



Landlines

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When a Tree Falls and Nature Calls an Oak Ambassador

REVIVING OUR YOUTH'S CONNECTION TO NATURE

Walking down the street, with her head buried in her phone, is a young girl; one of throngs of young adults growing up as the world goes by. Birds, trees, rabbits, coyotes... they fly by, flutter in the wind, sound their calls in the evening... and the phone dominates her world, and that of so many like her. Although the benefits of modern technology are clear, many have lost sight of the benefits of time in nature, especially for children.

Research by The Nature Conservancy is documenting that kids are less and less connected to nature. Technology is challenging youth to build empathic relationships and develop the social skills needed to create a compassionate and engaged world as adults. The most direct route to caring for the environment as an adult is participating in “wild nature activities” before the age of 11 (Wells and Lekies, 2006).

This poses significant risks for the future of conservation as well as our communities—which is why growing community support is so critical for the nature and education program called “Learning Among the Oaks,” known as LATO.

Over the past 13 years, the program has expanded from its public school base in Santa Margarita to a South County public school base in Arroyo Grande (Ocean View School). A third public school partner will be unveiled this year.

Continued...



Oak Ambassador Jenna exploring the oak woodlands.

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LATO activities are designed to connect kids – representing a diversity of socio-economic backgrounds – with nature in the oak woodlands that dominate local landscapes.

Through this program, kids experience the joy of making discoveries as well as learning about teamwork, caring for the land and each other, and the creatures that live around us. And along the way, many fall in love with the essence of what makes SLO County special: our oak woodlands.

That’s what happened with Jenna, Jessie and James, triplets who are part of the LATO program. On a stormy May evening, a tree fell at their country home, killing their family’s llama. Sadness and shock soon gave way to rescue and care as the nine year old siblings discovered another casualty: a baby bird who had been nesting in the now fallen tree.

It was a starling, not the most popular or beautiful bird, but that didn’t matter.

The children sprang into action, digging for worms in their pajamas into the night as they cared for the nestling bird. Their hard work paid off. The next day they delivered the baby bird to the Pacific Wildlife Care’s rehabilitation center in Morro Bay, where it thrived and was later released.

But what may have flourished most was their love of animals—and their desire to make sure these animals have a place to call home. “This is what LATO does” explained Bev Gingg, The Land Conservancy’s Oak Education Manager. “It inspires a passion for living



Baby starling rescued by Jenna, Jessie and James.

things; it brings school to life in a way that creates memories and magic.” For many, it’s the beginning of a lifetime of caring about nature.

Jenna wanted to do more. She applied to become a junior oak nature guide, what we call an “Oak Ambassador,” writing “I love to share what I’ve learned about nature with others. I think this is a great opportunity to explore my curiosities.”

Through the Oak Ambassador program, LATO empowers youth to become leaders, teaching and inspiring other kids to care about nature as they do.

Since graduating from the Oak Ambassador program, Jenna has been busy leading nature hikes for other children and educating the community. Jenna said she loves spending time with her OA friends and nature.

Room to Grow: a LATO Nature Center

Our 2016 Oak Ambassador graduates so impressed Atascadero Unified School District Superintendent Tom Butler that he promptly started the ball rolling toward a dedicated space at Santa Margarita School, LATO home base since 2005.

Designs are in the works to develop our new classroom into a creative place to learn, explore and grow.

“Seeing the program grow from a small cluttered room to a developing nature center makes me prouder and more hopeful than ever for the LATO program’s mission to create a conscientious, confident generation of learners and conservation leaders,” said Nathan Sharon, a 2011 graduate of the Oak Ambassador program.

OA mom Kristin Gillespie has donated her time and talents to create a vision for our future LATO Nature Center. We are so grateful for your support Kristin!

But we still need help completing this project.

Visit LearningAmongTheOaks.org to view nature center design concepts and learn how you can help turn this vision into reality.



In loving memory of Ed Carson, a dedicated Barn volunteer and passionate advocate for The Land Conservancy. Ed passed away peacefully in his home in Oregon on September 6th, surrounded by family. He was 89.

The Octagon Barn Center. What's Next?

It's official, the ground is moving at the beloved Octagon Barn site. Thankfully, we are not feeling earthquakes, but rather the bulldozers and machines taking the Center plans to the next stage of major construction. Groundbreaking took place on September 1, celebrating the kickoff of the County of San Luis Obispo's parking lot grading and the addition of a left-turn lane off S. Higuera.

Many changes have occurred at the project site over the past few months. The historic Milking Parlor has been retrofitted and received a new concrete floor. This weather-proof space will provide the perfect setting for meetings, fundraisers and educational training year-round for local groups and businesses.

As bulldozers turn the dirt, we reflect on the memories that this special land holds. Decades of family dairy farming in San Luis Obispo, children running and playing around the unique structure, the legacy of immigrant families working hard to build a life for their families on the Central Coast.

The earth tells us the story of what the Barn has been and the cherished ties to our County's history. As we

dig up the past we are excited to bring the Barn along for all of us to enjoy, now and for generations to come.

The Barn Center is coming alive as a place for many activities and meaningful moments. Families and friends will be meeting at the Windmill Trailhead to start off down the Bob Jones bike trail out to Avila Beach. School buses will arrive in the large parking lot, bringing children to learn about dairy history and farming through interpretative displays. The amphitheatre and Octagon Barn structures will be the perfect backdrop for meaningful events like weddings, concerts, family celebrations and fundraisers.

The Octagon Barn Center is part of our home. Help us build it all the way and bring the Center to life. It is truly a place for all of us to belong.

We are closer than ever, and we need your help in this final stretch to complete our center! Consider sponsoring a brick, a tree, bench or other donation to help our community complete this incredible local project. Contact Development Manager Lauren Meers at laurenm@lcslo.org for more information.

Conserving a California

There is something special about living in San Luis Obispo County. This place we call home is like no other in California. What makes our home special may be different for each of us, but it all starts with the land.

According to a 2011 study by the Conservation Science Partners, every 2.5 minutes the American West loses a football field worth of land to development. Housing and commercial buildings accounted for almost half of the open space lost in California between 2001 and 2011.

The California coast seems to be a world away from this universe of fast-paced development. SLO County is full of wide, open spaces. These are places that haven't changed much in over a century. Places where wildlife roam, farms thrive, and sunlight shimmers through the oak leaves.

You see these places on your favorite hike. You experience the abundance they provide at the local farmer's markets. The fresh air, clean water, local farms, and wild places we enjoy are here because open space can still be found in our county, thanks to people like you.

You, our donors, know the importance of protecting these special landscapes.

The Highway 46 West Corridor is an essential part of San Luis Obispo's open space legacy. Those rolling, oak-studded hills dropping into the sea are a piece of old California. This landscape is essential to protecting the places we enjoy throughout the county.

As iconic as the view may be, the 46 West Corridor is not isolated to the ranches in view. These landscapes



Legacy

AND WHY WE MUST ACT FAST TO PRESERVE THE SLO LIFE

provide homes to wildlife that we see on the trails, they provide fresh air on a Sunday bike ride from Templeton, and the clean water flowing from these hills replenish our reservoirs and protect habitat for the Steelhead trout spawning upstream.

The view we enjoy from the surf and from the coastal trails below just wouldn't be the same without those open hills rising in the distance. But unless we act now, those hills won't stay this way forever.

Our local legacy of open space needs protection. For more than a century, family ranches have preserved the character of our community. Together, we can protect that heritage, and the clean air and endless views they provide for us, and for future generations.

This summer you helped The Land Conservancy match

\$30,000 to protect lands like this throughout SLO County. The conservation work you made happen this year will have an impact on the horizon of the Central Coast beyond your lifetime.

But there is still much to be done.

Conserving the family ranches along the Highway 46 West corridor will protect more than the ranches themselves. It will conserve the countless moments you enjoy in the outdoors throughout our county. A connection with nature that is harder and harder to find in today's fast-paced technological environment.

As a member of The Land Conservancy, you have made open space conservation a reality for the Central Coast. Together, we can protect 46 West for centuries to come. Thank you for joining us on this journey.



Exploring Natural Controls for Invasive Species

CAPE-IVY REMOVAL STUDIES ALONG SLO CREEK

The Land Conservancy's Restoration team has been treating Cape-ivy in our Lower SLO Creek Floodplain Preserve for many years. This invasive vine (originally from South Africa, and introduced to California in the 1950's) thrives in moist riparian areas. It is so prolific that it takes over entire stream banks, preventing the growth of native flora that our local wildlife depends on.

In the summer of 2017 The Land Conservancy was approached by the USDA Agricultural Research Service and invited to partake in a study where a biological control would be used to manage Cape-ivy infestation on the Floodplain Preserve.

The biological control for this study was a shoot-tip galling fly. The name of this fly tells you all you need to know about how this little insect helps to manage Cape-ivy growth.

When the fly lays its eggs in the growing tips of the vine, the eggs cause a gall, or growth, to form at the vine's tip. This new growth prevents the plant from growing any longer.

While bio-control agents will not eliminate Cape Ivy in California, tests have shown a 30-60% reduction of stem length after just one generation.

USDA researchers have released the fly in 10 locations in California, from Humboldt to Santa Barbara, after nearly two decades of extensive lab studies on its effect on native and agricultural plants and a peer-review permitting process.

In combination with traditional methods of removal, a biological control for Cape-ivy is another tool we can use to increase the health and vitality of our local riparian ecosystems.

If these initial field studies are successful, the shoot-tip galling fly could not only improve the habitat of SLO Creek, but develop better Cape-ivy management techniques statewide.



(above) A USDA staff member releases shoot-tip galling flies in a controlled plot in the Lower SLO Creek Floodplain Preserve, surrounded by Cape-ivy.



Shoot-tip galling flies (*Parafruetreta regalis*) being used as a bio-control to manage invasive Cape-ivy vines.



The protuberance at the tip of this Cape-ivy plant is caused by the fly's eggs. The new growth will prevent the vine from growing any further.

YOU'RE AMAZING!

Discovery Days Continue!

What is a Discovery Day? A Discovery Day is a day where the general public can ride a free shuttle or their bicycle to the Pismo Preserve and experience the trail system without a guide. On these days the Preserve is open for hiking, running or mountain biking!

The Land Conservancy has hosted six Discovery Days so far this summer thanks to an Explore the Coast grant provided by the State Coastal Conservancy, and we have added four more open access days to our fall calendar.

Upcoming Discovery Days

Saturday, September 30
Sunday, October 15
Sunday, October 29
Sunday, November 12

For more information about Discovery Days, and where to get on a free shuttle, visit lcslo.org.



THANK YOU

- Race SLO for naming LCSLO as the beneficiary of the second annual SLO Ultra trail races in Wild Cherry Canyon.
- To our Barn Committee, volunteers, County of SLO staff, and local officials for a successful formal Groundbreaking ceremony at the Octagon Barn.
- To our Pismo Preserve docents for a fantastic (sometimes hot) summer welcoming members of the public to our trails for Discovery Days and docent-led outings.
- To the Arroyo Grande Sportsmen's Club for their ongoing support of the Learning Among the Oaks program.

WELCOME

- New Board Trustees Ann Robinson and Patrick Mullen. We look forward to preserving the character and landscapes of SLO County with you!

FAREWELL

- Lindsay Mobley, our former Restoration Project Associate who graduated from Cal Poly and moved to San Diego to pursue her career path. Thank you for sharing your talents with The Land Conservancy and best of luck in your future endeavors!

WISH LIST

- Tractor (John Deere or Kubota, mower attachment desirable)
- Wood chipper
- Vibratory plate compactor
- Kayak
- Dump Trailer
- Check out our Wish List on Amazon.com - search "land conservancy" to find us.

Donated goods are tax-deductible. Call us at (805) 544-9096 or e-mail LC@LCSLO.org.

PLANNED GIVING: LEAVING A LEGACY FOR LAND CONSERVATION

Your planned gift to The Land Conservancy of San Luis Obispo County is an investment in the long-term protection and restoration of our beloved local landscapes. To learn more about planned giving contact Lauren Meers at laurenm@lcslo.org or call (805) 544-9096.

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EVENTS CALENDAR

PISMO PRESERVE DISCOVERY DAYS

September 17, 30 | October 15, 29 | November 12

Discovery Days will continue into the fall with new dates added to our calendar at lcslo.org/events. Free shuttles will pick up guests from Pismo Beach City Hall and Dolphin Bay Resort. Other shuttle stops may vary. Check lcslo.org for the latest information.

APPLE PICKING

Friday | September 22 | 4:00-5:00 pm

Celebrate fall at the apple orchards off San Luis Bay Drive for a fun afternoon of apple picking! First bag of apples is free for members. A suggested \$5 donation per additional bag. Space is limited, please RSVP to Jamie Bell at jamiieb@lcslo.org or call (805) 544-9096.

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