2017 WILDFLOWER WALKS BEGIN
AT BRIDGEPORT ALONG THE SOUTH YUBA RIVER

When spring arrives in the Nevada County foothills there is no better way to welcome its arrival than with a walk among the beautiful wildflowers at South Yuba River State Park. Docents will provide guided wildflower walks beginning on March 11, and will continue every Saturday and Sunday through May 14 at 11:00 a.m. The walks and blooms are at the whim of Mother Nature. Rain may cancel.

The Buttermilk Bend Trail, which winds above the wild and scenic South Yuba River, is highly regarded for the many species that bloom on its hills and slopes. Each season observers are delighted with an ever-changing tableau of spring color. Early season walkers will find Western Buttercups, Zigzag Larkspur, and Shooting Stars. By mid-season, the hills turn gold and purple with Tufted Poppies and a variety of lupine. Mid to late season floral treats include Fairy Lanterns, Chinese Houses, and Birds-eye Gilia. Docents will share facts, legends and the many uses of the flowers and plants along the trail.

Docent led hikes last about two hours. The Buttermilk Bend trail is an easy 2 mile hike out and back. Meet at the trailhead in the South Yuba River State Park north parking lot. Follow Pleasant Valley Road north past the Visitor Center over the South Yuba River. Parking is $5.00. Sturdy walking shoes, hat and water are recommended. A $3.00 donation is requested and appreciated. (Dogs are not permitted on the guided walks as the trail is narrow and the groups can be large.)

Other guided hikes are also available such as four docent-led wildflower hikes on Pt. Defiance trail in April. They will be on Tuesdays, April 4, 11, 18, 25 at 9:30am. Midweek private group hikes can be arranged by contacting the Visitor Center.

(530) 432-2546

To make your visit complete, bring picnic lunch and allow time to take in the park Visitor Center, check out the covered bridge (while is it under renovation) and barn (both built in 1862), and the restored 1920’s gas station.

The Visitor Center is open from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Thursday through Sunday until Memorial Day and every day from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. starting Memorial Day weekend. Here you can find a collection of wildflower books educational and souvenir items. (And perhaps that bottle of water you forgot to bring for the hike)

For more information, call the park at (530) 432-2546, or go to www.southyubariverstatepark.org.
Bridge Project Update

No news is good news at this point in the project, we hope! The permitting process and funding requests are going forward with no reported major problems. Our next step will be to contact all of the members of the Assembly and State Senate budget review sub-committees that will review the Department of Parks and Recreation budget proposals. Thanks to a generous donation from one of our Save Our Bridge supporters, Ardie Obert, we have 100 beautiful notecards with envelopes that feature a picture of the Bridge to use in this endeavor, (see picture below). Ardie designed, paid for and then hand assembled each notecard. We will be asking Save Our Bridge Campaign Committee members and supporters to write short hand written notes to the two legislative committee members thanking them for their past support and encouraging them to support the funding that is in the proposed 2017-2018 State Budget to complete the project. As soon as we have the information identifying the legislative committee members serving this year and when the budget review committee hearings will take place, we will be putting the word out so that we can have S.O.B. representatives attend the hearings in support of the Bridge project. Watch for future email alerts to help with the letter writing and to attend the hearings in Sacramento.

The Save Our Bridge Campaign Committee members wish to express our sincere gratitude to all of you who have hung in there with the project over the past 4 years, repeatedly lent your support and helped make this project to Save Our Bridge a reality!
President’s Message

Spring is here! Wildflower Walks are underway on Saturdays and Sundays through mid-May at 11:00 am. School Tours will begin shortly. Visit the park before the hectic summer season. Whether you go with a docent or on your own, do not miss your chance to experience the wildflowers.

When you visit you will see that the river is still running high and cold. With the deep snowpack, this will most likely continue into mid-summer. As always, enjoy the river, but respect its power. In January the river ran very high, but thankfully did not reach the wooden structure of the Bridge.

The restoration of our historic covered bridge continues to require our attention. In January, the Governor’s proposed budget included $3.23 million for restoration of the Bridge. We will be working to assure that this funding is included in the final budget. The committee leading the “Save Our Bridge” efforts has members from SYRPA, The South Yuba River Citizens League, Bear Yuba River Land Trust, Nevada County, the cities, the Chambers of Commerce and other interested citizens and is working to save our iconic covered bridge. It continues to be a community effort. Please see the separate article for more on the Save Our Bridge Campaign.

On a sad note, we lost a true friend of SYRPA and the State Parks when Debbie Pfanner passed away in early March. As a park aide at Malakoff Diggins SHP for many years, she was a positive and cheerful face of the park and oversaw the Environmental Learning Program. For several years, Debbie, along with Lori Spencer, hosted the children’s games for the Fall Festival. Please see the separate article for more on Debbie.

The board recently concluded that it will not host SYRPA’s spring fundraiser, Celebrate Spring at Bridgeport this year. Although we will certainly miss the community building benefits of the fundraiser this year, we want to take some time to consider the purpose of the event and how it might be improved. We appreciate the support we have received in the past and look forward to relying on the support of our members and the community in the future.

In March, I attended the Sierra District All-Staff Meeting, a full day session at Donner Memorial State Park reviewing the accomplishments and challenges faced by the staff over the past year. It was an opportunity to hear about what is happening at all the parks across the Sierra District (The Sierra Gold Sector, which is comprised of the three parks in western Nevada County, is part of the Sierra District). It provided perspective on the process of addressing the needs of South Yuba River State Park and Malakoff Diggins Historic State Park. We also learned about a number of special projects in the Sierra District, including dealing with the damage at Bodie State Historic Park resulting from a series of earthquakes and restoration of the entry way at Vikingsholm (at Emerald Bay).

I am pleased to report that John Field has recently been elected to serve on the SYRPA Board. For the last few years, John (along with others) has taken our publicity to a new level. Daily we see the results of his efforts. I look forward to working more closely with John.

In addition to John and myself, the Directors of SYRPA are Carol Berry (Vice President), Bill Stamatis (Treasurer), Paul Keasberry, Doug Moon, Bruce Stanton, Margaret Vodicka and Warren Wittich. If you have an opportunity, please thank them for their efforts on SYRPA’s behalf. Also, please let me know if you have any questions, comments or concerns about SYRPA.

We are approaching the end of the process of renewing our annual memberships. If you have not yet renewed, please renew either through the website or by mailing in your payment. A membership form is included in this newsletter. Membership dues play a large role in our ability to perform our mission of providing interpretive, educational and financial support to our parks. It is also a good time to invite others who enjoy our parks to join our Association and/or to volunteer.

SYRPA also needs help on fund raising, website management and many other activities in support of our goals. Please consider volunteering your time. We have a very talented pool of members. Please contact me if you are interested in exploring volunteer opportunities and sharing your talents with SYRPA.

See you in the parks.

Robert Coats
**SUPERVISING RANGER REPORT**

Spring is in the air and with spring, change is abounding. We welcome 53 brand new State Park volunteers to the parks family. Dan Roediger, Brooke Betz and Lauren Wilson, our new Volunteer Coordinators, will be busy working with the new volunteers to get them trained and ready to interact with our visitors. We are also welcoming five new State Park seasonal employees that have recently been hired. Also, we are welcoming Ranger Michele Green, who has stepped up for our local Park Associations and is now the Cooperating Association Liaison (CAL) who is our department’s representative working with our Association partners. So, as you can see, we have been busy!!

Our Department is also on the verge of some serious changes that will help make us sustainable for future generations. The committee that was formed to help initiate the findings, the Transition Team, have already made a few organizational changes and recommendations to our department heads and we are now waiting on what changes will be enacted in the next few months that help bring relief to our over-taxed field staff. Stay tuned!!!

*For now, let’s get outside and start enjoying this much deserved Spring season!*  
*Dan Youngren, Supervising Ranger Sierra Gold Sector*

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**Introducing Michele Green, Special Event Ranger**

New Cooperating Association Liaison (CAL) to the SYRSP Board of Directors

Michele was born in New Jersey and moved to California in 1977. She met Matt Green in High School in 1983 and they married in 1990. Michele and Matt have two adorable daughters; Savannah and Sierra, both young volunteer Docents at Empire and Bodie State Parks. Michele earned a Bachelor of Science in Anthropology from the University of California Riverside, with an emphasis on Southern California Archeology. She has worked for several environmental firms doing field archeology. She worked for a variety of companies putting on catering and banquets while attending college. Michele began working for California State Parks in 1996 after graduation from college. She has served at Palomar Mountain State Park, and taught outdoor education at the Palomar Outdoor School. She went into the Ranger Academy in 1998, then worked at Silverwood State Recreation Area, Cuyamaca Rancho State Park, Monterey State Historic Park, Lake Tahoe Sector Parks and Empire Mine SHP. Michele has been a Special Event Ranger for 12 years, with special event training at the Center for Police Organizations Studies. She loves hiking, camping, backpacking, fishing, cross country skiing and long walks with her dog Georgia and her family.

**WELCOME, MICHELE** to your new role with South Yuba River State Park!  
*Doug Moon*
Warren Wittich Honored by BYLT

On March 14, 2017, The Bear Yuba Land Trust hosted its Annual Award Ceremony & Member Meeting (A.K.A. Oak Tree Bash) at The Historic North Star House in Grass Valley. Among the honorees, Bear Yuba Land Trust (BYLT) recognized Warren Wittich (SYRPA Board Member and Volunteer) with the John Skinner Sierra Outdoors Recreation Award for his volunteerism on the Independence Trail, Sequoya Challenge and South Yuba River Citizens League.

Warren Wittich developed a soft spot for the Independence Trail when his friend invited him for a hike on the west side 20 years ago. He was instantly smitten with the trail built by the late Naturalist John Olmstead and volunteers, known for its Gold Rush-era flumes and ditches. Posted on the kiosk at the trailhead was a notice calling for trail volunteers. Wittich was drawn to the cause and remains so to this day.

In no time Wittich was on the board of Sequoya Challenge and in charge of the maintenance of the trail. When the nonprofit group disbanded, Wittich continued to drive the 55 miles one way from Fair Oaks to work on the nation’s first wheelchair accessible trail, now as a volunteer for South Yuba River Parks Association.

With the trail now co-managed by State Parks and BYLT, Wittich, age 83, continues to devote at least one day a month working with BYLT’s Land Access Manager Shaun Clarke and volunteers to keep the trail in good working order. Wittich is optimistic that the community can come together to raise awareness and funding to restore the dilapidated wooden ramp at Rush Creek.

The retired Wonder Bread delivery truck driver says access to nature for all is important to him. He finds meaning in his life when he helps others. “Occasionally I’ll meet someone on the trail in a wheelchair and I tear up; I can see how much they are enjoying it…I know I’m a softie,” he said, with tears in his eyes.

Among others honored were Ted Beedy as a lifetime conservationist with the “William Nickerl Award for Conservation Leadership” and long-time community hero Ron Mathis for his work with many local nonprofits and organizations including BYLT, Nevada County Fair and Big Brothers Big Sisters and the North Star House.

Article and Photos by:
Laura Petersen
Community Engagement Manager
Bear Yuba Land Trust
John Field
Publicity Director, SYRPA
Hosts: Terry Hundemer, BYLT President (left)
Marty Coleman-Hunt, BYLT Executive Director (right)
BIRD WATCHING AT BRIDGEPORT

Spring is an irresistible season for those interested in viewing birds at South Yuba State Park. This seasonal transition marks the arrival of migrating birds to the park who are following warm weather, longer days, and resurgent food supply. Wood-Warblers, Western Tanagers, Black-headed Grosbeak, various species of flycatchers, Yellow-breasted Chats are among the migrants at the park this time of the year. All of them are in their showiest mating season plumage. Likewise, hundreds of Cliff and Northern Rough-winged Swallows can be viewed busily building nests and raising young under and along the highway bridge. Coming out of the past few drought years, we anticipate better food supply and even more migrants than normal this year. We also look forward to the return of our spring/summer resident Bald Eagles. The Eagles have been absent several years after their large nest blew down in a fall wind storm. However, they have been observed early this spring rebuilding a nest near their previous one in the hills southwest of the visitor center. Visit www.southyubariverstatepark.org website for more information and brochures.

Bob Slyker

NOT ONLY GORGEOUS WILDFLOWERS...

...but you will also be treated to a world of beautiful butterflies on the wildflower walks and along the trails throughout the South Yuba River State Park. A big thank you to Allen Bertke, who captured a number of these magnificent creatures through his camera lens. Thanks to all the Docents who volunteer their time giving walks, caring for the trails, sharing their knowledge of plant identification and plant usage, informing our visitors of the wonder of nature and answering as many questions as they can about the history of this Park and the plans to continue to preserve it and keep it beautiful for all our visitors.
The Sierra Nevada Group of the Sierra Club presents local author

Julie Carville
TAHOE'S SPECTACULAR WILD GARDENS
Nurturing Our Souls
Thursday May 11, 2017
6:30 pm
Seaman’s Lodge
423 Nimrod Street
Nevada City

We'll explore Tahoe's spectacular wildflower gardens and trails and enjoy stories about the special members of this cooperative community; the flowers and their pollinators, the birds, and other animals that enrich our experiences in Tahoe's backcountry and nurture our souls.

Julie Carville is an author, photographer, and botanist/naturalist. Her passion is helping people to find a more meaningful communion with nature. As she says, “When we immerse ourselves in nature, with an open, curious heart, we discover that we belong to something much bigger than our small selves. Children experience this naturally in their own way; adults often need to be re-awakened, by learning that Nature is not an “it . . .out there,” but rather a living, breathing, astounding community to which we all belong.”

Julie’s newest book, Tahoe's Spectacular Wildflower Trails, draws from her many years of living and hiking among the wildflowers at Tahoe. She has led wildflower field classes for 40+ years for children and adults with private groups, environmental organizations, schools, and colleges. She helped create and worked with the California State Parks' "Women in the Outdoors" program to encourage women to hike, camp, and enjoy the outdoors with confidence. She is a co-founder & past President of the Tahoe Chapter of the California Native Plant Society (CNPS) and a co-founder of the Redbud Chapter of the CNPS. She has traveled throughout Northern California presenting programs on California's native plants and is the author of Hiking Tahoe's Wildflower Trails and co-author of, both Wildflowers of Nevada and Placer Counties, CA, and Trees, Shrubs & Woody Vines of Nevada and Placer Counties, CA.

These books are available for purchase in the Visitor Center. Come by the Visitor Center and check them out!
Debora Joann Pfanner

Gracefully passed away on March 1, 2017 of gall bladder cancer, at sunrise in her home, surrounded by loved ones and her 2 dogs. She was 62. A Celebration of Life, was held at Malakoff Diggins State Historic Park on Saturday, March 25, from 1-3 p.m.

A Tribute (from the Humbug Herald)

A few years after I retired I got re-involved with the Malakoff Diggins Park Association. Not long after that I heard references to a Park Aide named Debbie. It was Debbie this, Debbie that, but mostly, “ask Debbie.” I had to meet this person.

Later at the Museum, I was perusing the book-rack and “Debbie” appeared from the office and quickly sized up my need and recommended a particular book. I thought of how I had worked here for 12 years and had never noticed that book, yet in her short time she was familiar with the contents.

As time went by, it was obvious that Debbie was something special. Often, Park Aides are there for a season then find other goals or not. Debbie was becoming an in-house, go-to person on things Malakoff, and things outside Malakoff that affected the place. She capably prepared herself to partake of not only the office and visitor-center museum, but of the entire town, the histories of the buildings and families and the park interpretive program.

Her at-ease style made interpreting places such as the Skidmore kitchen, into more like a bunch of folks standing around a pot-belly stove chewing the fat about, “that old mouse trap”, etc.

With the shortage of Park staff, many organizational duties fell to her that would not normally have been assigned to a Park Aide; yet she realized those important things would go undone, without her.

Indeed, one of her biggest contributions was to Be There; to show the flag, to be the face of Malakoff, at odd and unusual times and seasons, when it was so difficult for permanent staff to cover; Debbie was there. She was modestly elated about a year or so ago when she was deservedly promoted to: Senior Park Aide. To most of us watching, it was long overdue.

The torch had been passed to her. With good natured determination she stepped in and ably carried it to the end; then, with so much left to do, she reluctantly passed it on.

Well done Debbie Pfanner, you will be missed.

editor: L.F. Clark, Supervising State Park Ranger (retired)

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A letter from Debbie shared by her nieces and nephew:

“Deb’s Thoughts”

Even as a kid I would think now and again of how I would die. I wasn’t obsessed with it but a little curious. I always thought it would be cancer like mom or lung trouble like did. Well I guess I was half right but I would never have guessed gallbladder cancer. That was a shock.
I have accepted death a long time ago. Again, as a kid, I realized death was inevitable, couldn’t stop it, so why worry about it. I told myself to live life to the fullest and enjoy everyday for it’s beauty and feel blessed that I could do so without any disability. During my adult life I would often say “What a beautiful day,” no matter the weather and truly mean it. I surely felt in my heart the joy of life that I have lived. I have loved life and been loved by many people, both family and really good friends. I have no regrets!
I have always believed that if I was honest with my words and actions towards people that people would be honest with me. Well that’s not always true, but one can hope. I soon found out who was a true friend and not one giving me lip service. I have always believed that we go through life once and that we should make the best of it while we are here, don’t spend time with petty feuds. That is just wasting what precious time we have. I guess what I am trying to say is enjoy life to the fullest, be honest and kind to family, friends, and strangers. Put a smile on someone’s face everyday and reap the benefits.
2017 Volunteer Training/Spring Report

Greetings everyone! I am pleased to announce that we had a great turnout for our recent volunteer training. Over the two weekends that training was held, we received 13 new applicants for South Yuba River State Park! All of the applicants seemed eager to start working at our Park. So far, it’s been another great year at South Yuba River State Park. With wildflower walks and school tours under way, there’s plenty of ways to stay busy around Bridgeport. I would also like to take the time to thank every one of you for all that you do to make South Yuba River State Park the wonderful place that it is. Without your support, this Park would not be the place it is today. Thank you again and I’m looking forward to continuing to work with all of you throughout the year. Cheers!

Dan Roediger; Senior Park Aide and Volunteer Coordinator

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HAVE YOU RENEWED YOUR SYRPA MEMBERSHIP?
Would you like to become a member of SYRPA?
It’s easy and you will be helping support the many activities at the Parks.

Annual Individual Membership: $ 20
Annual Family Membership: $ 25
Lifetime Individual Membership: $150
Lifetime Family Membership: $200
Annual Small Business Sponsor: (up to 5 employees) $ 50
Annual Business Sponsor: $100

Make Checks Payable and mail to:
SYRPA
ATTN: Membership
P.O. Box 1658
Penn Valley, CA 95946
You can also pay on-line! It’s easy!
Go to the SYRPA website: www.southyubariverstatepark.org
and click on “Become a Member”
CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2017
South Yuba River and Malakoff Diggins Historic State Parks

WILDFLOWER WALKS: Buttermilk Bend Trail: Every Saturday and Sunday through May 14; 11:00am; Point Defiance; Tuesdays in April: 9:30 am

MOTHER'S DAY: May 7th; Empire Mine

SYRPA CELEBRATE SPRING FUND RAISER: Postponed until 2018~ Bridgeport

MALAKOFF FISHING DERBY: May 13th: 9am-2pm~ Malakoff Diggins

MALAKOFF HUMBUG DAY: June 10th: 11-4pm ~ Malakoff Diggins

NEVADA COUNTY FAIR: August 9th-13th ~Nevada County Fairgrounds

MINER’S PICNIC: August 26th ~Empire Mine

ICE CREAM SOCIAL: September 3rd ~ Malakoff Diggins

DOCENT APPRECIATION DINNER: September 20th: 5-7:30pm ~ Bridgeport

STAR PARTY: October 7th; 7:30pm-10:30pm~ Bridgeport North Lot

FALL FESTIVAL: October 22nd: 11am– 4pm ~ Bridgeport

HOLIDAYS AT EMPIRE: November 24-25 ~ Empire Mine

HOLIDAY POT-LUCK: December date and place to be announced

Reoccurring events

◊ VISITOR CENTER Open Thursday-Sunday 11am-3pm until Spring; then 10am –4:00pm

◊ BIRD WALKS: Saturdays: April 8, May 6, Friday, June 9, Saturdays, July 8, Sept 9, Oct 14 and Dec 9: All walks start at 8:00am except for June, July and September which will start at 7:30 AM ~ Meet at the Bridgeport North parking lot.

◊ GOLD PANNING Memorial Day-Labor Day Sat & Sun 12:00am-2:00pm~ Bridgeport; donation $1 p/pan

◊ SYRPA BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETINGS: Fourth Tuesday of each month; 9:00am~ Bridgeport

◊ FNB/MD EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS: First Friday of each month

**For more information on any of these events, please visit the SYRPA webpage at www.southyubariverstatepark.org
Or call the Visitor Center: 530-432-2546

South Yuba River Park Association—www.southyubariverstatepark.org
Newsletter Editors: Doug Moon, Shirley Moon
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