



# Bidwell Park Pulse

A Quarterly Newsletter of the City of Chico's Parks Division.

Whether it's hiking rugged Upper Bidwell Park, swimming at Sycamore Pool, or playing in a neighborhood park, Chico loves to get outside. Several upcoming events give even more reason to get out.

## Park Events Bring Chico Together

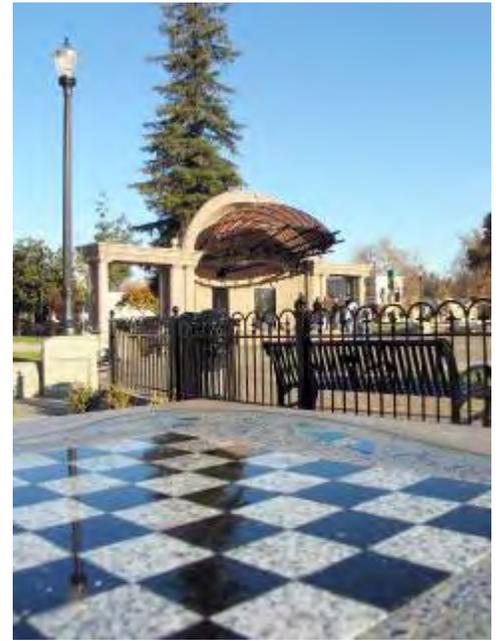
Chico's parks bring our community together in many unique ways. Parks are one of the hallmarks of healthy cities because they provide recreation, beauty, and public spaces that allow people to connect. Our diversity of park options in Chico gives citizens options to relax or invigorate; educate or entertain. They are a big part of Chico's fabric and quality of life, and why our city remains a desirable place to live.

The Chico Area Recreation District (CARD) and the City of Chico's Parks Division split management of Chico parks. CARD manages parks with intensive recreational uses, such as community and neighborhood parks, community centers, and pools. CARD also hosts a variety of activities and classes for the community. The Parks Division (Parks) manages City-owned Parks, preserves, open spaces and greenways. This includes Bidwell Park,

City Plaza, and areas along Lindo Channel and Little Chico Creek. Some CARD facilities (Sycamore Field and the Hooker Oak Recreation Area) are embedded within property owned by the City, and recently some neighborhood parks and the Humboldt Skate Park have been transferred from the City to CARD.

Bidwell Park, one of the largest municipal parks in the country, is a focal point of our community, and hosts amenities such as fields for sports teams, multi-use trails, and picnic sites. The Park provides many ideal venues for community events—offering a safe, picturesque environment for the adventures and entertainment of thousands of people every year.

Hundreds of events held throughout the year present something for everyone. Whether it's small events—like Dr. Wes



**Parks Provide Venues for Events.** City Plaza is the center of a number of events, such as the Thursday Night Market, concerts, and the National Yo-Yo contest.

Dempsey's Maidu Medicine native plant tours of Upper Park—or large events—like

(Continued on page 2)

## UPDATE: New Construction Underway

A number of new projects in the Park are currently underway or have been recently completed. These facilities are the work of several organizations and City of Chico Departments, but enhance the Park in many ways. Recent projects include:

- The Manzanita Avenue Corridor (completed),
- The One-Mile restroom (started August 30) and One-Mile concession stand (now open!),
- The new Chico Creek Nature Center (please see page 3),
- Annie's Glen Crossing (now open, please see page 6), and
- New equipment at Children's Playground (November 2010).



### Inside:



▶ A CHICO POSTCARD...2



▶ ANNIE B'S.....4



▶ ANNIE'S GLEN..... 6

**The Bidwell Park Pulse**

The Bidwell Park Pulse is a quarterly newsletter of the City of Chico's Parks, Open Spaces, Greenways, and Preserves Division. The Parks Division is part of the General Services Department, and is responsible for maintaining and operating City parks, open space, and recreation areas including Bidwell Park, Children's Playground, Depot Park, City Plaza, Lindo Channel, Little Chico Creek Greenway, Teichert Ponds, and other preserves. Parks Division programs include: Maintenance, Ranger, Lifeguard, and Volunteer Programs.

**City of Chico Mission**

To protect and enhance our community's quality of life for present and future generations.

**Bidwell Park and Playground Commission (BPPC)**

The BPPC is vested with the supervision, control and management of many public parks and playgrounds within the City. **Commissioners:** Mary Brentwood, Lisa Emmerich, Steve Lucas, Jim Mikles, Rich Ober, Jane Turney, and (Chair) Jamison Watts. **Staff Liaison:** Carmen Parachou, Administrative Analyst.

**Contact**

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**Trails:****Middle Trail Work Begins**

Chico's extended rainy season delayed the start of the Middle Trail Rehabilitation Project this spring. However, this October, the Parks Division will restart the project with trail crew leader Lloyd Johns working with two California Conservation Corps (CCC) crews.

The California Department of Parks and Recreation (CDPR) granted the City \$175,802 to fund the three-phase project over several years.

The first phase will be to rehabilitate 700 feet of the Middle Trail, east of parking lot E above Day Camp.

This project utilizes crews from the CCC's Chico satellite office and also from Redding. Trail crew leader Johns will supervise the Chico CCC crew, who will help with trail preparation and cleanup work. The Redding CCC crew will harden trail tread, re-route and shape the trail, and plant native grass seeds and plugs in areas damaged by erosion.

Once underway, the trail crews will work from 6:30 am and 4 pm daily. During the week of October 20-27, the Redding CCC "Spike" crew will camp overnight at Day Camp in Upper Bidwell Park to allow for more efficiency. Signs will be posted to advise Park visitors of the project and users will be requested to use alternative routes to avoid the Middle Trail worksite.

Future phases include the creation and installation of interpretive educational signs at Parking lots E and C and rehabilitation and upgrading of existing trail to accessible standards thus completing the accessible trail loop off of Parking lot E.



**Don't tread on me.** Rattlesnake enjoying Upper Park just off of the Middle Trail. (Photo Courtesy of Dr. James Wood).

(Continued from page 1)

Thursday Night Market—our parks promote a sense of self for our city.

Public events fill up the Fall calendar. The Thursday Night Market continues through the month of September. Other popular events include Pastels in the Plaza, Treat Streets, and the National Yo-Yo contest (City Plaza). In November, the Almond Bowl Run kicks off the first weekend of the month, and the annual Community Tree Lighting can get the crowds into the holiday spirit. Of course, Fall is a great time for impromptu adventures in the Park too.

With something on the calendar every weekend you're sure to find events and activities that interest you. Now, get out there and play!

**Park Postcard:**

**Where is it?** California poppies and golden lupins bloom in late spring at this former gravel quarry. This area was recently planted with native wildflowers, grasses, trees, and shrubs, transforming this former eyesore into a community asset. Do you know where it is? Answer on p.6.

*From Our Park Partners:*

## Chico Creek Nature Center Opens New Interpretive Center

*Courtesy of the Chico Creek Nature Center*

As the dust settles from the grand opening of the Chico Creek Nature Center's new interpretive center and nature lab, a new era in the Park's educational services has begun. The new facility was the culmination of the efforts of many community members who offered the Nature Center their financial support, expertise on the Park, and artistic contributions. The Center's new addition, as one writer put it, is a project that "has Chico written all over it." The exquisite building design of architect Dave Schleiger is complimented by a spectacular exhibit and the talents of local artists who honor the Park with their offerings. Local photographer Cris Colson's photographic murals capture the feel of the Park and give identity to the presentation of the Park's natural systems.

The City of Chico's support for the project has been vital. Its continued commitment to the Nature Center has paid great dividends for our community and all visitors who are drawn to our "Crown Jewel." Former Park and General Services Director Dennis Beardsley's role in advancing the process that led to the construction of the facility was instrumental. The Nature Center also acknowledges the support of the Park and Playground Commission and the City Council. Both bodies have played an important role in the development of the gateway to Bidwell Park, the Chico Creek Nature Center.

**Chico Creek Nature Center**  
 1968 East 8th Street  
 Chico, CA 95928  
 Phone: 530-891-4671  
 Email: [info@bidwellpark.org](mailto:info@bidwellpark.org)



*The Chico Creek Nature Center provides display areas, lab, and offices.*

**News:**

## New Gate and Restroom Hours Announced

As of September 7, 2010, gate and restroom hours will change for several park facilities.

The changes were proposed as cost cutting measures as a result of staff reductions. One goal with the shift was to maintain the availability of Park Rangers during peak visitor hours. Also, minimize impacts to most users.

These changes will increase Ranger coverage during the busiest times so that they may respond to enforcement issues, emergencies and hazardous situations.

The shift provides clearer closing times to park users and will primarily affect winter hours.

The changes do not affect pedestrian and bicycle access into the park.

Park Staff are working with organizations that operate facilities to minimize impacts to their programs, and will monitor areas with either early morning or late evening use such as the parking lot on the north side of One-Mile, or the Upper Park gate.

LOCATION	TIME OPEN	TIME CLOSED	
	All Year	APR-SEPT	OCT-MAR
<b>Lower Bidwell Park</b>			
South Park Drive	11:00 AM	9:00 PM	7:00 PM
Petersen Drive			
South 1-Mile Gate	9:00 AM	11:00 PM	9:00 PM
Caper Acres (Closed Mon)			
North 1-Mile Parking Lot	7:30 AM	9:00 PM	7:00 PM
1-Mile Restrooms			
Cedar Grove Parking Lot & Restroom			
<b>Middle Bidwell Park</b>			
5-Mile Gate & Restroom	7:30 AM	9:00 PM	7:00 PM
Horse Arena Gate			
<b>Upper Bidwell Park</b>			
Upper Park Gate	5:30 AM	11:00 PM	9:00 PM
Upper Park Gate at Parking Lot E (Closed Sun-Mon)	7:30 AM	9:00 PM	7:00 PM

Donations:

## Support Bidwell Park!



The North Valley Community Foundation (NVCF) has launched the largest community-wide grant program in the region—Annie B's Community Drive.

During the 2010 campaign, contributions for Bidwell Park and other participating nonprofits will be supplemented by matching funds from NVCF. In 2009, NVCF matched donations by 7%.

Funds raised through Annie B's Community Fund Drive for Bidwell Park will be used toward vegetation management, restoration efforts, the volunteer program, equipment and toward the general maintenance of the Park.

Please hurry, as the matching funds will only be available until September 30. Your generous donation will go a long way in sustaining the health and well-being of Bidwell Park today and for future generations.

Annie gave Chico an extraordinary gift.  
What have you given back to *your* Park?



*Please support the Park with a donation through the Annie B's Community Drive!*

Please make donations online at:  
[www.chico.ca.us](http://www.chico.ca.us) or [www.nvcf.org](http://www.nvcf.org)

Donations can also be mailed to:  
**North Valley Community Fdn**  
**3120 Cohasset Road, Ste. 8**  
**Chico, CA 95973**

Please make checks payable to: "Annie B's/Bidwell Park, City of Chico"

## DONATION REQUESTS...

In addition to the Annie B's program, the Parks Division can receive donations of key equipment and materials. In the past, the Park has accepted donations related to a variety of park needs. Some current needs include:

- PAR Course fixtures and installation,
- Caper Acres building material,
- ATV and boom sprayer,
- Printing (for future newsletters!) and
- 2 mountain bikes for Ranger patrols.

Bike patrol of our Chico Parks allows the Rangers to travel more areas, including trails, make more visitor assistance calls, enforcement contacts and are very valuable during missing person calls and emergencies. Current Ranger bikes are more than 10 yrs old, very heavy and often unusable because of repairs. The Parks Division seeks donations (of approximately \$1,500) to replace these bikes. We have many other needs too, please call us for more information at (530) 896-7831.



## ...AND VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Volunteers donated close to 20,000 hours last year to Bidwell Park. Volunteers, including Park Watch, help with just about everything in the Park from clean-up to maintenance to planting. Our volunteers work independently, as part of groups, or join in on organized work days. Several upcoming events that need volunteers include:

- **Bidwell Park and Creeks Cleanup, September 18 (9 am to 12:00 pm)** — The Butte Environmental Council hosts this annual event (sponsored by the City of Chico), to clean up Bidwell Park, Little & Big Chico Creek, Sycamore Creek, Teichert Ponds and Lindo Channel. Bring gloves and water and wear closed-toe shoes. For the park cleanup (suitable for children), meet at Hooker Oak Park parking lot. A picnic will follow!
- **Make a Difference Day in Bidwell Park, October 23 (10 am until 1 pm)** — **Cedar Grove.** Projects include litter pick up along Big Chico Creek, painting projects, weed removal and native plant plantings.
- **Volunteer Workdays** — Volunteer Tuesdays (1 to 4 pm), Fridays (1 to 4 pm) and some Saturdays (11 am to 2 pm).. Call us for details or see online calendar.
- **Picnic Site adoption** — Groups and organizations can adopt picnic sites and other Park areas.

We have lots of other opportunities as well, please call Lise at (530) 896-7831 for more information.

**Baseline: Plant Profile****Yellow Star-Thistle Poses Sticky Park Problem.**

Bidwell Park faces a number of challenges to manage vegetation. Unfortunately, one of the most familiar invasive plants that plague California and the Park is yellow star thistle. As part of a regular feature, we will profile both native and non-native plants and their impacts to the park .

**Scientific name:** *Centaurea solstitialis* L.

**Common name(s):** Yellow star thistle, St. Barnaby's thistle, yellow centaury, yellow cockspur.

**Family:** Asteraceae

**Native To:** Europe-Mediterranean region

**Means of Introduction:** Accidentally introduced in the mid-1800s in contaminated alfalfa seed. **Current CA Distribution:** Millions of acres in foothill and valley areas (between 0 and 4300 feet).

**Status/Weed Rating:**

Statewide impact: High (CAL-IPC)

CDFA Noxious Weed List C [CDFA Weeds 2000]

**What does it look like?**

Annual to short-lived perennial herb, ankle to chest height (usually 1 to 4 ft when in flower) and generally mounded with many branching stems - particularly when tall. Plants have deep taproots. Leaves are gray-green, slightly downy (minute hairs on surface), alternate and either simple or partially lobed. Basal leaves are 2 to 3 inches long and deeply lobed. Flowers are open and yellow; characterized by sharp, rigid spines around flower heads. Very prolific seed production with a long flowering time (May–Oct), but seeds are relatively short lived. Only reproduces by seed. Most seeds move no more than two feet from the parent plant without assistance from animals (wildlife, livestock, and humans).

**Where is it found invading?**

Weed species characteristic of disturbed places (pastures, roadsides, disturbed grassland or woodland. Yellow Star Thistle prefers sunny, drier, well-drained upland soils. Yellow Star Thistle is commonly found in Upper and Middle Bidwell Park with more patches occurring in Lower Park.

**Why worry?**

Yellow star thistle chokes out native plants, reduces biodiversity, wildlife habitat and forage. Its deep tap roots deplete soil moisture. Sharp spines discourage wildlife and livestock foraging as

well as deterring people from using recreational areas. The plant is toxic to horses.

**How can it be managed?**

Plants can be pulled, hoed, tilled or mowed before bloom. Controlled burns are successful if repeated for 3 consecutive years. Well-timed herbicide applications of several readily available chemicals (such as glyphosate, triclopyr, clopyralid or picloram) successfully reduces yellow star thistle numbers. Biological control insects have also been released for yellow starthistle control with mixed results. Sheep, goats, and cattle grazing can be effective if timed before the flower's spines develop.



*Yellow star thistle's sharp spines are a distinctive feature—and hazard.*

**What is being done in Bidwell Park?**

Park volunteers have been removing this plant by hand, and donations of time by certified applicators have allowed for the treatment of portions of the Middle trail. Herbicide was successfully used to treat approximately 3.5 acres this spring. Mowing has also been used to minimize star thistle seed production at Verbena Fields. Since the majority of seed is moved in the park by people and animals, visitors can reduce the spread by checking clothing and making sure that vehicles, horses, and bikes are cleaned off before entering the Park. Park staff are developing strategies for use in the Park and we anticipate more aggressive treatment of this plant in the future.

**Where do I go for more information?**

UC Cooperative Extension, The Weed Research and Information Center Profile on Yellow Star Thistle (<http://wric.ucdavis.edu/yst/>).

DiTomaso, J.M, G. B. Kyser, and M. J. Pitcairn. 2006. Yellow starthistle management guide. Cal-IPC Publication 2006-03. California Invasive Plant Council: Berkeley, CA. 78 pp. Available: [www.cal-ipc.org](http://www.cal-ipc.org).

**UPDATE: Parks to Develop Vegetation Plan**

Strategies to combat yellow star thistle and other noxious weeds will be unveiled over the next few months as the Parks Division staff will work with the Bidwell Park and Playground Commission to prioritize plants and identify strategies to reduce the impact of noxious plants in the park. These plans will be articulated in an updated Natural Resource Management Plan. As part of an integrated management approach, the Plan will recommend a variety of techniques: manual removal, prescribed burns, herbicide applications, and mowing.

Ultimately, the goal is to make Bidwell Park more resistant to noxious plant invasions, and so attention will be placed on measures that favor existing native plant communities. Because of the limited resources available for the Park, this approach may take years before users see lasting improvements, but in the meantime it will outline the opportunities to leverage staff and volunteer time in a coordinated fashion.

# New Outreach Efforts!

*Parks Division Staff providing new opportunities for information and input.*

This newsletter represents the latest way for the Parks Division staff to share information with citizens. The public has always been able to address the Bidwell Park and Playground Commission (meetings held the last Monday of the month at the City Council Chambers), but we plan on using other tools (informal meetings, newsletter, informational signs, webpage) to share information and gain public input.

The *Bidwell Park Pulse* is a venue for insight into natural resource management. Although we will cover a number of issues and places, we chose to call our newsletter the *Bidwell Park Pulse*, because for many of us, Bidwell Park is the heart of Chico—and checking the Park's vital signs, is critical to our community.

In addition, we are initiating means of community communication. We began hosting quarterly *Park Talk* meetings to provide the public an informal way to ask questions and provide feedback. The next *Park Talk* will be at the Chico Creek Nature Center on September 30, 2010 starting at 4 pm.

We will add more postings at our facilities. For example, updated information about management at Verbena Fields will be added to the back of the main information sign. And stay posted — we'll let you know where you can tune in on the radio to learn more about Parks in Chico!

We will make other changes over the next few months, so please give us feedback on our approach or topics you would like to see in the future.

## NEW CONNECTIONS: Annie's Glen Tunnel



A new tunnel now connects Annie's Glen with the rest of Bidwell Park. This once nearly forgotten area suffered from trash, vandalism, and illegal camping.

The tunnel and entry are lined with beautiful tiles made by community members. The Annie's Glen area now has regular foot and bike traffic that use the safe passage from the edges of downtown into Bidwell Park.

*Answer to "Where is it?": Verbena Fields earlier this year put on a spectacular show of wildflowers that were planted under a state grant and a host of partners.*



Parks Division  
General Services Department

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