

Take a Walk on the Wild Side

Take a walk (or a drive) on the wild side; Where the Wild Things Are; Wild Thing – I Think I Love You; Into the Wild; It's a Wild, Wild, Wild World.

It was Memorial Day weekend in 1979 when my family and I came to explore Butte County (or more importantly, Oroville, Brush Creek, and Millsap Bar). We drove our old VW Bug down the logging road to Millsap Bar, which we had tracked on our map. It was a rather precarious journey, with the wheels of the tiny VW traveling on top of the ruts. We were hoping our little Beetle wouldn't fall to either side, when a bobcat leisurely strolled across the road and stopped to look at us, almost as if to say "Hello, what are you doing here?" I had never seen a bobcat before. It was a moment I will never forget. It was one of those things that happen in nature that you feel blessed to have witnessed.

In our day-to-day experiences, it's the simple, natural environment and the things we do each day that we enjoy most. It's things like flying a kite, or running and jumping and playing on the grass, the feel of the Spring season upon us and the natural world around us. It's as simple as listening to the melodic song of a bird when we slow down enough to hear him; perhaps while sitting on a park bench to soak up the sun and watch the trees sway with their fresh new leaves overlooking the Feather or the Sacramento River.

The other day I drove down Salmon Run Road at Riverbend Park to the Wildlife Fishing Ponds. I checked the restrooms and the fishing pier, as I usually do. Afterward I traveled slowly along the maintenance service road down toward Matthews Ready Mix. It's at the end of Riverbend Park. This area is not traveled by most. It's a great area to just be one with nature. I went past the first pond and was almost past the second pond when I saw something very large and round near the long, connected narrow ponds between Highway 70 and the service road. As I slowly approached, I could tell it was Grandpa Beaver. I had seen him before, chewing on the cottonwoods at the first pond by the Highway 162 riffle.

As I came nearer to him, he froze and then suddenly waddled and scooted, slapping his tail before he dove into the pond water. He was a big dude and I felt privileged to see him. As I continued on to the Matthews Riffle and then turned back, I was still thinking about Grandpa Beaver. It was now the break of day. On the way back, as I passed by

the same ponds, I noticed something out of the corner of my eye. It was a quick movement. It was three large does, frozen in position and camouflaged by the flora and fauna. They couldn't have been more than 30 feet away from me. Not a muscle on them twitched, as they stood staring right at me like mannequins. I didn't move, I just admired them – their strong, agile, proud look. We just looked at each other for somewhere between five and ten minutes. After sensing that I was not out to harm them, they slowly started to move and at that point comfortably moved within the shelter of a group of trees.

It's amazing what you see in nature. It hit me, like it always has, that I have a great job to watch the wildlife around us. What a great place to live, in Oroville and Butte County. It made my day. Through all the meetings that I will experience throughout the day, nothing will compare with my first experience in Butte County at Millsap Bar and my Sunday morning drive in Riverbend Park.

This weekend, we celebrate our second annual Wildflower and Nature Festival at Riverbend Park. There will be guided hikes of the Table Mountain wildflower area, pony rides, plant sales, wildlife art, educational booths, crafts, activities for kids, and much more!

With all the technology and the fast pace we live at today, it's so refreshing to take pause and re-connect with nature. If you have the opportunity, visit Riverbend Park, and take a walk on the wild side.

Quote

"Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you, and the storms their energy, while cares will drop off like autumn leaves." (John Muir)

Fun Facts

Feather Falls. Feather Falls, known as the sixth largest waterfall in the continental United States and fourth highest in California, cascades over 640 feet to the canyon below.

The Oroville "O." The Oroville High School Class of 1929 put the "O" on Table Mountain. The "O," which was dedicated on June 8, 1929 has a concrete thickness of four inches, and is 87 feet by 33 feet. It was intended to last through the generations and

convey a spirit of good sportsmanship in local high school athletic events. For more information about the Oroville "O," visit <http://members.tripod.com/~djkuaba/index-8.html>

Table Mountain. Poppies and lupine are the star attractions of the wildflower display on Table Mountain, just north of Oroville. Comprised of a lava cap that's several hundred feet thick and several miles wide, the Table Mountain wildflower area consists of South Table Mountain and North Table Mountain.

FRRPD Upcoming Events

FRRPD and the Oroville YMCA are sponsoring a carnival at Riverbend April 3-6. Carnival hours are: Thurs. 3-10 p.m.; Fri. 3-10 p.m.; Sat. 10 a.m.-10 p.m.; Sun. 12-8 p.m.

Enjoy nature in full bloom at the second annual Wildflower & Nature Festival April 5-6 from 10 a.m.-4 p.m., at Riverbend Park. For more info., call the YMCA at 533-9622.

Sign up now for the Walk into Fitness class, which begins April 23. For more info., call FRRPD at 533-2011.

See you in the parks!