



Bodega Land Trust



Newsletter

"...When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect". — Aldo Leopold (1886-1948), *American Forester*

Everything You Need to Know You can Learn from the Salmon

It's best to be born in a clear stream

Stay home until your body changes
When you are ready, travel into the world

travel in groups, swim strong
stay in your element, eat well

As you age, recognize the time
trust your instinct to guide you home

No two streams smell alike
(Every child knows this about their mother)

follow your passion, your will to create

find a partner and do it
moving together with perfect timing

protect your progeny with your last gasp

relax into death
litter the streams with your earth body
and the skies with the myth of yourself

become the streambed
live in your children, the roots of trees,
the song of the river.

give.

—Patti Trimble '96

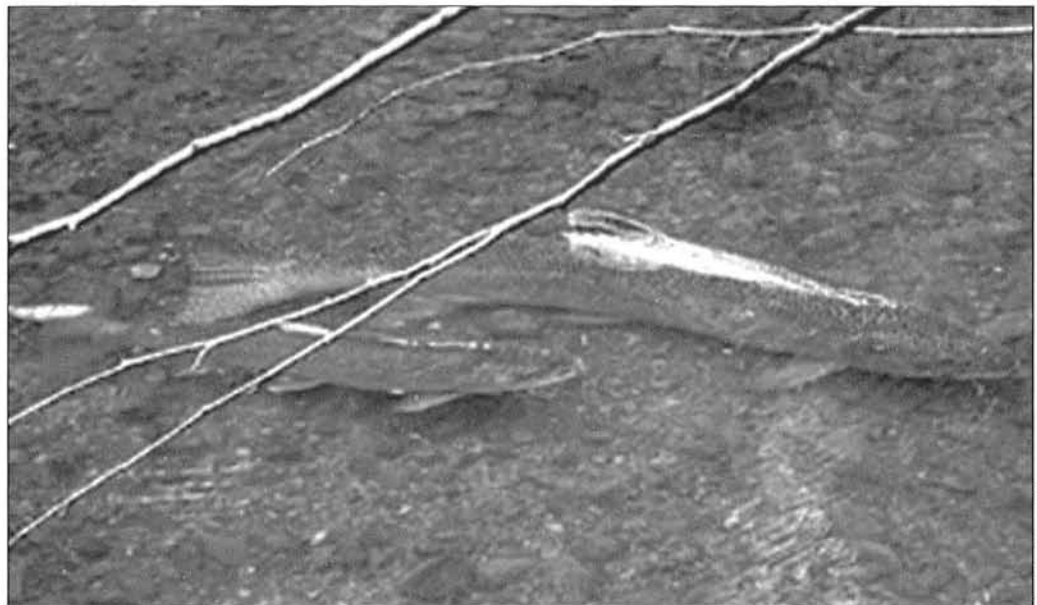


Photo by Steve Killey

Steelhead spawning in a tributary of Salmon Creek.

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Why Conserve West Sonoma County?

by Jay Sliwa

A breath of wind carries a vulture drifting lazily over the boughs of an ancient fir. It is morning and I find myself sitting on the porch as I have time and time again. Hot tea in hand, my 5 senses are open to what this day has to offer. In the distance I hear the sound of water tumbling down through a carved sandstone chasm, fueled by the intensity of this mid-February storm.

Steller's Jays, observing carefully, greet the day with me. The robins and Rufus-sided Towhees groom the velvet green slopes, picking off one fat earthworm after another. Sometimes I wonder how they can even fly after a good day's feast on their favorite pastureland delicacies. The firs again sway and whisper hushed melodies in the breeze as the steel-gray February skies shift and swirl overhead, foretelling the breaking of the storm or perhaps only the beginning of the next deluge.

Growing up surrounded by the surreal beauty of these rolling hills, deep redwood groves, and wild creek canyons, I was given a premium playground to begin a life of learning and exploration. Daily I would immerse myself in nature, following the trails of the blacktail deer deep into the forest. It was a place where the twisted fallacies of my public school education ended and the truthful reality of my real education began. For years, I learned by watching the beings of this land.

The fox taught me to be clever and creative in life. The deer showed me how to move in the forest. The steelhead taught me lessons of devotion and helped me learn to be a steward of the land in order to protect them. From the trees I learned of a deeper inner awareness, and from all plants I learned to forage from the riches of nature.

As I grow older, more and more often I give thanks and truly appreciate what this land has taught me, for it has provided my foundation in life. Not only have I learned about nature from this place, I have also learned respect, truth, love, wisdom, and most of all, that I am continually learning. I have begun to wander, expanding my stomping grounds from the cobblestone creek canyons and open rolling hillsides to lands far away over the mountains, down the river canyons, and across the oceans. Yet always I see this place as home and always I am connected to this beautiful land. When I return home after each adventure, no matter how far I have trekked into the

wild, I always seem to find my deepest peace just being home sitting on the porch in the morning and watching the ebb and flow of nature around me as the day awakens.

Over time I have seen the land change, creekbeds shift, old trees fall and new ones grow taller, new families of deer in the fields and Red-tail hawks in the trees. Yet I have also seen a greater change that pains me to my deepest core. I have witnessed my beloved homeland being consumed everywhere around me. The field where I once watched fawns dancing and frolicking in the knee-high spring grass is now a vineyard, where Round Up is now the fate of purple needlegrass and wild oats that once flowed like a river in the spring winds. There, inside the tall deer fence in some desperate pose of trapped fear, lie two deer carcasses, hopelessly imprisoned by the fences that I have watched crisscross the hills. Are they the fawns I once watched at play?

Many of my playgrounds are gone. The wild ridges are now dotted with houses and vineyards, all seeking the majestic views of our western hills. I know I may never again see this land as wild and as free as I did in my childhood. Yet perhaps what touches my heart most deeply is knowing that my children may never run free over the same open fields, nor be able to build a foundation in life from following the trails of the blacktail deer.

As we consider why this land should be protected, let us not think of it only as land. Let us think of it as something greater and remember all the things that this place has taught each of us. Let us think of our children and their children. Try to imagine all of the things that the sheer natural beauty of this place will teach them. Imagine the childhood wanderings they may to have. Perhaps from this perspective we will realize that as residents we have a responsibility to be stewards of the land, not only for our own sake and for the well being of all beings that share the land with us, but for future generations as well. ❁



Line art by Serge Etienne

Managing Riparian Areas to Benefit Songbirds and Agriculture

by Viola Toniolo

Compared with other wildlife, birds are remarkably easy to see and hear, each species announcing its identity with a unique call and song. Birds can be found everywhere and every habitat has a unique array of bird species associated with it—whether it's a grassland, forest, river, creek, farm, city, desert, or marsh. Unfortunately, there are many habitats that are currently in decline, and so are the birds associated with them. Birds that are linked with human activities—crows, ravens, jays, blackbirds, house finches, house sparrows, and cowbirds, to name a few—are replacing the native populations of migratory songbirds that characterize the coastal California landscape. While many of these human-associated bird species are also native, their populations have exploded to disproportionate sizes. An unspoiled stretch of riparian habitat, for example, may host over 20 species of birds, as opposed to only 5–10 species on a heavily grazed creek or urban area.

Riparian areas, which comprise all the vegetation along creeks, streams, lakes, and other freshwater bodies, have long been identified as one of California's most critical habitats for Neotropical migrant and resident songbirds as well as other wildlife. It has been estimated that in California alone, over 225 species of birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians depend on riparian habitat for their survival. Riparian vegetation, the interface between water and land, provides shade, food, and nutrients to one of the most diverse wildlife communities on earth.

Riparian habitats are also undergoing some of the most rapid declines: today, they cover about 5–15 % of their historic range.

Good riparian bird habitat is characterized by a diversity of trees species (e.g. arroyo and yellow willow, buckeye, white and red alder, box elder, and big-leaf maple), a vigorous shrub understory (e.g. California blackberry, thimble-berry, poison oak, and the saplings of bigger trees), a thick herbaceous cover (e.g. rush, horsetail, hedge-nettle, and stinging nettle), soft edges (gradual changes between different environments—such as trees to shrubs to grassland), a heterogeneous design (trees and shrubs planted in random clumps rather than uniform rows), and sufficient width to sustain a high degree of structural diversity (in order to provide a variety of niches for a variety of birds and other animals).

Neotropical migratory songbirds spend their winters in Central and South America, where food and shelter are abundant throughout the year, and then move north to the United States, Canada, and Alaska to breed during the spring and summer. While some believe that the size of their populations is limited by habitat destruction (deforestation) on the wintering grounds, recent studies have shown that one of the primary causes of songbird population declines is the lack of adequate habitat during the breeding season, when they are building nests and rearing their young. Many of the birds that breed in California, for example, are unable to successfully raise

their young due to exposure to nest predators such as jays, feral and domestic cats, foxes, skunks, and raccoons. While some degree of predation is natural and will always occur, only healthy habitat can adequately conceal and protect nestlings against the odds of extirpation. With so many species in decline, it is still possible and relatively easy to attract birds to one's property. Many migratory songbirds are still found on California's coast, and, given the right circumstances; most of them will quickly respond to habitat restoration and repopulate a riparian area within one to three years.

The good news is that there is still much we can do to restore riparian habitat and bring back the birds associated with it. Because a large portion of land in California is under private stewardship, having isolated nature preserves and parks on public lands alone does not suffice. Private landowners can make a significant contribution to a healthy landscape and help fill in the habitat gaps by fencing off creeks to cattle (and establishing alternative water sources), planting native trees, shrubs, and grasses along streams and creeks, removing non-native invasive vegetation, keeping cats indoors (cats kill an estimated 4.4 million birds daily!), and avoiding mowing and grazing in riparian areas between March and July (the peak nesting season). These activities are not at odds with a ranching or farming lifestyle; many landowners have successfully created wildlife habitats on their properties while maintaining their

agricultural livelihoods.

There are multiple ways in which private landowners can benefit by practicing bird-friendly farming:

- Riparian vegetation, which is critical for birds, increases *agricultural and ranching productivity* by raising the water table and stabilizing stream-banks.
- Many bird species that are associated with riparian areas are also excellent predators and can help *control agricultural pests* such as rodents and insects.
- Birds are excellent indicators of overall *ecosystem health*. Because they occupy a variety of niches and are relatively high on the food chain, managing for birds can have beneficial effects on a variety of other ecosystem components.
- Establishing riparian buffers can help *avoid regulatory actions*. The thick mat of roots provided by riparian plants filters out pesticides and other agricultural pollutants, which would otherwise enter the stream and make it more difficult to meet water quality standards. Establishing buffers can also help create enough wildlife habitat

that species which would otherwise become endangered can be brought back to healthy population sizes (and regulatory actions needed to protect them are no longer necessary). Many riparian associated birds, for example, are currently in rapid decline. Only by creating habitat for them can we prevent them from becoming state or federally listed.

- The *voluntary nature* of riparian habitat protection empowers landowners to take conservation and the fate of their properties into their own hands.
- Riparian habitat is *beautiful*, and so are the many species of animals associated with it. From a strictly aesthetic perspective, having abundant plant and wildlife diversity in one's own backyard can be very gratifying.
- Many *funding assistance programs* exist today to help landowners establish riparian buffers and wildlife habitat. Local land trusts, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and Resource Conservation Districts all provide financial and technical assistance programs for fencing off creeks and establishing riparian vegetation. Participation does not

oblige landowners to open their properties to the public: property right protection and voluntary participation are some of the mainstays of these programs.

Every landowner can make a significant contribution to our declining songbirds and their habitats by establishing and maintaining riparian areas on their properties, outreaching to their communities and the public about the importance of bird conservation (and the essential roles landowners possess), and supporting the local agricultural economy against the odds of development and urbanization. ❀

Viola Toniolo works as Riparian Habitat Conservationist for the Point Reyes Bird Observatory, Marin County Resource Conservation District, and USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. For more information, contact her at (415) 868-0655 or viola@prbo.org.

The following is a list of bird species that can be found breeding, migrating, or over-wintering in riparian areas in Marin and Sonoma Counties. The presence of each species depends on the season and habitat characteristics of each riparian site.

Allen's Hummingbird, American Crow, American Goldfinch, American Robin, Anna's Hummingbird, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Belted Kingfisher, Bewick's Wren, Black Phoebe, Black-headed Grosbeak, Brown-headed Cowbird, Bullock's Oriole, Bushtit, California Quail, California Towhee, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Common Yellowthroat, Cooper's Hawk, Downy Woodpecker, European Starling, Great Horned Owl, Green-backed Heron, Hairy Woodpecker, House Finch, House Wren, Hutton's Vireo, Lazuli Bunting, Lesser Goldfinch, MacGillivray's Warbler, Mourning Dove, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Nuttall's Woodpecker, Oak Titmouse, Orange-crowned Warbler, Pacific-slope Flycatcher, Pine Siskin, Purple Finch, Northern Flicker, Red-breasted Sapsucker, Red-shouldered Hawk, Red-winged Blackbird, Song Sparrow, Spotted Towhee, Steller's Jay, Swainson's Thrush, Tree Swallow, Warbling Vireo, Western Bluebird, Western Scrub Jay, Western Wood-peewee, Wilson's Warbler, Winter Wren, Wood Duck, Wrentit, Yellow-breasted Chat, and Yellow Warbler.

Christmas Bird Count in Bodega

If you were to look for birds in midwinter down Salmon Creek Road, Bodega, and the surrounding land, what might you see? Here are the 65 species which Madrone Audubon Society birders found on their Christmas bird count on December 30, 2000. Numbers refer to the number of birds seen.

42 Turkey Vultures	40 American Crows
5 Golden Eagles	2 House Finches
1 Peregrine Falcon	13 Steller's Jays
2 Ferruginous Hawks	15 Western Scrub Jays
3 Red-shouldered Hawks	74 Dark-eyed Juncos
10 Red-tailed Hawks	12 Golden-crowned Kinglets
4 Sharp-shinned Hawks	50 Ruby-crowned Kinglets
7 American Kestrels	26 Western Meadowlarks
5 White-tailed Kites	40 Red-breasted Nuthatches
8 Glaucous-winged Gulls	10 Black Phoebe
6 Great Horned Owls	1 Say's Phoebe
7 Northern Saw-whet Owls	42 Common Ravens
5 Spotted Owls	53 American Robins
2 Northern Pygmy-Owls	31 Pine Siskins
2 Western Screech-Owls	13 Fox Sparrows
6 Killdeer	21 Golden-crowned Sparrows
48 California Quails	30 House Sparrows
83 Wild Turkeys	14 Song Sparrows
15 Mourning Doves	90 White-crowned Sparrows
6 Anna's Hummingbirds	34 European Starlings
16 Northern Flickers	12 Hermit Thrushes
4 Red-breasted Sapsuckers	8 Varied Thrushes
2 Acorn Woodpeckers	4 Oak Titmice
4 Downy Woodpeckers	15 California Towhees
1 Hairy Woodpecker	4 Spotted Towhees
1 Nuttall's Woodpecker	3 Hutton's Vireos
1 Pileated Woodpecker	1 Hermit Warbler
64 Brewer's Blackbirds	7 Townsend's Warblers
10 Western Bluebirds	43 Yellow-rumped Warblers
18 Bushtits	2 Bewick's Wrens
99 Chestnut-backed Chickadees	4 Winter Wrens
10 Brown Creepers	3 Wrentits
10 Red Crossbills	

In the West County as a whole 38,028 birds were counted in 192 species. Most of the additional species (not sighted around Salmon Creek Road) were coastal. The West Sonoma County count area is a circle 15 miles in diameter, centered at a spot on Finley Creek and including the mouth of the Russian River and the Estero Americano, and extending east to Green Valley Road and Furlong Road. Results are compared for count groups all over the U.S. and Canada, all with the same sized circles. West Sonoma County is often in the top 10; the 1999 count placed 11th among 1,779 counts. We truly have a diversity of birds.

Thanks to Bill Payne and Ken Wilson for sharing their results; more details are given in Madrone Leaves, the newsletter of the local chapter of the Audubon Society.

Oak Mortality Syndrome

Caused by a previously unknown species of the fungus *Phytophthora*, this syndrome attacks coast live oak, tan and black oak, and also huckleberry. There is currently no known control of this syndrome. *Phytophthora* species are primarily moved in water and soil. The pathogen is highly contagious. It can be spread by hikers, bikers and vehicles, as well as by cattle, horses, deer and other vertebrates. Prevention of the movement of soil and wood may slow the spread of the fungus. Wood from oak and tanoak should not be moved out of infested regions, or moved around within those regions.

From *Tree Notes* August 2000, California Department of Forestry.
See also www.sonoma.edu/ord/preserve

Restoring Biodiversity in Coastal Redwood Forests

by Laura Sousa

The California Coast Redwood, *Sequoia sempervirens*, grows in a fog belt within thirty miles of the Pacific Coast, from sea level to three thousand feet. Its range is from Monterey County, California, to Chetko River, Oregon. Extensive logging of these once vast forests has resulted in degradation of the remaining redwood groves.

Most remaining old-growth redwoods are now in state and federal parks where cars and people are allowed near the bases of the trees. Over time this traffic destroys the vegetation around the trees. Redwoods have shallow root systems and are easily harmed by root compaction caused by such activities. When automobiles are driven through the forest, their exhaust is trapped by the trees' upper canopy.

Old-growth trees are an essential part of a healthy redwood forest as they provide the dense shade and fog-drip needed by both younger trees and native plant species. Isolated redwoods always suffer, especially when exposed to excessive temperatures, as happened during the heat-wave of June 2000. Throughout the region such trees were left with burnt leaves and a loss of ground water. This did not occur in dense groves because the older trees helped to keep the forest cool.

You almost never see native ferns or flowers around scattered or exposed redwoods because the conditions are not conducive to their growth. The variety of plant species is a good indication of the health of any forest. While some plants native to the redwood community are found in other coniferous forests, others are found only in the dark dampness of virgin redwoods.

The restoration of native flora begins with the elimination of root compaction and non-native plant species. This can be done while still allowing for human access. Barriers can be constructed to keep people away from the bases of the trees and paths can be built to allow for the enjoyment of the forest without further degradation. Such strategies will encourage the return of native flora.

Examples of this can be found in Armstrong Woods State Park where wooden fences have been built to keep people on paths and away from the bases of the trees. Fern Grove, in Bodega, recently had barriers set up around redwood trees with the help of tree specialist Darrell Sukovitz and local volunteers. Both areas are now enjoying a return of native plant species.

Some of the first plants to return during restoration are redwood sorrel, milk maids, cleavers, trail finder, wild

strawberry, redwood pea, miner's lettuce, star flower and modesty. Once these species take hold sugar scoops, wake robin, inside-out flower, slink pods, columbine and redwood violet will soon start to return. Finally plants that are indicators of a healthy redwood community, like calypso orchid, Andrew's clintonia, coral root, bleeding hearts, habenaria, western coltsfoot, leafless wintergreen and western heartease can be found.

The interrelationship between the flora and fauna of the redwood forest and the health of the trees themselves is a very delicate balance. Redwood trees can live for over two thousand years. By continuing to harvest and degrade our old-growth forests we are destroying an irreplaceable part of our national heritage. Conservation now will ensure that future generations will be able to enjoy their natural aesthetics while preserving them for recreational use, as well as for educational and scientific study. ❀

Laura Sousa's booklet Wildflowers of the Pacific Coast Redwood Community—a Field Guide with illustrations by Karen Conrad will help you identify these plants.



Wake Robin (*Trillium ovatum*)

Drawing by Karen Conrad

A conservation easement is a legal agreement between a landowner and a land trust (a private, nonprofit conservation organization) or government agency that permanently limits a property's uses in order to protect its conservation values.

When you own land, you also "own" many rights associated with it, such as the right to harvest timber, build structures and so on. Each of those rights has a certain value. When you donate or sell a conservation easement to a land trust you agree to give up some of those rights. The choice is always up to you. A conservation easement may apply to just a portion of the property, leaving the option of development open for another part. The land trust has the legal responsibility to enforce the terms of the easement.

As easements are being used more widely, they are attracting research into their use as a conservation tool; from this flows advice on best practices, which Bodega Land Trust is eager to follow.

For more information see "What is a Conservation Easement" in BLT's Fall 2000 Newsletter.

Landowner Perceptions of their Agricultural Conservation Easements

by Ellie Rilla

In 1999 a team of University of California researchers conducted a survey to discover why farmers give up development rights and convey a permanent conservation easement on their land. They interviewed 46 landowners who had agricultural conservation easements on their properties that were held by the Marin Agricultural Land Trust (MALT), the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation & Open Space District (SCAPOSD) and the Yolo Land Trust. 37 of the landowners had originally sold the easements on their farmland and 9 landowners purchased land with such an easement already on it.

Motivations

While landowners responded with a variety of discrete reasons about why they restricted the use of their property by selling an easement there were obvious similarities and overlaps among these reasons that are easily combined into just three major types of motivation:

- (1) **to preserve land** (for farming or open space, 27 respondents)
- (2) **to obtain cash** (for non-farm purposes, to invest in farm operations, or to reduce farm debt, 24 respondents)
- (3) **to serve family needs** (estate resolution or transfer to the next generation, 18 respondents)

One-third of the landowners gave reasons that fit into a single category. The other 25 landowners had multiple objectives in mind when selling their easements. Economics and other factors are closely interconnected in these combinations. Clearly the cash involved was substantial. For giving

up their development rights, landowners in the three counties typically received at least several hundred thousand dollars apiece and more than one million dollars in a few cases. Yet for most of the 37 original easement grantors in this sample, the cash was only a means for accomplishing certain family or preservation benefits. One Sonoma landowner offered this interpretation:

"I doubt that people who participate in the SCAPOSD or MALT do it for purely economic reasons. They have to want to stay in agriculture. It makes less sense from a purely economic standpoint."

Many landowners commented on stewardship and landscape values and few were concerned about the perpetuity of their parcel restrictions—indications of the preservation motivation. Personal attachment to the easement-protected parcels was another widely-held sentiment, with many respondents noting a long history of family ownership and the importance of their farms as home sites.

Landowners were also asked how they spent the cash received from the sale of the easement. Sellers spent the cash on these purposes, in order of frequency:

- (1) non-farm uses, including retirement income and savings
- (2) farm investment
- (3) estate settlement
- (4) to reduce farm debt

For most of the nine landowners in the three counties who purchased their properties after the development rights had been removed, having an easement in place was a de-

cided advantage. The principal reason, they said, is that it made the purchase more affordable. By eliminating the possibility of development, an easement in effect reduces the market value from a speculative to a farm production level.

Experiences

Landowners overall had very positive views of their easement-related experiences. A few landowners said they would participate again only if they could do certain things differently, mostly revising particular features in their easement deeds. It was a matter of having learned from the negotiation process and now wanting to apply this knowledge, as one Sonoma landowner noted:

"I wish I knew then what I know now. I would have used different language in the agreement on where I can build the house."

Landowners also believe the easements are a valuable and effective tool for both personal and public purposes. The 37 landowners who were original easement sellers willingly—enthusiastically in most cases—sold conservation easements giving up the development rights for themselves and for future generations of owners and accepting other restrictions as well. Cash, the ideals of land preservation, and family benefits, separately or in combination, more than compensated for the permanent loss of this important property option. And now, some years or months after the transactions, they find few reasons to regret their actions and are satisfied with their continuing experiences with the local conservation programs. The 9 landowners who later purchased parcels with easements attached have similar views of the easement technique.

Program Performance

Landowners did make several suggestions for organizational and procedural improvements which are categorized in the following four areas of advice:

1. *Programs should seek ways to clarify and expedite easement negotiations with willing landowners.* The obvious advice for program managers is to provide complete information to potential easement sellers at the time of initial contact, to be open and accessible as negotiations proceed, and to be sensitive to individual landowner circumstances. It is especially important that landowners fully understand the meaning and later implementation of specific easement terms, including use restrictions and the monitoring process.

2. *Programs should make a special effort to explain to later purchasers of restricted parcels how the easement affects their use of the land.* To avoid later misunderstandings, agencies should make personal contact with new purchasers of the parcels on which they hold easements, to

pass on full information about specific restrictions and monitoring and to get them interested in other program activities.

3. *Programs should monitor easement-restricted parcels as a cooperative rather than adversarial process, one which provides landowner benefits as well as ensuring compliance with easement terms.* Monitoring should be an informative process that stresses better land stewardship. The steps that help to achieve such an outcome include formal and written guidelines, consistency in the monitoring activity from year to year, advance landowner notification, written reports, and personal contacts.

4. *Programs should seek to involve landowners in conservation activities other than those directly related to easement management.* Nonprofit land trusts with broad conservation agendas generally have an edge over public agencies in this area. With its farm tours, workshops, and newsletters, MALT provides a model of what can be done to stimulate public interest and participation in conservation activities. Besides benefiting personally from such activities, landowners with easements also provide valuable lessons in land conservation for other segments of their communities.

The results of the interviews have been published by the Agricultural Issues Center at UC Davis in a new report, *California Farmers and Conservation Easements: Motivations, Experiences, and Perceptions in Three Counties*.

The report is available on the Center's website at <http://aic.ucdavis.edu>, or you can order a copy from AIC at University of California, 1 Shields Ave., Davis, CA 95616-8514. The cost of the report is \$10. This survey is part of a larger study of California's experience with the farmland easement technique. The research is supported by the California Department of Conservation through the Great Valley Center of Modesto. ❁

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**Bodega Land Trust is seeking
new Board Members.
For information, please call
876-1806.**

Why did you give a conservation easement?

Hazel Flett asks Khysie Horn

“The overwhelming reason for my giving an easement is conservation. I want to protect the little piece of land I have the power to protect. I have the personal satisfaction of knowing that this land won’t be logged again.”

Khysie Horn was talking about the conservation easement that she is donating to Bodega Land Trust on her 40-acre property on Bohemian Highway (see fall 2000 newsletter). This is redwood forest, once supporting the kind of flora that Laura Sousa describes in her article in this issue.

Khysie bought her land in 1984, while she was still living in Guerneville. The previous owner had bought it to log, which he did around 1980. He then resold it for his original purchase price, making his profit from the timber. It was badly logged. The land is steep and undoubtedly sediment ran into the creek, one of the headwaters of Salmon Creek. A great deal of brush was left but few big trees.

She built her house in 1987-8. Once she moved to the land, she began to see that other property owners were buying property around her to log and then resell, or simply to make money on land they still own. In fact since 1988 every property around her has been harvested to varying degrees. It became very apparent that there is no mechanism in place through the California Department of Forestry or any other state or federal agency to monitor the cumulative effects of so many small timber harvests within the Salmon Creek watershed. This realization spurred Khysie into thinking about ways she could protect her piece of land from additional timber harvesting in the future.

Then, several years ago, she joined with a group of neighbors to fight one more harvest right next door. This plan, done by local real estate developers, included harvesting above a steep, slide prone section of the Bohemian Highway and Salmon Creek, and included a boundary line no more than 100 feet from her neighbor’s back door. Following official procedures with the Department of Forestry proved time consuming and in the end futile. But perhaps most disturbing was the fact that the forester ended up rearranging statistics representing the cumulative impacts of logging in the Salmon Creek watershed area so that the actual impacts of logging in the area appeared to be less than they are, and denied the presence of a family of spotted owls which, Khysie found out later, has been documented by one of the Department’s own foresters. This experience galvanized Khysie into taking steps to protect her own land permanently.

“The big picture is really overwhelming”, Khysie sighed,


“but if each of us who is able takes steps to steward our own smaller pieces of land, we begin to have a bigger impact on the whole.” While the main purpose of her easement is to protect the trees and prevent development, she also wants to protect the habitat in her canyon. “This place is a haven for critters because of the year-round creek. Deer and birds, especially; though I have noticed a decrease in some kinds of birds in the past few years, I suspect due to both logging and vineyard development in our area,” she says.

Khysie chose Bodega Land Trust to receive the easement because it is small and local. “If we can make small groups stronger, that is a good thing”, she says. Her land is part of Salmon Creek watershed, which BLT works to protect, so that also was a reason for her choice.

Conservation easements were not widely used as a conservation tool until the last few years, and the process was not entirely clear to Khysie when she started out. Her situation was relatively complex, but in working with the land trust she was able to develop an easement that satisfies all her needs. She also had several helpful comments to smooth the path for future easement donors or sellers.

If you are wondering about easements on land that has not been paid for entirely, Khysie’s experience is encouraging. Her bank was willing to subordinate the loan to the terms of the easement. Willingness may depend on the bank, the size of the loan and the amount already paid off, she speculated, adding that it would be useful to know which banks and other lenders are supportive. Such information would be helpful to potential donors before they get rolling on the process.

How does the donor benefit from giving a conservation easement? Financially he or she benefits from a permanent reduction in property tax; the longer he lives on the property the longer he reaps the benefit and hence the greater the value. The donor also gets an income tax reduction, which can be spread over a number of years. If the land is suitable for vineyard or other development, the value of an easement and the tax benefits may be substantial.

For Khysie, the satisfaction of protecting the land outweighs any financial benefits. “If as individuals we can act on our concerns in this way, then we can start piecing together a quilt of protected land. Because everything in our society is driven by the buck, we can’t assume the land we currently live on will be secure beyond our lifetimes. We have to act to protect it. Small private easements, agricultural easements and trails easements together should give even greater diversity to protected land in our county.” 



Photos by
Les Kamens

Bodega Land Trust Dinner and Silent Auction, Nov. 4, 2000

Many thanks to the following businesses and individuals that made our event possible:

Actors' Theater Aloha California Style Artisan's Coop Auric Blends Belladonna Benzinger Winery the Bicycle Factory
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Cathi Bruton Matt and Tess Burnham California Academy of Sciences Carla at Natural Grace Ron Chamberlain
Nancy Conkle Martha Cant Chateau Saint Jean Tim Cheng Copperfields Books Jan Costello Davis Bynum Vineyard
The Dressmaker Ruth Dreier East-West Café Fiesta Market Hazel Flett Frizelle Enos Galleria Gourmet au Bay
Ann Grant Jim Grant Anne Greenfield Hand Goods Hat in Hand Harmony Farm Supply Hearth Song Toys Barbara
Hoffmann Pottery Iron Horse Vineyards Gay Jacobsen Jenner Inn Joy Ridge Pottery Anna Kealoha Kragen Auto Parts
Landmark Gallery Leapin' Lizards! Fun Store Local Color Gallery Maureen Lomasney Lucas Wharf Restaurant
MeSH gallery Milk and Honey Gloria Molica Joan Mortenson Mostly Natives Nursery Betsy Mundell The Navigator
Northern Light Surf Shop Occidental Arts and Ecology Center Occidental Choir Ocean Waves Styling Salon Orchard
Farms Osmosis Enzyme Bath Pacific Shores Gift Shop Nick Peck People's Music Barbara Peterson Roberta Paskos
Patagonia Clothing Quicksilver Mine Company Roadhouse Coffee Rosemary's Garden Russian River Vineyards Restaurant
Javier Salmon and friends Sandpiper Dockside Café San Francisco MOMA Santa Rosa Symphony Gary Sauter's 3 Penny
Farm Sea Cliff Designs Seagull Antiques Sebastopol Hardware Center Sandy Sharp Slice of Life Kathy Snyder
Charlotte Smith Annie Springer Sonoma Coast Villa Darrell Sukovitzten Laird Sutton Betsy Sweikert Taylor Maid
Organic Farm Topolos Winery Traditional Medicinals Trinity Herbs Union Pizza & Pasta Co. Valley Ford Hotel
Venus Rising Vintage Gardens Vira @ Never Ends Watts Family Farm Wayward Gardens Katrina Weaver
Western Hills Rare Plants Whole Food Wild Flour Bread Wild Things Windwalkers Designs Wishing Well Nursery
And the following young people of Bodega who volunteered to serve dinner: Spencer Brumm, Julayne Granahan, AnneLise
Kinney, Kate Mundell, Lindsey North, Jason Sauter, Shannon Shaffer-Killey and Michelle Travinsky.

Announcements

Bodega Land Trust Awarded Two Grants

Bodega Land Trust would like to thank the Sonoma County Fish & Wildlife Advisory Board (SCFWAB) and the Bay Area Open Space Council (BAOSC) for grants given in fall and winter of 2000.

SCFWAB awards grants to deserving projects that benefit fish and wildlife. The program is funded by fines collected for violation of environmental regulations such as poaching and pollution. SCFWAB's grant to BLT follows an earlier one that provided plants and materials for the Fay Creek Riparian Habitat Restoration Project. Like the previous grant, the Land Trust administers this one for the landowner. The funds will help with the cost of maintaining the plants and irrigation system for three years.

BAOSC consists of organizations in the nine-county Bay Area dedicated to preserving and managing open space lands. Members from the North Bay include the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District, the Sonoma Land Trust, and the Marin Agricultural Land Trust. BAOSC has a program of easement stewardship grants to improve and advance stewardship of the region's conservation easements. The grant awarded to BLT will pay half the cost of completing baseline studies on four riparian corridors in the Salmon Creek watershed on which the Land Trust holds easements. Two of the riparian areas are on Finley Creek, one is on Coleman Valley Creek, and the fourth is on Fay Creek (see BLT *Newsletter* IV/2, winter 1999/2000). A baseline study documents the characteristics and conditions of a property at the time an easement is recorded and is used to monitor changes on the site.

Environmental Grants

BLT can administer environmental grants for which the assistance of a nonprofit organization is needed. For information on having a grant administered by BLT call 876-1806.

Salmon Creek Watershed Council Update

The second Salmon Creek Watershed Day will be held Saturday May 19 at Salmon Creek School in Freestone. This free, all day event, focusing on West County watersheds, will feature great speakers, workshops, music, artwork, school projects, booths and food along with fun and games. Please save the date and plan to bring your family and friends. Your tax-deductible donation to help sponsor Watershed Day can be sent to Bodega Land Trust.

The Council submitted a grant application to the Regional Water Quality Control Board for an assessment of the Salmon Creek watershed. This assessment will survey sediment sources, water quality, flood flow data, and riparian habitat. Residents will be trained to help gather the data. The community can then use the information to formulate a watershed plan that addresses the needs of the watershed and the concerns of its citizens. Bodega Land Trust and Gold Ridge Resource Conservation District are principal cooperators.

The Bodega Land Trust has agreed to be the fiscal sponsor for the Council and the formal agreement was signed on February 19. Salmon Creek Watershed Council meets the third Sunday of every month. Everyone is welcome to participate. Call 876-1806 for more information.

Community History Project

A video of senior neighbors telling community history is being made to show at Watershed Day. Please call 876-3552 if you would be willing to share your stories.

Annual Membership Drive

Our annual membership drive is coming up soon. Join or renew now by sending in your contribution and the BLT membership form.

BLT Membership Form

I would like to join or continue my membership at ☐ \$10 ☐ \$20 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ Other _____

Please make checks payable to: **Bodega Land Trust**, and mail to: P.O. Box 254, Bodega, CA 94922

All donations are tax-deductible

I would like to become involved as:

- ☐ an interest group participant
- ☐ an advisor
- ☐ a Board member
- ☐ an occasional volunteer
- ☐ other: _____

My special interests are: _____

My special skills are: _____

A project I would like to see the Bodega Land Trust consider is: _____

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Walk, April 28, 9:30 a.m.

Explore the Sonoma Land Trust's property on Estero Lane. For details call 876-3422.

Fisherman's Festival, April 21-22

BLT needs volunteers to help at the annual Bodega Bay Fisherman's Festival, especially for setting up on April 20. Call 876-3422. We want to thank Fisherman's Festival 2000 for underwriting most of our Fall 2000 newsletter.

Salmon Creek Watershed Day

May 19, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. at Salmon Creek School. To volunteer for this wonderful family event call 876-1806.

Community Land Trusts

Now at Bodega's Take 5 Video: *Homes and Hands: Community Land Trusts in Action*, a well documented and entertaining study of affordable housing land trusts. Rental fees are donated to BLT.

BLT Board of Directors

Mary Biggs, President; Alistair Bleifuss, Secretary; Kathleen Brennan; Linda Esposito; Sharon Welling Harston

Basin of Relations Scholarships

BLT is happy to announce the donation of four full scholarships (\$100 each) to the Occidental Arts and Ecology Center for their next 4-day Basins of Relation seminar, scheduled for July 27-30. They are intended for residents of the Salmon Creek watershed. For information, call Brock at 874-1557.

Rural Roads Workshop

On May 18, 8 a.m.-5 p.m., the Gold ridge Resources and Conservation District and the U.C. Cooperative Extension will host a workshop on the building and care of unpaved roads. The class will cover long-term solutions for surface drainage, placement of culverts, and stream crossings. The workshop will include a tour of roads that have been renovated as well as ones that still need work. Space is limited so call in advance to reserve a place. For more information and reservations contact Jeff Sharp, GRRCD Outreach Coordinator, at 824-1816 or online at jeffgrrcd@yahoo.com.

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Editors: Hazel Flett and BLT Directors
Design: Satri Pencak



In This Issue

Why conserve Western Sonoma County?
How can conservation easements help this area?



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