



# Lake County Land Trust

PO Box 1017, Lakeport, CA 95453 • (707)262-0707 • Winter/Spring 2023

## Middle Creek Marsh restoration project: a Land Trust priority making progress

By Merry Jo Velasquez, vice-president, LCLT, and Middle Creek Restoration Project Committee member

The Lake County Land Trust (LCLT) has been actively participating in the Middle Creek Restoration Coalition (MCRC) since its formation in 2016. This coalition is a group of private citizens whose mission is to actively encourage public officials to prioritize the Middle Creek Flood Damage Reduction and Ecosystem Restoration Project. There are over 100 members and a steering committee of five; the steering committee includes LCLT president, Val Nixon.

In 1994 the US Environmental Protection Agency completed a study that concluded that sediment-borne nutrients were primarily responsible for the chronic cyanobacteria blooms on Clear Lake. It found that 71% of sediments and phosphorous entering the lake were from the Scotts and Middle Creek watershed. From the early 1900's until 1958 these two creeks were channelized and the wetlands reclaimed for agricultural use. The Army Corps of Engineers completed multiple feasibility studies; in 2007 the Corps approved and authorized a restoration project. In a nutshell, the project required that all the land in the Project Zone be purchased, all structures be removed, most levees be breached, and most wetlands be restored.

By 2016 the county had purchased approximately 500 acres of the 1,650 acres in the Project Zone but grant monies dried up and the project stalled. The MCRC rallied local, state and federal politicians to procure \$15,000,000 from the Department of Water Resources (DWR) to purchase the rest of the land. The Board of Supervisors' Middle Creek Restoration Project

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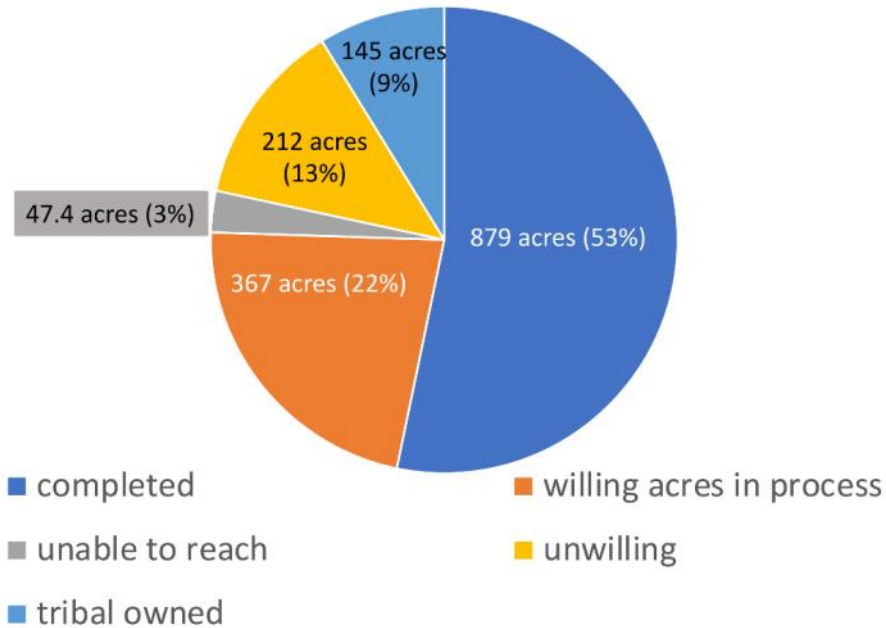


**An aerial view of the project area showing inflow from Rodman Slough.**



**A wetland in the project area.**

## Middle Creek Restoration Project



# Middle Creek Marsh restoration project

(Continued from page 1)

Committee, which also has a Land Trust Board Member on it, follows up on the land purchases and prods agencies involved to make progress toward restoration of this magnificent and essential wetland. As of March, 2023, a total of 879 acres of land have been purchased; the purchase of 367 is imminent.

The lands to be acquired are adjacent to Middle Creek between Upper Lake and the Nice-Lucerne Cutoff; they are currently sequestered by levees that are failing. Their acquisition with DWR funding can only be from willing sellers. Recently, the DWR extended the deadline for purchases to the end of 2028. Presently close to 85% of the lands are either acquired or close to being acquired. (See blue and orange zones in the figure.)

Progress continues on another front: \$750,000 for the Project is in a Federal Bill that passed late last year. This money is for the Army Corp of Engineers to complete and update environmental, cultural, and biological studies of the area.

Once these studies are completed, the Army Corp of Engineers will be prepared for the Preconstruction, Engineering, and Design (PED) phase of the project, designing the breaks in levees to restore connectivity of 1,650 acres of farmland to Middle Creek and Clear Lake. The Lake County Board of Supervisors, acting as the Watershed Protection District, has set aside

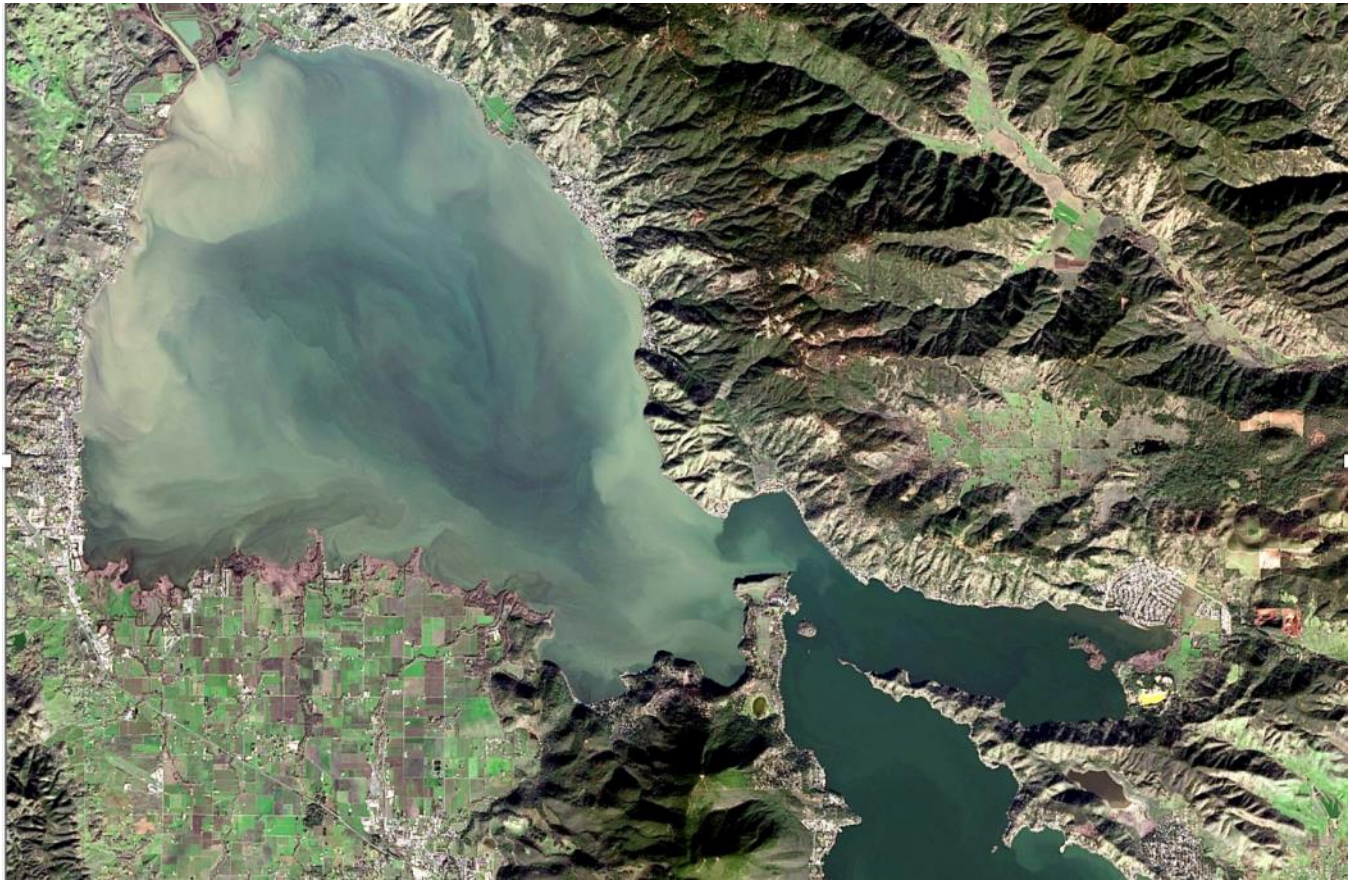
\$850,000 for the Local Sponsor's share of the PED cost.

A well-designed plan is crucial: spontaneous, uncontrolled levee failure will not result in a functional wetland. A design is required to avoid a massive stagnant pool with little ecological value and with little value in flood protection. Careful planning will result in a functional wetland that will benefit local wildlife, including the threatened Clear Lake Hitch, and protect local infrastructure, including roads and residences outside the Project Area. The passage of waters from Scotts, Middle, and Clover Creeks through the wetlands will remove significant run-off sediment, reducing phosphorus input to Clear Lake. Phosphorus has been implicated in spurring the growth of noxious blue-green algae.

Since the early 1900s 7,520 of the pre-European 9,300 acres of the wetlands surrounding Clear Lake have been lost. The restoration of Middle Creek will add 1,400 back. Outside of the Middle Creek Project, the Lake County Land Trust has been purchasing wetlands and is in the process of restoring them, such as the Wright Wetland Preserve and the proposed Keithly Wetland Preserve near Lakeport.

See more photos next page

# Middle Creek Marsh project advances



**A satellite view of the project area and nutrients flowing into the lake from Rodman Slough.**



**Great Blue Herons nesting in the project area.**



**In 2020 Assemblywoman Cecilia Aguiar-Curry met with Lake County representatives to tour the property. In the background is Lake County Land Trust board member Erica Lundquist who is also a biologist with the Natural Resource Conservation Service.**



**Phainopepla are always an exciting bird to see. This one is perched in mistletoe at the Wright Wetland Preserve.**

## **Bird species list at the Wright Wetland Preserve has increased to 161 birds, 156 specified as native**

**By Roberta Lyons**

The 200 acre Wright Wetland Preserve that was purchased by the Lake County Land Trust in 2020 contains a variety of habitats for many species of birds and other wildlife. From the tule and wooded shoreline, to open grasslands, to giant oaks, the Preserve provides breeding, feeding and living space for many creatures.

Dave Woodward, Lakeport resident, retired entomologist with Lake County Vector Control and observant birder, visits the Wright Preserve on a regular basis and keeps track of the many bird species that make the preserve their home. As of the end of 2022 Dave was able to add two species of birds to the Wright list bringing the total to 161 species of which 156 are native. Then, after being unable to visit the preserve

because of inclement weather, Dave was able to visit again in March of 2023 and added six more species of birds, bringing the 19 month total to 161 species, 156 are native. New to this list are: Snow Goose, Greater White-fronted Goose, Phainopepla, Belted Kingfisher, White-throated Sparrow and Swamp Sparrow. Both sparrows are rarities in Lake County.

Dave reports a single Tundra Swan was present three times in November of 2022. It was resting with pelicans and other birds on the point east of the outlet of Manning Creek or feeding nearby in the lake. Tundra Swan is a rarity in Lake County and new to the species list. Up to three Cackling Geese were associated with the large Canada Goose flock late in fall. Ruddy

*Continued on page 5*



**Belted Kingfishers were spotted along the channel.**



**A rare sighting was a Swamp Sparrow.**

## **Wright Wetland Preserve bird species list expanding**

*(Continued from page 4)*

Ducks, Buffleheads, Mallards, Green-winged Teal, Northern Shovelers and Canvasbacks were abundant through November.

Some notable shorebirds seen in the Fall were Red-necked Phalaropes, American Avocets, Black-necked Stilts, Willets, Short-billed Dowitchers, Marbled Godwits and two Black-bellied Plovers in breeding plumage.

An exciting and unexpected find were three Lewis's Woodpeckers. Avid birder and Cobb resident, Darlene Hecomovich, spotted the woodpeckers in the trees near an outlet to one of the channels on the Preserve. Willow Flycatchers have also been spotted in those same trees. Eucalyptus trees were attractive to a variety of birds in November including a Red-breasted Sapsucker, Acorn, Nuttall's and Downy Woodpeckers, Northern Flickers, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Bewick's Wrens, Hermit

Thrushes, California Towhees and Yellow-rumped Warblers.

Western Meadowlarks and Savannah Sparrows were numerous on the Preserve's grasslands. A flock of Western Bluebirds were seen flycatching along fence lines during warmer weather. Golden-crowned, White-crowned and Song Sparrows used the taller vegetation near the grassland. There was a single Coyote foraging in the open grassland in September and November.

A variety of raptors were also seen at the Preserve in fall including Cooper's Hawk, White-tailed Kites (two adults and two juveniles) Bald Eagle, Red-tailed and Red-shouldered Hawks, Northern Harrier, Merlin and American Kestrel.

Guided walks will be available at the Wright Wetland Preserve when the weather improves and anyone interested in visiting the preserve is welcome to contact the Land Trust at [lct@lakecountylandtrust.org](mailto:lct@lakecountylandtrust.org).

Join us for the annual  
**Lake County Land Trust**  
**Spring**  
**Celebration**



Please join the  
**Lake County Land Trust**  
**Sunday, June 11, 2023**  
 3-5 pm, for our  
 Spring Celebration

Hosted by Lynne and Bernie Butcher  
 in the courtyard of the **Blue Wing Saloon**  
**Restaurant and Tallman Hotel**  
 in Upper Lake.

Enjoy wine, hors d'oeuvres and live music.

Tickets are \$50 per person with  
 all funds going to support the  
**Lake County Land Trust**

**TICKET INFORMATION:**  
**RESERVATIONS REQUIRED**

To purchase tickets online, visit

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And click on Spring Celebration Tickets  
 on the home page.

Or call (707)262-0707

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Or send payment to **LCLT**

**PO Box 1017, Lakeport, CA 95453.**

Payment in advance is requested.

Looking forward to seeing you!

**2022 FINANCIAL STATEMENT**

**REVENUES**

General Donations	\$177,318.42
Donations for acquisitions	\$78,500.00
Stewardship Support	\$ -
Tax refund	\$ 1,525.52
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>\$ 257,343.94</b>

**EXPENDITURES**

Land Stewardship	
Labor	\$2,100.00
Professional services	\$13,668.00
Maintenance and	
Repairs	\$16,384.02
Property Acquisition	
Expense	\$500.00
Permits and fees	\$1,963.80
Property signs	\$632.06
Property tax	\$899.47
Events	\$607.28
Bank fees & credit	
card processing	\$765.73
Conferences	\$38.29
Association dues	\$4,122.00
General office &	
software expense	\$4,987.29
Insurance	\$4,182.00
Media & Advertising	\$1,358.89
Staff support	
(payroll)	\$58,685.57
Postage & Printing	\$13,438.78
Utilities	\$1,745.38
Other	\$768.29
<b>TOTAL</b>	
<b>EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>\$126,846.85</b>

**NET GAIN** \$ 130,497.09

**MONETARY ASSETS**

<b>RESTRICTED</b>	
<b>FOR SPECIFIC</b>	
<b>PROPERTIES</b>	<b>\$181,528.26</b>

# Bob Schoenherr, friend and volunteer for the Lake County Land Trust leaves a lasting legacy

Last September, family and friends of Bob Schoenherr, 69, suffered a great loss with his sudden passing. Bob lived in Soda Bay with his beloved companion, Anita Benzing. He was always willing to offer his help, skills and knowledge to not only the Land Trust, but to many other local organizations, including Clear Lake State Park.

Bob was born and raised in North Dakota by loving parents, then moved to New Mexico where he completed High School and attended New Mexico State University. There, he acquired a passion for photography.

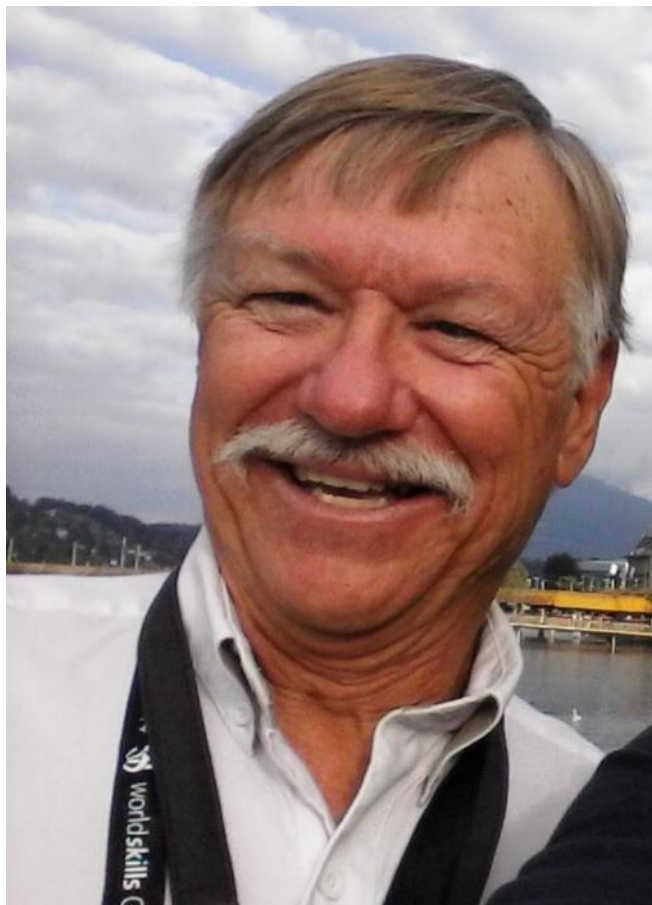
His professional career included 30+ years of teaching and coaching grades 4 through college. In Lake County he worked at Konocti Unified, Middletown Unified and Yuba College. He spent his final 15 years before retirement as a developer of a global program, Cisco networking Academy. The Academy has educated over 4 million students worldwide on the use of Information Technology.

Bob loved the outdoors and was an avid hiker, biker, and boater. Everyone loved his “Walks in the Park,” video programs featuring him and Anita exploring Clear Lake State Park. His videos are still seen on YouTube and the Lake County Land Trust features his narrated videos on the LCLT website. Bob helped engineer and construct the boardwalk at the Land Trust’s Rodman Preserve, he helped students and volunteers on a sign project at Rabbit Hill, he used his drone to not only photograph the trust’s multiple wetland preserves, but also to help monitor conservation easements. He was an IT wizard and could answer questions from the simplest to the complex, always with grace, humility and kindness.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Roy Schoenherr and Mary Schoenherr. He is survived by Anita, his sister Carrol Tracy and husband Francis, of Carlsbad, New Mexico and brother Greg Schoenherr and wife Jennette, of Lubbock, Texas.

It is impossible to put into words how much Bob is missed by everyone who knew him. It truly was a tragic loss. Despite his absence, his legacy will continue. Bob made a difference to the people who knew him and to the world in general by contributing his skills.

RIP Bob. You will be forever missed and remembered.



**Bob Schoenherr was a man of many talents and generously shared them.**



**Bob at an easement monitoring at the Seigler Springs wetland bank project.**



# President's Message

By  
Val  
Nixon

## *Not all experiences in nature can be put on a graph*



**Val Meyer Nixon**

of seasonal and permanent changes. There are stewards who help us with monitoring and the multitude of tasks and routine chores that must be done to allow safe access, keep trails clear and prevent degradation of land. We also allow other agencies and universities to do studies and plant and wildlife surveys. These documents are shared with us and are saved to help us track conservation progress or problems.

Then there are the land conservation results that all of us *feel*, but that can't be *quantified*. The first time we step onto a property we have not seen before, take a deep breath, look at the open space and realize it is a hidden gem of wetlands, grasses, wildflowers, and ancient trees. The sense of wonder and joy this creates can't be measured but stays with us.

Perhaps a young adult tells us they remember a nature walk they went on as a child and have had an appreciation for the natural world ever since; or the person who, while reading an educational panel, looks up to see what they are reading about on display in its natural setting before their very eyes. They make a new connection to this planet we inhabit with so many other creatures. That can't be put on a pie chart or measured on a graph, yet it is every bit as valuable.

In the past year the Lake County Land Trust received donations of land and funding to acquire, conserve and steward land. We also received support to create educational displays and viewing platforms. These gifts came with stories from folks who feel a deep connection to nature. From the Pitzer Family Foundation we heard about an aunt who loved wildflowers and a

There are quantifiable results of conserving and restoring land. Water quality can be tested, oak tree reproduction can be counted, and nesting birds can be documented. Lake County Land Trust creates management plans for all new properties. We have photo check points to keep track

grandmother who was fascinated with grebes. Dennis De La Montanya related a long colorful pioneer history that included Lake County and made him feel some lands needed to be left in their natural state. Vicky Malley, when asked why she supports LCLT, responded that "Not only does the Land Trust protect land, but they create awareness of the importance of what we have." These immeasurable emotional connections to the natural world around us may not have quantifiable documentation but they provide an awareness of the value of land conservation to our own emotional well-being.

As the Lake County Land Trust moves forward with our mission to protect lands of natural, cultural and scenic value, we will be guided by quantifiable data but also by the emotional connection to the land that all of our supporters, staff and volunteers have. As we work towards finalizing our latest acquisitions and accomplishing restoration efforts, we anticipate making them available for you to visit and create your own measurable and immeasurable connection to them.

Until then, I hope you are staying warm and dry and that when the rain clears you are out enjoying the beauty of nature in spring. With much appreciation to you, the Lake County Land Trust supporters, I sign off.



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Contact us at:

[LCLT@lakecountylandtrust.org](mailto:LCLT@lakecountylandtrust.org)

if you would like anything changed in the way you receive your newsletter. Thank You!



# The Land Trust welcomes new team member Meg Harper



*By Roberta Lyons*

Changes are occurring at the Lake County Land Trust. After Executive Director, Amanda Martin relocated to further Northern California, the trust was pleased to welcome volunteer and Lakeport resident, Margaret Harper, or Meg, as the trust's new Administrative Assistant.

Meg has lived in Lake County for over 30 years and still recalls the day she “drove over the hill,” and saw Clear Lake. “I’ll always remember that day,” Meg states. “I was overwhelmed with the beauty of this place and knew it was where I wanted to be.”

Before making a career change and moving to Lake

County, Meg graduated from California State University Sacramento with a Bachelor’s degree in human development. She worked her way to a general manager position with an advertising and publication company and has an extensive background in marketing, art and management.

Seeking a career where she could contribute more to the greater good she jumped from an administrative career to teaching—receiving her teaching credential from Chico State in 1989.

She worked here in Lake County as a teacher at Lakeport Elementary until her retirement in 2019. Meg met her former husband Ken here and they share a son, Nathan, who at 27 has just entered the field of medicine as a Registered Nurse.

The Land Trust first became acquainted with Meg when after her retirement she started volunteering at the Upper Lake office at the Rodman Preserve. From that time on it became clear that she had a deep affinity for the Lake County Land Trust and her caring and skills are genuinely welcomed by the trust.

**Lake County Land Trust  
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Konocti Regional Trails  
group on Meetup.  
Join today and start  
enjoying our trails!**

**Sign up with  
Meetup.com  
and find activities  
for like-minded  
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## Special Thanks

The Lake County Land Trust would like to express a special thank you to donors who may not be recognized in our 2022 list, but who are providing special support to the Land Trust through pledges, life estates, or large annual donations. Our gratitude and appreciation to:

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# LCLT 2022 Supporters\*

It's because we all share a love for our beautiful wild land and the life that it sustains that we come together to protect it. It's because of your support that we are able to protect and preserve Lake County's wildlands in perpetuity. Thank you all for the support that you give us to do this vital work.

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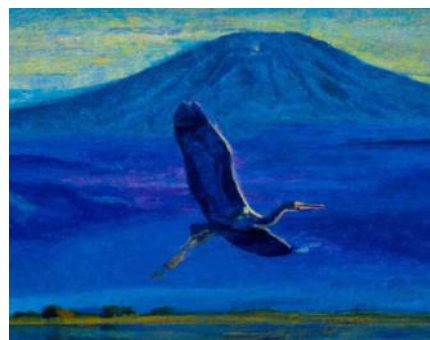
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**Michele Quere at the Rodman Preserve.**



**Pictured are Middletown High School students Alyson Pina, Camilo Aguirre, Cade Dubose, and Rabbit Hill steward and LCLT committee member, Jean Goulart.**

## Stewards are fulfilling an important job for the Lake County Land Trust

**By Meg Harper**

Lake County Land Trust (LCLT) owns and monitors hundreds of acres in Lake County and continues to acquire more lands to protect and conserve. As a non-profit organization we rely on volunteers to help with many aspects of our job to assess, monitor, and manage each property, balancing benefits to the community with maximizing conservation values. Stewarding one of our preserves is a pivotal volunteer role at LCLT.

Our stewards have an assigned preserve and commit to monitoring the property, communicating with neighbors as to any issues that arise, helping with maintenance, and reporting to LCLT on their preserve's status.

Jean Goulart has been stewarding Rabbit Hill Preserve and has even organized an event with some local youth to erect directional signage at the peak of the hill. Our Boggs Lake steward is Virginia Hamlin, a Cobb  
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resident, who has kept a careful watch on this preserve for the last few months.

Upper Lake resident and committed steward of the Rodman Preserve, Michele Quere, has been keeping our birds feeders full, our gate & lock working, and reporting property concerns. Michele has put in countless hours at the Rodman's Nature Center helping with general operations.

Welcome to our newest stewards, Nancy Harby and Drew Tritchler, who will monitor our Melo Wetland Preserve in Kelseyville.

We are grateful to our stewards and appreciate their commitment to LCLT. If you are interested in helping LCLT continue their mission to protect and preserve Lake County lands by becoming a steward please contact us at [lclt@lakecountylantrust.org](mailto:lclt@lakecountylantrust.org) or call 707-262-0707 and leave a message.

*See more photos on next page*

# Land stewards provide invaluable service



**LCLT president, Val Nixon, visits with Melo Wetlands Preserve stewards, Nancy Harby and Drew Tritchler and their grandson.**



**Boggs Lake steward, Virginia Hamlin**



Hitch were seen "running," up a drainage at the Wright Wetland Preserve, probably heading towards Manning Creek.

## Storms are having impacts

By Roberta Lyons

Many of us were skeptical that Clear Lake would reach the "full," mark on the Rumsey Scale this winter, but as of this writing, that mark (7.56) and more has been reached. The rains are welcomed in that the lake is full, and as pictures accompanying this article show, the Clear Lake Hitch are running, swimming upstream to spawn, and then returning to the Lake. The Hitch are doing so on Land Trust properties like the Melo and Wright Preserves, true wetlands.

The impacts of storms include downed trees, inundated roads, and a very wet walking trail at the Trust's Rodman Preserve. Nevertheless we welcome the rain, hoping it stops soon but valuing its long-term benefit to nature and society. See more photos page 15-16



Hitch, or Chi are active this Spring.

# Storms bring renewal to Melo Wetlands



**(Above) The Melo Wetland Preserve on Clipper Lane in Big Valley has a new look.**



**(Middle) The Melo Wetland Preserve has filled.**



**(Last) White Pelicans as seen from a distance at the Wright Wetland Preserve near Lakeport.**

# Storms fill channels at Rodman Preserve



**The channels at the Rodman Preserve are full and overflowing too. Trails are walkable though, with waterproof boots.**

## **Gifts of Stock are a great way to support the Lake County Land Trust, as well as saving on capital gains**

There can be significant tax advantages for giving appreciated stock as a contribution to the Land Trust (LCLT) and we have the ability to accept stock donations. The tax on the gain in appreciated value will be avoided if a stock is contributed to the LCLT since the Trust is a 501c3 qualified organization. Further, the full value of the stock on the date of contribution can be used as a charitable deduction on your Federal income tax.

These advantages can make your contribution be even more effective in supporting the important work of the Land Trust. Another opportunity to donate to the Last Trust is through your Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) from your IRA. If you direct some of that RMD to the Land Trust, there is no tax on that either. We recommend that you consult your tax advisor for the specifics of your situation, but please let us know if you would like to make a contribution of stock, or some of your RMD to the Lake County Land Trust. You can reach the Land Trust at (707) 262-0707 or contact our treasurer, John Stierna at (571) 331-4452.





**Chaparral is a dominant biome in Lake County that supports an array of endangered pollinators.**

## **Mt. Konocti chaparral acreage donated to the Lake County Land Trust**

This past January Lake County Land Trust (LCLT) gratefully accepted a property donation from the De La Montanya family. In November Dennis De La Montanya contacted LCLT with the generous offer to donate 40 acres on the south side of Mt Konocti. The parcel is contiguous with Mt Konocti County Park. It could offer future trail possibilities on the mountain and vital protection of chaparral habitat.

The De La Montanya family owns and operates the De La Montanya Vineyards and Winery in Healdsburg. According to their website, they have a colorful seven generation California pioneer history that includes Lake County and a history of generous charitable contributions. They have a strong connection to Lake County and have been part-time residents for 30 years.

The Lake County Land Trust appreciates their foresight in conserving land on Mt Konocti. It is fitting that De La Montanya means “From the Mountains.”

Native chaparral is one of the most dominate biomes of Lake County. It covers the scenic hillsides appreciated by residents and visitors; it is home to a variety of birds and mammals and provides numerous plants upon which endangered pollinators like native bees and butterflies thrive.



**Manzanita is part of the chaparral community.**

**Native Salvia, or Sonoma Sage is a chaparral groundcover that is fire resistant, especially compared to non-native grasses.**





(Above) Pictured are walk leader, Harry Lyons, educators Parker Spadero, a Clearlake resident who teaches for Lakeport Unified and Heather Koehler, a teacher for Konocti Unified School District who lives in Kelseyville.



(Right) The Lake County Land Trust is again partnering with the Lake County Office of Education (LCOE) in its "Building Better Teams through Mental and Physical Health" project that includes leading walks at the Rodman Preserve for LCOE educators. A Star Lilly was spotted on the recent LCOE walk.

## Become a supporter of The Lake County Land Trust

### Supporter Benefits include:

#### **Golden Eagle: \$1,000+**

- Reserved seating at our Annual Benefits Dinner upon request.
- Invitation to special Land Trust events.
- Invitation to our annual "State of the Land Trust," coffee
- Acknowledgement on the Land Trust website, updated annually and our twice yearly newsletters.

#### **Osprey: \$500-\$999**

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#### **Blue Heron: \$100-\$499**

- Invitation to our annual "State of the Land Trust" Coffee
- Acknowledgment on the Land Trust website updated annually and in our twice yearly newsletters.

#### **Snowy Egret: \$20-\$99**

- Acknowledgement on our Land Trust website, updated annually and in our twice yearly newsletters.

**To donate online, go to <http://www.lakecountylandtrust.org>**

### **Yes! I want to become a supporter of the Lake County Land Trust!**

- Yes, I would like to support the LCLT
- Please renew my support with LCLT
- Please increase my support with the below contribution
- Please sign me up as a sustained giving supporter and bill my credit card on a monthly basis for the amount indicated below.

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## Leave a lasting impact with a legacy gift

Some LCLT supporters have chosen to support our mission through planned giving—including LCLT in a will or trust—or making another kind of legacy gift. Their foresight and yours, should you choose to join them, ensures the strength and the sustainability of the Lake County Land Trust.

Your planned gift to LCLT will ensure that conservation efforts continue to preserve and enhance vital biodiversity, improve the health of our ancient lake, allow wildlife to flourish, and encourage sustainable economic growth.

Whether you are taking those first important steps toward planning your estate or are in the process of updating your estate plan, please consider including the Lake County Land Trust in your plans.

If you would like more information about Legacy Giving opportunities, please contact Lake County Land Trust board president Val Nixon at (707)331-8321 or email her at [4val944@gmail.com](mailto:4val944@gmail.com).



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# Lake County Land Trust

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**Walks are now open  
every Saturday morning  
at the Rodman Preserve!  
Join us!**

## Who We Are

The Lake County Land Trust is a local, 501 (c) (3) charitable nonprofit organization directly involved in protecting important land resources. These include: wetlands, wildlife habitats, parks, forests, watersheds, riparian stream corridors, lakeside areas, and trails. The trust is also concerned with property that has unique scenic, cultural, agricultural, educational, or historical value.

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Margaret Harper

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Officers:  
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Vice-President Merry Jo Velasquez  
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Board Members: Roberta Lyons  
and Catherine Koehler

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