

Stewardship - Education - Advocacy



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May Newsletter

What's New

PHILLIPS BROTHERS MILL TOUR

We hope you'll join us for a very special field trip to tour the last fully steam-powered sawmill in the United States located right here in Shasta County! The Phillips Brothers Mill, located in Oak Run, has been operating since 1897 and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It sits on over 900 acres of timberland that has been placed in a conservation easement with the Pacific Forest Trust to ensure this property remains protected and sustainably managed in perpetuity.

The tour will be conducted by the mill's manager, Gregg Hendrix, who has been part of this family-owned-and-operated business since he was a child. Gregg will guide us through the operation, from the mill pond through the first cuts of the logs, to the finished products of custom-cut lumber and wooden boxes. It will take about two hours, and we will have an opportunity to purchase some of their box factory products. Afterwards, we can eat lunch before heading back. Please wear sturdy shoes and bring water and a lunch or snack.





Date: May 31, 2026

Time: 9:00am - 2:00pm

Where: Mt. Shasta Mall, near Chase Bank parking lot for carpooling

Sign up: [HERE](#)

Cost: \$15 per person (Children are free)

To join this tour you **MUST** fill out this [form](#) as we are limiting this field trip to 30 people. We will meet at Mt. Shasta Mall near Chase Bank to carpool and caravan to the mill. You may prepay via [PayPal](#) or bring cash or check the morning of. The full amount of the fee goes to the Phillips Brothers Mill, but we would greatly appreciate any amount above that price to support our mission to protect our local environment through stewardship, education, and advocacy.

For any questions, email juliet@ecoshasta.org

[Get to Know Your Watershed](#)

Species of the Month:

California Pipevine Swallowtail, *Battus philenor hirsuta*



Photo by Biologist Tim Wong

by Stacey Alexander

At this time of year, you can find me on the Sacramento River Trail, lovingly relocating these spicy little caterpillars off the trail and out of harm's way on to a patch of California Dutchman's Pipevine. If you have been out in about in nature this time of year as well then you have likely also seen these little guys (adult or caterpillar stage). These insects are endemic to California and have a close personal relationship with our California Pipevine, in that eggs are laid on the underside of pipe leaves and after the eggs hatch, larvae begin feeding on the tender young shoots, in fact these caterpillars feed exclusively on the plant, making the plant a host plant for the species. So much so that the life cycle of the swallowtail follow growth of the Pipevine. After the caterpillars become full grown they retreat into a brown or green leaf-like chrysalis to begin to metamorphose into a butterfly. The timing of this stage is somewhat of a mystery, but seems to be a combination of day length and temperature. Once adults emerge they feed drink nectar from many different plants including asters, lupines, California buckeye, and even the non-native species (if nothing else is available).



Fun Fact! Pipevine leaves are poisonous and when the caterpillars eat the leaves of the plant, consuming a chemical in the plant called aristocholic acid, they too become poisonous. Pretty nifty adaptation! Both the butterfly and caterpillar life stages of Pipevine Swallowtail have bright orange markings, this is called aposematism, or warning coloration used by many insects to warn predators of their toxicity (also nifty).

References:

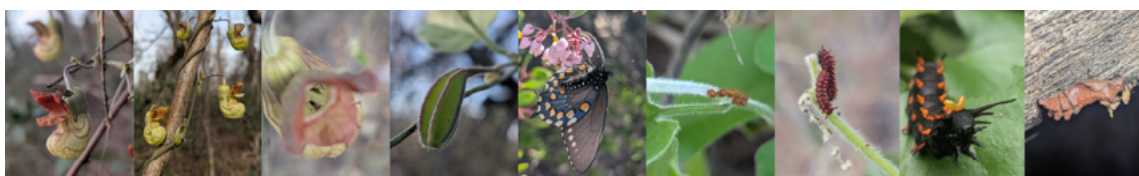
Stacey Alexander

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Species of the Month:

California Pipevine, *Aristolochia californica*

California Pipevine Swallowtail, *Battus philenor hirsuta*



Jan 30

February

March

April

May 13

by Ren Redlich

You might be thinking, "Hey, didn't I already read about California Pipevine in this newsletter?" Well... this month we're doing a special rerun of California Pipevine in order to investigate the life cycles of two species: *Aristolochia californica* and *Battus philenor hirsuta*.

My personal goal to document the stages of our pipevine plant began in late January and continues into May. The first to appear were the pipe-shaped flowers, filled with tiny insects, dangling from vines climbing up oak branches and crawling over brambles. Then the leaves began to outnumber the flowers; green hearts covering the ground. A beacon for the only creature able to withstand their toxic nature: *Battus philenor hirsuta*. The California Pipevine Swallowtail is black and blue with white markings and orange dots along the bottom of its wings. They exclusively lay their eggs on California Pipevine, which will hatch within 4-10 days. The first pipevine swallowtail that caught my eye was on March 1, and their numbers exploded soon after. My mission continued. I searched almost every day for tiny orange eggs on bright green vines, finally finding them on March 12!

Next step: wait for the larva to emerge. The timeline of 4-10 days to hatch stretched into two weeks... where were these little guys?! Fresher vines continued to spring up throughout the season, and this was where I spotted the first clutch of dark-red bodied, bright-red spiked caterpillars. They continued to hatch over the next month, and soon the woods were filled with black and red peeking through the holey leaves. For weeks, I watched the caterpillars fatten, as they moved their way from small leaves to hard seed pods, from least to most toxic.

The last step in the project: to find an observation of the final stage. On

up an oak, was where I found the chrysalis I sought. Two, in fact, stuck to a dead limb. While other larvae still munched away in the vines below, these were pupating, above it all. The final stage before emergence as a butterfly, to continue the cycle, my final observation.

From the Journal of Ren Redlich:
Observations of the relationship
between *Aristolochia californica* and
Battus philenor ssp. hirsuta



In The Field

Upcoming Events





There Is No Planet B Book Club

May 17, 2026

Our exploration of Ayana Elizabeth Johnson's *What If We Get It Right?* continues on May 17 from 2pm-4pm!

Join us for conversations about what's possible, biophilia, nature as teacher, reworking food systems, design justice, and surely much more. To receive meeting details and additional resources please join our TINPB book club contact [list](#) or contact juliet@ecoshasta.org.

Adopt-A-Swim Beach Program

DATES TO BE ANNOUNCED

Whiskeytown NRA has created a program to keep beaches clean over the summer! SEA will be responsible for one of the three 'swim beaches' that Whiskeytown Lake has to offer. Be sure to keep checking our social media pages for our clean-up days!



Click Here to Volunteer for the Adopt-A-Swim Beach Program with SEA!

Trip Reports



2026

City Nature Challenge Shasta County RESULTS

Observations: 2,773 Species: 858 Observers: 119

Most Observations		Most Species		Most Observed Species	
cinnamon3	335	renre	204	Pipevine Swallowtail	27
renre	272	cinnamon3	197	Whiteleaf Manzanita	20
jrmorris	184	jrmorris	144	Tolmie's Pussy Ears	19
acornynaturalist	180	acornynaturalist	106	Chaparral Honeysuckle	19
bird_brew	145	bird_brew	99	Round-Tooth Ookow	19
kalyn50876	138	kalyn50876	95	Common Woolly Sunflower	19

[CLICK HERE to view the full results for Shasta County](#)

Mothing / Lightsheeting April 24th



by Ren Redlich

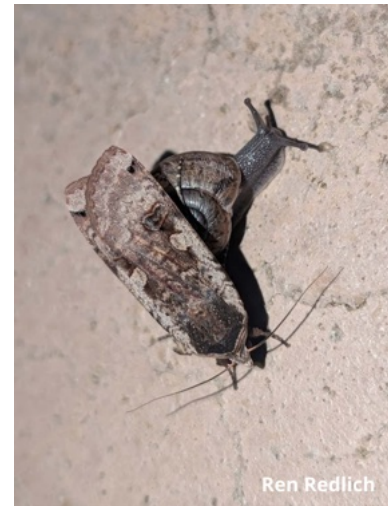
The sun had set, white sheet was lit, toward the glow a moth did flit!

On Friday the 24th of April, curious explorers followed lights into the forest to find a purple glow. This glow was coming from a blacklight against a white sheet, set up to attract moths and other insects of the night. The

wings of an Alfalfa Looper. One creature thought this was a BYOB (bring your own bug) party, hastily crafted a web, and caught a meal in front of everyone. Very rude of this Orbweaver spider, but not entirely unexpected. Can you believe this display did nothing to faze the Common Eupithecia Moth, the American Idia Moth, or even the Merry Graphic Moth in attendance!? Not to be outdone by the various species around it, the Large Yellow Underwing moths sent out a memo to their relatives and showed up in force.

All in all, a night of fun was had by everyone!

- > Best Party Crasher Award goes to: Ophion of Ichneumonid wasps.
- > Best Dressed goes to: Oregon Prominent moth (pictured below)
- > Best Moon-Bather Award goes to: Pine Tip moth (Rhyacionia)
- > The Wallflower Award goes to: Spittlebug (Aphrophora)
- > Dazed and Confused Award goes to: Large Yellow Underwing atop a Shoulderband Snail (pictured below)



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Crystal Creek Water Ditch April 26





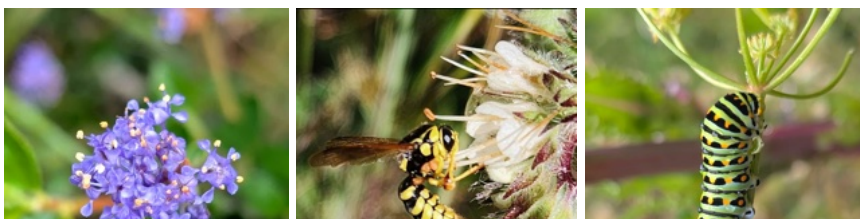
by Juliet Malik

Our outing on April 26 to the Crystal Creek Water Ditch Trail was met with cool cloudy conditions and not a drop of rain in sight. The purpose of this field trip was to participate in the [Shasta County City Nature Challenge](#) by documenting as much biodiversity as possible on this short trail. This eager group was already on the job of taking photos to upload to [iNaturalist](#) as soon as they jumped out of their cars in the parking lot.

Before hitting the trail, we were treated to a brief history of Whiskeytown National Recreation Area and the Crystal Creek Water Ditch Trail by the park's Volunteer Ambassador, Greta Davis. The currently dry water ditch was dug out by hand in the mid 1850s and used to service various needs such as mining operations and orchard irrigation, but on this day, it was a frequent location of interesting wildflowers and insects.

Local naturalist and birder Ross Schaefer led our group along the trail identifying birds by sound and the numerous native plants along this trail. Based on the extensive number of photos taken by all of the participants, this trail is a "superhost" of biodiversity. The star observation of the day was easily the gorgeous Anise Swallowtail caterpillar! Those of us who participated in this same event last year noticed a decline in wildflower blooms, possibly due to the mid-March heat wave. Nevertheless, the deerbrush, woolly sunflowers, ookow, lupine, mountain phacelia, and fiddlenecks provided splashes of color throughout the trail. A fun find on the return trip was a blooming Pacific bleeding heart.

The City Nature Challenge project may be done for the year, but documenting observations on iNaturalist is valuable year-round, as the data may be used for conservation research and efforts. It's also a fun way to slow down and notice all the amazing lifeforms we have right in our own backyard.



(Left to Right)
Lemmon's Ceanothus,
Ceanothus lemmonii

Pseudomasaris
edwardsii on *Phacelia*



Ren Redlich



Juliet Malik



Ren Redlich

Papilio zelicaon

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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