

American River Parkway

Effie Yeaw Nature Center at Ancil Hoffman Park

More than 70 acres of riparian woodland adjacent to the Effie Yeaw Nature Center have been preserved as a nature study area within the American River Parkway. Ancil Hoffman Park and the nature center are part of the annual American River Natural History Association (ARNHA) December Wildlife Count, and the Bird and Breakfast event in March. Typically 50-55 bird species are seen.

The site includes oak woodlands, grasslands, a pond and access to the river. Marked trails make exploring easy and accessible. The nature center is open every day except Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day. Summer hours, March 1 to October 31, are 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Winter hours, November 1 through February, are 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. It offers exhibits and information about the river and its wildlife, besides the practical advantages of rest rooms and drinking fountains. A multi-purpose assembly building has recently been added to support the nature center's program and storage needs. If you visit when the center is open, you may wish to pick up a map to the trails. Please remember to stay on the trails. You may also purchase field guides and checklists at the reception counter.

Birding the site: Because this birding spot is easy to reach and includes a variety of habitats, it is possible to sight more than 100 species during the course of a year. In the spring, migrating warblers move through the woods. The crowned sparrows return each fall, and winter brings the goldeneyes back to the river. A Merlin sometimes takes up winter residence on an old snag near the northeast end of the service road.

Some of the notable permanent species are the Wild Turkeys that feed in the grasslands, the Acorn Woodpeckers that take advantage of dead trees for acorn storage and nesting holes, and the Red-shouldered Hawks and Great Horned Owls that nest along with the Yellow-billed Magpies in the tall oaks and cottonwoods of the woodlands. Frequently you will find White-tailed Kites hunting rodents in the grasslands. Approaching the pond you may find a Green Heron stalking fish in the shallows, hear the rattle of a Belted Kingfisher or see a pair of Wood Ducks, or Mallards floating under the hanging vegetation at the pond's edge.

Western Scrub-Jays are a common sight, and a careful look in the oaks will often produce a flock of Bushtits, pairs of Oak Titmouse, Nuttall's Woodpecker, White-breasted Nuthatch, and in winter, Ruby-crowned

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Kinglet. The blackberry thickets at the side of the road and along the paths shelter California Quail, Bewick's Wren, and Spotted and California Towhees. The star thistle patches attract both American Goldfinches and Lesser Goldfinches. Black Phoebe like the ponds. Anna's Hummingbirds frequent the California fuchsia planted near the parking lot and nature center building. Western Bluebirds and Tree Swallows have nested in the snags at the edge of the meadow and have taken advantage of nesting boxes placed in the area.

Along the river's edge, you may find Killdeer, Greater Yellowlegs, Spotted Sandpiper and the magnificent Great Blue Heron and Great Egret. When the salmon are spawning in the late fall, American Crows and Turkey Vultures gather along with a variety of gulls to scavenge the dead fish.

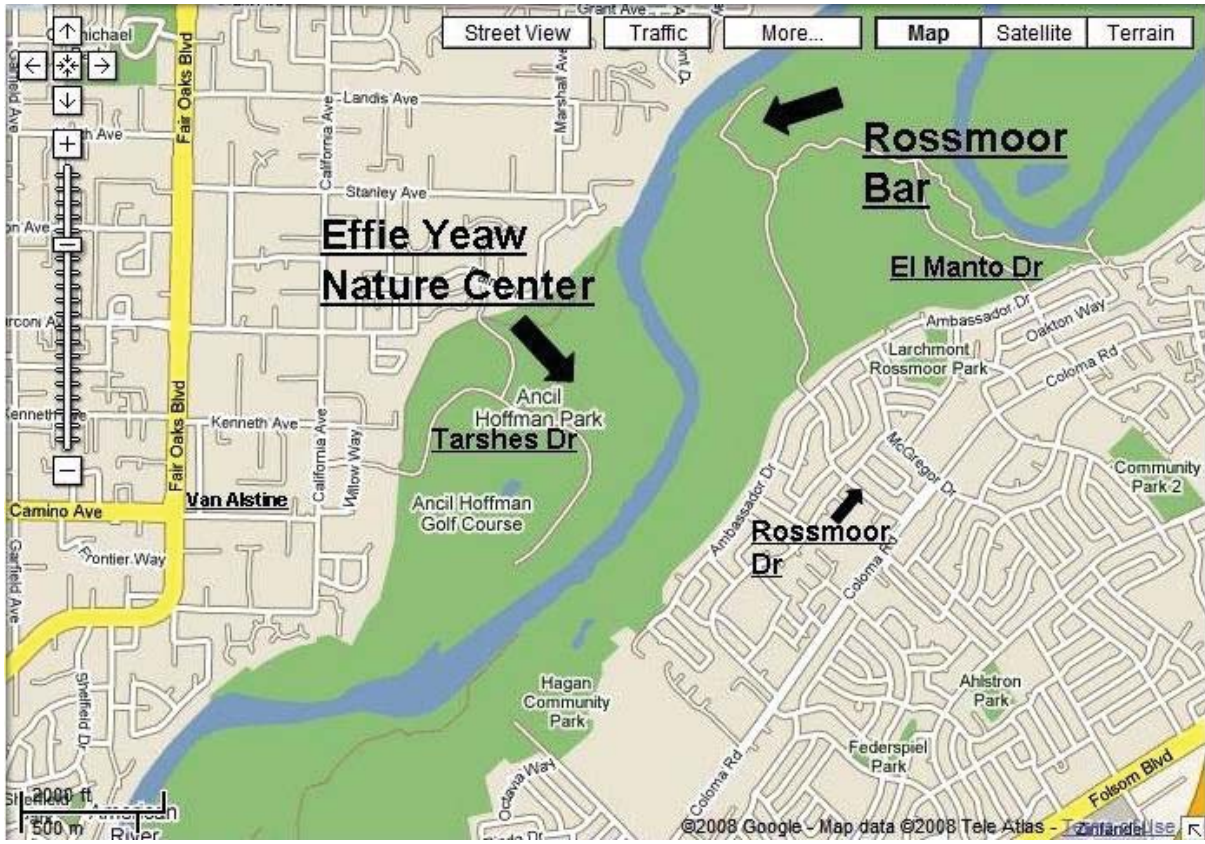
In addition to the many species of birds you may spot, you may also find deer, western gray squirrels, California ground squirrels, and see evidence of the many other mammals that live in the nature area such as striped skunks, gray foxes, coyotes, opossums, raccoons, cottontails and jackrabbits.

The Effie Yeaw Nature Center and the surrounding area are truly rich in wildlife and are great places to introduce young and old to the natural world. Visit often.

Directions: The Effie Yeaw Nature Center is located in Ancil Hoffman Park. From downtown Sacramento, take Highway 50 east for 7.0 miles from Interstate 5, and take the Watt Avenue exit north. After 1.6 miles, turn right onto Fair Oaks Boulevard. In 4.0 miles, turn right onto Val Alstine Avenue. After 0.4 mile, turn left onto California Avenue, then turn right onto Tarshes Drive. The parking area for the nature center is on San Lorenzo Way, a left turn off Tarshes Drive (The gate on San Lorenzo Way off Palm Avenue is an exit only). The entrance fee is currently \$5 per vehicle (or a \$50 annual pass; see introduction to this chapter). Members of ARNHA have free entry to the park to visit the nature center.

Jo Smith; updated by Brian Gilmore





Rossmoor Bar

Rossmoor Bar offers a similar mix of birds and habitats as described for Lower Sunrise. It is heavily impacted by dredge mining for gold along the river that occurred during the first half of the last century. Large piles of gravel and reduced topsoil have left many open areas with only pockets of vegetation. The main attraction for birders over the years has been a Bank Swallow colony on the steep north bank of the river. The bare soil and patches of gravel are good sites to look for reptiles.

Birding the site: On the drive into the park, you may see Wild Turkeys and black-tailed deer along the road. From the parking area, begin walking upstream on a service road. It is only a ten-minute walk to the traditional Bank Swallow colony. There are patches of vegetation that hold common species such as Anna's Hummingbird, Bewick's Wren and Spotted Towhee. A few large cottonwoods have managed to grow in the otherwise gravelly and hard soil, and they have been known to hold raptor nests. At the colony site, the river has cut steeply into the high bluffs and has created a sheer bank across the river from you. You can walk down the slope to a gravel bar opposite the colony. The nest holes are easily visible, but a scope is helpful to view the swallows as some of them sit with their heads peeking out of the holes. Both Bank Swallows and Northern Rough-winged Swallows use this site, and during some years the Bank Swallows, a threatened species in California, may be absent (they were last confirmed nesting here in 2002).

Following the service road and informal trails, there is a lot of habitat to explore, and you can continue upstream to the San Juan Rapids (see the next section) and beyond.

Directions: From downtown Sacramento, take Highway 50 east for 11 miles from Interstate 5, and take the Mather Field Road exit. Go north to Folsom Boulevard and turn right. In 0.4 mile, turn left on Coloma Road. In 1.6 miles, go left on Rossmoor Drive. Go all the way to the end of the road and park. The entrance fee is currently \$5 per vehicle (or a \$50 annual pass; see introduction to this chapter).

