

# Bird and Breakfast

at the Effie Yeaw Nature Center

By GARY and PAM BAKER  
Photos by GARY BAKER

Not sure where all the excitement was coming from, but you could sense the anticipation in the air. Maybe it was coming from the birders who had been there the week before for sightings or maybe it was from the birds themselves, knowing that they would be on display for the weekend. The mornings' excitement centered on guided bird watching at the Effie Yeaw Nature Center. Collaboration between the American River Natural History Association (ARNHA) and the Sacramento Audubon Society brings this very popular event to life each year. It features a morning of birdwatching guided by some of Sacramento's best birders. The guides lead groups on a 90 minute walk through the nature study

area followed by a delicious breakfast buffet provided by volunteer staff from the Nature Center.

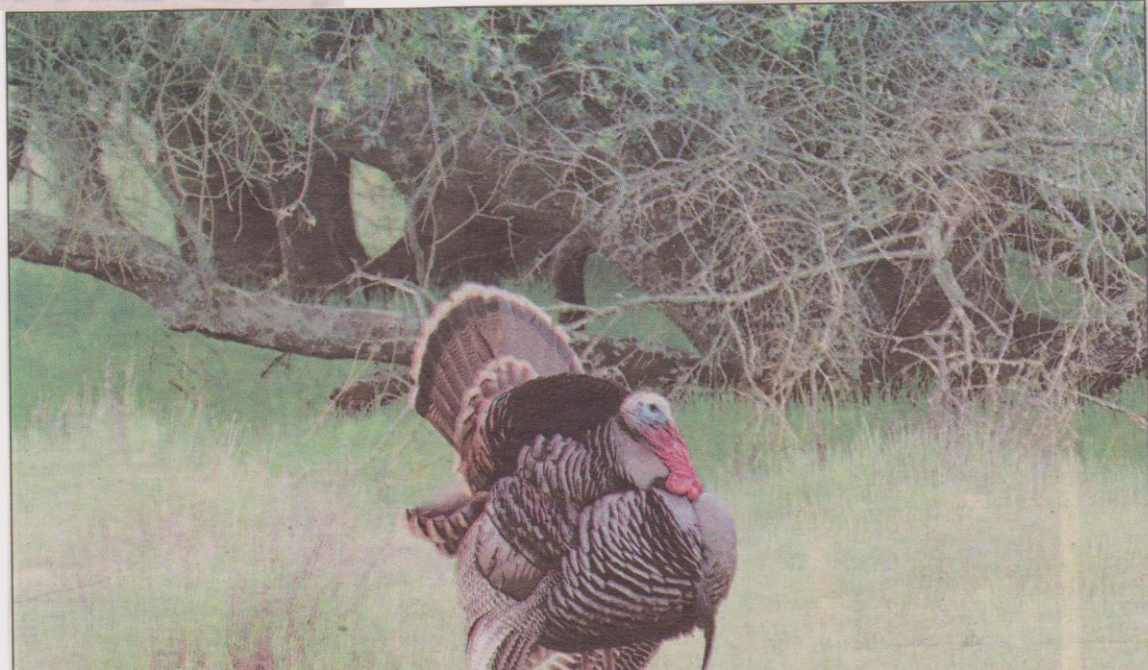
Held this year on March 19th and 20th, the event is a fundraiser for the benefit of the Nature Center. A lot of effort goes into this annual event with 75 volunteers hosting 130 guests over the weekend. For several weeks prior to the event, volunteer guides from Sacramento Audubon and Effie Yeaw scout the nature study area for nests, migrating species and sightings of local rarities.

Our walk started at 8:00 am in the cool quiet of the oak wooded meadows along the American River. Small groups of ten people were assigned to each birder, who then guided them along a half dozen different dirt trails that cut through the native grasses, plants and trees of the riparian habitat. Scanning

the tree tops, the guides look for birds and call out their types whenever they spot one. As we walked the trails, our guide encouraged us to listen for bird songs, ask questions and smell the fresh aroma of the spring plants and wildflowers. Our guide that morning, Richard Barbieri, was knowledgeable and friendly, with over 30 years of bird watching experience and nearly as many years volunteering with the Audubon Society. Aided by an app on his phone, Barbieri was quickly able to pull up a picture of each bird we were watching and play a recording of the bird's song.

While on the trail, it really started to get exciting. The deeper we walked into the woods, the more the treetops came alive







## Bird watching:

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with birds until we found ourselves surrounded by several different species, some squawking, some jabbering and chattering amongst themselves. The rapid staccato outburst of an acorn woodpecker frequently punctuated the air. We sighted a red tailed hawk, along with its unkempt nest. It is one of the largest hawks common to this area. Next we saw, with the aid of a scope, Anna's Hummingbird, sitting on a nest the size of a walnut. Starlings were quite abundant. The Ruby Crowned Kinglet is only here in the winter. Hutton's Vireo, also ruby crowned, doesn't show its red top until it decides to flash it. Cavity dwellers, like Tree Swallows, go south for the winter, and come back in the spring. House wrens, also cavity dwellers, make all kinds of chatter. Our guide was quite impressed with finding a Cooper's Hawk, a bird as big as a cat, sitting on a branch way above us, staring down quite contentedly. Stationed out along the many trails, volunteers had set up scopes on tripods aimed at the nests of active birds. The nest of a Bush tit hangs from a tree branch and looks like a dirty sock, except it quivered with life of baby birds inside.

After the walk, our guide returned us to the Effie Yeaw event hall where we dined on a scrumptious buffet breakfast, excellent coffee and enjoyed the warm camaraderie of the volunteer

staff. The recipe for the breakfast casserole, a main feature of the buffet, has been handed down for 30 years with explicit instructions not to change a thing. After breakfast, we bid on baskets full of bird watching essentials, bird statues, sculptures and feeders in a silent auction set up on the porch outside of the event hall. Raffle tickets were on sale for a chance to win a bird watching scope donated by Mendocino based Out of This World Optics.

Betty Cooper, the Development Director estimated that close to \$8,000 would be raised by the weekend's fundraiser. We asked Cooper what she thought makes this event so popular. She said "it's beautiful and all the birds are singing. With the help of the Audubon volunteers and the scopes set up throughout the nature area, folks can get a really good look at the birds." An avid birder herself, Cooper added "and I love it."

Although the recent recipient of a one-time only \$5,000 check from Sacramento County, the Nature Center is reliant solely on donations, grants and fundraisers to remain open. The Bird and Breakfast event will be followed by ARNHA's largest fundraiser, a Gala and Art Auction. This year's event is entitled "Art Where Wild Things Are" and is scheduled for Saturday, May 21st from 5 pm to 8 pm on the beautiful grounds of the Effie Yeaw Nature Center. It benefits the Center and its environmental education programs for youth. To learn more, visit [sacnaturecenter.com](http://sacnaturecenter.com) or call (916) 489-4918.