

Drama at Hassayampa River Preserve

When I went to Hassayampa River Preserve this morning, I saw an



American bittern busy at the edge of the water. The bittern had captured a frog, but the frog seemed to be stuck, and the bird couldn't get it loose. Then, when the bird pulled, I saw the frog was partly in something else. My first thought was catfish, because of the shape. The bittern was so fast, it could reposition its beak on the frog without losing its grip. Each time it did that, I heard a tiny clack. It dawned on me that was no catfish, it was a turtle!!

The turtle had hold of the other end of the yelping frog. The turtle also had its head pulled clear back into its carapace to protect it from the long, sharp beak of the bittern. Each time the bittern grabbed at the frog again, it hit the turtle's carapace with its hard beak and made a clacking noise.

The sad (for the frog) tug of war went on for several minutes, but finally the turtle let go, and the bittern was the victor who gladly gulped down the poor frog. I was absolutely amazed and delighted (though sad for the frog) to witness such an event.

I never did see the waterthrush, but I saw lots and lots of warblers, vireos, verdin and bridled titmice (that is a bird).