

Gristmill Recreation Area

An amazing number of rarities have been found here: Eastern Wood-pewee, Red-eyed Vireo, Tennessee Warbler, Northern Parula, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler, Bay-breasted Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler, Black-and-white Warbler, Hooded Warbler, and Rose-breasted Grosbeak. Reichmuth Park and Babel Slough are among the very few other small sites in the Sacramento area with a similar track record. Jeri Langham and his cadre of friends and students scour it, sometimes several times a day, during migration. Gristmill is big enough to attract and hold interesting birds, but small enough and open enough to allow for good coverage.

Birding the site: From the parking area, there are informal trails heading both upstream and downstream. Heading upstream near the river, the trail overlooks a bluff with nesting Northern Rough-winged Swallows. There are often many waterbirds visible on the large pond on the north side of the river (William B. Pond Recreation Area). Access extends for only about a quarter-mile in this direction, but it can be quite productive, and you can make a loop by returning on a different trail farther from the river. Heading downstream from the parking area, an informal trail goes through nice stands of willows and cottonwoods. These give way to stands of non-native black locust and some non-native elm. Alders and willows line the riverbank. There are several spots with open views of the river, and Barrow's Goldeneyes are sometimes found among the Common Goldeneyes and Common Mergansers.

The parkway narrows shortly after crossing the Mayhew Drain, about one mile downstream from the parking area, though you may continue all the way to the Watt access, over two miles from the Gristmill access. A few large oaks often harbor Black-throated Gray Warblers, among other species, during spring and fall, and occasionally they overwinter. Larchmont Park, a quarter-mile downstream of the Mayhew Drain, just outside of the levee, has hosted a Red-naped Sapsucker and Sacramento County's only Cape May Warbler. Yellow-billed Magpies, Western Bluebirds, and Lark Sparrows are often seen here.

Directions: From downtown Sacramento, take Highway 50 east for 9.5 miles from Interstate 5. Exit at Bradshaw Road and go north (left) to Folsom Boulevard. Turn left on Folsom Boulevard, and then right onto Butterfield Way. Turn right on Linda Rio Drive and right again on Mira Del Rio Drive. In about 50 yards, turn left into Gristmill Recreation Area. The entrance fee is currently \$5 per vehicle (or a \$50 annual pass; see

introduction to this chapter). You may also park along Mira Del Rio Drive and walk into the park.

Chris Conard

William B. Pond Recreation Area

This area is located on the north bank of the American River, bordered on the east and south by the river and on the north by a man-made levee. The habitat consists mostly of riparian woodlands found adjacent to the river and dominated by Fremont cottonwood, white alder, California sycamore, California black walnut and several willow species. A large pond is located toward the southern edge of the area, with a large expanse of open habitat at the center. A developed park generally runs through the northern part of the area separated from the natural areas by the bicycle trail with a stand of eucalyptus trees bordering the levee. William B. Pond Recreation Area supports a diverse set of conditions with a good variety of both plant and animal life. Visitors can take a variety of trails throughout the area to search for wildlife.

Birding the site: On fast flowing water where riffles are present, look for Common Goldeneye and Common Merganser. On quiet waters look for Pied-billed Grebe, Double-crested Cormorant, Canada Goose and Mallard. Along the shoreline look for Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Green Heron, Killdeer, Greater Yellowlegs and Spotted Sandpiper. Watch for Osprey perched on dead snags or Black Phoebe fly-catching low over the river. Listen for the rattle call of the Belted Kingfisher as it forages for fish in the river.

The ponds within William B. Pond Recreation Area are home to Pied-billed Grebe, Canada Goose, Mallard, Wood Duck, Double-crested Cormorant, Green Heron and, during the winter, American Coot. A patient observer may locate beaver in the early morning or late evening or muskrat and river otter during the day. There are several beaver lodges located against the banks of the river, as well as in the ponds. A Great Blue Heron and Great Egret nesting rookery is located east of the large pond with a lot of activity being observed between March and May.

From October through April, heavy concentrations of Turkey Vulture, Herring Gull, California Gull and Ring-billed Gull can be observed on gravel bars near riffles where salmon have died after their struggle to reach their breeding grounds. In addition, an observer may see Forster's Terns in April and May. Cliff Swallows build gourd-like nests of mud on the bicycle bridge that spans the American River.

American River Parkway

Sandy banks and cliffs along the river's edge make good nesting holes for Belted Kingfisher and Northern Rough-winged Swallow. In the riparian corridor along the river's edge, look for Red-shouldered Hawk and Cooper's Hawk, Anna's Hummingbird, Nuttall's Woodpecker and Downy Woodpecker, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Black Phoebe, Oak Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, Bushy-tit, Bewick's Wren and House Wren, Western Scrub-Jay, Hermit Thrush, Spotted Towhee and, in winter, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Fox Sparrow and Lincoln's Sparrow. Watch for western gray squirrel in the Fremont cottonwoods, California black walnut and the scattered valley oak and interior live oak of the riparian woodlands, as well as black-tailed deer in the understory near blackberry brambles.

In the open areas and the edges of woodlands, look for Turkey Vulture, White-tailed Kite, American Kestrel, Mourning Dove, Western Kingbird, Western Bluebird, California Towhee, Lesser Goldfinch and American Goldfinch, as well as both desert cottontail and black-tailed jackrabbit. Western Bluebird, American Crow, Yellow-billed Magpie and House Finch are located in the developed park as well as western gray squirrel and eastern fox squirrel.

Directions: From downtown Sacramento, take Highway 50 east for 7.0 miles from Interstate 5, and take the Watt Avenue exit north. Proceed 1.6 miles north to Fair Oaks Boulevard and head east for 2.5 miles to Arden Way. Turn right and go 0.7 mile to the entrance and fee station. The American River Bike Trail crosses from River Bend Park (formerly C.M. Goethe Park) on the south side via a bridge and generally runs through the northern edges of the area before turning southwest toward the large pond and then downriver toward Watt Avenue. The entrance fee is currently \$5 per vehicle (or a \$50 annual pass; see introduction to this chapter).

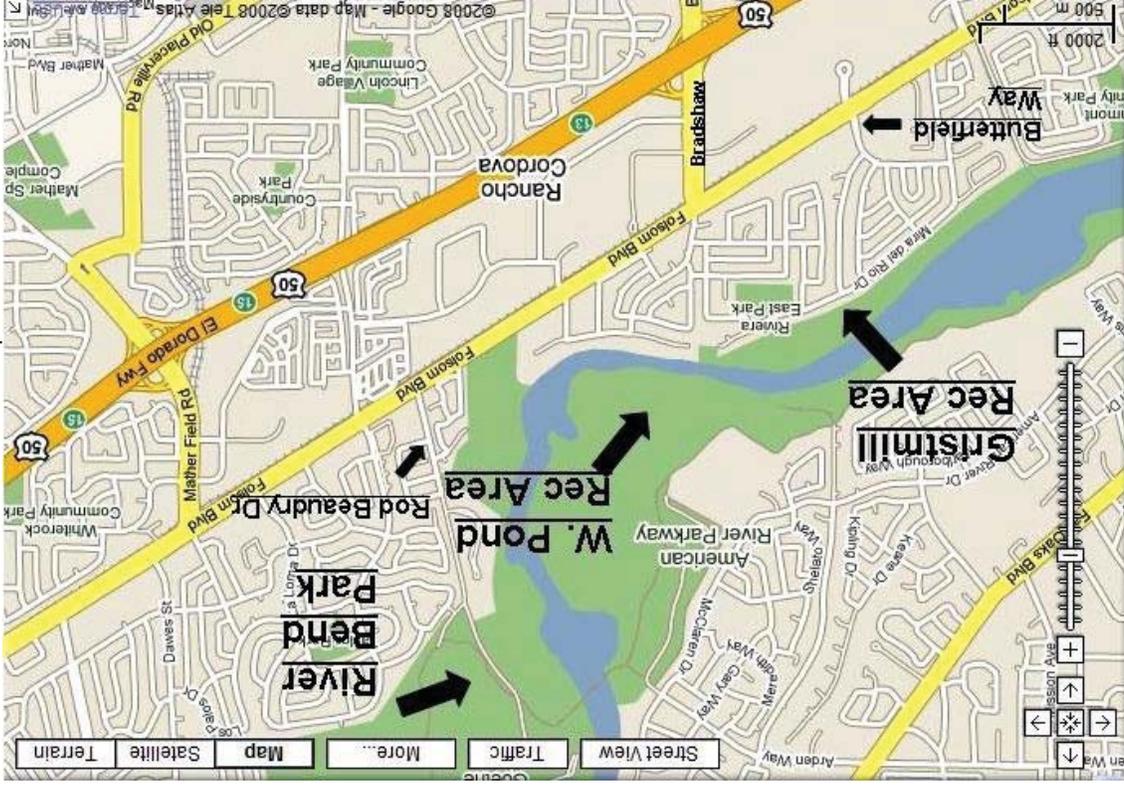
Dave Johnson

River Bend Park (formerly C.M. Goethe Park)

This area is located on the south bank of the American River, bordered on the west and north by the river and on the east and south by a man-made levee. The habitat in the center and northern part of the park consists mostly of interior live oak, valley oak and California black walnut; whereas, along the west side in the floodplain area, Fremont cottonwood, California black walnut, white alder and several willow species are dominant. A large expanse of open area is found along the

American River Parkway

center and the eastern side. Several large gray pines are located in the picnic area and a stand of eucalyptus trees is present just east of where the bicycle trail bisects the main access road into the area. The park has a variety of habitats to offer the visitor with trails throughout the park that visitors can take to look for wildlife and plants.



American River Parkway

Birding the site: Along the American River, look for Common Goldeneye, Double-crested Cormorant, Canada Goose, Mallard and Common Merganser. Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Green Heron, Killdeer, Greater Yellowlegs and Spotted Sandpiper can be found along the gravel shorelines of the floodplain. Pied-billed Grebe, Wood Duck, Mallard and Green Heron are found in the quiet, sheltered stretches of the river. Look for Belted Kingfisher, Black Phoebe and Northern Rough-winged Swallows along the edges of the river.

In the riparian woodlands, watch for Red-shouldered Hawk, California Quail, Anna's Hummingbird, Nuttall's Woodpecker and Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Tree Swallow, Oak Titmouse, Bushitit, Bewick's Wren and House Wren, Hermit Thrush, Orange-crowned Warbler, Spotted Towhee, Fox Sparrow, Song Sparrow and Lincoln's Sparrow. Black-tailed deer are found where the understory consists mostly of blackberry brambles.

In the oak woodlands, watch for Red-shouldered Hawk and Cooper's Hawk, Wild Turkey, Mourning Dove, Great Horned Owl, Acorn Woodpecker and Nuttall's Woodpecker, Western Wood Pewee, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Tree Swallow, Western Scrub-Jay, Oak Titmouse, Bushitit, White-breasted Nuthatch, Bewick's Wren and House Wren, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Hutton's Vireo, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Spotted Towhee, Dark-eyed Junco and House Finch. Western gray squirrel, eastern fox squirrel and black-tailed deer may be found throughout the woodlands.

In the open areas and the edges of the woodlands, watch overhead for Turkey Vulture, White-tailed Kite, Red-tailed Hawk and American Kestrel. Lower down, look for Western Kingbird, Black-chinned Hummingbird, Mourning Dove, California Towhee, White-crowned Sparrow and Golden-crowned Sparrow. California ground squirrel, black-tailed jackrabbit and desert cottontail are often found feeding around the shrubs and smaller brush. Coyotes can be found during the day in the open areas, especially in the eastern part of the park.

Below the American River Bike Trail bridge, look for the gourd-shaped mud nests of the Cliff Swallow. Downstream from the bridge, scan the gravel bars for Turkey Vulture, Herring Gull, California Gull, and Ring-billed Gull, especially during the salmon runs (feeding on dead salmon), and Greater Yellowlegs, Spotted Sandpiper and Killdeer. Forster's Terns are present here during April and May.

American River Parkway

Directions: From downtown Sacramento, take Highway 50 east for 9.5 miles from Interstate 5. Exit at Bradshaw Road and go north (left) to Folsom Boulevard. Turn right and go approximately one mile to Rod Beauty Drive and turn left, heading north, to the park entry fee station. The American River Bike Trail crosses from William B. Pond Recreation Area via a bridge and runs generally through the southern edge of the area, turns north and proceeds east along the American River toward Rossmoor Bar Park. The entrance fee is currently \$5 per vehicle (or a \$50 annual pass; see introduction to this chapter).

Dave Johnson

