

SPRING 2017



... to protect the land forever

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MEET OUR NEW
DIRECTOR OF PHILANTHROPY

PUT A VISIT TO STUART CREEK RUN ON YOUR SPRING CALENDAR

BY SHERI CARDO

The amenities currently in progress at Stuart Creek Run include four parking spaces, interpretive signage and two picnic tables.

We've taken down the barriers, put out the welcome mat for steelhead and are close to finishing the final amenities for our Stuart Creek Run project in Glen Ellen. By the end of April, Sonoma Land Trust members will be able to stop by the site when they're in the area to take a look at the now-unencumbered creek, check out the interpretive signage

and enjoy a leisurely picnic with a streamside view.

A lot has been accomplished since your land trust acquired this tiny (3.5 acres) but significant property within the Sonoma Valley Wildlife Corridor in 2011.

"Purchasing the property was a key element in being able to fix two of the three barriers preventing steelhead from

getting upstream to spawn," says Tony Nelson, Sonoma Valley program manager. "The third barrier was a ways upstream and we were able to deal with all three at once."

Loss and degradation of steelhead trout freshwater spawning habitat remains the greatest threat to the species' survival. While the federally

(Continued on page 3)

A note from the Executive Director

TAILS UP!

Growing up, my father told me to “always keep your tail in the air,” and this is a story of putting that rule into practice.

The wetlands and marshes of San Francisco Bay are home to Ridgway’s rails, which are perky, rusty-colored birds about the size of a small chicken who spend most of their time hiding out in dense plant cover on the edges of the tidal zone. We usually only get a glimpse of them when they’re dashing into the open to forage on tiny crabs or clams, and other goodies they may find in the mudflats. Ridgway’s rails make a sound like they have two small rocks and they’re clacking them together, and they have a short stubby tail that they keep upright, in the air.

Over the last century, hard times have fallen on these birds, I mean really hard times. In fact, their status is as an endangered species

due to the loss of 80 percent of their habitat — bay marshland being filled in or lost to development, plus additional losses expected from sea level rise as a result of climate change. Like a canary in the coal mine, we watch the populations of Ridgway’s rails to measure progress toward the restoration goals set by our science partners in the San Francisco Bay Joint Venture.

That’s why I got excited recently when I read a post on Sonoma Land Trust’s Facebook page that Meg Marriott, a biologist with the San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge, spotted 20 Ridgway’s rails on a recent bird survey of the Sonoma Baylands tidal marsh restoration project, which we helped kick off in 1996. Hot dog, folks, measurable signs of success!

This restoration work is happening because of individuals like you who are supporting

our work. Now is a great time to do as Ridgway’s rails do — stick your tail in the air and get outside! Isn’t now a good time to plan a hike at the Baylands?

Thank you and see you out there!

Dave



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threatened fish ran in abundance in Stuart Creek decades ago, once the barriers went up in the 1950s, their existence in the upper stretches of the creek where they had historically spawned came to a close. The last time a steelhead was observed in that area was nearly 15 years ago, and that remarkable fish who had gamely negotiated the three barriers in a quest for a mate ended up all alone.

Now, this 900-foot stretch of creek is filled to the brim, with water washing over the pools and chutes on the

creekbed that were specially designed to provide passage and rest for steelhead on their way to spawn. Tony and his staff monitor the creek routinely and, although they have yet to see a steelhead returning to the ancestral home, our anticipation grows with each winter's rains.

The amenities currently in progress at Stuart Creek Run include three parking spaces (along with an ADA spot), educational signage and a couple of picnic tables that were built by five of our skillful and dedicated volunteers. We are

also very grateful to the donors who financed the visitor enhancements and the new volunteer crew that will be keeping the site clean and tidy for visitors.

"This is a beautiful and peaceful place and it's become special to all of us as a symbol of renewed hope for life in our creeks," says Tony.

We hope you'll stop by Stuart Creek Run sometime and enjoy all it has to offer.

Sheri Cardo is SLT's communications director.



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WITH WATER WASHING OVER THE POOLS AND CHUTES ON THE
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PASSAGE AND REST FOR STEELHEAD.



Photo by Lance Kuehne Photography.

GETTING OUT ON THE LAND — LET US COUNT THE WAYS

BY NICOLE NA

AS A SUPPORTER OF SONOMA LAND TRUST, YOU UNDOUBTEDLY GIVE TO OUR ORGANIZATION BECAUSE YOU STRONGLY BELIEVE THAT THE STUNNING, NATURAL OPEN SPACES OF SONOMA COUNTY ARE WORTH PROTECTING.

AND, SOMETIMES, YOU MIGHT APPRECIATE A TANGIBLE REMINDER OF HOW THE LAND MAKES YOU FEEL WHEN YOU'RE OUT ON IT — TO REINFORCE THE IMPORTANCE OF THE LAND THAT LIVES IN ALL OF OUR HEARTS. WITH MYRIAD WAYS TO ENGAGE OUR SUPPORTERS AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC, YOUR LAND TRUST IS MAKING SURE THAT PEOPLE'S CONNECTION TO THE LAND OF SONOMA COUNTY IS AN INCLUSIVE AND LASTING ONE.



Photo by Corby Hines.

Our On the Land program

Sonoma Land Trust's On the Land program connects our supporters and others who enjoy getting outside on the land. Outings manager Ingrid Spetz and outings guide Corby Hines conceptualize, plan and lead hikes and outings across Land Trust properties, providing a look at the land that isn't just beautiful, but educational as well. The outings take advantage of what the seasons bring and the unique features of Sonoma County. Expect to see wildflower hikes in the spring, sunset hikes in the heat of summer, raptor hikes in the fall and winter, as well as a plethora of other activities. Sonoma Land Trust members receive priority registration for On the Land programs and special invitations to events. Stay updated at sonomalandtrust.org/outings.

Docents at Sears Point

The tidal marsh restoration project at Sears Point presents a unique opportunity for hikers, birders and observers to watch the transformation of 1,000 acres of previously diked farmland returning to its natural state of wetlands. Every Saturday morning, from 9AM to noon, volunteer docents are stationed on the Bay Trail at Sears Point to provide nature and history interpretation to interested visitors. Ask questions about the marsh, bring your binoculars to identify birds or even just walk down the trail with a docent — our docents are there to interpret the narrative of the story being woven in the Baylands.

From the coast through the Jenner Headlands to the top of Pole Mountain

Among our network of protected lands, Pole Mountain shines like a gem. The acquisition of this iconic summit in 2014 created an unparalleled opportunity for seasoned hikers. From the soon-to-be-completed parking area along Highway 1, up through the Jenner Headlands (which we acquired in 2009 and transferred to The Wildlands Conservancy in 2013), to the very top of Pole Mountain is a dazzling, if arduous, 7.5-mile hike (15 miles roundtrip)! At the top, visitors will be rewarded by unobstructed views of the coastline and interior landscapes. "We're assembling the Point Reyes of Sonoma County," Morgan Elliott said when his family sold Pole Mountain to the Land Trust. In fact, the Pole Mountain summit is a destination unlike any other in the region. When construction of the Jenner Headlands parking area concludes later this year, this grand adventure will be available for the public to enjoy. Just start early in the day! In the meantime, join us on one of our guided hikes this spring.

Volunteer workdays

The more industrious among us may choose to participate in Sonoma Land Trust volunteer workdays and take an active approach to preserving the land. Volunteers lend their skills to activities that might include pulling invasive weeds, constructing picnic benches, removing old fences for wildlife and planting native pickleweed on the levee at Sears Point. These projects directly contribute to the health of the land — and, as an added bonus, our volunteers get an insider's view of our protected properties.

Bay Camp at Sears Point for children

Connecting the land with our grown supporters is essential, and we're also focusing on fostering the next generation of land stewards. Starting this summer, Sonoma Land Trust will implement a new bilingual summer day camp at Sears Point. Bay Camp, for 7–10-year-old children, will provide environmental education and incorporate activities such as bike rides on the Bay Trail, kayak trips in the wetlands and stewardship of the newly restored tidal marsh. Consisting of three one-week-long sessions with 20 children per week, the program will also include family days on weekends to introduce families to the public access opportunities available at Sears Point. Sonoma Land Trust is partnering with La Luz Center to reach out to Spanish-speaking families in the Sonoma Valley about this opportunity and assist them with the enrollment process. Transportation will be provided to and from camp from Sonoma.

Nicole Na is SLT's communications coordinator.



Left: Mary and Kate joined us for a recent raptor hike to forge lovely, lasting memories of hiking and birdwatching together. Right: Kate and Martin on their wedding day.



Philanthropy

RUNS IN THE HAFNER FAMILY

BY KAAREN VAN DYKE

For 50 years, the Hafner Family, headed by Mary and Dick, has worked together to create a family vineyard and winery. In 1967, Mary and Dick Hafner purchased a 100-acre farm in Sonoma County's Alexander Valley and, in 2016, Hafner Vineyard celebrated its 35th harvest. Now, the second generation is guiding this venture with sons Parke and Scott as managing partners. And Kate, the daughter of Parke and his wife Sarah, has joined the sales team, making Hafner Vineyard a three-generation enterprise.

The Hafner Family is joined together in more than just the family business: They have also handed down a heritage of generous philanthropy and community service. The Hafners are longtime members of Sonoma Land Trust. Mary Hafner is a former Land Trust board member and her son Scott served on the Land Trust's membership committee.

Now, a third generation of the Hafner Family is also taking a leading role in philanthropic endeavors with granddaughter Kate and her husband Martin Bernal giving their time and money to a variety of local organizations, including Sonoma Land Trust.

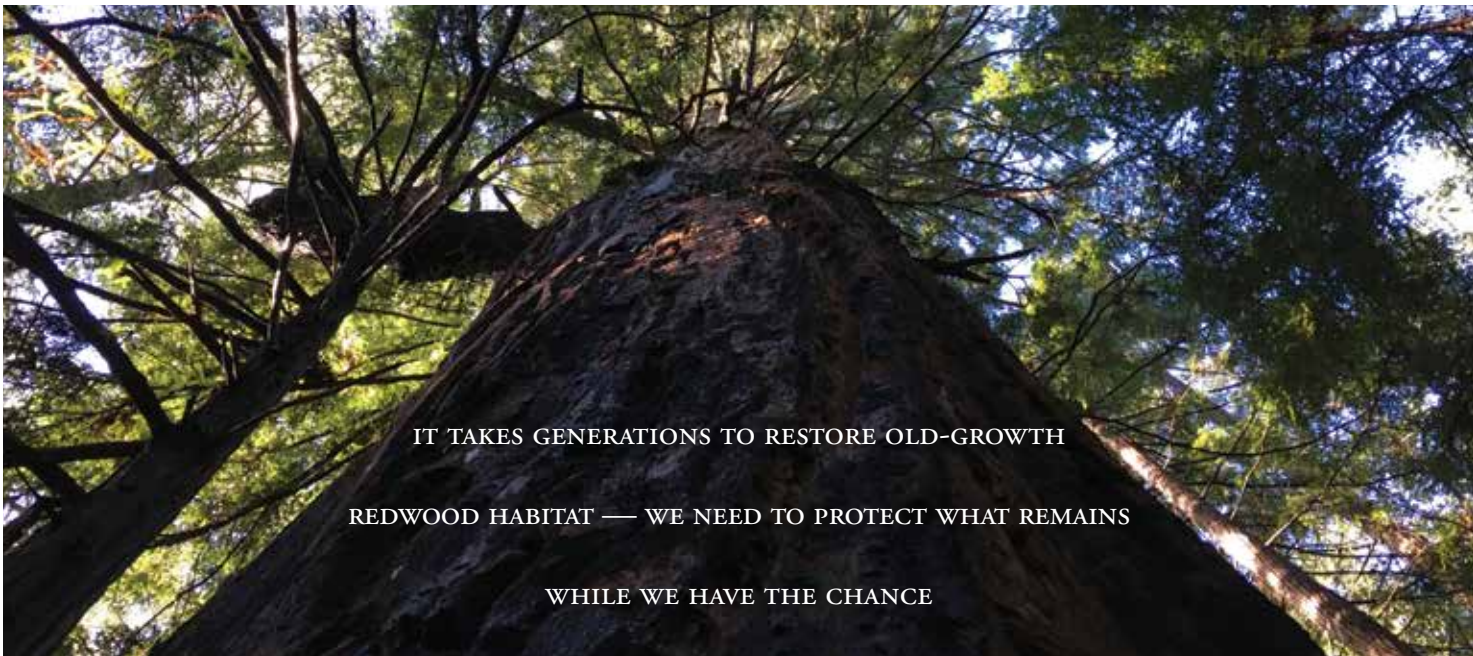
We are fortunate to have young members like Kate and Martin who engage with us on so many levels. They have given a helping hand by volunteering with French broom removal in Russian Gulch on the Jenner Headlands, which Martin found "a fun and mutually beneficial day." They learned about invasive weeds they can now spot and control on their own property and enjoyed meeting fellow members. One of the most touching ways that Kate and Martin have supported us was by making a gift to Sonoma Land Trust in honor of their wedding guests in 2013. Their

reception menu contained a note: "We are both passionate about helping to maintain natural landscapes and their resources" — a mission that Sonoma Land Trust is dedicated to achieving.

Kate says her family's philanthropy comes naturally; their discussions about the organizations they support are a way of sharing their inspirations with each other. The reason they focus on conservation is because, as Kate eloquently puts it, "We are here for a short amount of time compared to the land itself."

If you are interested in becoming a member, or if you're not sure whether your membership has lapsed, please contact me at (707) 526-6930 ext. 108 or member@sonomalandtrust.org to learn more.

Kaaren Van Dyke is SLT's membership program manager.



IT TAKES GENERATIONS TO RESTORE OLD-GROWTH

REDWOOD HABITAT — WE NEED TO PROTECT WHAT REMAINS

WHILE WE HAVE THE CHANCE

protecting

OLD-GROWTH REDWOODS AT HOWLETT RANCH

Saving land almost always starts with conservation-minded owners — people who love their land and want to retain its natural characteristics for the ages. Back in 2012, a family on the North Coast sought to conserve their 1,380-acre property, which they had sparingly logged over the years. Known as Howlett Ranch, this property supports one of the last intact old-growth forests in Sonoma County. Located adjacent to Buckeye Forest (the former Preservation Ranch), the ranch also provides desirable habitat connectivity for wildlife. To protect their forest without eliminating their livelihood, this family approached the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District for a solution.

While the District expressed interest in purchasing a conservation easement over the property to extinguish development rights and protect the old-growth redwoods, that process takes time and the family couldn't afford to wait. That's where

Sonoma Land Trust came in. To keep that important forest intact until the sale of the conservation easement with the District could be completed, in 2014 we provided the landowners with a bridge loan, thanks to funding provided by the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation. In the meanwhile, our acquisitions staff secured additional funding from the Moore Foundation and The San Francisco Foundation for the cost of the easement.

Last month, the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors gave approval for purchase of the easement over Howlett Ranch. "Projects like this one are vital because it takes generations to restore old-growth redwood habitat — so we need to protect what remains while we have the chance," says SLT's land acquisition program manager Ariel Patashnik.

This extraordinary deal conserves thousands of significant, old-growth trees within an intact forest, 5.75 miles of healthy riparian corridors and the

headwaters of two of the five main tributaries to the Gualala River. The easement also helps ensure the economic viability of the local forest industry by retaining good jobs through long-term, sustainable timber harvesting. It was a win for the family, for the trees, for wildlife, and for all of us who value the land.

"Sonoma Land Trust has recognized the importance and urgency of this special project since its early days," says executive director Dave Koehler. "We are thrilled to be partnering with the District and other funders to achieve permanent protection of Howlett Forest's towering redwoods and pristine creeks. With the property's outstanding habitat values and adjacency to Buckeye Forest, it is a crucial addition to a complex of more than 50,000 acres of protected land in the region. This project leaves a wonderful legacy of old-growth redwood protection and sustainable forest management for our children."



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SHANNON NICHOLS JOINS SONOMA LAND TRUST AS DIRECTOR OF PHILANTHROPY

We are delighted to introduce our new director of philanthropy, Shannon Nichols. With more than 20 years of experience as lead development officer, most recently at the Boys and Girls Clubs of Central Sonoma County in Santa Rosa and 10,000 Degrees in San Rafael, Shannon brings a wealth of fundraising expertise along with a great appreciation for nature and land conservation. She replaces Jeffrey Westman, who left the organization in December to pursue other opportunities.

"It's an honor to help people connect with the land, our waterways and wildlife through Sonoma Land Trust. I'm looking forward to meeting many of our members and thanking them for making it possible for Sonoma Land Trust to permanently protect that which makes our county so special," says Shannon. "I know that the

work we do today will serve many generations to come."

"Shannon brings the experience, talent and understanding of complexity that is needed for this key job," says Sonoma Land Trust executive director Dave Koehler. "Shannon has an authentic passion for our mission and we have full confidence that she will be successful. We welcome the opportunity to work with her and support her as she builds a larger platform of philanthropy for Sonoma Land Trust."

Shannon moved to California from her home state of Maine in 2008. She lives with her husband and two teenage sons in Windsor.

Welcome, Shannon!



OUR MISSION

Sonoma Land Trust protects the scenic, natural, agricultural and open landscapes of Sonoma County for the benefit of the community and future generations by:

- DEVELOPING LONG-TERM LAND PROTECTION STRATEGIES;
- PROMOTING PRIVATE AND PUBLIC FUNDING FOR LAND AND CONSERVATION;
- ACQUIRING LAND AND CONSERVATION EASEMENTS;
- PRACTICING STEWARDSHIP, INCLUDING THE RESTORATION OF CONSERVATION PROPERTIES; AND
- PROMOTING A SENSE OF PLACE AND A LAND ETHIC THROUGH ACTIVITIES, EDUCATION AND OUTREACH.