

https://napavalleyregister.com/news/napa-sheehy-creek-environment-baginski-lederer-habitat-wildlife-hiking-outdoors/article_1bbd294f-201f-4ae4-834e-30320dea239e.html

FEATURED EDITOR'S PICK

Napa's Sheehy Creek: Can nature thrive in an industrial park?

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Sep 4, 2025



The Week in Review: 10 Napa Valley stories you may have missed this week



Napa's Sheehy Creek is a slice of nature within an industrial park.

Barry Eberling/Register video

Yvonne Baginski describes Sheehy Creek as a natural landscape and walking area amid the growing Napa County Airport industrial area – and she says it can use

help.

The creek is a stealth slice of nature in an area with sprawling warehouses, offices, and vehicles rumbling down Devlin Road. It is an oasis of willows, buckeyes and cattails amid asphalt and concrete.

Egrets, rabbits, wild turkeys, river otters and beavers are among the animals found there, said Baginski, a Napa resident and environmental advocate.

Sheehy Creek runs from nearby hills under Highway 29 near North Kelly Road and empties into waterways leading to the Napa River. A walking path parallels almost a mile of the airport industrial area segment west of the highway.

Baginski has counted Sheehy Creek as one of her favorite walking spots for 20 years, and she sees disturbing signs. One is that the amount of trash she picks up grows with the surrounding development, she said.

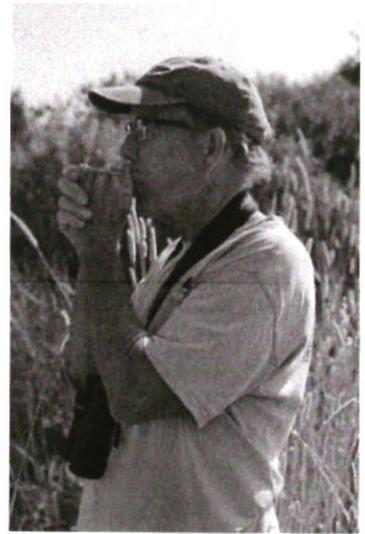
“All of the trash you see here?” Baginski said, pointing out the paper and wrappers and a hubcap near where the creek crosses under Devlin Road. “I was here last week and picked it all up. This is all new.”



Sheehy Creek, seen on Aug. 28, is a rare local haven for egrets, rabbits, wild turkeys, river otters and beavers amid the Napa County Airport's industrial area.

Nick Otto/Register

Other Sheehy Creek conditions are harder to change. Bird watcher Murray Berner said Napa County creeks in general have been turned into "tree-lined ditches" that no longer have broader swathes of riparian habitat.



Murray Berner does a bird call while birdwatching along Sheehy Creek in Napa on Aug. 28.

Nick Otto/Register

Still, he said there are good things at Sheehy Creek, even if those broad riparian habitats of old are better for breeding birds.

"Migrating birds don't need a lot," Berner said. "They just need a place with insects and seeds. These things are really valuable for migrants."

Tension between the natural and industrial worlds was foreseen back in 1986, when Napa County did the environmental impact report for the planned Napa Valley Business Park. There would be tradeoffs.

"The natural channels of Sheehy Creek and the unnamed stream could be permanently altered by development of the proposed plan," the report said.



A discarded, crumpled warehouse sign lies along a path near Napa's Sheehy Creek on Aug. 28.

Nick Otto/Register

Wildlife in the area would change with industrial development, due to having less habitat and more contact with humans. More “urban” species would tend to replace more natural ones, the report forecasted.

But, it predicted, the industrial park would create jobs and economic growth. It would permanently protect the nearby county airport from incompatible development.



Yvonne Baginski walks along Sheehy Creek on Aug. 28.

Nick Otto/Register

Baginski is the creek's outspoken advocate, the one who seeks to limit tradeoffs to the creek's health. She took to the lectern during public comments at the Napa County Board of Supervisors' July 29 meeting, urging the county to take better care of Sheehy Creek.

“What has come to my attention is there is nobody actually monitoring or managing that creek,” she told supervisors.



A finch flaps its wings in a tree near Sheehy Creek on Aug. 28.

Nick Otto/Register

Sheehy Creek subsequently came up at the Aug. 6 county Planning Commission meeting. The commission approved a proposed 55,000-square-foot building by Phelan Development along the creek, though outside of the creek setback.

Commissioner Kara Brunzell walked along the creek at the Phelan site while learning about the proposed development. She saw restoration attempts near the bank from a couple of decades ago.

“There is a lot of vegetation that was clearly planted as part of restoration,” she said. “Irrigation was set up. Now the irrigation is all cut up. Most of the vegetation is dead and the creek itself is overgrown.”

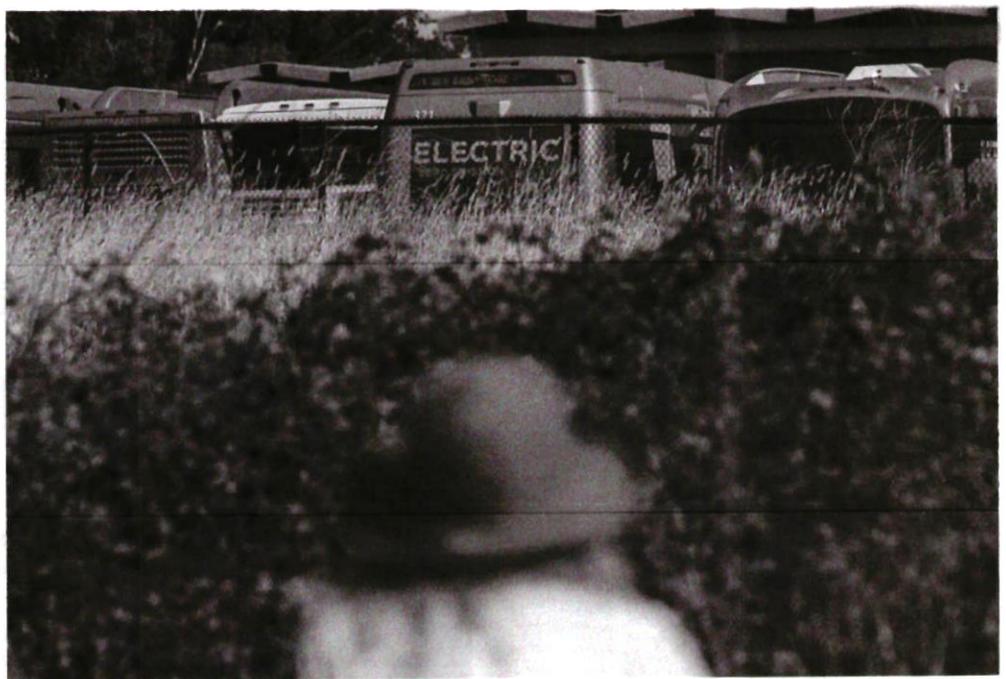


Yvonne Baginski walks along the path next to Sheehy Creek and a large piece of land where construction of buildings is planned that may disrupt local wildlife on Aug. 28.

Nick Otto/Register

David Haugen of Phelan Development agreed this section of creek “needs a little love.” He said he’d be happy to clean up the company’s stretch, though he didn’t want to do so without somebody’s permission and supervision.

“But I’m happy to be part of the solution,” he told commissioners.



NVTA buses are parked in a lot near Sheehy Creek on Aug. 28.

Nick Otto/Register

Brunzell noted that Phelan Development is only one property owner along the creek. She wondered what more can be done.

County reports explain that the creek was realigned and revegetated in the early 2000s as the industrial park developed. The developers worked with the state Department of Fish and Game – now Fish and Wildlife – on habitat requirements. Napa County in 2006 agreed to hold a conservation easement along the creek.

“The county doesn’t have the obligation to maintain the creek,” deputy county counsel Laura Anderson told planning commissioners. “It’s the adjoining property owners that do.”



A turkey vulture sits in a tree near Sheehy Creek on Aug. 28.

Nick Otto/Register

Public works director Steven Lederer said last week that department staff on Aug. 6 inspected Sheehy Creek.

“They found the creek operating naturally, with beavers, mature vegetation and a healthy tree canopy,” Lederer said. “Some common invasive species, including fennel and Harding grass, were observed and could be addressed.”

Napa County will share the findings with the business park association for consideration. He knows of no further actions being taken, Lederer said.

Mark John Nicol represents the Napa Valley Gateway Business Park Association, which oversees the common property in the business park. He said the association is responsible for maintaining the asphalt path along the creek and trims back vegetation from the path once or twice a year.

"We don't want to disturb the rest of the fauna," he said. "It's a natural environment and we want to leave it like that. It's not meant to be a landscaped section of property. I think we're on the right path."



Birdwatcher Murray Berner walks along a path near Sheehy Creek on Aug. 28.

Nick Otto/Register

The association would work with the county and Fish and Wildlife if they said a tree needs to be removed from the creek or something similar. But it won't make changes to a natural waterway without government approval, he said.

Baginski would like to see a coordinated, comprehensive approach to improve Sheehy Creek. How and whether that will come about and who would lead the effort remains unclear.

In the meantime, Sheehy Creek remains a narrow band of nature amid the hustle and bustle of an industrial park.

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By Barry Eberling
Napa County Reporter



CHECKLIST S223163616

Sat 5 Apr 2025 6:40 AM**Sheehy Creek (NAP Co.)** 📍 Napa County, California, United States**Murray Berner****Traveling** Complete

👤 2 🕒 2 hr, 15 min 📏 1.2 mi

Walked length of creek west of Hwy 29. South side only. Partly cloudy 50-80%, calm, 41-48°

 **44**

Species Observed

+2 other taxa, 5,574 individuals

 **1**

Species with Photos

5300 **Cackling Goose (Aleutian)**

By 20s. East-west migrants 0740-0845.

2 **Canada Goose**10 **Mallard**BREEDING BEHAVIOR CODE: **P Pair in Suitable Habitat (Probable)**5 **California Quail**2 **Wild Turkey** *BREEDING BEHAVIOR CODE: **C Courtship, Display, or Copulation (Probable)**2 **Ring-necked Pheasant** *BREEDING BEHAVIOR CODE: **S Singing Bird (Possible)**11 **Mourning Dove**BREEDING BEHAVIOR CODE: **P Pair in Suitable Habitat (Probable)**

- 9 **Anna's Hummingbird**
BREEDING BEHAVIOR CODE: **C Courtship, Display, or Copulation (Probable)**
- 21 **Ring-billed Gull**
BREEDING BEHAVIOR CODE: **F Flyover (Observed)**
- 2 **Double-crested Cormorant**
- 1 **Green Heron**
- 2 **Great Egret**
- 1 **Great Blue Heron**
- 1 **Turkey Vulture**
- 2 **White-tailed Kite**
BREEDING BEHAVIOR CODE: **P Pair in Suitable Habitat (Probable)**
- 2 **Red-tailed Hawk (calurus/alascensis)**
- 1 **Northern Flicker (Red-shafted)**
- 2 **Black Phoebe**
BREEDING BEHAVIOR CODE: **S Singing Bird (Possible)**
- 5 **California Scrub-Jay**
- 10 **American Crow**
- 2 **Common Raven**
BREEDING BEHAVIOR CODE: **P Pair in Suitable Habitat (Probable)**
- 15 **Tree Swallow**
- 6 **Cliff Swallow**
BREEDING BEHAVIOR CODE: **CN Carrying Nesting Material (Confirmed)**
- 10 **Bushtit**
BREEDING BEHAVIOR CODE: **P Pair in Suitable Habitat (Probable)**
- 2 **Ruby-crowned Kinglet**

- 1 Northern House Wren
- 4 Bewick's Wren
- 2 European Starling *
- 3 Northern Mockingbird
BREEDING BEHAVIOR CODE: S Singing Bird (Possible)
- 1 Hermit Thrush
- 2 American Robin
BREEDING BEHAVIOR CODE: S Singing Bird (Possible)
- 20 House Finch
- 3 Lesser Goldfinch
- 6 White-crowned Sparrow (Gambel's)
- 14 Golden-crowned Sparrow
- 15 Song Sparrow
BREEDING BEHAVIOR CODE: M Multiple (7+) Singing Birds (Probable)
- 13 California Towhee
BREEDING BEHAVIOR CODE: P Pair in Suitable Habitat (Probable)
- 3 Spotted Towhee
- 7 Western Meadowlark
- 25 Red-winged Blackbird (California Bicolored)
BREEDING BEHAVIOR CODE: C Courtship, Display, or Copulation (Probable)
- 5 Brown-headed Cowbird
BREEDING BEHAVIOR CODE: C Courtship, Display, or Copulation (Probable)
- 2 Orange-crowned Warbler
- 5 Yellow-rumped Warbler
- 1 Yellow-rumped Warbler (Myrtle)

15 Yellow-rumped Warbler (Audubon's)

1 Townsend's Warbler

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« Start Over

Bird Observations

Date Range: [Change Date](#)

Jan-Dec, 2024-2025

[Change Location](#) **Sheehy Creek (NAP Co.)**

Updated ~45 hr(s) ago.

84 species (+4 other taxa)

[Jan](#) | [Feb](#) | [Mar](#) | [Apr](#) | [May](#) | [Jun](#) | [Jul](#) | [Aug](#) | [Sep](#) | [Oct](#) | [Nov](#) | [Dec](#)

[Cackling Goose](#)  

[Canada Goose](#)  

[Gadwall](#)  

[Mallard](#)  

[California Quail](#)  

[Wild Turkey](#) *  

[Ring-necked Pheasant](#) *  

[Rock Pigeon](#) *  

[Eurasian Collared-Dove](#) *  

[Mourning Dove](#)  

[Anna's Hummingbird](#)  

[Allen's Hummingbird](#)  

[Virginia Rail](#)  

[Sora](#)  

[Killdeer](#)  

[Jan](#) | [Feb](#) | [Mar](#) | [Apr](#) | [May](#) | [Jun](#) | [Jul](#) | [Aug](#) | [Sep](#) | [Oct](#) | [Nov](#) | [Dec](#)

[Ring-billed Gull](#)  

[California Gull](#)  

[gull sp.](#)  

[Double-crested Cormorant](#)  

[Green Heron](#)  

[Great Egret](#)  

[Great Blue Heron](#)  

[American White Pelican](#)  

[Turkey Vulture](#)  

[White-tailed Kite](#)  

84 species (+4 other taxa)

Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec

<u>Cooper's Hawk</u>		
<u>Northern Harrier</u>		
<u>Red-shouldered Hawk</u>		
<u>Swainson's Hawk</u>		
<u>Red-tailed Hawk</u>		

Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec

<u>American Barn Owl</u>		
<u>Belted Kingfisher</u>		
<u>Downy Woodpecker</u>		
<u>Nuttall's Woodpecker</u>		
<u>Northern Flicker</u>		
<u>Willow Flycatcher</u>		
<u>Black Phoebe</u>		
<u>Say's Phoebe</u>		
<u>Western Warbling Vireo</u>		
<u>California Scrub-Jay</u>		
<u>American Crow</u>		
<u>Common Raven</u>		
<u>Chestnut-backed Chickadee</u>		
<u>Oak Titmouse</u>		
<u>Tree Swallow</u>		

Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec

<u>Violet-green Swallow</u>		
<u>Tree/Violet-green Swallow</u>		
<u>Northern Rough-winged Swallow</u>		
<u>Barn Swallow</u>		
<u>Cliff Swallow</u>		
<u>Bushtit</u>		
<u>Ruby-crowned Kinglet</u>		
<u>Northern House Wren</u>		
<u>Marsh Wren</u>		
<u>Bewick's Wren</u>		
<u>European Starling</u>	*	
<u>Northern Mockingbird</u>		
<u>Western Bluebird</u>		
<u>Hermit Thrush</u>		
<u>American Robin</u>		

Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec

<u>Cedar Waxwing</u>		
<u>House Sparrow</u>	*	

84 species (+4 other taxa)

Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec

House Finch  

Lesser Goldfinch  

American Goldfinch  

new world goldfinch sp.  

Dark-eyed Junco  

White-crowned Sparrow  

Golden-crowned Sparrow  

Zonotrichia sp.  

Savannah Sparrow  

Song Sparrow  

Lincoln's Sparrow  

California Towhee  

Spotted Towhee  

Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec

Western Meadowlark  

Bullock's Oriole  

Red-winged Blackbird  

Brown-headed Cowbird  

Brewer's Blackbird  

Orange-crowned Warbler  

Common Yellowthroat  

Northern Yellow Warbler  

Yellow-rumped Warbler  

Black-throated Gray Warbler  

Townsend's Warbler  

Western Tanager  

Black-headed Grosbeak  

KEY:  = insufficient data |  = rare to widespread

[Download Histogram Data](#)