



Habitat 2020 is a committee of environmental organizations collaborating on common issues in and affecting Sacramento County.

***Sacramento is missing something.***

***Just about every other major California city has a regional park system.***

***Even Redding has one.***

# ***CALIFORNIA HEARTLAND PROJECT***

***PRESERVING OUR NATURAL AND AGRICULTURAL LEGACY***

***It's not because Sacramento lacks world-class biological, recreational, and scenic resources.***

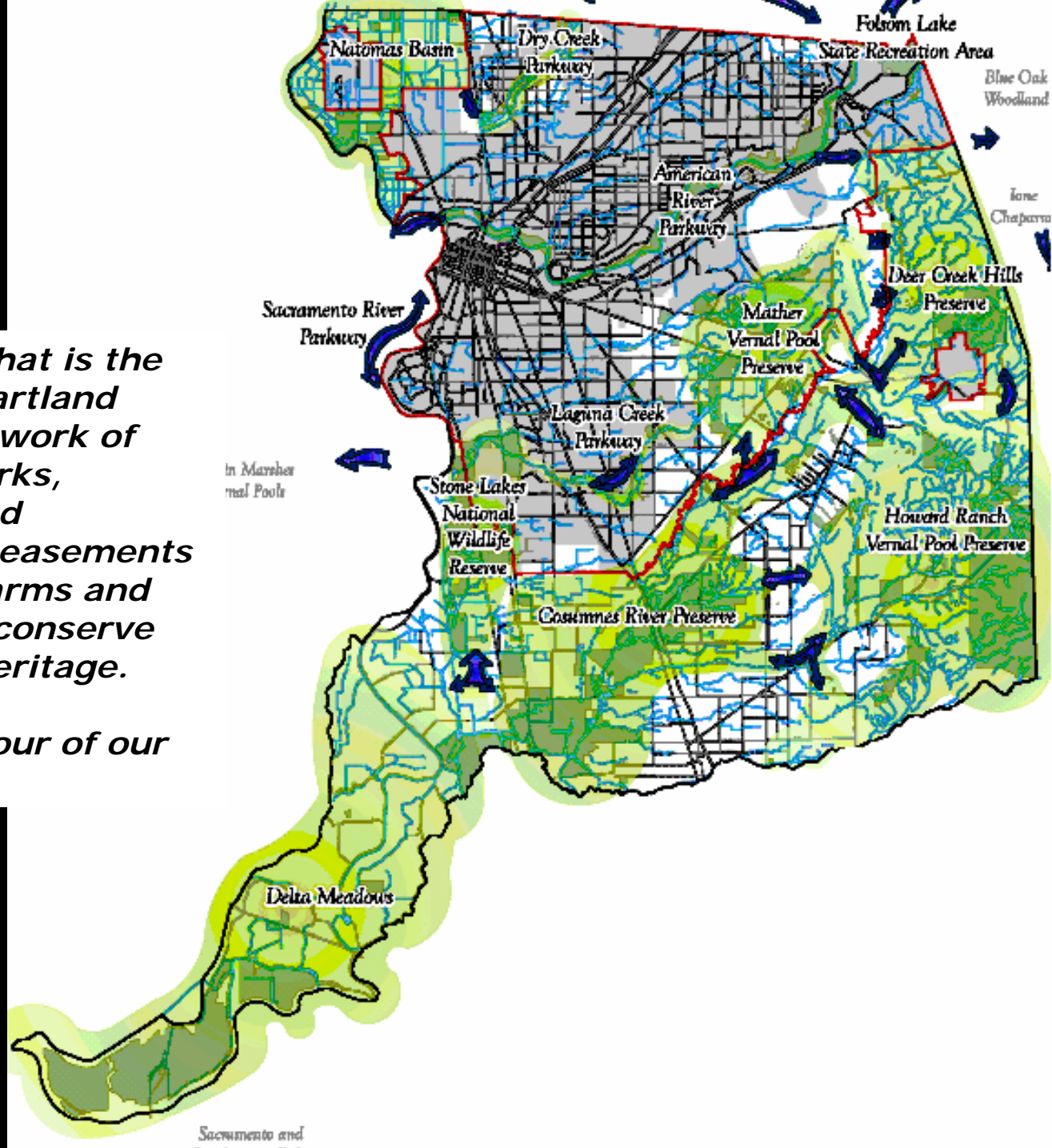
***Our great Central Valley is identified as one of North America's most endangered ecoregions.***

***But more of its landscapes are intact around Sacramento than anywhere else.***

***It's time we recognized what we have and started protecting it.***

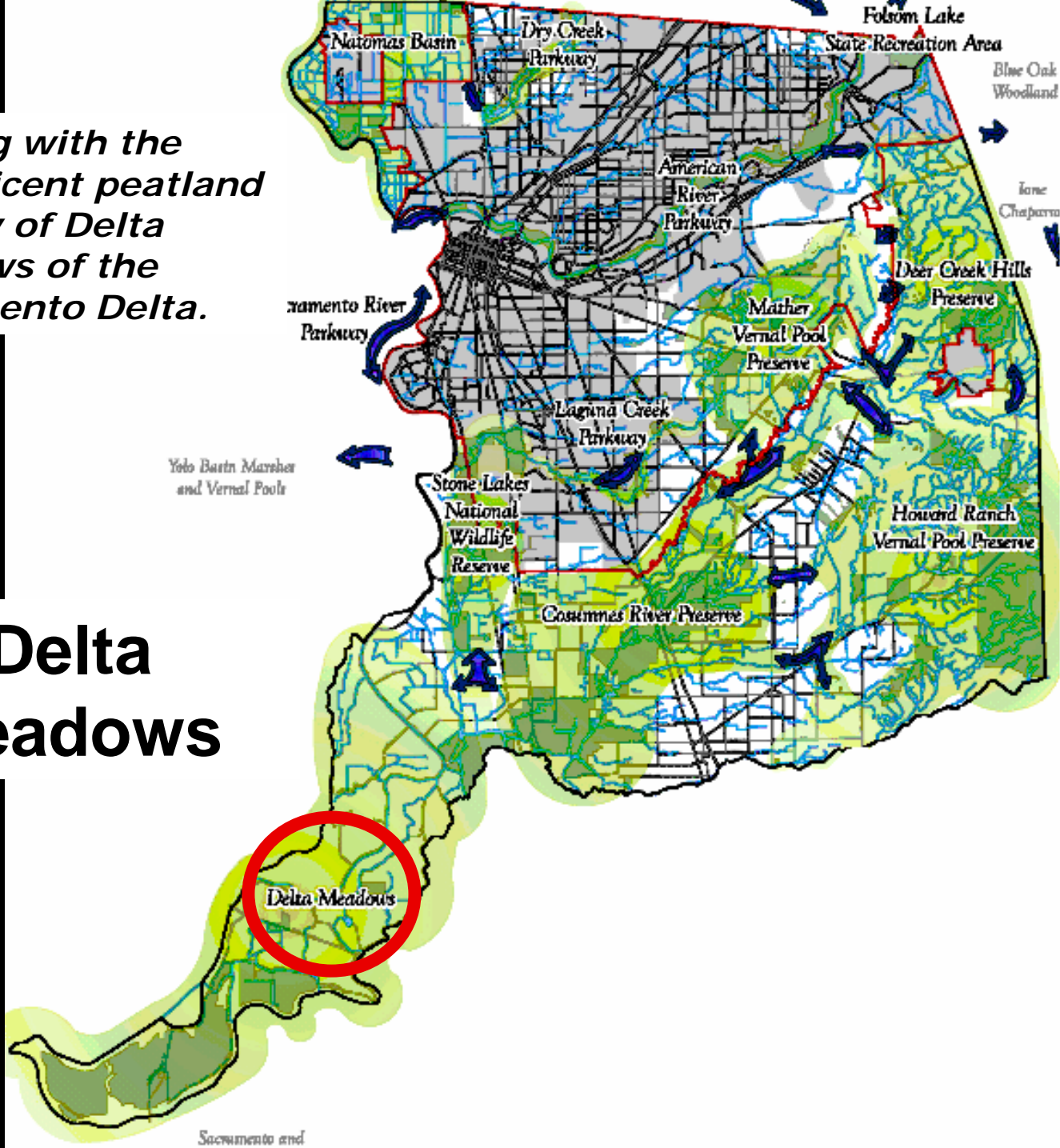
*A way to do that is the California Heartland Project, a network of connected parks, preserves, and conservation easements on working farms and ranches that conserve our natural heritage.*

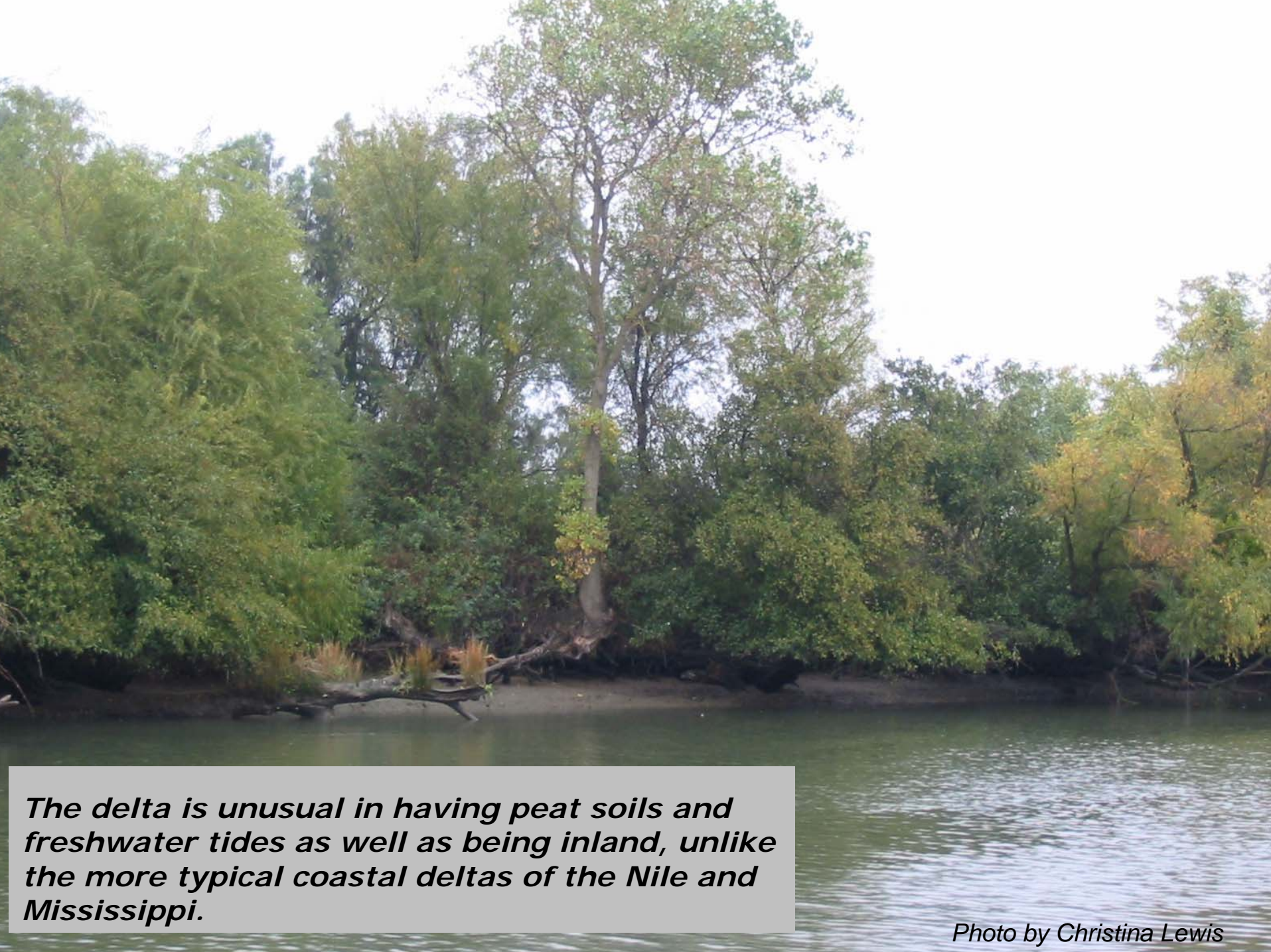
*Let's take a tour of our heartland.*



*Starting with the magnificent peatland country of Delta Meadows of the Sacramento Delta.*

# Delta Meadows





***The delta is unusual in having peat soils and freshwater tides as well as being inland, unlike the more typical coastal deltas of the Nile and Mississippi.***

*Photo by Christina Lewis*



***Some of the Central Valley's last tule marshes survive in the Delta to continue cleaning our water by removing pollutants and our air by taking up greenhouse making CO2 and replacing it with oxygen.***

*Home to resident birds like Green Heron and migrants arriving in winter from the arctic and in summer from the tropics.*



Semipalmated Plover



Green Heron

*Photos by Chris Conard*

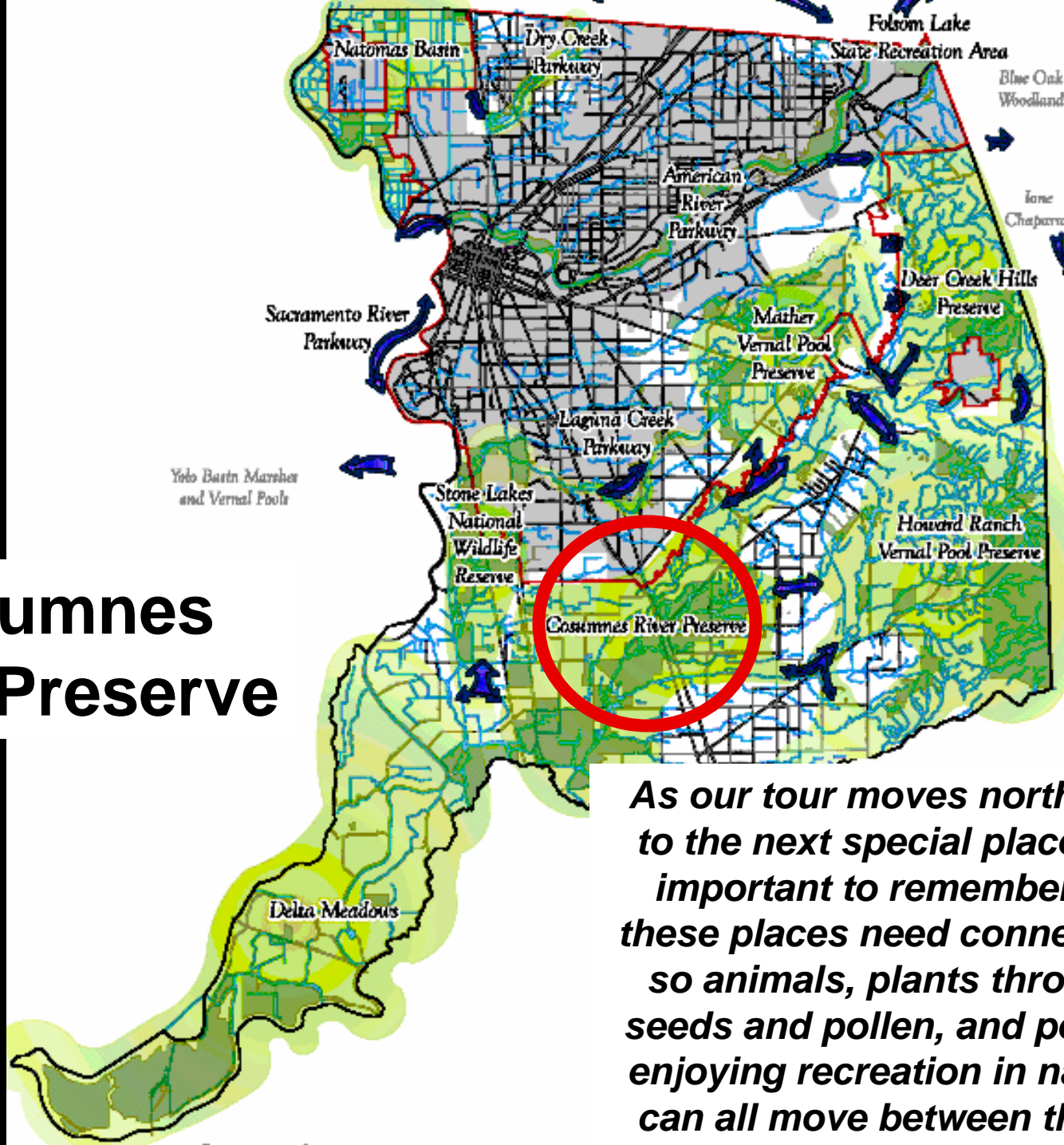


***An important stop on the Pacific flyway, the great aerial highway migratory birds use to move up and down North America as seasons change.***

***Photo by Steve Clapper***



# Cosumnes River Preserve

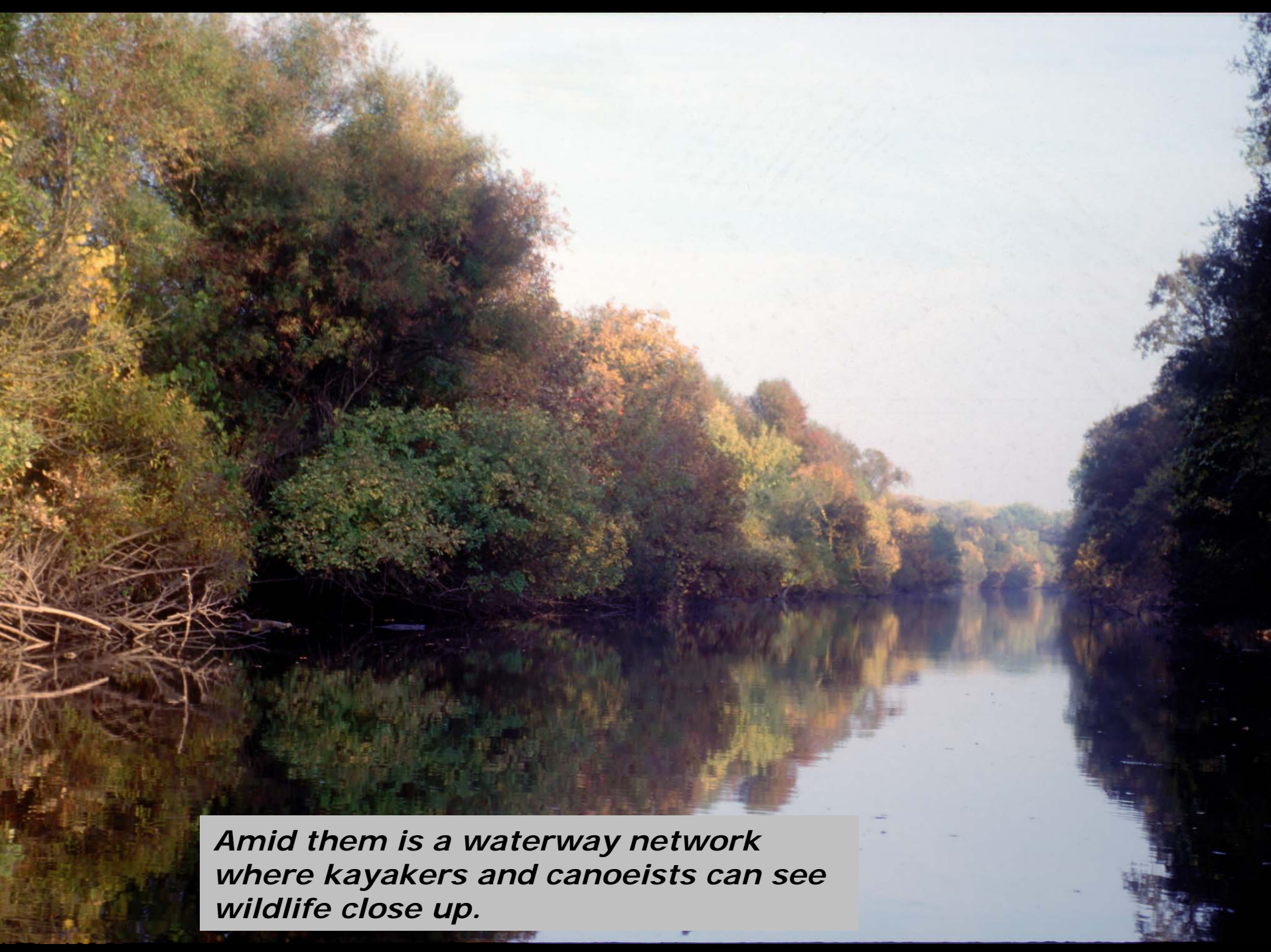


*As our tour moves northeast to the next special place it's important to remember all these places need connection so animals, plants through seeds and pollen, and people enjoying recreation in nature can all move between them.*



*In the Cosumnes Basin the last 1% of the Central Valley's ancient forests survive.*

*Photo by Cosumnes River Preserve Staff*



*Amid them is a waterway network where kayakers and canoeists can see wildlife close up.*



***And Sandhill Cranes return each fall from distant dancing grounds to the wintering places they've used since prehistoric times.***

***Photo by Gary Gervin***

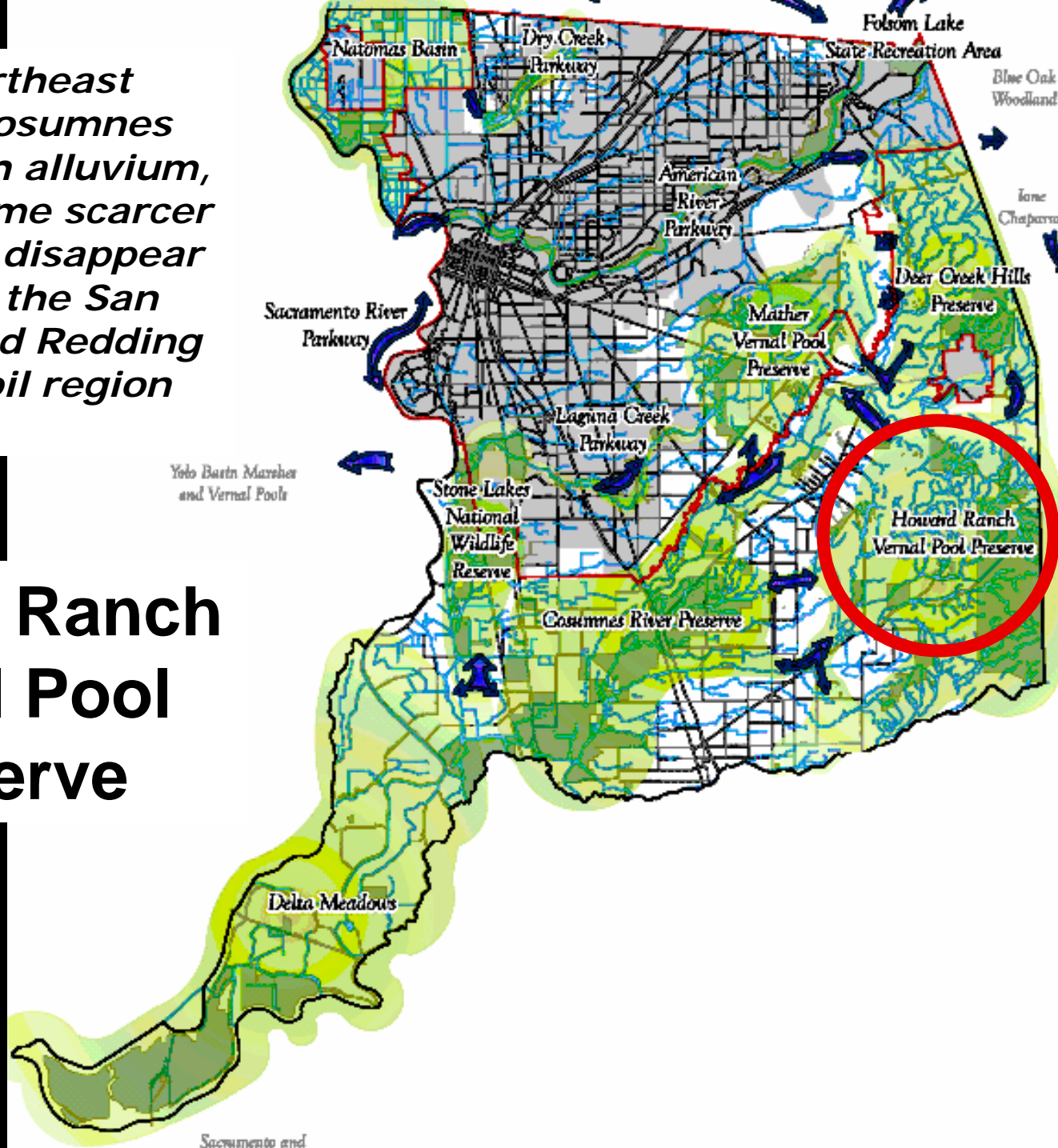


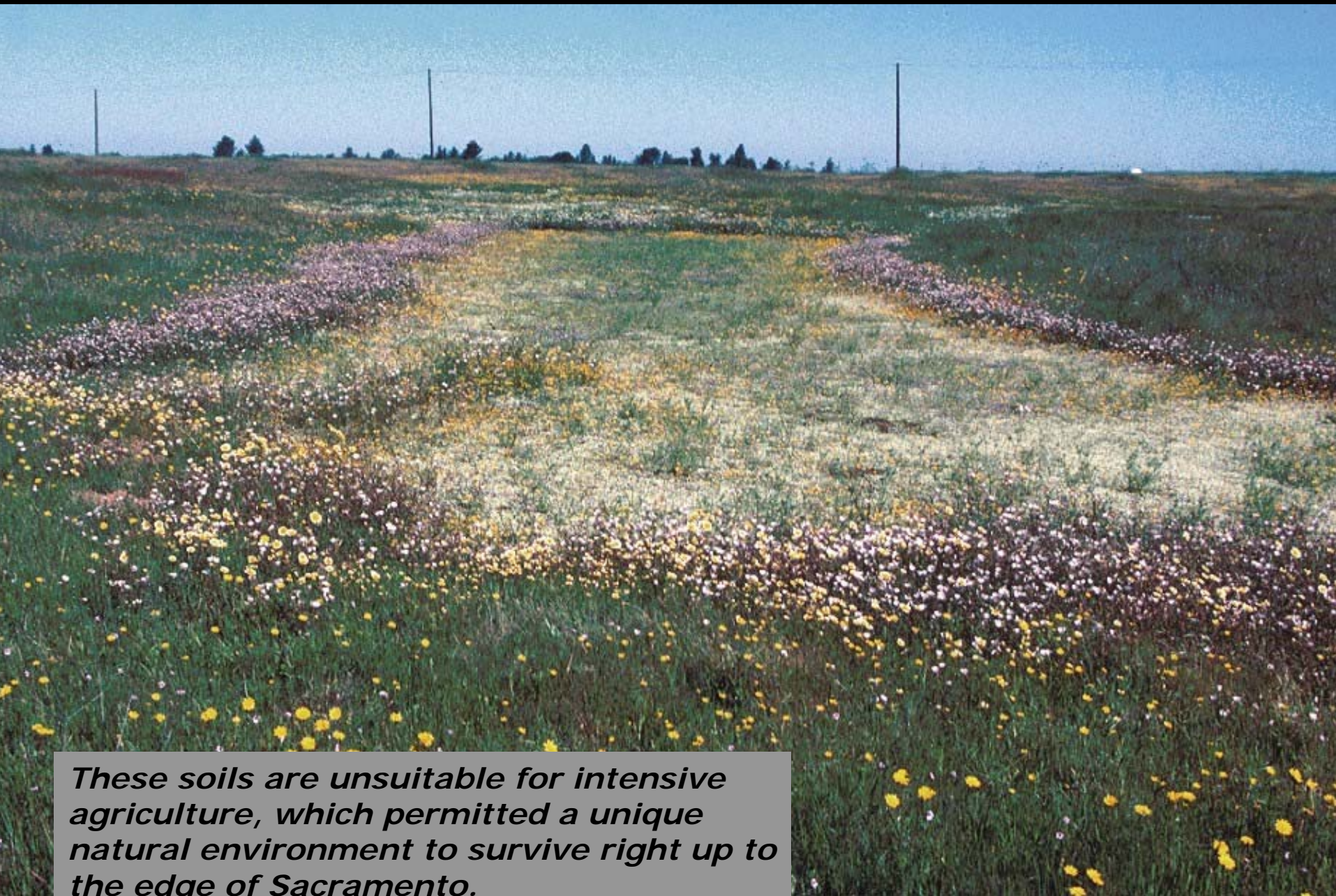
*Now these wintering grounds often include working farms.*

*Photo by Gary Gerwin*

*Moving northeast from the Cosumnes Basin's rich alluvium, trees become scarcer and finally disappear entirely as the San Joaquin and Redding hardpan soil region begins.*

## Howard Ranch Vernal Pool Preserve





*These soils are unsuitable for intensive agriculture, which permitted a unique natural environment to survive right up to the edge of Sacramento.*

*Photo by David King*



***Their vernal pools and prairie are an inland Galapagos where each pool is a theater of evolution and rare species abound.***

***Photo by Glen Holstein***





*Winter*

**Wet Phase**



*Spring*

**Flowering Phase**



*Summer/Fall*

**Dry Phase**

***One million years ago the Central Valley was even flatter than it is today and covered by many meandering streams.***

***As the Sierra Nevada was uplifted, much of the valley was also raised just enough to leave many of these streams high and dry. Low places in their beds could then fill in winter and gradually dry by summer.***

*Photos by SacSplash.org*



**These unique factors, occurring only in and around California, produced vernal pools, where more species evolved than in the entire Galapagos.**



*Just as John Muir described it, the prairie is the only landscape in North America naturally dominated by wildflowers.*

*Photo by Glen Holstein*



*Holocarpa virgata*;  
Pitgland Tarweed

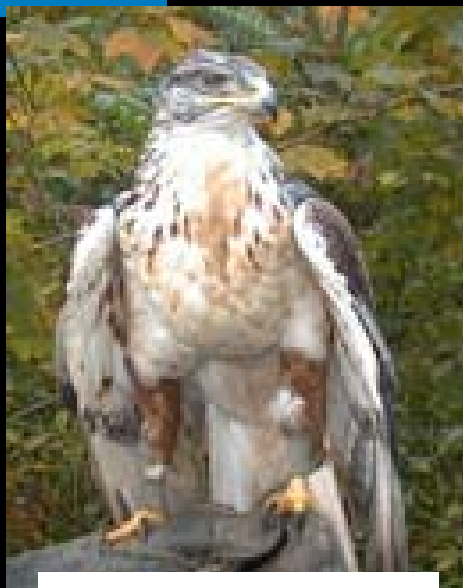
*Photo by Jeff Abbas*

***And it's not just a prairie but a double prairie carpeted with one crop of wildflowers in spring and another different one in fall.***

*Photo by Glen Holstein*



Rough-legged Hawk



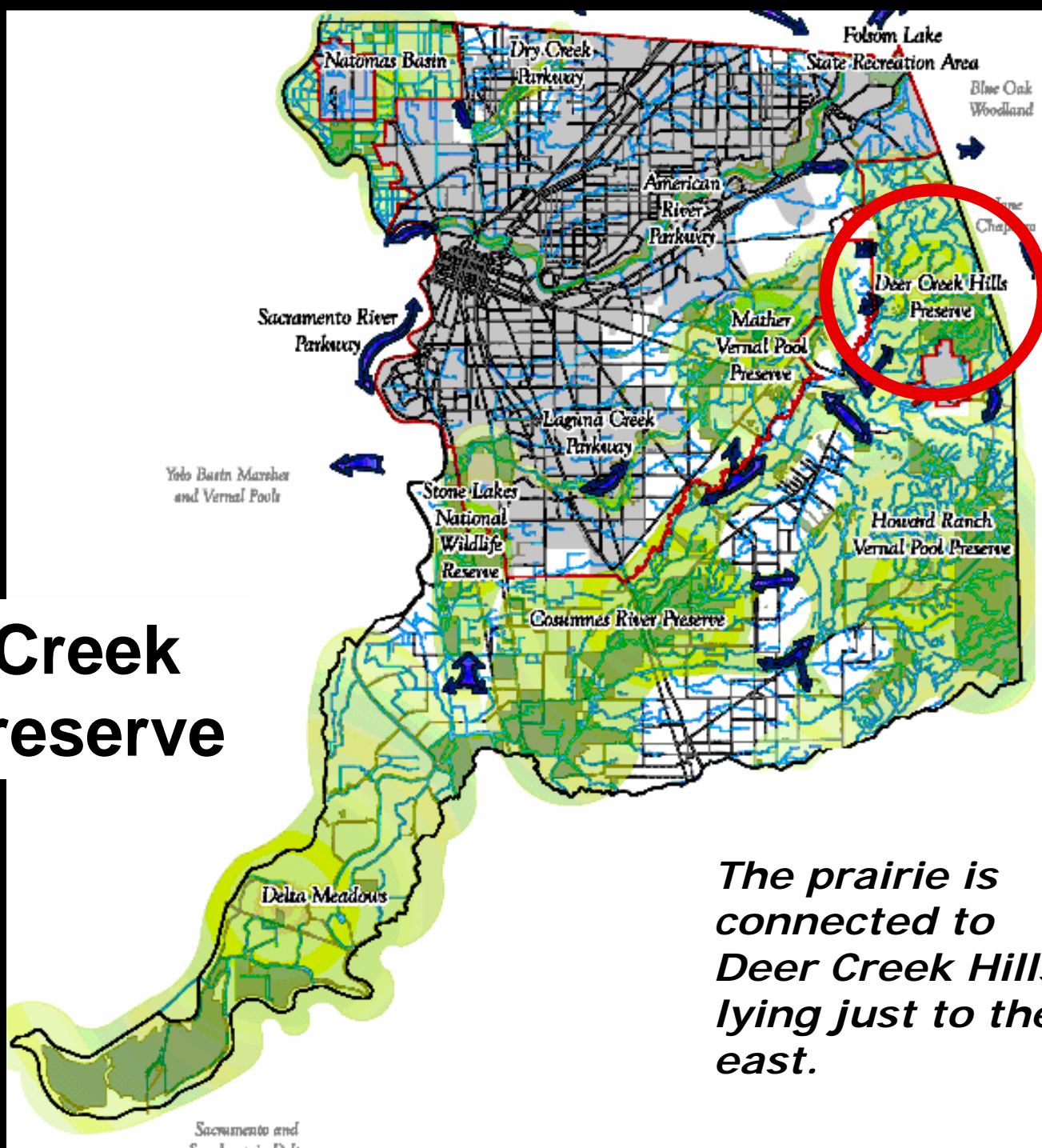
Ferruginous Hawk



Red-tailed Hawk

*A place where Rough-legged Hawks from the high arctic and Ferruginous Hawks from the northern plains return each year to forage. There they meet resident Red-tailed Hawks and a host of other unique prairie dwellers from pocket mice to trapdoor spiders.*

# Deer Creek Hills Preserve



*The prairie is connected to Deer Creek Hills lying just to the east.*



*The hills are blue oak savanna country, where trees are far apart and quiet glades frequent.*

*Photo by Randy Smith*



*Photo by Steve Clapper*



***Savanna begins where Sierra Nevada bedrock outcrops in the mountains' westernmost foothills.***





*In the hills spring rains cause creeks to flow for a season and sometimes longer.*



***And working ranches help control exotic weeds  
that crowd out wildflowers.***

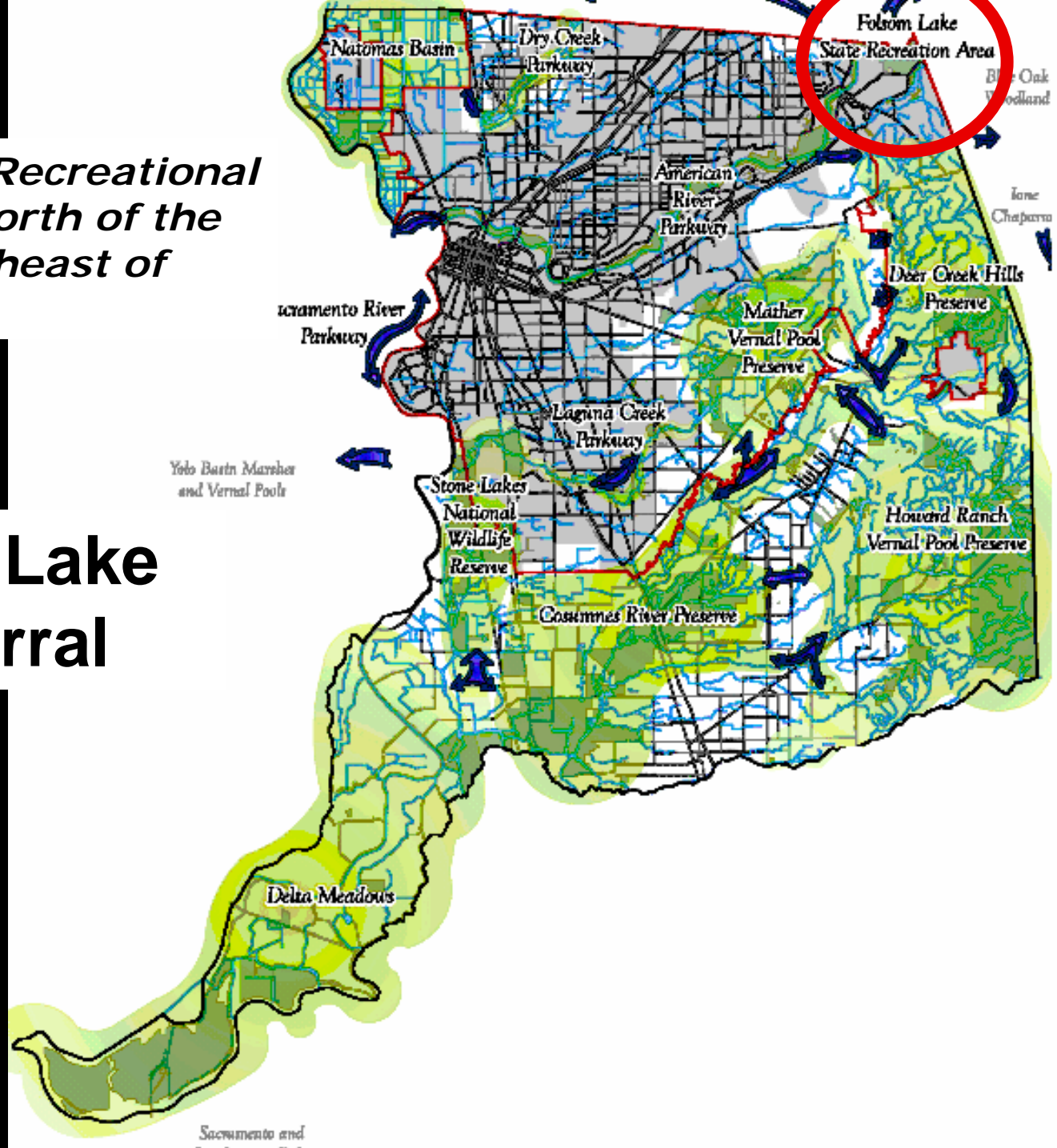
***Photo by Randy Smith***



*Photo by Randy Smith*

*Folsom Lake Recreational Area is just north of the hills and northeast of Sacramento.*

# Folsom Lake Chaparral





CF 7101 HX

Photo by Randy Smith



*Slopes above Folsom Lake are often clothed by the elfin forest of California's Chaparral ...*

*Photo by Glen Holstein*



*...where shrubs grow close together like miniature trees.*

*Photo by Glen Holstein*



Sage Sparrow



Wrentit



Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher



California Thrasher

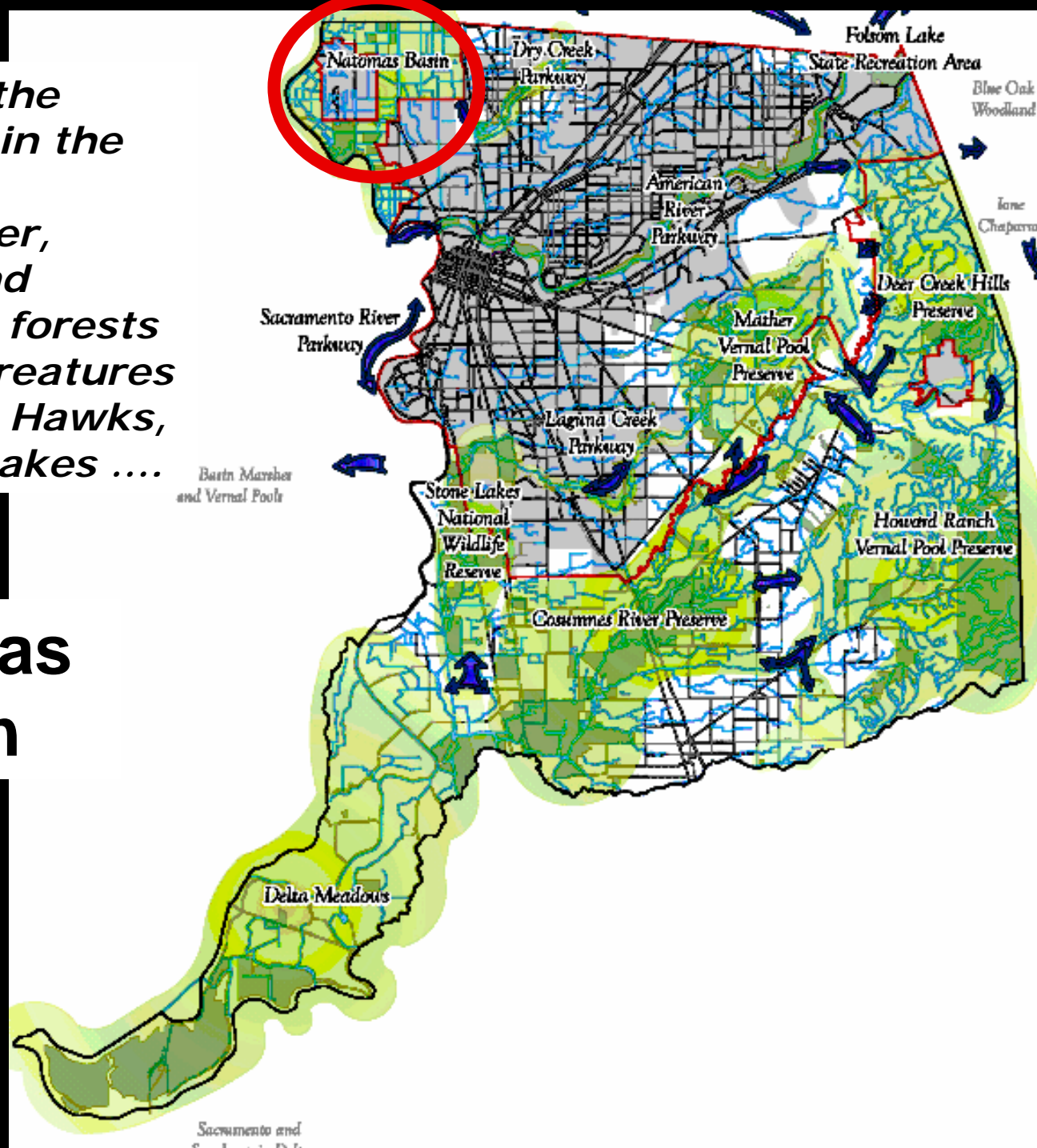
*Photos by Chris Conard*

***Birds like these thrive in Chaparral's elfin forest. Some, like many other plants and animals, can only be found there.***



*And now on to the Natomas Basin in the County's most northwest corner, where farms and riparian gallery forests preserve rare creatures like Swainson's Hawks, Giant Garter Snakes ....*

## Natomas Basin





*... and Burrowing Owls once widespread in the Central Valley.*



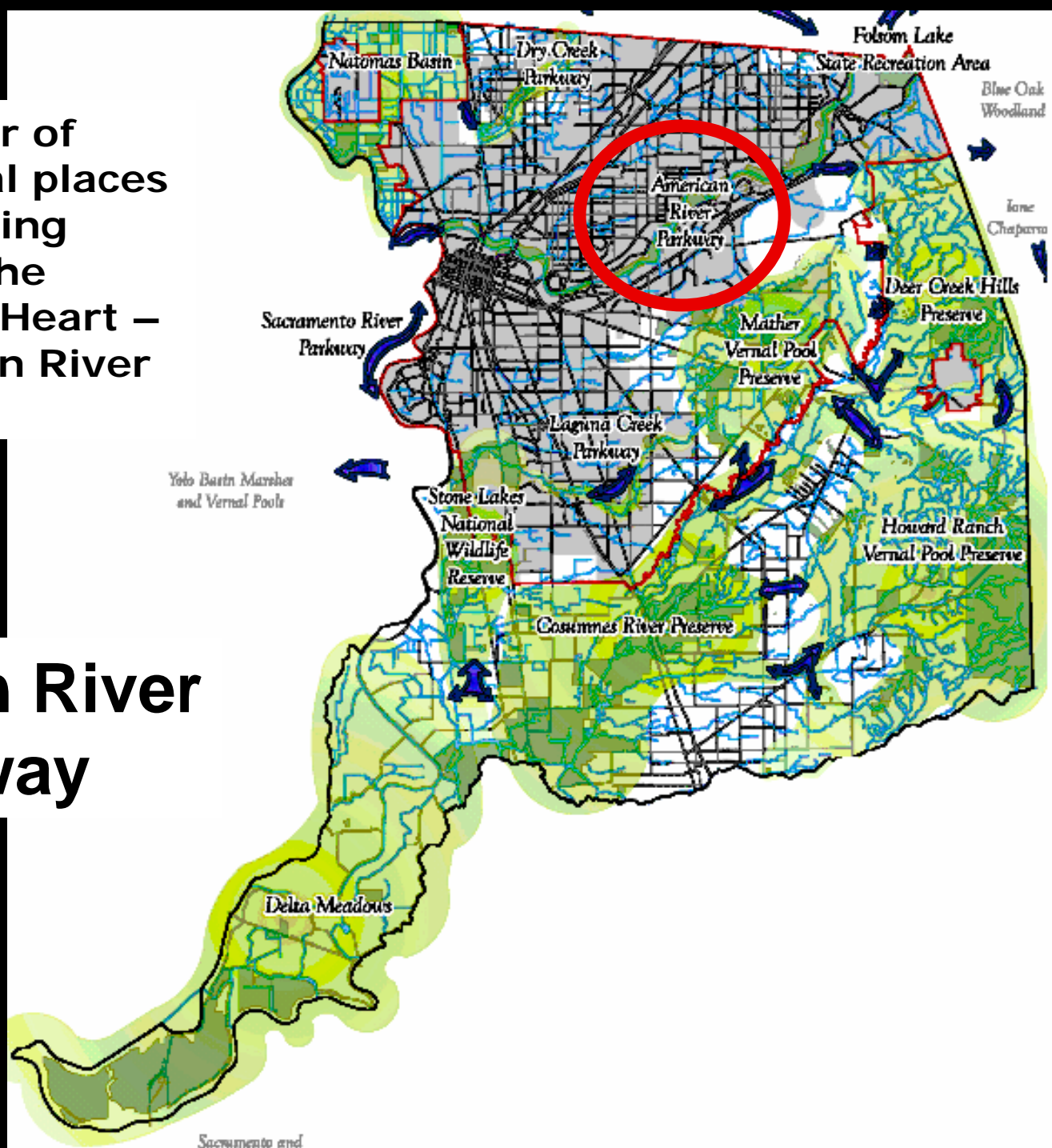
*Swainson's Hawks arrive from the tropics each spring to nest in riparian trees and forage in surrounding farmland, an ancient connection lost elsewhere in California that only survives when all its components continue to exist.*



*Great tule marshes that once covered the Central Valley's basins like Natomas are mostly gone now but their creatures like herons, egrets, bitterns, giant garter snakes and wintering waterfowl still flourish in interconnected working rice farms.*

At the center of these special places and connecting them all is the Heartland's Heart – the American River Parkway.

# American River Parkway





*Where a river in the city's heart looks much as it did when gold was discovered a little way upstream.*



*And strollers can still  
come upon a Great Egret*

*Photo by Randy Smith*



*Or an impressive King Salmon*





*As they explore the Parkway's many trails amid flowering redbuds.*

*Photo Courtesy the American River Parkway Foundation*



*Photo by Steve Clapper*

*Like the Parkway, the California Heartland Project connects the extraordinary diversity of plants,*



*Photos by Steve Clapper*



*animals,*

*and human experiences that surround California's Capitol.*



*Photo by Randy Smith*

*Great cities around California, America and the world recognize that protecting their natural heritage doesn't just save plants and animals, as important as that is.*

*It also renews the human spirit and enhances quality of life.*

*It makes cities attractive places to live, work, and visit for people everywhere who appreciate special places.*

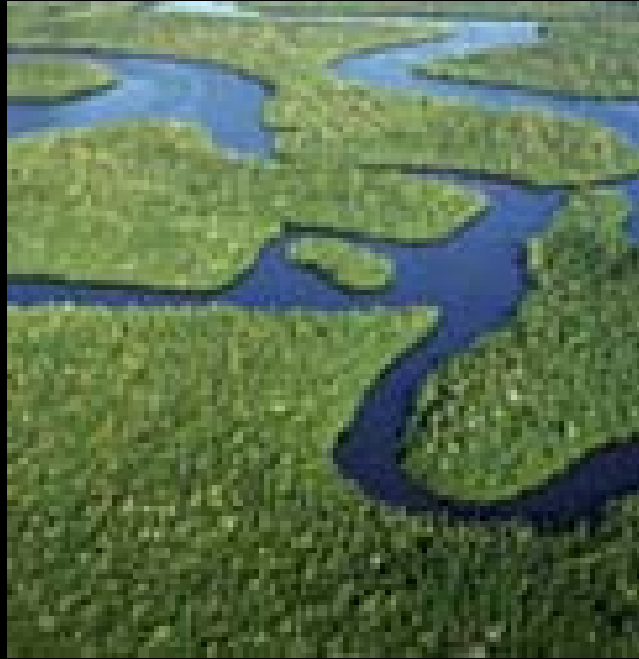
*The first step is a city's residents seeing what's around them.*





*Golden Gate National Park by NPS.gov*

*Like when San Franciscans stopped seeing water barriers  
and saw the Golden Gate.*



***And Miamians stopped seeing just swamps  
and saw the Everglades.***



Cosumnes Preserve / Tundra Swans  
*by Jim & Shirley White*

Vernal Pool Prairie / Crown Brodiaea  
*by Carol Witham*

Delta Marsh / Hibiscus  
*by Rick York*

***Now we can do the same!  
What's around us is a lot more than just open space.***





**The California Heartland Project is presented by  
Habitat 2020. Member organizations are:**

**Sacramento Audubon,  
Save the American River Association (SARA),  
Sacramento Urban Creeks Council,  
California Native Plant Society (CNPS)- Sac Valley Chapter,  
Environmental Council of Sacramento (ECOS),  
Sierra Club- Mother Lode Chapter,  
Friends of Swainson's Hawk (FOSH),  
Save Our Sandhill Cranes (SOS Cranes)**