



Shasta Environmental Alliance

Stewardship - Education - Advocacy

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March Newsletter

Meet Our Board: Six Early Moments in Nature

We asked our new board members a simple question:

”What early outdoor experience made you feel connected to nature?”

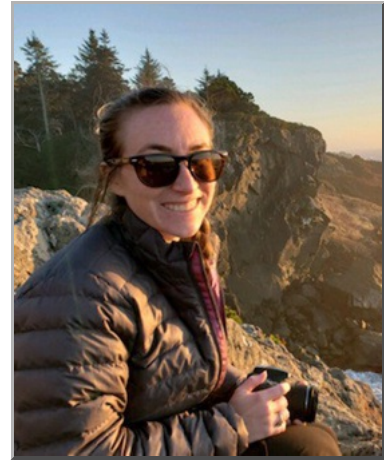


I grew up in Shasta County with an active, outdoor-loving family. We waterskied, hiked, swam, and camped whenever possible. My mother, a Southern California native, constantly commented, awestruck, on our surroundings; “The mountains! Look at the snow!” “Aren’t the trees beautiful?!?” “Ooh; the water is like glass!” From the age of four, my attention was continually drawn to the beauty that surrounds us, and we derived such enjoyment in the midst of it. Early camping trips, however, really connected me to nature; particularly a camping trip to Eagle Lake that still stands out vividly in

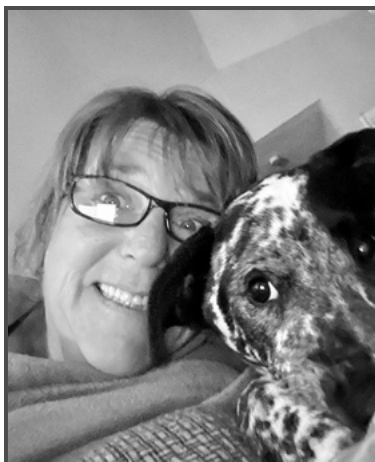
were no other campers. We spent a long weekend camped on a sandy beach; no electricity, no noise, no people; only beautiful Mother Nature. I was hooked.

My first experiences in the outdoors that made me feel connected to nature are mix

of three memories. The first is hiking with my Dad in the mountains right behind the house I grew up in (the Santa Monica Mountains), seeing oak trees and chaparral in all seasons made me curious about it. The next would be my tenure as a Girl Scout, where I learned how to camp, build a fire, leave no trace, and getting to experience many different natural environments. And last would be my 7th grade science teacher who taught me the basics of how nature worked and really sparked my love of science! Thanks to a handful of amazing adults who shared their love of nature with me, I became a nature appreciator and even ended up spending my career protecting it!



**Stacey Alexander,
Treasurer**



**Kat Camplin,
Secretary**

Years of summer trips gave me something I didn't have words for as a kid.

Our whole family would pack up and go, my parents finally off work, all of us together in a way that didn't happen the rest of the year.

Sleeping in tents, cooking on a little propane stove, running wild in the creek with the other kids from morning until dark.

Everything about it was different from our suburban neighborhood in a way that felt almost unreal.

Moments like a bear wandering through our campsite, sending us sprinting to the car laughing and terrified, made clear we were guests in something much larger than us.

It was a luxury, although I didn't recognize as one at the time, but I do now.

That's why I believe every person deserves access to wild places.

My sense of connection to nature developed when I was seven years old

when my family moved from Visalia to the tiny town of Whitmore. Instead of a walnut orchard in my front yard I was surrounded by towering ponderosas, leafy black oaks, and a seemingly endless sea of manzanita. While our father set to work to clear out much of the manzanita to make room for a horse –for which I was immensely excited –my sister and I found the manzanita rather enchanting, especially the large ones we could climb. The cool deep red bark was soothing to the touch on hot days and scraping off handfuls of the dried bark curls into our hands felt like collecting some kind of natural currency. The curious exploration of this new-to-me tree with its magnificent twisting branches was foundational to my connection to nature and to my sense of place.



**Juliet Malik,
Education &
Outreach**



**Ren Redlich,
Community
Engagement**

Every summer, to escape the scorching heat, my family would pack up three kids and a dog into our van and struggle up the long winding road, over Buckhorn Summit, and down to the California coast. We'd strain against our seatbelts to peak over the horizon and be the first one to shout, "I see the ocean!" Of course, that excitement would die down when there was work to be done setting up camp. But when the tents were up, the fire blazing, and dinner started, we were set free to explore. Running along fern-lined trails, jumping over tree roots and banana slugs, we'd stop at the edge of a sea cliff and stare in wonder at the sun dipping below the endless ocean. My family didn't have a lot of money growing up, but we always had this. Nature is an experience, and it's one I'll never stop having.

Growing up in Southern California, I naively accepted wildfires and the poor air quality that resulted as a natural and unavoidable consequence of living in a drought-ridden region. As fire season became longer and less predictable, I learned more about our changing climate and grew curious about how human actions contributed to this proliferation. I first realized the natural world needed defending when I encountered the defeatist and obstructive attitudes of so many. The problems may seem insurmountable, but we have the solutions!



Mara Sackfield

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Battle Creek Wildlife Area Trip Report



Pipevine Swallowtail, *Battus philenor* on Santa Barbara Sedge, *Carex barbarae*

Photo by: Ren Redlich

by Juliet Malik

Our recent field trip to the Battle Creek Wildlife Area on March 1 was a perfect cool and cloudy day for a dozen nature enthusiasts to explore the riparian forest and learn about the Battle Creek watershed. With not one, but three SEA board members present (Juliet Malik, Stacey Alexander, and Ren Redlich), the topics of discussion were plentiful and rich with information. After a brief round of introductions, the group set out on the trail leading to the Coleman National Fish Hatchery to identify native (and some non-native) riparian tree and plant species and discuss their many benefits to the ecosystem and human well-being.

Riparian forests, sometimes referred to as California's rainforests due to their high biodiversity, are unique habitats of woody vegetation that grow along rivers and smaller streams. They consist of trees and plants adapted to and dependent on access to a great deal of water. Some common riparian tree species observed on this walk include valley oak (*Quercus lobata*), Fremont cottonwood (*Populus fremontii*), Western sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*), California black walnut (*Juglans californica*), white alder (*Alnus rhombifolia*), and California bay laurel (*Umbellularia californica*). In return for the water, these trees and their understory pals like willows (*Salix spp.*), blue elderberry (*Sambucus cerulea*), and California pipevine (*Aristolochia californica*) provide habitat and food for wildlife, bank stabilization, erosion control, shady cooler water for aquatic wildlife like Chinook salmon, cleaner water for

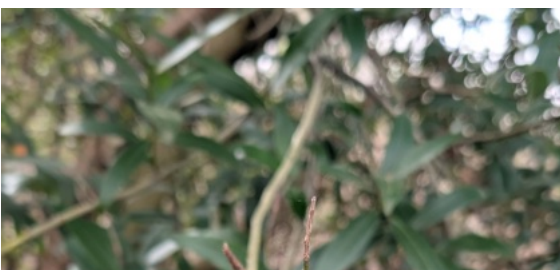


Photo by: Juliet Malik

At a scenic overlook, the discussion was handed over to Stacey, an environmental scientist with a passion for native fish and a “salmon spiel” to prove it. Battle Creek has been identified as a critical waterway for restoring the endangered winter run Chinook, and Stacey enlightened the group to the many factors that play a part in salmon restoration projects. On one hand, there are man-made physical barriers to fish passage such as the aging PG&E dams, and natural ones like enormous boulders that need workarounds. Adding to the complexity is the patchwork of different property owners throughout the watershed and the thorny issue of water rights.

Further complicating matters is upstream activity including clear cutting on private timberland adjacent to Battle Creek, which Ren discussed with the group, passing around [satellite images](#) showing how much clear cutting has occurred in the last two decades. Clear cutting causes a whole host of problems in the watershed, such as higher water temperatures, increased sedimentation, and toxification from the accompanying practice of using herbicides.

At this point the group separated, with some returning to the parking lot and others venturing further to see more of the trail, because true to form, this naturalist walk provided many observations but didn't cover much distance.



For more information on these topics:

[Battle Creek watershed](#)

[Battle Creek salmon restoration](#)



California Bay Laurel, *Umbellularia californica*

Photo by: Ren Redlich

Upcoming Events



Spring Hike at Upper Salt Creek

Date: Sunday, March 22, 2026 • 9 am–11 pm

Location: [Upper Salt Creek Trailhead](#)

Sign Up [HERE](#)

Spring is here and that means wildflowers are emerging to shake off the doldrums of winter. Join California Naturalist Juliet Malik for a walk along the Upper Salt Creek Trail to observe and identify flowering plants. We will also talk about the pollinators that choose these flowers and why. So grab your hiking essentials and join us for

This is an easy out-and-back trail for most. Round trip is about 3 miles with approximately 100ft in elevation gain. We will meet at the trailhead where Valparaiso Way meets Lower Springs Road. **The parking lot is very small so please consider carpooling with friends.**

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

*Only service dogs on a leash please. This is a narrow trail that is popular with mountain bikers too.

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.



Families in the Forest

Date: Saturday, March 28, 2026 • 10 am–12 pm

Location: Clear Creek, Redding, CA (exact location shared upon registration)

Sign up [HERE](#)

Families are invited to join SEA volunteers and California Naturalists **Holly White-Wolfe** and **Juliet Malik** for a gentle, sensory-rich morning along Clear Creek designed especially for young children and their caregivers. This two-hour outing introduces families to the restorative benefits of time in nature—supported by research showing that even a couple of hours outdoors each week can reduce stress, improve mental clarity, and support overall well-being. Through simple activities that engage sight, sound, scent, and touch, participants will learn how to slow down, notice more, and build a deeper sense of belonging to the natural world.

The walk will take place on mostly flat, easy-to-navigate terrain, though closed-toe shoes are recommended. The morning also includes a story time on picnic blankets and a playful visit from a “local gnome,” who will help children identify nearby mountains, waters, and plants. Service dogs on leash are welcome; no other pets, please. The event will be cancelled in the event of a storm.

To prepare, families should bring a picnic blanket, water, snacks, and layers for changing weather. This small-group experience is designed to foster curiosity, connection, and community among families who care about the local ecosystem.

Questions? Contact juliet@ecoshasta.org.





FREE-FOR-ALL ~ Thing Swap

Date: Sunday, March 29, 2026 • 9 am–12 pm

Location: Western Shasta Resource Conservation District, 6270 Parallel Road, Anderson, CA

Event page: <https://www.ecoshasta.org/event/free-for-all-thing-swap/>

Parking is limited to 20 cars; carpooling is encouraged.

The Shasta Environmental Alliance and the Western Shasta Resource Conservation District invite community members to a joyful morning of sharing, reuse, and connection at the **Free for All ~ Thing Swap**. This free, family-friendly event offers a simple way to pass along items you no longer need and discover new treasures without purchasing anything new. By extending the life of everyday goods, swaps help reduce waste, conserve resources, and keep usable items out of the landfill—small actions that add up to meaningful environmental impact.

Participants are encouraged to bring gently used items from their homes, including garden tools, seed packets, plastic pots, bikes, skates, camping gear, kitchen items, books, art supplies, and more. Almost anything in good condition can find a new home. Items may be placed on provided tables or on personal tables clearly labeled **“not part of swap”**. Attendees are responsible for taking home any unclaimed items they bring, as organizers cannot provide disposal services.

neighbors who care about reducing consumption and strengthening community resilience. Please bring bags or boxes for transporting both your contributions and any treasures you collect, and label your containers so others know they are not part of the swap.

Questions? Contact ren@ecoshasta.org.



Sloppy Joe Naturalist Hike

Date: Sunday, April 12, 2026 • 9 am–12 pm

Location: [Intersection of Sunglow Dr and Winter Green Ct](#)

Sign Up [HERE](#)

Join naturalists Juliet Malik and Ren Redlich for a plant and wildlife identification hike along Sloppy Joe and other connected trails. We will explore both riparian and oak

[Challenge](#) coming up at the end of the month (April 24-27), we will offer guidance and demonstrations on how to make [iNaturalist](#) observations to any who are interested. This field trip will cover about 3 miles depending on our route. Most stream crossings have bridges, but if there has been recent rainfall, the trail may truly be “sloppy,” so wear appropriate shoes. The trail crosses over a couple of ridges and some trail sections are steep, rocky, and uneven.

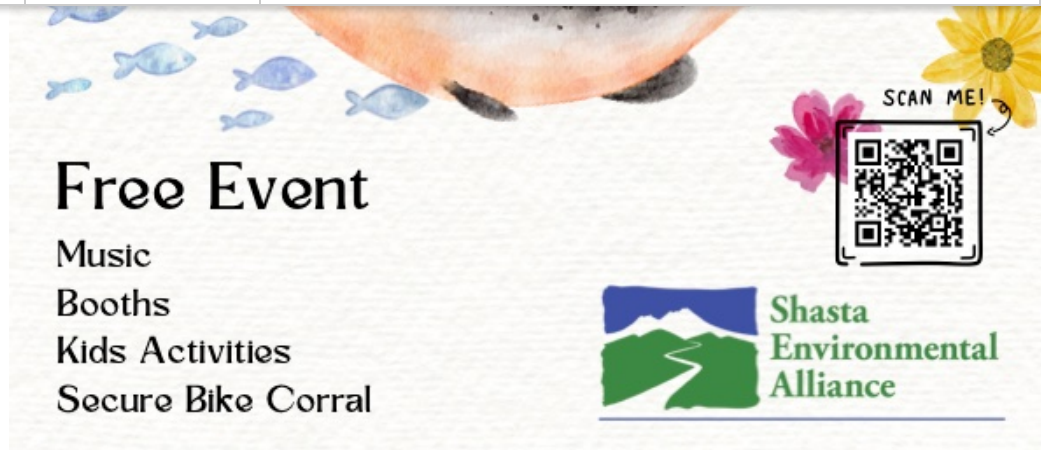
Please come prepared with water, sun/rain protection, sturdy footwear, hiking poles if desired, a snack, and anything else you like to use to observe nature, i.e. binoculars, hand lens, etc. If you are interested in making iNaturalist observations on this hike you can get prepared by downloading the app on your phone and [creating your account](#).

*Only service dogs on a leash please. This is a narrow trail that is popular with mountain bikers too.

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.



A promotional poster for a free event. At the top, there are illustrations of blue fish, a large orange fish, and a yellow flower. The text 'Free Event' is prominently displayed. Below it, a list of activities includes Music, Booths, Kids Activities, and Secure Bike Corral. A QR code is present with the text 'SCAN ME!' and a pink flower. The Shasta Environmental Alliance logo, featuring a green mountain and a path, is at the bottom right.

Free Event

Music
Booths
Kids Activities
Secure Bike Corral

SCAN ME!

Shasta
Environmental
Alliance

Earth Day is April 18! Come join the fun! We're now accepting exhibitor and vendor applications for this year's event. Interested in participating? Apply here: <https://www.ecoshasta.org/earth-day/>

We also have a calendar of events leading up to the Earth Day Fair which can be found at [ecoshasta.org/earth-day-events](https://www.ecoshasta.org/earth-day-events)

Species of the Month: Acorn Woodpecker, *Melanerpes formicivorus*

by Ren Redlich





Image Credits: Ren Redlich

A flit of black wings with white markings, moving from Valley Oak to Grey Pine. A small bird with a red-topped head and yellow cheeks lands on a tree covered in holes that are filled with acorns. This is the Granary Tree of a family of Acorn Woodpeckers. The practice of drilling holes into wood, specific to the size of each acorn, earned the Acorn Woodpecker its name. This tree serves as a communal pantry, and it is maintained through generations by a complex social system of cooperative breeding. Acorns will be stored here, rotated, shifted, and eaten from during winter, and lean times when insects (their preferred food source) are scarce.

These trees, and the trees in which the species cavity nest, are fiercely defended by one family of birds. Their family consists of multiple male and female breeders that share breeding duties and raise young together. They possess a rare ability to recognize others beyond their immediate family, to avoid inbreeding. A necessary skill, as non-breeding adult offspring will often stay for generations to help raise younger siblings. Because the breeders in one family will not intermix with another clan until all their options have died or disappeared, vacancies in other family groups can be hard to come by for the younger generations. These non-breeding "helpers" can remain with the group due to the storage of acorns and do their part to maintain the "pantry", sometimes moving 1% of acorns every week. When an Acorn Woodpecker has found the right sized hole for the acorn, they will hammer it in so that it can't be pried loose by another bird or a squirrel. But acorns will shrivel over time, and so, a new hole must be selected to house it. This complex system is possible due to family groups working together over generations to support each other and thrive.

I am fortunate enough to live 300 feet away from a granary tree, and observe the behaviors of Acorn Woodpeckers all year round. I have heard them loudly call "Wakaka!" when a squirrel is jumping from branch to branch. They have circled a tree, trying one hole and then another, until the perfect fit was found. One evening, when everyone else was tucked into bed, a lone sentinel perched on a branch and yelled at a nearby Red-tailed hawk until it flew away. He was silent after that, his duty fulfilled.

Spring is not known for acorns, but the Acorn Woodpecker has made sure that the bounties of Fall sustain the inevitability of the changing seasons. Although we are different from non-human species, we can take

learn from. The acorn you plant now is a hope for the future. But unlike a woodpecker, your tongue doesn't wrap around your skull to absorb the impact, so I wouldn't recommend hammering into a tree with your head!

Species of the Month: Western Redbud, *Cercis Occidentalis*

by Ren Redlich

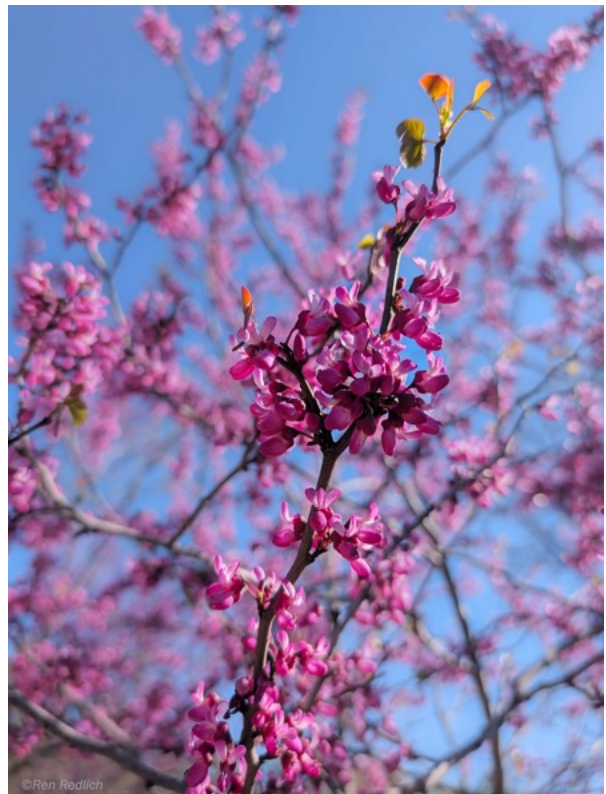


Image Credits: Ren Redlich

If you've noticed magenta pops of color fighting through the white blooms of non-native pear trees, congratulations! You've met the species we're featuring this month: Redbud. This native plant is a deciduous shrub or tree that can be identified in winter by its dried legume pods from the previous summer. Redbud is attractive to many pollinators, like: Non-native honeybees, Bumble bees, Hummingbirds, Butterflies, and Moths, and its leaves are a favorite of Leafcutter bees.

It also has uses to humans. It is a common ornamental plant in native plant gardens, as it is drought tolerant and blooms best in full sun. They're

lemonade, infused vinegar, jelly, and used raw to garnish salads. It should be noted that redbud is an important source for pollinators in early spring when not much else may be blooming. As always with foraging, don't take more than 20% of what you find, leave some for the birds and the bees! You'll also want to leave flowers on the tree if you intend to come back for the edible seed pods. They are tart, and become too fibrous to eat as they mature, so they are best collected when they are a dark reddish-purplish brown.

While redbud is a very showy and popular plant, it can be difficult to grow from seed. The process involves both scarification and stratification. The seeds need to be gathered from pods and cleaned before soaking them in hot water (scarification) and then keeping them cold for 30-90 days (stratification). This mimics their natural germination cycle of seed pods opening due to fire and then remaining dormant during the winter.

Fun Fact: *Cercis* is from the Greek *kerkis*, meaning "a weaver's shuttle" and *occidentalis* is a Latin word meaning "Western". According to Botanist Victor King Chestnut, these are the names for Redbud used by various northern California tribes: the Yuki call the tree Chā'ā, the Koncow call it dop or tal'k, the Ukiah (cited as Yokia) call it Kälā' ä kälä', and it is called Mūlā' in Northern Pomo.

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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