

Site Guide Reprinted from the Central Valley Bird Club Bulletin

American River

Habitats: Stream, riparian woodland, foothill woodland.

Specialty birds: *Resident*—Wood Duck; White-tailed Kite; Acorn and Nuttall's Woodpeckers; Yellow-billed Magpie; Phainopepla; Lesser Goldfinch. *Summer*--Ash-throated Flycatcher, Black-headed Grosbeak, Bullock's Oriole. *Winter*—Mew, California, Thayer's, and Glaucous-winged Gulls.

Other key birds: *Resident*—Green Heron, Red-shouldered Hawk, Wild Turkey, Great Horned Owl, White-breasted Nuthatch, Northern Mockingbird. *Summer*--Orange-crowned Warbler. *Winter*—Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye, Common Merganser, Greater Yellowlegs, Lincoln's Sparrow.

Best times to bird: September through May.

Directions: To get to the **Effie Yeaw Nature Center**, from the junction of U.S. Highway 50 and Watt Avenue east of Sacramento, go 1.1 miles north on Watt Avenue, and turn right on Fair Oaks Boulevard. Go about 2.9 miles east to Van Alstine Avenue, then right 0.3 mile to California Avenue. Turn left and go 0.2 mile to Tarshes Drive, then turn right, following signs to Ancil Hoffman Park-Effie Yeaw Nature Center (fee, parking, restrooms, visitor center).

For Ambassador Park, from Watt Avenue go 7 miles east on US 50 to Sunrise Boulevard, then 0.6 mile north on Sunrise Boulevard to Coloma Road. Turn left, go 0.9 mile to Elmanto Drive, then right 0.2 mile to Ambassador Drive. The **Elmanto Access** lies directly ahead (fee, parking, chemical toilet, open 5 A.M. to 9 P.M.). To get to **Ambassador Park** (an unofficial name for the area), instead of going straight ahead at Ambassador Drive, turn right and go 0.2 mile to a parking area (open 5:30 A.M. to 8 P.M.).

For **Upper Sunrise** and **Lower Sunrise**, go 0.8 mile north on Sunrise Boulevard from the junction of Sunrise Boulevard and Coloma Road to South Bridge Street; turn right and go 0.4 mile to a parking area next to the river (fee, restrooms, open 5 A.M. to 9 P.M.). This is Upper Sunrise. You can go an additional 1.4 miles upstream on a park road that parallels the river. To get to Lower Sunrise, instead of going to the parking area, turn left under Sunrise Boulevard to a large parking area (restrooms). From here, Sunrise Boulevard can be reentered for southbound traffic only. There is another parking area near the river about 0.3 mile downstream.

For the **Nimbus Fish Hatchery**, from Sunrise Boulevard go 3.2 miles east on US 50 to Hazel Avenue, then 0.3 mile north on Hazel Avenue to Gold Country Boulevard. Turn left and then immediately turn right on Nimbus Road into the parking lot for the fish hatchery.

The Birding: The birds in all the following areas are likely to be much the same, depending, of course, upon habitat. Resident birds in the wooded areas are California Quail; Red-shouldered Hawk; Great Horned Owl; Acorn, Nuttall's and Downy Woodpeckers; Western Scrub-Jay; Oak Titmouse; Bushtit; White-breasted Nuthatch; Bewick's Wren; Spotted and California Towhees; and Lesser Goldfinch. Fairly common spring and summer breeders are Ash-throated

Flycatcher, Orange-crowned Warbler, Black-headed Grosbeak, and Bullock's Oriole. Beginning in October, winter visitors such as Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Yellow-rumped Warbler, and Golden-crowned and White-crowned Sparrows show up in force. Lincoln's Sparrows appear at about the same time but are less numerous.

In more open areas, look for residents such as Red-tailed Hawk, Anna's Hummingbird, Black Phoebe, Yellow-billed Magpie, Northern Mockingbird, and Song Sparrow. Belted Kingfishers will be wherever there is water, and quiet waters may hold Wood Ducks.

Here's something else to look for in places where you can see directly down into the river--spawning salmon. The salmon run begins in mid-October and continues into December. If the river is not running too high, you can see them spawning in the shallows, especially near the Nimbus Fish Hatchery.

Effie Yeaw Nature Center: Effie Yeaw (pronounced YAW) was a conservationist and teacher who was instrumental in the establishment of the American River Parkway. The visitor center has exhibits, books, and a few live birds on display in cages. On the trails that traverse the natural area outside, the most abundant birds are likely to be Western Scrub-Jay and Acorn and Nuttall's Woodpeckers. There is also a resident flock of Wild Turkeys.

Ambassador Park: This is a local name for the lovely grove of trees, mostly oaks, bordering the river in this stretch. From the parking area two paths lead to the river. The paved path on the downstream side of the parking lot leads to the river and bike path in about 100 yards. The rather obscure path on the upstream side (an old road, partly paved) leads directly into a grove of large trees, and in about 0.2 mile comes to a green lawn adjacent to the river and bike path. The oak grove's resident birds include Acorn and Nuttall's Woodpeckers, Western Scrub-Jay, and Oak Titmouse, and may also have migrant flycatchers and warblers, especially in September.

Birding from the bike path can be a bit of a hassle, but a horse trail between the bike path and the river allows you to get away from the bikes and closer to the river where you can usually see Great Blue Herons, Great and Snowy Egrets, Double-crested Cormorants, Belted Kingfishers, Killdeer, and gulls. In September and October winter visitors such as Greater Yellowlegs, Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye, and Common Merganser show up. Check the river in winter for rarities such as Barrow's Goldeneye and Hooded Merganser.

Lower Sunrise: From the parking lot, a maintenance road runs close to the river, to the next parking area about 0.3 mile downstream. The trail is used by horses, but is closed to bicycles. It offers a rather quiet opportunity (at least in midweek) to find many of the woodland birds that are in Ambassador Park, and gives frequent opportunities to check the river.

The area near the **Nimbus Fish Hatchery** can have lots of gulls in winter, mostly Ring-billed, California, and Herring, but also Bonaparte's, Mew, Thayer's, and Glaucous-winged. Glaucous Gull is rare. From the hatchery you can walk downstream on a fairly good informal trail along the bank of the river. In about 0.5 mile the trail joins the paved bike path. In this area the country is open, with small trees, mostly live oaks, scattered about. This is a good place for White-

tailed Kite. Phainopeplas often perch in the tops of trees, which make them easy to spot. The bike path can be used to return to the fish hatchery, where the access road to the hatchery meets Gold Country Boulevard.

General Information: The American River Parkway extends 30 miles along the American River from Folsom Lake to Discovery Park, where the American joins the Sacramento River. (Less than half the parkway is included here.) It is used heavily by rafters, kayakers, fishermen, joggers, horseback riders, and bicyclists. According to parkway rules, bicyclists have priority on the designated bike paths. Pedestrians are supposed to walk to one side, on the shoulders.

ADDITIONAL HELP

NCA&G grid: Page 86, 4D; page 87, 5C. [refers to Delorme *Northern California Atlas & Gazetteer*]

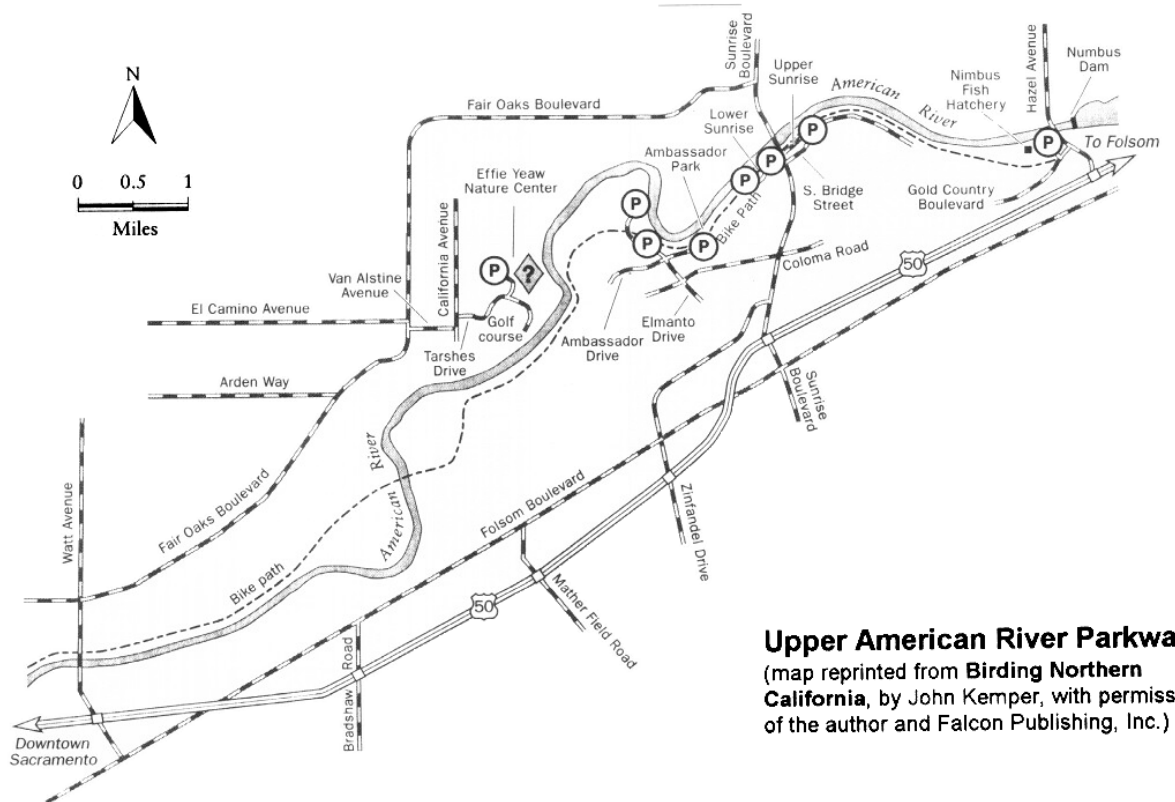
Elevation: 100 feet.

Hazards: Poison oak, rattlesnakes, ticks, and the river, which claims lives every year.

Nearest food, gas, and lodging: Sacramento, Folsom.

For more information: Sacramento County Regional Parks.

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Upper American River Parkway
(map reprinted from *Birding Northern California*, by John Kemper, with permission of the author and Falcon Publishing, Inc.)