



Shasta Environmental Alliance

Stewardship - Education - Advocacy

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December Newsletter



A Year of Stewardship and Gratitude

As the year draws to a close, this season invites a moment of reflection on the many experiences we shared outdoors. Our guided walks and field trips offered many chances to learn, connect, and enjoy the places that make Northern California so special. These moments are a reminder of why we care for our environment and why protecting it remains at the heart of our mission.

The beauty of this time of year encourages us to slow down, notice the world around us, and look toward the possibilities of a new year. We hope your holidays are peaceful, restorative, and filled with the sense of connection that nature brings. From all of us at the Shasta Environmental Alliance, thank you for being part of this community and for sharing your love of our region's landscapes.

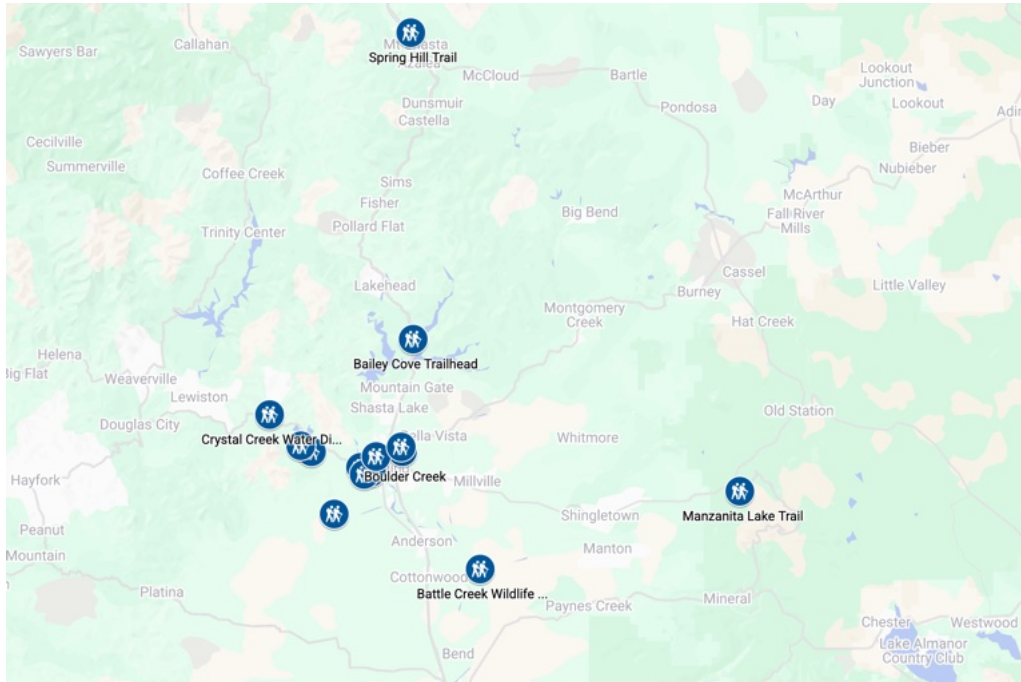


A Year on the Trail

Before we step into the new year, we invite you to look back at the journeys we shared outdoors. [The map](#) below highlights every educational hike and field trip we hosted this year, from quiet mornings along the river to afternoons exploring our local forests and grasslands.

Each location reflects places where people slowed down, asked questions, and noticed the minute habitat details surrounding them.

Thank you for being part of this year's adventures, and we look forward to sharing many more in the year ahead.



Click the image to load the map.



Wildfire: Friend or Foe?

by Juliet Malik

On November 24, Shasta Environmental Alliance hosted the Wildfire: Friend or Foe presentation in downtown Redding. With sounds of revelry from the nearby launch of the new Redding Public Market drifting in the

[Network](#), offered a multi-perspective exploration of California's history and relationship with fire that was informative and thought-provoking.

Kalyn opened the presentation by identifying the factors that make California prone to wildfire, namely its [Mediterranean climate](#), history of fire suppression (resulting in expanded fuel loads), and development in the wilderness urban interface (WUI). Climate change contributes an additional layer of complexity and uncertainty about future fire behavior by making conditions hotter and drier.

Evolving with Fire

Before European settlement, California experienced periodic, low intensity wildfires that kept ecosystems healthy and in balance, a natural cleanse for the forests. From redwoods and mixed conifer forests to oak woodlands and chaparral habitats, California native plant communities have relationships of dependence, resistance, and adaptation to fire due to millions of years of co-evolution. The Indigenous people of this land not only deeply understood these relationships, they used fire to enhance the landscape for various human, plant, and wildlife benefits, because, as Jonathon pointed out, the fact that fire is an essential part of the ecosystem is not new knowledge, it is "(k)new knowledge."

Working with Fire

As the understanding of fire's essential role in ecosystem health gained acceptance by Western science, the call for reintroducing intentional fire to our landscapes has been increasing in recent decades, and Jonathon helped us understand the differences between prescribed burning and cultural burning by reviewing the definitions provided in the Karuk Tribe's [Good Fire Report II](#). While both types of burns achieve many of the same benefits, such as fuel reduction, habitat restoration, control of invasive species, and restoration of forest and watershed health, the development and implementation of prescribed burns are in accordance with state and federal laws and review processes. Cultural burning, on the other hand, is the inherent right of Indigenous people to use fire for not only the previously listed benefits but for many more objectives, including cultivation of traditional foods and materials, as well as spiritual, religious, and community ceremony. Guidance for cultural burns comes from Tribal and Traditional Indigenous Law which is rooted in the holistic knowledge of the land.

Rethinking our Relationship with Fire

Kalyn continued the presentation with an overview of the history behind the U.S. policy for fire suppression that has led to decades of fuel build-up in our nation's forests. In 1910, a catastrophic wildfire commonly known as

detected. Kalyn alluded to the hubris of this rule by comparing it to attempting to hold back the ocean during hurricane season. Preventing all future wildfires is impossible, but mitigating human-caused catastrophic ones is within our abilities. Paying attention to red flag warnings and being mindful of our surroundings and actions can go a long way towards preventing unnecessary and potentially deadly fires. In 2024 alone, nearly 600 wildfires were caused by vehicles.

We know wildfire will continue to be part of our lives, but it doesn't have to be a reason for our demise. Protecting ourselves, our loved ones, and property requires preparation. Kalyn shared the current guidance for defensible space and home hardening.



She also reminded us of the importance of having an [evacuation plan](#) and staying connected to alert systems like [Watch Duty](#). Additionally, it is important to get to know our neighbors and establish plans to assist the most vulnerable amongst us. In times of crisis, it is our community that comes to the rescue when emergency services are overloaded.

We are grateful to Jonathon and Kalyn for taking time out of their busy lives to share this invaluable knowledge with our community. This presentation provided greater context for understanding our relationship to wildfire. Often the fear of loss overrides our understanding of the beneficial and essential role of fire in our landscapes.

Additional resources shared during the presentation:

[Tending the Wild: Cultural Burning](#)

[California Fire Resource Guide](#)

Upcoming Events



Cloverdale Loop Nature Hike

Date: January 4, 2026: 10:00 am - 11:30 am

Location: [Cloverdale Trailhead, Igo](#)

Sign up [HERE](#)

Let's start the new year off right by getting out on the trails to connect to nature and to one another. The [Cloverdale Loop Trail](#) is part of BLM's Clear Creek Greenway's trail system. It is considered easy for most, but there are some short steep sections with uneven footing so prepare accordingly. The loop is 1.73 miles and features a short jaunt to a vista point where we can pause to take in the view and if we feel compelled to do so, share some environmental intentions we have for the coming year.

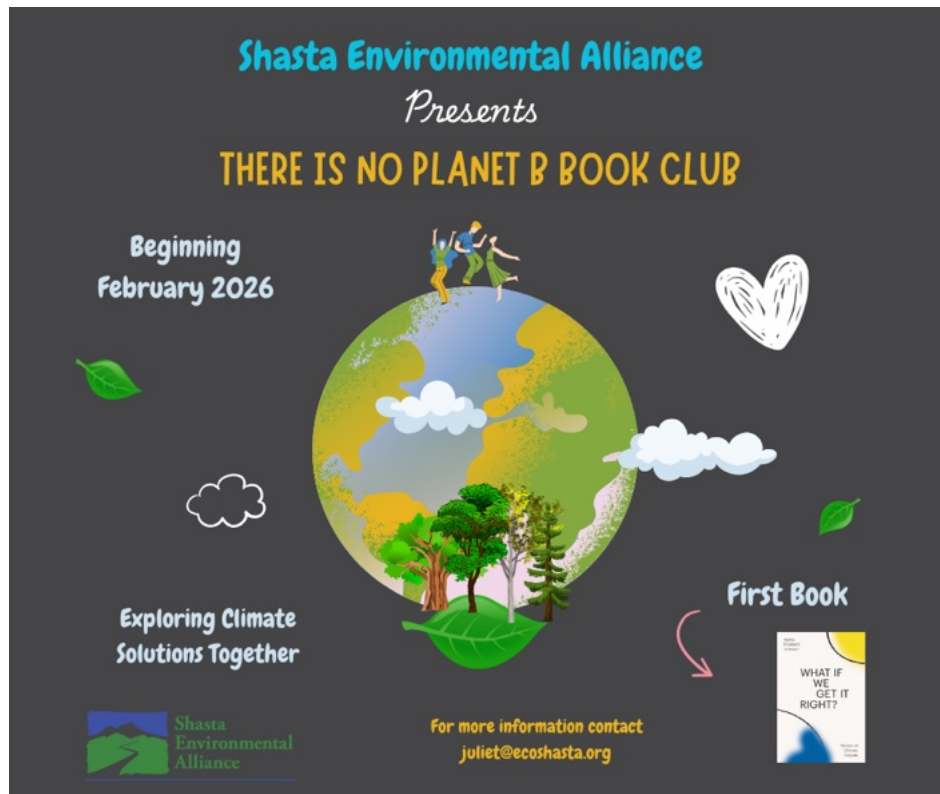
Please come prepared with water, sun/rain protection, sturdy footwear, hiking poles, snack, and anything else you like to use to observe nature, i.e. binoculars, hand lens, etc.

Severe weather cancels. Please fill out this [form](#) to sign our waiver and be added to the contact list for updates.

For any questions, email juliet@ecoshasta.org.

Stay up to date on future events at: <https://www.ecoshasta.org/calendar/>

February 8, 2026



We hope you will join us for the first meeting of the **There is No Planet B Book Club** on February 8, 2026, at 2pm! With an objective to facilitate meaningful conversation and build connection to community, this club will focus on books that help us imagine more hopeful climate futures. Our first book is Ayana Elizabeth Johnson's *What If We Get It Right?* Our meeting location will be determined by how many people sign up, so if you are interested please fill out this brief [form](#). For questions, email juliet@ecoshasta.org.

Species of the Month: Oak Mistletoe, *Phoradendron leucarpum* *ssp. tomentosum*

by Ren Redlich



Image Credit: Wikimedia Commons

Mistletoe is recognized mainly for its cultural reference to Christmas or its designation as a pest. Some might wonder how a poisonous parasite came to be an indication of love, affection, peace, and good luck.

Due to its evergreen nature, mistletoe's presence in deciduous trees (trees that shed their leaves in fall) makes it more conspicuous through winter and has thus been historically associated with fertility and vivacity.

Mistletoe is a sign of life when everything around it is cold and barren.

This, and perhaps a tale from Norse mythology, led to the tradition of 'kissing underneath the mistletoe'.

Oak Mistletoe is a leafy, hemiparasitic shrub. It is commonly viewed as a blight on whatever plant is hosting it, as it does utilize the water and minerals of its host. It does this by sinking its Haustorium (rootlike structure) beneath the bark into the vascular tissue. However, to wildlife, mistletoe is an essential part of the ecosystem. The white fruit ripens in winter, and is toxic to humans, but is particularly loved by birds such as cedar waxwings and western bluebirds. Their love for this fruit is partially responsible for seed dispersal, as they wipe sticky seeds from their beaks onto branches or deposit them in their droppings. The masses of mistletoe, colloquially called "witches' brooms," not only provide habitat for a variety of bird species, but also for many mammal species as well. Squirrels, martens, raccoons, and ringtails will use mistletoe as a comfy mattress and a food source. Mistletoe is the perfect Bed 'n' Breakfast! This is especially true for great purple hairstreak butterflies, which lay their eggs solely on the leaves of this plant.

This can lead to a healthier forest if the genetically weaker trees are culled. The berries, leaves, and flowers of this plant are important food and nest habitat for a variety of vertebrate and invertebrate species. They also photosynthesize and provide nutrients to the soil when they shed their leaves beneath the host plant, in this case, an oak. Perhaps this symbol of abundance is less metaphorical and more literal than commonly thought...

Be a Voice for the Environment

Do you care deeply about protecting our local environment and the wildlife, forests, rivers, and public lands that make it special? Join our board and help guide advocacy efforts that shape land use, conserve natural habitats, and preserve spaces for recreation and enjoyment. Bring your ideas, energy, and passion to make a real difference for the environment and your community.

Ready to get involved? [Fill out our interest form here.](#)

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