

**Bobelaine Audubon Sanctuary**

Once, all of the rivers in the Central Valley were bordered for five miles or more on either side with rich riparian forest habitat. Now less than five percent of the original river forests remain. Bobelaine's 430 acres on the west bank of the Feather River are a tiny remnant of that ecosystem. The sanctuary is listed by the State of California as a State Ecological Preserve and is part of the 3,000-plus acres that make up the Lower Feather River Important Bird Area, listed in Audubon California's 2004 edition of *Important Bird Areas of California*, and is a prime example of Great Valley Mixed Riparian Forest. The sanctuary contains a variety of habitats, including riverbank willows, shrubby thickets, grasslands and climax oak woodland. Bobelaine Sanctuary is owned by the National Audubon Society, and for many years was solely managed, funded and operated by the Sacramento Audubon Chapter. While Sacramento Audubon is still actively involved with Bobelaine, it is no longer financially responsible for the support of the sanctuary. National Audubon has received a bequest, which will be invested, and the dividends will provide for Bobelaine's expenses and management.

Magnificent mature California sycamores and massive valley oaks are the predominant trees in the sanctuary. A 1992 fire destroyed 90% of the mature Fremont cottonwoods in the sanctuary. Three restoration projects have successfully replaced several hundred cottonwoods, some of which are now thirty to forty feet tall. In winter, coyote bush will be blooming; in summer the wild rose, moth mullein, evening primrose and blackberries may be seen. In the fall, California wild grape will be ripe, and poison oak will show its brilliant fall colors. Watch out for poison oak, which flourishes year-round, but is more difficult to identify in winter after it has lost its leaves.

Bobelaine is open to the public to walk through during daylight hours. The sanctuary is not wheelchair accessible. No pets, bikes, fires, hunting, horseback riding or fishing are allowed. Please stay on the trails and help protect this beautiful habitat by observing the no smoking policy in the sanctuary, picnic areas and parking lot. A chemical toilet, picnic tables, and running water are available at the parking area. The sanctuary is about 2.5 miles long and about a half-mile wide (between the levee and the Feather River). There are about five miles of trails to explore, and there are usually trail maps in the mailbox at the parking area. A self-guided trail brochure is available for sale at the Sacramento Audubon Society general meetings, at [www.sacramentoaudubon.org](http://www.sacramentoaudubon.org), and at several bird and nature stores in the region.



## North of Sacramento

**Birding the site:** A walk through the sanctuary is a delight in any season. Over 190 species of birds have been recorded. Beaver, otter, and deer are often seen, and the ringtail population has been studied here. In summer, Swainson's Hawks soar overhead, and the secretive Yellow-billed Cuckoo has been spotted during its short summer nesting season (though the last regular sightings were in the late 1980s). There is a nesting colony of Bank Swallows on the east side of the Feather River, visible downstream from the River Overlook. Great Horned Owls are common here. Wood Ducks, herons, egrets, turtles and Pied-billed Grebes can be found year-round on Lake Crandall and the adjacent sloughs. Springtime brings a variety of warblers and other migrants as well as nesting Western Bluebirds, Bullock's Orioles and Black-headed Grosbeaks. In winter, sparrows, towhees, kinglets, Yellow-rumped Warblers and Northern Flickers are among the common birds.

A short walk (2.2 miles round trip) will take you north on the levee past Lake Crandall, into the sanctuary at the main entrance past Wood Duck Slough, up the Center Trail to Eizinger Grove, on the North Trail to the River Overlook, back to the north trail, west to the Otter Trail, south to the Center Trail, then back to the parking lot.

**Directions:** Bobelaine is located off of Highway 99, south of Yuba City and about 30 miles north of Sacramento. Take Interstate 5 for 7 miles north of Highway 50. Take the Highway 99/Highway 70 exit (exit 525B) toward Marysville/Yuba City. After 12.5 miles, at the 99/70 split, take Highway 99. Seven miles past the 99/70 split, the second paved road on the right after crossing the Feather River is Laurel Avenue. Turn right and follow it 0.9 mile until it dead-ends into the Bobelaine parking lot. The last 800 feet of Laurel Avenue is a private dirt road that Bobelaine shares with neighbors. Please drive slowly.

*Bill Clark*

