

## Yurtle the Turtle Mourned

There were more than a few tears shed when Effie Yeaw Nature Center staffers buried “Yurtle the Turtle” in the nature area last summer. The Western Pond Turtle succumbed after having been a favorite of the naturalists and the children who admired her since 1983 when she was found in a nature area pond with a fish hook and weight caught in her mouth.

“Yurtle,” classified as “a species of special concern,” was a star of EYNC outreach programs in the schools where she helped naturalists teach about the need to keep creeks and other waterways clean and to avoid releasing non-native turtles into streams where they can multiply and crowd out native species.

“She was amazingly friendly – when the children looked at her she would look right back them,” said Marilee Flannery, EYNC director.

## Maidu Indian Day Celebrates Living Culture

One of the most successful Maidu Indian Day events drew 780 visitors and volunteers to the Effie Yeaw Nature Area under bright sunny skies October 7. A big crowd gathered to watch members of the Maidu Dancers and Traditionalists Troupe perform. They were accompanied by Effie Yeaw Nature Center Cultural Program Director Vince LaPena and his father Frank LaPena, who sang and kept the beat. Visitors also enjoyed food tasting and crafting pendants or necklaces from abalone shells.

“The annual event gives everyone the chance to celebrate the past and living culture of the Maidus,” EYNC Director Marilee Flannery said. “It’s put on in cooperation with ARNHA, with proceeds helping to support the nature center’s Maidu cultural heritage program in the schools and at the nature center.”



## Salmon Festival “Spawns” Fun for All

Some 23,000 visitors of all ages attended the 10th annual American River Salmon Festival at the Nimbus Fish Hatchery Oct. 14-15, and a goodly number of them patronized the ARNHA booth, buying up everything from colorful T-shirts, to tiny magnetic turtles to ARNHA field guides, to plastic, water-squirting trout.

Coordinator Lee Wilner’s team of volunteers, who included eight members of Folsom and Carmichael Kiwanis clubs, grossed \$6,245 during the two-day event celebrating the return of spawning Chinook Salmon from the ocean. The festival also realized \$18,000 each from parking and the salmon barbecue. As co-sponsor with the California Department of Fish and Game, ARNHA receives a percent fee for serving as fiscal agent for the festival.

## ARNHA Members Help with River Clean-Up

Sixty volunteers collected some 500 pounds of trash and recyclables including a truck tire and an abandoned baby stroller at Ancil Hoffman County Park in the Great American River Clean Up September 16. ARNHA was responsible for the Ancil Hoffman section of a 29-mile stretch of the parkway in the annual event sponsored by the American River Parkway Foundation

The Ancil Hoffman volunteers included 20 students from teacher Joel Carson’s Mira Loma High School class, recruited by ARNHA board member Cindy Dunning. Other ARNHA participants included Claudia and Chris Hulbe, Molly Keller, Jamie and Larry Washington, and Pete Hayes, coordinator.



## Concert of Laughter : Acorn Woodpeckers on the American River Parkway

Step with me under the forest canopy.  
Soon this garrulous band  
with their raucous banter  
shake the tops of oak trees  
as they gather the bounty of acorns,  
hammer the harvest into their granary,  
pounce on intruding jay—  
See them dressed like whiteface clowns,  
Listen to their festive  
worksongs and mealtime chatter  
this team of jesters  
and their lapping waves of laughter.  
this drumbeat echoing through timeless wildwood—  
It is good. Yes, it is very good.

by Steven Du Pre

## CRITTER COLLECTIVES

We know about a school of fish, herd of cattle and flock of chickens. But down through the centuries word-smiths, often influenced by an animal’s behavior, have come up with some off-beat collective nouns for various wildlife. Can you match the following collective nouns and animals?

1. Swarm of \_\_\_\_\_
2. Crash of \_\_\_\_\_
3. Kindle of \_\_\_\_\_
4. Knot of \_\_\_\_\_
5. Unkindness of \_\_\_\_\_
6. Parliament of \_\_\_\_\_
7. Army of \_\_\_\_\_
8. Convocation of \_\_\_\_\_
9. Smack of \_\_\_\_\_
10. Singular of \_\_\_\_\_
11. Pod of \_\_\_\_\_
12. Romp of \_\_\_\_\_
13. Gaggle of \_\_\_\_\_
14. Pride of \_\_\_\_\_

Answers to quiz on page 8

## PAGES FROM THE ALMANAC

### The Orphan

The stately swan paddled leisurely against the current of the lower American River. This, the largest waterfowl, overshadowed nearby mallards and mergansers. It didn’t really belong here, making the sight all the more interesting.

The ash-gray neck, longer than the snowy body, marked this tundra swan as an immature bird, one that was born this year. Normally it would have been with a large flock of swans spending the winter gleaning leftover grain near delta shallows at least an hour’s flight away. We can only speculate on why it was on this river in the middle of suburbs.

It entered the world last summer, perhaps on Alaska’s barren Arctic coast, hatched from one of a half-dozen eggs in a nest of water plants and swan’s down. By October, as temperatures began dropping, the young bird, or *cygnet*, was ready to join its parents, siblings, and other swans on the long flight down the Pacific flyway.

Pushed along by increasingly cold weather, the swan family would have flown south in V’s or diagonal lines, necks outstretched, broad wings propelling them through the skies at 40 mph or more. As leaders of the flock took turns at the wind-buffeting point of the procession, the air filled with honking sounds, ranging from deep bass notes to shrill tones like those of clarinets.

Whatever it is that steers swans in the right direction – geographical features, the stars or magnetic influence – a great many find their way to a favorite feeding spot on Victoria Island in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, where 10,000 or more may gather in winter.

But somewhere along the way, disaster may have struck the family of the lone American River swan. Its parents, who mated for life, may have fallen victim to fowl cholera or a fog-shrouded transmission line. The young swan lost its way, and now it is alone.

But it likely will search out another flock in the delta or in the San Joaquin Valley, calling out with muffled musical whistles. Swans are intolerant of intruders during breeding season on the far north tundra, but down here they surely will adopt this orphan and let it stay with them until it’s time to return to the Arctic in March. They will take care of one of their own, once it finds them.

*Reprinted from ARNHA’s “An American River Almanac: Reflections on nature throughout the year,” with essay by Peter J. Hayes and color photographs by Tom Myers and George Turner. It can be purchased for \$19.95 at the Effie Yeaw Nature Center and selected bookstores.*