

California State University, Sacramento

The campus and adjacent 1.3-mile section of the American River Parkway from the Guy West footbridge east to about a half-mile past the Howe Avenue bridge are typical examples of disturbed, "modern," streamside woodlands. The campus has large expanses of well-cared-for lawn with many hedges, planters, mature introduced trees and, near the northwest corner of the campus, a large arboretum. The parkway has few remaining large cottonwoods and willows, but there are many small willows and tangled berry vines and open savannah populated by introduced annual grasses, as well as native annuals and perennials.

Birding the site: In winter, look for Dark-eyed Juncos, crowned sparrows, Yellow-rumped and Orange-crowned Warblers, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Cedar Waxwing, Red-breasted Sapsucker, Northern Flicker, Downy Woodpecker and Hermit Thrush in all areas. An American Redstart was found as a winter vagrant in the eucalyptus trees along the west margin of the campus. Irruptive species such as Purple Finch, Evening Grosbeak, Pine Siskin and Varied Thrush can be present, but are not seen annually. Belted Kingfisher, California and Spotted Towhees, Fox and Lincoln Sparrows, Black Phoebe, and Bewick's Wren are among the species typically found on the parkway. Just downstream from the campus and the J Street bridge is a large gravel bar frequented by California Gulls and other species that fly up and down the river. Pied-billed Grebe, Common Goldeneye, and Common Merganser are seen on the river.

In spring, look for migrants such as Townsend's, Hermit, Black-throated Gray, MacGillivray's, Nashville, Wilson's and Yellow Warblers, Warbling and Cassin's Vireos, Western Kingbird, Western Wood-Pewee, Western Tanager, Black-chinned and Rufous Hummingbirds, and Black-headed Grosbeak throughout the area. Watch for Cliff and Barn Swallows near the Howe Avenue bridge in spring and summer.

The year-round residents include Red-shouldered Hawk, White-throated Swift, American Kestrel, White-tailed Kite, Green Heron, California Quail, Western Screech-Owl, Great Horned Owl, Anna's Hummingbird, Nuttall's Woodpecker, Yellow-billed Magpie, and Oak Titmouse.

Directions: From downtown Sacramento, take Highway 50 east for 5.3 miles from Interstate 5 and exit at Howe Avenue. Stay right at the first ramp and follow the signs to California State University, Sacramento (variously signed as "CSUS" and "Sacramento State"). Turn left at the light onto College Town Drive, then right onto State University Drive.

Daily permit lots are currently available just before reaching the parking garage. You can also park at the Howe Avenue access to the American River Parkway (see the next section) and walk along the parkway toward the campus.

Mike Lippsmeyer

Howe and Watt Avenue Accesses

These two accesses are only a mile and a half apart and are connected by a paved bike trail as well as informal trails through the riparian forest. This is a relatively narrow section of the parkway, but there are nice stands of cottonwoods with native understory and flooded backwaters.

Birding the sites: From the parking lot at the Howe access, you can walk downstream toward California State University, Sacramento, or upstream toward Watt Avenue. Following a service road downstream under the Howe Avenue bridge, you will come to a stand of cottonwoods and an isolated pond where you may find Wood Ducks. From the Watt Avenue access, there is a particularly nice stand of cottonwoods with an understory of Santa Barbara sedge. Informal trails provide access to the forest, and this is a good area in winter for sparrows and wrens. During spring and fall migration, look for warblers, vireos and flycatchers in the oaks, willows and cottonwoods. Between the two accesses there are several spots where the bike trail overlooks flooded backwaters below. These are good sites to see Wood Ducks, Belted Kingfishers, Green Herons, and Black Phoebes.

Directions: From downtown Sacramento, take Highway 50 east for 5.3 miles from Interstate 5 and exit at Howe Avenue. Turn left (north) on Howe Avenue, then veer right onto La Riviera Drive just before reaching the Howe Avenue bridge. At the stoplight, go straight into the parking area. For the Watt Avenue access, take Highway 50 east for 7.0 miles from Interstate 5, and take the Watt Avenue exit north. Veer right onto La Riviera Drive just before reaching the Watt Avenue bridge. Turn left at the stop light and make a right turn into the Watt access. The entrance fee is currently \$5 per vehicle (or a \$50 annual pass; see introduction to this chapter).



American River Parkway

