

THE LAND



Discover Outside

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DISCOVER OUTSIDE & EXPLORE WITH YOUR LAND TRUST

GREETINGS FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MEREDITH HENDRICKS

Did you catch the ceanothus exploding in purple bunches from the hillsides along the Gaviota Coast in early spring? I bet your jaw dropped when you saw Lake Cachuma so full. And what about the oaks in a kaleidoscope of greens from Buellton to Los Alamos? Our recent wet winters have created a botanic symphony of colors and textures this year that are not to be missed. Right behind the rain and the blooms are the bugs! When was the last time you discovered a new butterfly? Oh, but you should! Check out our kids' corner for a mini identification guide and bring out your inner kid while you adventure in search of a new critter. You need not go far to delight your senses. Not sure how to spot a new butterfly? Ask a kid, they can show you how.



This summer, set aside some time to discover more of the precious places not far from home and get to know your Land Trust better along the way. We are offering a host of

walks, hikes, and family friendly activities—we are looking for ways to create new volunteer opportunities too! Our work to protect land for future generations is a partnership with you and friends from around the whole county. We love to get to know our supporters so reach out and join us for a community-building event this summer.

Our work to conserve land continues at a rapid clip—we have reached an awesome 57,304 acres of protected land countywide. That includes an addition of 955 acres of stunning rolling oaks and grassland in the first few months of 2024. Your support and excitement for our mission makes it possible for this momentum to continue—the more we believe in the importance of conservation and work together toward preservation of precious places, the more we can get done together. Thank you for your support of our work and for your love of the land. Now go discover something new and tell us about it!

Take care,

Meredith Hendricks, Executive Director

MISSION STATEMENT

The Land Trust for Santa Barbara County conserves natural resources, agricultural land, and open spaces for the benefit of present and future generations.



SPRING IS A TIME OF RENEWAL

SANTA BARBARA COUNTY IS UNIQUE in its biodiversity, its beauty, its bounty, and its promise.

Thanks to your continued partnership, the Land Trust has surpassed over 57,000 acres of conserved land! While we have nearly doubled our acreage since last year, we remain steadfast in our mission to further safeguard the natural resources of Santa Barbara County.

Please join us in our efforts. Your gift will conserve open space for future generations, protect our wildlands, and in turn, increase climate resilience. Let's protect what makes Santa Barbara County unique.

You can renew your support today by scanning the QR code below, or going to our website, sblandtrust.org to make a gift.



WAYS TO GIVE THIS FISCAL YEAR END

- If you're 70.5 or older, you can join fellow Land Trust supporters who are making tax-free gifts from their IRAs. **Making a gift from your IRA** is a tax-savvy way to give.
- Do you own appreciated shares of stock? **Stock gifts** are a great way to support the Land Trust because you can save on taxes and make a larger impact. Gifts of appreciated stock and securities are win-win.
- Put your **Donor Advised Fund** to good use—join hundreds of other supporters and make a grant to the Land Trust.
- Like appreciate stock, donating long-term held **cryptocurrency** investments is a tax-efficient way to give.
- **Create a legacy:** We know that cash donations might not be right for everyone, but giving a gift in your will is a powerful commitment to our work and mission for generations to come.

Visit <https://www.sblandtrust.org/ways-to-give> for details.

GET THE LOWDOWN: Our once monthly e-newsletter has the details you need, including the upcoming **Discover Outside** calendar of events, Treks, updates on exciting Land Trust projects, and other fun opportunities for getting out on the land you love.

Subscribe today at www.sblandtrust.org.



CONNECTING COMMUNITIES: TRAILPALOOZA WITH SANTA MARIA VALLEY OPEN SPACE AND THE LAND TRUST

THE LAND TRUST WAS EXCITED TO PARTNER with Santa Maria Valley Open Space for their Trailpalooza, a host of outdoor public festivities that took place at the end of May 2024. This event invited community members to explore the trails that Santa Maria Valley has to offer and is part of an ongoing endeavor to connect locals with the natural grandeur of Santa Barbara County.

The all-volunteer Santa Maria Valley Open Space (SMVOS) was founded in 2011 as an effort to increase public access to natural spaces in and around the Orcutt area. With help from a network of volunteers and community partners, this nonprofit organization establishes public trails throughout the area for hiking, cycling, horseback riding, and other outdoor recreational activities. In addition to building the region's trail system, SMVOS fosters a public appreciation for the natural world through hosting community events like docent-led hikes, trail runs, and educational outings for local students.

The importance of conserving open spaces for public use is a founding principle of SMVOS, which works to limit degradation of the surrounding landscape that may otherwise be caused by encroaching development or unofficial trail systems. SMVOS's President, Jon Blanchard, notes there is a complementary relationship between recreational trails and open space, "Each one helps you get the other. Natural spaces provide trails for recreation, and established trails allow the community to access natural spaces in a sustainable manner."



PHOTOS: Jon Blanchard, Santa Maria Valley Open Space





PHOTO: Fabienne Wyss
Family explores Arroyo Hondo Preserve



A SHARED VISION: OUR PARTNERSHIP WITH CALIFORNIA COUNCIL OF LAND TRUSTS

SINCE 1985, The Land Trust for Santa Barbara County (LTSBC) has dedicated itself to protecting, restoring, and managing open spaces, wildlife habitats, and agricultural lands across the county. With nearly four decades of experience and over 57,000 conserved acres, our achievements are substantial, yet our commitment to further action remains steadfast. As a small nonprofit operating in a vast region, our valued partnerships are indispensable to our mission. Whether collaborating with landowners, philanthropists, community groups, or government agencies, the adage holds true: *If you want to go fast, go alone, if you want to go far, go together.*

People often ask us if there are other organizations that do similar work in other parts of the state. Building upon the ethos of collaboration, the California Council of Land Trusts (CCLT) acts as a critical partner for local land trusts throughout the state including LTSBC, serving as a connector, influencer, and advocate for the work we do. CCLT is a member-driven organization dedicated to serving local land trusts by committing to three valuable areas of support: policy and advocacy, education and convening, and funding and capacity building. Being a member of CCLT has enabled us to think bigger and ensure we are using best practices in the field of conservation.

CCLT has been instrumental in securing substantial grant funding, such as the recent \$5 million grant from the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB), aimed at enhancing the capacity of nonprofit land trusts across California. This funding directly contributes to advancing conservation efforts, aligning with statewide goals such as the Pathways to 30x30 initiative and the Natural and Working Lands Climate Smart Strategy. For us, this translates into access to resources and support essential for effective land conservation efforts in Santa Barbara County.

Other grants from CCLT like CA Onward Capacity Program can help fund areas of our work that is not covered by traditional grant programs. Our Director of Land Conservation, Devin Rothman, expresses how valuable this is stating, “Paying for outreach, project development, and transaction costs are often missing puzzle pieces to getting a property conserved. CA Onward allows us to utilize these additional resources to get critical conservation completed.”

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Public policy is ever-changing and directly impacts how we go about the work of conservation. CCLT plays a crucial role in advocacy and legislative support, actively engaging on behalf of conservation, such as working to create natural resources bonds in partnership with elected officials. This policy work strengthens LTSBC's ability to secure resources at the state level that we can then leverage with support from our friends at home. Given the complex and expensive realities of land preservation it helps to be a member of an organization that is working at the state level to keep conservation a priority.

Partnerships like this enable land trusts to learn from each other, forge valuable connections, and enhance their capacity to protect and steward natural lands for the benefit of present and future generations.

EXPLORING THE CARPINTERIA SALT MARSH ECOSYSTEM

HAVE YOU EVER DRIVEN along Highway 101 and looking toward the ocean noticed an extensive stretch of wetlands in Carpinteria? This unique ecosystem is called a salt marsh, and it's one of the last and largest remaining in Southern California.

Salt marshes are highly productive coastal wetlands that are regularly flooded and drained by tides. They form an ecotone (a transitional zone) between upland areas and the sea. Salt marshes are dominated by dense stands of salt-tolerant plants called halophytes, and often support estuaries where fresh and saltwater mix.

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Sometimes defined as “ecological guardians,” salt marshes and the estuarine habitats they protect are important nurseries for fish and other wildlife. Salt marshes also help to filter runoff, reduce erosion, and protect against storm surges. It's estimated that one acre of salt marsh has the ability to absorb 1.5 million gallons of floodwater!

Despite salt marshes many benefits, the United States loses around 80,000 acres of them and other coastal wetlands annually. California has lost approximately five million acres of these historic habitats, including 90% of Southern California estuaries. This high volume of habitat loss throughout the region makes our local salt marsh a critical concern.

The Carpinteria Salt Marsh is an approximately 230-acre coastal wetland situated at the base of the Franklin and Santa Monica creek watersheds. It is characterized by a series of natural and artificial channels that slowly meander into the Pacific, forming a brackish estuary that is a nursery for halibut and other regional fish. The salt marsh also provides



breeding habitat for endangered species of birds, including the State and Federally listed Belding's Savannah sparrow and light-footed Ridgway's rail. Other rare species found in the marsh includes the endangered plant, salt marsh bird's beak flowering native. This species forms a patchy ground cover that has a semi-parasitic relationship with other salt marsh halophytes like pickleweed.

Conservation efforts to protect the Carpinteria Salt Marsh began in the 1960s when Ken Norris, a former UC Santa Cruz professor and cofounder of the UC Natural Reserve System (NRS), identified the area as an important ecosystem worth protecting. Over the next 10 years, the NRS worked to acquire 120 acres of the marsh and establish the Carpinteria Salt Marsh Reserve. Over the next 30 years, the UC NRS, City of Carpinteria, Land Trust for Santa Barbara County, and other local stakeholders were able to conserve the remaining 110-acres. The Land Trust currently owns and manages 35 acres of the marsh.

The Carpinteria Salt Marsh continues to harbor endangered species while protecting our coast from erosion and flooding. It is a beloved place in our community where you can routinely see school groups, researchers, and nature lovers enjoying the ecologically-rich landscape.



SPOTLIGHT ON THE CALIFORNIA TIGER SALAMANDER

THE CALIFORNIA TIGER SALAMANDER (*Ambystoma californiense*) is a large and stocky salamander with a broad, rounded snout. Averaging 6 to 9.5 inches long, they have white or yellowish spots or bars along the length of their black bodies. Their “mouth” coloration, usually a pale yellow or white, gives the appearance that they’re “smiling,” making them a very charismatic creature.

The California tiger salamander is categorized into six populations: Sonoma County, Santa Barbara County, The Bay Area, Central Valley, Southern San Joaquin Valley, and Central Coast Range. However, these populations are treated as three distinct population segments (DPS) that are genetically differentiated and geographically isolated from another. The three DPS are Sonoma County, Santa Barbara County, and Central California. Our local DPS is listed as federally endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and threatened under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA).

SOME FACTS ABOUT THE CALIFORNIA TIGER SALAMANDER INCLUDE:

- Tiger salamanders require both aquatic and upland habitat for their lifecycle.
- These salamanders breed in standing bodies of freshwater such as ponds and vernal pools, where they mature within three to six months.
- Once mature, tiger salamanders leave their ponds and pools and move into upland habitat, where they find burrows often made by other animals to hide in during non-breeding months.
- They are opportunistic hunters throughout all stages of their life cycle, eating zooplankton, small crustaceans, and even other tadpoles like tree frogs and western spadefoot toads. As adults, their diets are varied and include aphids, ground beetles, centipedes, wolf spiders, harvestmen, and crickets.
- The tiger salamander’s lifespan is 10 to 15 years, longer in captivity.
- Despite being different species, the California tiger salamander can hybridize (procreate) with barred tiger salamander, resulting in fertile offspring that exhibit higher survival rates than pure barred or California tiger salamanders.

LAND PARTNER HIGHLIGHT

LAS CUMBRES RANCH is proud to be one of the properties in the Land Trust’s program to conserve open spaces for the benefit of present and future generations.

The 950-acre Las Cumbres Ranch, owned by James and Patricia Selbert, joined our collection of easements in 2017.

This easement helps protect a large, contiguous block of open rangeland that provides for wildlife migration between Los Padres National Forest, La Purisima State Park, and Burton Mesa Ecological Reserve. Its grassland, scrub, maritime chaparral, and oak woodland communities provide a mosaic of diverse habitat that is home to a myriad of special plants and animals. The Selberts enjoy sightings of eagles, hawks, bobcats, mountain lions, and many deer.

The ranch is managed holistically using regenerative practices that consider the health of the cattle, the health of the soil, the biodiversity of the pastures, and the wildlife that reside on the land. It is certified by the Savory Institute’s Ecological Outcome Verification program and the Selbert Family is thrilled to have confirmation from the program that their practices have created a thriving rangeland ecosystem. They look forward to the Land Trust’s annual monitoring visits and reports that help with long-term documentation.

The Selberts express pride in their work, stating, “It has been exciting to discover that producing nutrient dense, compassionately raised cattle that are grass-fed, wildflower honey, and eggs from pasture-raised chickens with true regenerative practices goes hand in hand with improving the eco system.”

In addition to partnering with the Land Trust, the Selberts established the Las Cumbres Ranch Education Foundation to bring experts from around the world to present workshops on their practices, experiences, and discoveries in regenerative agriculture. The foundation also hosts ranch tours for schools at all levels and offers scholarships to prospective attendees who would otherwise be unable to attend.



STREAM ECOLOGY:

THE WONDERS OF ARROYO HONDO CREEK

ONE OF OUR MOST POPULAR school programs is an exploration of Riparian Ecology. There is a universal fascination with flowing water, and all that lives in and around it. Elementary school classes, high school classes, and even occasional college groups all enjoy our stream programs.

Docents lead small groups of students along the riparian corridor (the area that encompasses a river or stream and the land adjacent to it), teaching them about the terrestrial flora and fauna as they walk. Tall sycamore, willow, alder, and bay trees grow along this healthy stream, providing shade and nutrients for aquatic species. Along the way, kids learn about the importance of streams to land animals, especially during the dry summers characteristic of our Mediterranean climate. Coyotes, bears, foxes, mountain lions, and many different birds have been seen at this creek.

Along the way, kids learn about the importance of streams to land animals, especially during the dry summers characteristic of our Mediterranean climate.

Students visit the fish passage that was constructed under Highway 101 to help fish travel downstream where they enter the ocean, and to make it easier for adult steelhead to swim up from the Pacific to their freshwater spawning beds. Before the Alisal Fire of 2021, we often observed small resident rainbow trout, and an occasional large steelhead that had come upstream from the ocean. Sadly, as a result of the flooding and debris flows that followed this fire, there are no longer any trout in the creek. We hope that, in the near future, pairs of rainbow and steelheads will find their way in from the ocean to spawn and they will repopulate the stream once again.



Every group has a hands-on experience at our “stream station” where we invariably find a diverse collection of animals. Sometimes we see rare vertebrate species that make this clear, clean creek their home. Pacific pond turtles, coast range newts, and three different kinds of frogs live in and around the stream.

Using buckets and nets, kids find aquatic invertebrates and we talk about their roles in the aquatic food web. Beginning with animals that feed on submerged leaves or on the green algae that covers the rocks in the streambed, students then learn about the many tiny carnivores that feed on these herbivores. We see tiny water pennies that move across stones as they graze on algae, and caddisfly larvae that build protective “houses” from plant material and sand grains. We observe water striders that are able to walk on the water’s surface due to the many hydrophobic hairs on their legs. There is great excitement when students find a giant water bug or toe-biter, especially if it is a male carrying eggs on its back. Nymphs of dragonflies and damselflies, stoneflies, and mayflies are all part of the huge array of aquatic life that can be found here.

This program teaches students that there is far more to nature than usually meets the eye, thus they are encouraged to become keen observers. They learn about the huge diversity of life, they observe many fascinating adaptations, and they learn about life cycles of many different species. And, many interesting new words are introduced, so kids go home with an expanded vocabulary.

On June 16, during *Discover Outside* there will be a chance for you and your family to enjoy the many wonders of Arroyo Hondo Creek and to learn all about it at our stream exploration station at Arroyo Hondo Preserve.



PHOTOS: Sally Isaacson



“Tell me, and I’ll forget. Show me, and I may remember. But involve me, and I’ll understand.”

– CHINESE PROVERB

BEYOND SIGHTSEEING: DISCOVERING NATURE THROUGH THE SENSES

SEVERAL YEARS AGO, volunteer docents Ann Lippincott and Ann Bronstein, designed a now-popular multi-sensory walk at Arroyo Hondo Preserve. During the walk, participants are guided to use their senses (visual, auditory, tactile, and kinesthetic) to experience nature in new ways. For example, they smell the leaves of the California bay laurel tree and are asked, “What words would you use to describe this smell? How do you think the smell helps the bay tree?” They then learn that the aromatic scent they have experienced is an example of protective adaptation as most animals don’t like to eat plants that have a strong smell or taste. They also learn that Dusky-footed woodrat line their nests with bay leaves to keep the fleas out and, that the Chumash people lined their baskets with these leaves to keep the bugs out of the flour they ground from acorns.



Employing their sense of sight, hikers take three “mind photos” and describe the differences they see before being introduced to three habitats: grasslands, chaparral, and riparian. They learn that while human ears lay flat against our skulls, deer ears face forward amplifying auditory input to alert the deer to danger. With this information, hikers fold their ears forward at a creek crossing so they can experience this sound amplification.

Based on discovery learning pedagogy, these kinds of sensory experiences help hikers be more fully engaged as well as more likely to remember what they learn while out on the trail.

VISITING THE ARROYO HONDO PRESERVE

THE ARROYO HONDO PRESERVE welcomes visitors on the first and third full weekends of each month to explore the canyon, trails, and ridgeline views. After a rainy winter, the creek is running cool and clear.

Reservations are FREE but required—make yours online and get the most current visiting information at sblandtrust.org/arroyo-hondopreserve-reservations or join the waitlist at sblandtrust.org/waitlist if open weekends are full.

SUMMER HOURS:

The first and third full weekends of the month, Saturdays and Sundays from 10am-4pm.

OPEN WEEKENDS:

June 1–2, June 15–16, July 6–7,
July 20–21, August 3–4, August 17–18



UPCOMING SUMMER EVENTS

The Land Trust has a fresh lineup of summer events throughout the county for you to explore—**don't miss Discover Outside in June!**

JOIN US! JUNE 13 – 23

Thursday, June 13

TREK: Guided Afternoon Walk at Ennisbrook Open Space, Montecito



Friday, June 14

Conservation 101: "What We Do & Why We Do It," Santa Maria

Saturday, June 15

Diani Shopping Day, Santa Barbara

Sunday, June 16

Family Day at The Arroyo Hondo Preserve with a Scavenger Hunt, Docent Tours, Stream Station & Art Activity, Gaviota

Thursday, June 20 • 4:00 pm - 6:00 pm

Meet & Greet with George Rose, Photographer and Author of "California's Changing Landscape – The Way of Water," Solvang

Shopping Day at J.McLaughlin, Montecito

Friday, June 21

"Conservation in Practice: Protecting Biodiversity Locally and Beyond" Partner Discussion with NCEAS, Santa Barbara

TREK: Guided Afternoon Hike at the Coronado Butterfly Preserve, Goleta



Saturday, June 22

TREK: Farm Visit and Hike at Restoration Oaks Ranch, Home of Santa Barbara Blueberries, Gaviota



Sunday, June 23

Patagonia Shopping Day, Ventura

Details subject to change. Scan here for the most recent info:



KIDS CORNER!

WINGS & THINGS...

There are lots of critters that call our local preserves home! Have you seen any of these at Coronado Butterfly Preserve or North Campus Open Space?

TOP LEFT: Monarch Butterflies (*Danaus Plexippus*) They migrate almost 3,000 miles from Mexico to California each year!

TOP RIGHT: Striped Skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*) Give me some space! A skunk's defense mechanism is to spray sulfur containing fluid from its rear end. They can spray up to 10 feet!

BOTTOM LEFT: Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher (*Poliptila caerulea*) In spite of their name, gnats do not form a significant part of the Blue-gray Gnatcatcher's diet. They primarily eat insects and spiders.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Pacific Golden-Plover (*Pluvialis fulva*) Plovers forage for food by running, stopping, and scanning, then quickly picking up prey from the ground.



PHOTOS: Kyle Kusa

NEW FACES, BRIGHT HORIZONS: CELEBRATING TEAM GROWTH



THANK YOU CARRIE MULLEN! After eight years of hard work and good cheer, we bid a fond farewell to Carrie Mullen (above, center) at the end of 2023. Carrie departed her role as the Development and Communications Director in order to explore the world beyond the Land Trust. Carrie was a part of our incredible growth and during her time with the team, we added 20 conservation easements and engaged many more people in support of our work. Carrie expressed, “I’m so grateful for the remarkably talented and dedicated colleagues at the Land Trust—and our work—that added to my life in many positive ways.” Carrie now serves as the Administrative Director at Fairview Gardens.

Don't be surprised if you run into Carrie out on a trail or driving the tractor at Arroyo Hondo Preserve—her love of the land continues. Thank you, Carrie!



VANESSA STOWERS joined us in early 2024, serving as the Development and Communications Director. Vanessa grew up in Guadalupe, CA, and is deeply rooted in Santa Barbara County, proudly representing a lineage spanning three generations in the area. She has fervently served the community at local organizations such as the Scholarship

Foundation of Santa Barbara and various roles at UC Santa Barbara. Her passion for community service is matched only by her profound appreciation for the Santa Barbara County landscape. Welcome Vanessa!



ZACH ZIMMERMAN joins us in the newly established role of North County Projects Manager! Zach arrives at the Land Trust with over a decade of experiential education and guiding experience throughout the West. His diverse professional background spans local government, small business entrepreneurship, nonprofit leadership, higher education

administration—and touring band performances. Zach is eager to apply his skills in creating accessible outdoor spaces for the next generation.



WE BID FAREWELL TO ELAINE MADSEN, our esteemed Land Stewardship Associate, as she embarks on a new chapter. For the past year and a half, Elaine has been a valuable member of the stewardship team, supporting everything from monitoring the Gaviota tar plant to California tiger salamanders. Elaine was always willing to jump into a project where she was needed most. We thank her for her many contributions and wish her all the best in her future endeavors.



THANK YOU, CAROLYN CHANDLER!

Carolyn has worn many hats over decades of service to the Land Trust including as a project manager, grant writer, executive director, and since 2015 on our Board of Trustees. Carolyn will be stepping down from our board to focus on her thriving new landscaping company but will remain on our development committee. Carolyn's career and volunteer activities have primarily focused on preserving and restoring open space lands. She was a Project Analyst for the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, a state conservation agency based in Los Angeles, and relocated to Santa Barbara in the early 90s to work as a consultant. Her imprint on the Land Trust is indelible. We are also grateful for the meaningful contributions she has made during her tenure on the board. Carolyn's leadership, insight, and passion has left a lasting impact on our organization and its mission.



WELCOME VALERIE HOFFMAN TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES! Valerie's leadership roles with environmental organizations, including chairing the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden and serving as vice president of the Los Padres Forest Association, underscore her commitment to preserving California's native habitats. As a partner at Seyfarth

Shaw LLP, she has advised various employers, specializing in strategies to prevent and resolve issues related to employment discrimination. With over 12 years of service on Union College's Board of Trustees and a wealth of experience in employment law, Valerie brings invaluable insight to our organization. We warmly welcome Valerie and look forward to her contributions to the mission of the Land Trust.

SPECIAL THANKS FOR CONTRIBUTIONS:

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