

Excerpt: *Biking and Hiking the American River Parkway*



. . . Near Mile 12.4 is the Harrington Avenue. A fee collection booth marks the entrance into the Harrington Recreation Area. This access and William B. Pond Park are part of the Parkway known as Arden Bar. Across the river is the site of Gristmill Park, reached from Mira Del Rio Drive in Rancho Cordova.

. . . Harrington Recreation Area: Travel down the access road toward the river. The park is a popular equestrian staging area, fishing and river raft takeout point. The sound of the water gliding over the gravel riverbed helps drown out sounds of freeway and city. Redbud (tree of heaven), and telegraph

and jimson weeds brighten the terrain next to the parking area. Near the river off the trail running east, a cottonwood was girdled by beavers and died. Fungi and western fence lizards (blue-bellied lizards) have taken up residence here. Except during their winter hibernation, these brownish-gray lizards are a common sight on rotting trees. Blue patches on their bellies become more vivid during the spring mating season. Lizards that lack thick armor, or powerful teeth and claws, have an important means of defense. When caught by a predator, they shed their tail to escape, distracting an enemy by giving it an easy meal. Their habit of pumping up and down upon your approach is their way of saying, "This is my territory. . ."