

One view of The Big Chico Creek Ecological Reserve, 7,835 acres of preserved habitat.
PHOTO COURTESY OF BIG CHICO CREEK ECOLOGICAL RESERVE



Go beyond Bidwell Park

At the northeastern border of Upper Bidwell Park, just past the parking lot at Green Gate on Highway 32 is the beginning of a whole other natural area that is twice the size of its neighbor. The Big Chico Creek Ecological Reserve comprises 7,835 acres of habitat under the stewardship of Chico State Enterprises, a preserved “natural area for environmental research and education” according to the BCCER website (www.csuchico.edu/bccer).

Like Upper Bidwell Park, the reserve is largely made up of Big Chico Creek canyon, with 4.5 miles worth of creek running through it. And like the park, you can visit!

The difference is that the area’s purpose is protecting species and habitat rather than entertaining humans. You can’t ride a bike or horse, drive a car or bring a dog into the reserve. There are no athletic facilities and swimming is not allowed.

What can you do then? You can enjoy a fairly unspoiled natural resource just a few miles up the road. And you can hike. There are several miles of trails throughout

the reserve on both sides of the canyon. There’s also a less-than-one-mile Nature Trail Loop around a meadow near the Field House, and a map online that describes habitats, natural features and animals—from black bears to black-tailed deer—in the area.

The BCCER is open to the public and you can enter, by foot only, at two different trailheads—one at the border of Bidwell Park and one at the main park entrance off Highway 32 (east, approximately 10 miles past Bruce Road; look for a green “3521” address marker and park at the lot down the hill next to the gate). Visit the website for trail maps and info on upcoming events like the Annual Butterfly Count, June 2, 8:30 a.m. (email jauill@csuchico.edu to register).

—Jason Cassidy

Think globally, read locally

Rather than—or in addition to—consulting the New York Times Bestseller List or other standard sources when compiling your summer reading itinerary, why not add some locally grown literature to the mix? North State authors have turned out exceptional works since at least the days when Joaquin Miller—the “Poet of the Sierras”—rambled ‘round these parts in the late 1800s.

Following are some recommendations of recently published books that lit-loving yoga instructor Nancy Wiegman, who’s hosted North State Public Radio’s “Nancy’s Bookshelf” for more than 30 years, shared with the CN&R to round out your summer reading list.

In *Chico’s Chapmans: The California Years, 1861-1899*, eminent local historian Michele Shover dives deep into the history of the family for whom the local neighborhood is named. “Everyone knows a lot about the Bidwells, but the Chapmans were also very interesting and important to Chico’s early history,” Wiegman said.

For thriller lovers, she recommended Mike Paull’s *Missing* series of international spy thrillers, the third of which—*Missing in the Maldives*—was published in March. She also mentioned science-fiction book *Proto-Spora* by Erika Lunder. Wiegman noted both authors published books after following careers in wildly different fields; Paull was a dentist and commercial pilot, and Lunder a social worker.

50 Countries, 50 Stories: A Journey of Discovery Around the World Told Through Authentic Stories and Captivating Media, chronicles 14 years of David Simmons’ globe-trotting adventures. Simmons grew up in Chico and, sadly, was killed in a landslide in Alaska in 2020, at the age of 30. His father, Randall, compiled the book from his late son’s writings.

Wiegman’s chats with these and more local authors can be found in NSPR’s archives (mynspr.org). Or, stop by The Bookstore (118 Main St.) to peruse the downtown institution’s local shelf and pick up the latest locally produced ‘zines and poetry collections.

—Ken Smith

Locally produced books and ‘zines at The Bookstore.
PHOTOS BY KEN SMITH



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