2025. The ARNHA Board reviewed the plans at its May 2025 meeting. The project plans provide for a standalone aviary structure that would be located northeast of the existing museum/administration building (in the area of the small amphitheater), together with walkways and a viewing plaza.

The cost of construction has not yet been funded. It would require grant funding and donations. The rough construction cost estimate is \$1.3 million (at Dec. 2024). There also would be permit fees, architect fees, mitigation costs, and other non-construction costs.



Perspective Rendering

Human eye level view, from viewing plaza of the aviary center.

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LIONAKIS

Proposed Aviary Center (from construction documents prepared by Lionakis Architects, Mar. 14, 2025)

Nature Museum Renovation and Revitalization Project

ARNHA received a \$400,750 grant from the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) to fund museum improvements and upgrades. The work will include updated exhibits with enhanced accessibility and interactivity, improved lighting, disability access improvements, new signage (including digital signs), and new storage cabinets. ARNHA also received a \$20,000 grant from the Yocha Dehe Wintun tribe to be used toward improving the museum's Nisenan tribe-related exhibits.

The CNRA grant-funded work will occur in the same building where the county plans improvements (as discussed above). Some of the county work may overlap with the grant-funded work. With the nature of the planned county work, it should proceed first for good construction phasing followed closely by the CNRA grant-funded work. Consequently, the ARNHA grant-funded work is on hold pending the completion of the county improvements to the building. The state has extended the expend-by date for the grant to May 1, 2029, which means that ARNHA may extend its project work completion as far out as March 1, 2029.

Back Porch Upgrade

In 2022, the Diepenbrock family donated \$30,000 to ARNHA in memory of Anthony C. Diepenbrock to fund upgrades to the back porch off the museum/administration building. The concept is to enclose the space with a retractable garage-type door so the area can be used year-round as indoor or outdoor space, install some cabinets, replace/improve the lighting, and perhaps install additional improvements depending upon costs and available funds. The project has not yet been designed. The implementation of this project also is planned for after the county completes its work on the building.

All of these projects will allow the nature center to welcome more people, house and display animals in a more appropriate way and enhance the longevity of our buildings. We can't wait to see the results!

(R)Evolution at the Nature Center

By Molly Keller

Come see the exciting changes just inside the front door of the Effie Yeaw Nature Center!

The live exhibits, a hairy tarantula, camouflaged walking stick insects, rare cockroaches, and more, are now housed in the spacious museum room. In the coming months, watch for the addition of local snake species and California newts. The enclosures are uncrowded and the creatures are easy to study up-close.

In the reception area, since the removal of outdated bird enclosures have been removed and new shelving spotlights our famous ARNHA publications, such as, the popular Outdoor World of the Sacramento Region, the beautiful American River Almanac, and our best-seller,

150 Frequently Seen Birds of California's Great Valley.

The shop's inventory is expanding, too. Look for more kids' books, soft plush animals, magnifiers, pocket field guides, activity books, and greeting cards. Every week the inventory will grow, offering nature and science study tools for all ages.

Student tours will no longer have to compete for space with everyday visitors in the reception area, where the shop, restrooms, and the information desk are located.

Come in to pick up a Parkway map or a plush jackrabbit for a special nature lover!



Molly Keller, Volunteer Retail Specialist, and Elias Lozano-Enciso, staff, discuss remodel of the Nature Center Lobby. ©Kari Bauer



Dan Root, Facilities and Exhibits Manager, begins the disassembling process. ©Kari Bauer



Final disassembly, left to right Dan Root, retired naturalist Randy Lewis, and volunteer Dale Roberts. ©Kari Bauer



Visitors peruse the new shop offerings. ©Kari Bauer

Tim Hargrove - Donor Spotlight

By Joey Johnson

Jim Hargrove has been a member of ARNHA since 2016. His generosity has been ongoing through the years, and he has supported such efforts as upgrading signage along the trails in the nature study area and purchasing aluminum water bottles in support of the new water station in 2018. In addition to supporting specific projects, he has chosen to support the organization's efforts to restructure and be instrumental in preventing closure.

When he is not directly supporting the nature center, he can be seen strolling around the nature study area with his camera, seeking out memorable images of the raptors and other wildlife that thrive there.

I wanted to get Jim's own story of how he became involved with the nature center, and what motivates him to be such a strong supporter. Here is what he had to say.

What motivated you to connect with the nature center initially and to then become such a strong supporter?

"My initial venture to Effie Yeaw Nature Center and the nature area was about eight or so years ago. I had heard about some great photographic opportunities there so decided to investigate. I was amazed at the wide variety of wildlife that presented itself to me and my camera and have continued to be astounded at what is there. Shortly after my initial visit, I realized how important Effie Yeaw is to the community, especially the opportunity it provides to school-age children, many of which have never seen deer, wild turkeys, hawks and even salmon. It was that knowledge that spurred me to start donating to the center as well as providing support for tangible projects."

What do you feel is the most important part of the mission of ARNHA and EYNC?

"To me, the most important mission of ARNHA and EYNC is education to school age children and to adults."

What would you like to see happen at the center in the near future? Further down the line?

"Today, I would love to see the center expand their education programs to as many children (schools in the Sacramento region) as possible. Additionally, I would like to see the center itself undergo a physical change which would make it more of a teaching facility as well as an expanded area for purchasing books, etc. Finally, an expanded hands-on program for adults to learn more about the area and Nature itself."

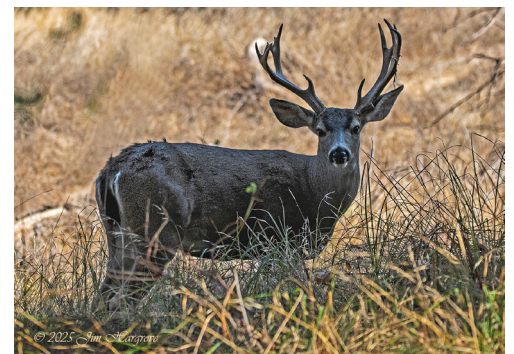
Do you have any suggestions for bringing in more donors like yourself?

"Donors are a key element in keeping Effie Yeaw Nature Center alive and vibrant. Finding corporate sponsors would greatly help in funding various programs. Use of social media, television (news outlets) could be used more to 'get the word out about EYNC.' I'm not sure how many people know that giving donations from IRA's (Required Minimum Distributions - RMD) can lower a person's taxes. Perhaps having a yearly seminar about Living Trusts and/or making EYNC a beneficiary to IRA's or in Trusts."

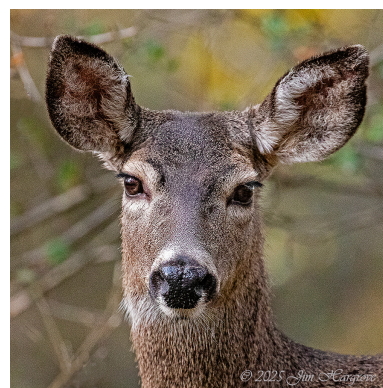
Joey Johnson is a longtime volunteer at Effie Yeaw Nature Center and former ARNHA board president.



Jim Hargrove in the Aspens; ©Wendy Stevens



Jim whistles "Heard it through the Grapevine."
©Jim Hargrove



Jim whistles "Ode to Joy" to the deer in the nature study area and they listen. ©Jim Hargrove

Staff Profiles: Kalee Christensen and Elias Lozano Enciso

By Eric Ross



Kalee Christensen –
Advancement and Fund
Development Manager.

Kalee Christensen, Advancement and Fund Development Manager

Effie Yeaw Nature Center functions well because of our talented, hard-working staff. One of our stalwarts is Kalee Christensen. Kalee arrived at the nature center in November 2023 and immediately established herself as a dependable employee who can be counted on to listen well, quickly grasp the task, and take ideas and creatively turn them into thoughtful plans, be it organizing meetings to drive successful fundraising, setting up a new and later revitalized website, or jumping in to make sure the details that matter get done before events like Bird and Breakfast and the Gala.

Possessed of a pleasant personality and a kind sense of humor, Kalee has strong people skills. In her daily work, she finds ways to collaborate well with others; she is never one to criticize her colleagues, but instead sets an example through her work ethic and accomplishments. Kalee says, “I love helping our programs, exhibits, and wildlife ambassadors thrive by connecting people to nature through fundraising and community outreach. Seeing the impact of our work – whether it’s a child’s excitement at meeting an animal ambassador or a donor’s joy in supporting conservation – makes what I do rewarding.”

Kalee, not surprisingly, has many other interests. She teaches Microbiology at both Folsom Lake College and Sierra College where she says, “I’m passionate about making science engaging and accessible.” When she is not at the nature center or in the classroom, Kalee shares, “You’ll most likely find me on the soccer field most weekends, cheering on my 12-year-old son, Isaac, who is a competitive player. My daughter, Evelyn (15), is an aspiring artist – you may have even seen some of her artistic skills on display at our family Bird and Breakfast events!” She adds, “When I do find a little free time, I love hiking, reading, and supporting conservation efforts.” We truly appreciate you, Kalee!



Elias Lozano Enciso –
Accounts Receivable and
Discovery Store Manager.

Elias Lozano Enciso, Accounts Receivable and Discovery Store Manager

Elias is another one of our stalwarts. He is our staff member responsible for managing financial and retail administration. He is deeply involved in numerous aspects of the nature center’s operations, including handling accounts receivable, deciding on and procuring profitable inventory for our visitor center’s Discovery Store, preparing for and helping run a variety of ARNHA educational and fundraising events throughout the year, and assisting with and mentoring EYNC staff members on our ROVERD software system which books outdoor educational programs for school children in school districts throughout the greater Sacramento region.

Elias became an ARNHA employee in September 2023. Before coming to the nature center, he had already acquired over 25 years of experience from increasingly challenging work in retail operations, finance, and team development. Raised in New York City, a graduate of the State University of New York, his career has involved him with many well-known retail operations, including The Limited Corporation and Sephora USA.

Elias says, “By developing and managing budgets, tracking expenses, and identifying opportunities for cost savings, I played an integral role in ensuring the operations I oversaw aligned with both organizational goals and financial targets.” He adds, “As my career evolved, I began incorporating financial stewardship into my skill set.”

When one spends time with Elias, one sees he has skills which are very beneficial to the nature center. He is very focused and analytic, knowledgeable of and adept at operating computer systems, experienced in retail operations, and willing to take on projects on short notice with successful results. In addition, he has a quite hilarious sense of humor when expressing his frustrations with products and software systems which do not meet his standards. In short, Elias is a valuable asset for the nature center. We are glad you are part of our EYNC team, Elias!

Eric Ross is an ARNHA Board member and volunteers as a docent and with the Habitat Restoration Team. Photos ©Eric Ross.

The Indelible Legacy of Effie Yeaw Nature Center

By Greg Dewey

Pittsburgh, like Sacramento, sits at the confluence of two rivers, one flowing north-south and the other flowing east-west. During my childhood, the Monongahela River, flowing east-west by the steel mills, was so polluted that it never froze in the winter, regardless of how cold it got. So when my wife Cindy and I recently retired to Sacramento we were thrilled to discover the American River. "It's like a mountain stream flowing right through the city," I told my relatives back in Pittsburgh.

Cindy and I quickly found ourselves spending a lot of time hiking and biking along the river. Before too long, we discovered another amazing resource on the river, the Effie Yeaw Nature Center (EYNC). EYNC sits on a flood plain below a bluff. We learned this land has ongoing cultural significance for the Nisenan tribe who lived on it for many millennia. Historically, the Nisenan would winter on the bluff and spend their summers on the flats of what is now EYNC. They lived in harmony with nature and had a profound respect for their environment. They practiced sustainable land management and EYNC's land represents a rare stretch of the American River that is in the process of restoring to native habitat.

The nature center exists because of Effie Yeaw, a remarkable conservationist and educator who left an indelible legacy through her commitment to nature. The nature center, named in her honor, stands as a testament to her passion for environmental preservation. She dedicated her life to fostering a deep connection between people and nature through conservation and education.

The nature center promotes two separate legacies. The first one involves the land where it sits. EYNC leads by example, preserving its stretch of the American River and demonstrating the critical importance of conservancy and restoration efforts. Efforts to preserve natural habitats not only contribute to controlling global warming but also align with the traditional practices of the Nisenan people. In preserving the beauty of nature, we honor the wisdom of both Effie Yeaw and the Nisenan people and ensure a legacy that respects the land as a living entity deserving of our stewardship.

The second legacy of the EYNC is its dedication to educating children about the wonder of nature. Barely a week goes by when there is not a school group or children's camp at the facility. By fostering an early appreciation for the environment, the nature center aims to cultivate a generation of environmentally conscious individuals. But perhaps more importantly, our educational programs aim to instill an awe of nature in our kids which began with Effie Yeaw. We teach our children to not only understand ecosystems in scientific terms but to gain a holistic appreciation for the interconnectedness of all living things and the delicate balance of life.

Nowadays, steel mills no longer exist along the Monongahela River. It is no longer polluted and probably would freeze if it got cold enough. So things can change. But what cannot change is our continual obligation to address two fundamental and inescapable questions: how do we manage our land and how do we educate our children. This is why EYNC is so important and has compelled my wife and myself to get involved. The nature center benefits from the efforts of an amazing and dedicated group of staff, volunteers and donors. When you become involved at EYNC, you become part of maintaining and preserving two indelible legacies. I encourage you to join the EYNC community for the sake of its land and our children.



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effieyeawnature.org