

Valley Wilds

A publication of the LARPD Open Space Unit

Volume 20 | Issue 6

Super Dads!

By Ranger Dawn Soles

June has arrived and the 19th is a most wondrous day - FATHER'S DAY! I thought this would be an appropriate time to look at some of the dads out there in the animal kingdom that go above and beyond for their kids.



Photo from Emperor-Penguin.com

Seahorses are probably the most famous animal dads. They are one of the few animals where the males are morphologically specialized to take care of the young. After an elaborate courtship that includes sunrise swims along the ocean floor, the female inserts a tube into the male's brood pouch where she deposits her eggs. The young

(up to 2,000 depending on the species) will develop in the pouch giving him a very "pregnant" look. When the young are ready the male will double up and squeeze his abdomen to pop out the babies.

Emperor penguin dads take charge of the egg just after it is laid at the height of the Antarctic winter. He places the egg on his feet and tucks it under a fold of skin. The mother leaves to eat and Dad stays behind with the egg. He will stand and go without food, protecting the egg from the harsh elements (temperatures as low as -40 °F and winds up to 90mph!), for 60 days until the egg hatches. He


will then protect the chick and keep it warm until the mother returns. By the time mom returns dad will have lost over one-third of his weight.

Male parenting is virtually unknown in insects, but one striking exception is the giant water bug. Dad becomes a virtual beast of burden, beginning with the mating process, when the female latches onto him until she is ready to lay her eggs. She will cement as many as 150 eggs onto his back and then depart.

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 This Month's Ranger-led Programs and Activities

 Gray Ghost of the Forest

Livermore Area Recreation and Park District

4444 East Ave. Livermore, CA 94550
www.larpd.dst.ca.us
Ranger Office: 925.960.2400

Camp Shelly opens June 17th!

If you've never been to LARPD's Camp Shelly near South Lake Tahoe you've been missing a fabulous camping experience. Spacious campsites, clean restrooms and fun activities with the Rangers are just a few reasons Camp Shelly is the best!

Call (925) 373 5700 to make a reservation or for more information visit http://www.larpd.dst.ca.us/camp_shelly/info.html

Ranger-led Programs

Experience nature in a special way. Programs are generally 1 - 2 hours in length. A \$2 donation is requested. A \$5 parking fee is charged at both park entrances.

June Programs

Quick Look:

Sunset Hill Hike
Saturday, June 11
7:30 pm

Cougar Country
Sunday, June 12
1:00 pm

Snakes
Saturday, June 18
2:00 pm

Evening Tea
Amongst the Blooms
Sunday, June 19
5:00 pm

Exploring the
Arroyo del Valle
Saturday, June 25
11:00 am

The History of Olivina
Sunday, June 26
10:00 am

Sunset Hill Hike

Saturday, June 11

7:30 p.m.

Summer is just getting going and the evenings are wonderful! Come out for a hike to the highest hill in the park for a rare view of the sunset as the park closes below us. As we walk back to the parking lot the stars will be coming out and the moon will rise to light our way down the hills. Please wear comfortable walking shoes.

Ranger Glen Florey

Sycamore Grove Park
Wetmore Road Entrance

Cougar Country

Sunday, June 12

1:00 p.m.

We live in cougar country. Today's program will provide information on cougar history, identification and behavior. We'll also discuss recommended safety measures to take when recreating in cougar country, and much more. Visual aids and handouts provided.

Ranger Patti Cole

Sycamore Grove Park
Wetmore Road Entrance

Snakes

Saturday, June 18th

2:00 p.m.

Some of these animals have a horrible reputation, but most of the time is it based on myth and not reality. Snakes are under-appreciated for the role they play in nature. Join me today to learn about these slithering (but not slimy!) critters and meet some up close and personal.

Ranger Dawn Soles

Veterans Park

Tea Amongst the Blooms

Sunday, June 19

5:00 p.m.

Join us for an enchanted evening amongst the soaproot blooms. These beautiful flowers don't open until late in the day. As the evening comes in so do the bees, flying from flower to flower gathering all the pollen they can. The bees are too busy to pay any attention to us so we will be able to sit and watch them as we sip our tea. We will be walking only about a mile round trip so this walk is great for those who have young children or are not up for a long hike. We recommend bringing some snacks to enjoy with your tea.

Ranger Amy Wolitzer

Sycamore Grove Park
Wetmore Road Entrance



Super Dads! (Countinued)

The male will carry this load for the next month, aerating the eggs by performing deep knee bends and warding off parasites by sunning himself at the water's edge. After three weeks the eggs will have tripled in size. About this same time Dad will stop eating altogether, so as to avoid accidentally eating his new offspring.

A father Namaqua sand grouse from Africa's Kalahari Desert flies as far as 50 miles a day in order to soak himself in water and return to his nest, where his chicks can drink from his feathers.

The male green and black poison arrow frog watches over the eggs after the female has laid them. He will keep them moist and protect them from predators. Just as the eggs are getting ready to hatch (10-14 days after laying) the male stands over them, lowering his back and forming a canal on his back for the tadpoles to wriggle their way up. One by one he will carry each tadpole to tree holes filled with water (often 30 or more feet above ground), or holes in logs on the ground where they will live until they metamorphose into a frog.

These are just a few of the Super Dads in the world. Regardless of where you go, you will find Dads making a difference in their kids' lives. I don't know what I would do without mine. HAPPY FATHER'S DAY!



Sea Horse Father and Young Photo from BNPS



A bee visiting soaproot blooms Photo by Amy Wolitzer

More June Programs

Exploring The Arroyo Del Valle

Saturday, June 25th

11:00 a.m.

Is it too hot for you to go on a regular hike through the park? Then cool off with me on a walk alongside (and in) the creek as we look for water loving plants, fish, turtles and frogs! The creek is very rocky, so closed-toed shoes (no sandals) must be worn at all times, even while in the water!

Ranger Jamie Greco

Veterans Park

5211 Arroyo Road

The History of Olivina

Sunday, June 26

10:00a.m.

Sycamore Grove Park is home to one of the larger wineries in the valley. Unfortunately that was over one hundred years ago and now there's not a lot left. Join us as we tour the faded elegance of the Olivina winery and talk about its history and that of the man who created it. We will walk or van out to the headquarters site then take a leisurely 1 mile hike around the former estate. Call (925) 960 2400 if you would like to reserve a place in the van.

Ranger Darren Segur

Sycamore Grove Park

Wetmore Road Entrance

Gray Ghost of the Forest

By Ranger Pat Sotelo

I was walking through Camp Shelly, the park district's campground near South Lake Tahoe. The campground had closed for the year, and the birds, chipmunks, and squirrels were making quite a racket. Suddenly, as if on cue, all of the animals fell silent. Instinctively, I turned around and saw a flash of movement through the trees. A grayish hawk with short wings and a long tail was slipping through the shadows of the trees at incredible speed, darting and dodging before vanishing into the forest like a fleeing ghost. I had been lucky enough to see (albeit briefly) a northern goshawk, the largest of the accipiter group of hawks.

Although sharp-shinned and Cooper's hawks, the other members of the *accipiter* genus, can be seen in the Bay Area, the goshawk, *Accipiter gentilis*, is a hawk of the forests, and is the largest of the accipiters. With a length of 19 to 27 inches, and a wingspan of 40 to 47 inches, these stealthy and lightning-quick hawks have earned the respect and fear of many of the smaller forest dwellers.

Adult goshawks are sooty-gray below and have a blue-gray back. They sport a striking white line above each orange-red eye, and have a distinctive, regal appearance. Goshawks, true to their accipiter heritage, are bold and aggressive hawks, darting through thick woods and around tangled tree branches. Its short wings and long tail are useful in slipping through and maneuvering around obstacles. When it spots its prey, either on the ground or in the air, it thrusts its legs and feet forward, then grabs and pierces the prey's body with its talons.

The goshawk, like its accipiter cousins, is a bird hawk, hunting and devouring medium-sized birds such as grouse, ducks, crows, woodpeckers, quail, owls, and jays. But these large hawks will hunt mammals as well, including rabbits and hares, squirrels, chipmunks, and weasels.

Their nests are built of sticks and twigs and lined with sprigs of conifers, and located between 20 to 60 feet up in aspens, firs, pines, or junipers. The young begin flying about 45 days after hatching. One of these young, newly-fledged goshawks, quite unlike the sleek adult mentioned earlier, gave me a lesson in bird identification one year at the campground.



On this occasion, I watched as a hawk flew awkwardly to a pine tree and landed, teetering on a branch. This particular bird was not graceful at all. I initially thought it was injured. Consulting every guide book I could find, I was stumped by this odd-looking bird. I could not figure out what kind of hawk it was or how it was injured.

Then it dawned on me: this hawk wasn't injured; it was a juvenile that was not very good at flying, or at balancing on a branch for that matter. I checked the guide books again: brown on the back, tan underneath and heavily streaked with brown, an unevenly banded tail, and a light stripe over a yellow eye. It was a juvenile goshawk, still learning the finer points of flying.

Although this young goshawk was still a clumsy juvenile, it would be a short time before it would be zooming over and through the forests of the Lake Tahoe Basin. Within a year, it would shed its juvenile attire for the elegant and regal plumage of a mature goshawk.

These impressive birds are seldom seen, and most sightings result in no more than a flash of gray rocketing through the forest. But if you come up to Camp Shelly this summer and keep a sharp eye out, you too may get a glimpse of the gray ghost of the forest, the northern goshawk.