



"The mission of the Eastern Sierra Land Trust is to protect and enhance vital lands in the eastern sierra for their scenic, recreational, agricultural, historical, botanic, and wildlife values."

Board of Directors
Tony Taylor

President

Stephen Ingram

Vice President

Rick Kattelman

Treasurer

Karen Ferrell-Ingram

Secretary

Andrea Lawrence

Craig Roecker

Brian Stange

Advisors

Herb Benham

Dave Doonan

Jacques Etchegoyhen

Steve Frisch

Linda Hess

Byng Hunt

Geoff McQuilken

George Milovich

Denyse Racine

Tim Sanford

Susan Szewczak

Ann Wong

Phone: (760) 935-4806

Fax: (760) 387-2961

www.easternsierralandtrust.org

President's Message

Hello from the Eastern Sierra! As I write this message, we are enjoying one more blast of winter weather here in Mammoth Lakes. Spring is easing its way into our region but winter is still going strong up here in the higher elevations.

Since our summer edition of SierraScapes, your Eastern Sierra Land Trust has been hard at work. With over 40 volunteers contributing hundreds of hours each month we are building our expertise as we approach completion of our first land transactions.

In January we took two days to sit down together and take stock of where we are and where we need to go. Out of that meeting came two major thrusts that we will be pursuing in the next two years.

First, we narrowed our land project focus to three critical initiatives. The **Mono Basin Program** will work with private landowners to offer alternatives to development projects that would degrade the important natural qualities and stunning scenic beauty of that area. The **Working Landscapes Program** will partner with ranchers and farmers to sustain their agricultural operations in the face of growing development pressure on their lands. The **Wildlife and Plant Communities Program** will focus efforts on maintaining the viability of this region's wild inhabitants (more about this program on page two).

Second, we determined that if we are to achieve our potential we must begin to build a professional staff to complement the work of our volunteers. We have defined the job of an Executive Director and are pursuing financial resources that will allow us to fill this position by year-end.

If there was any question about the need for our work, it vanished in March when we celebrated the completion of a conservation easement on the 6350-acre Centennial/Dressler ranch in the Bridgeport Valley in northern Mono County. A joint project of two large organizations -the American Land Conservancy and the California Rangeland Trust - this project is a model for our work in the years ahead.

Thank you again for your interest and support. We welcome your comments and suggestions and look forward to celebrating our future success with each of you.

-Tony Taylor

Keeping Land in Agriculture with California's Williamson Act

In addition to the ESLT's Working Landscapes Program, local farmers and ranchers have had another excellent means of preserving agricultural and open space lands for over thirty years. The California Land Conservation Act, usually known as the Williamson Act, was approved by the state's legislature in 1965 and was fully implemented in 1971 with state payments to local jurisdictions as a means of offsetting any property tax losses. After a city or county establishes an Agricultural Preserve, willing private land owners within such a designation enter into a voluntary legal contract with the city or county to maintain the property in agriculture and open space in exchange for taxation at the rate for open space instead of a higher-value land use. These contracts are in effect for ten years and are automatically renewed each year, thereby maintaining a constant ten-year contract. If a land owner decides to not renew their contract, whatever limitations on land use within the local Agricultural Preserve remain in effect for the following nine years. Over its history, this

(Continued on page 6)

Wildlife and Plant Communities Program

Protecting the plant communities and the wildlife dependent on those communities is one of the main reasons the Eastern Sierra Land Trust formed. The Eastern Sierra region is blessed with having some of the most diverse and unspoiled landscapes in the nation. The varied climate and topography due to glacial, earthquake, and volcanic activity have provided the soils and steep elevations that give the Eastern Sierra region its interesting array of plant communities. From the alkali meadows on the valley floors to the limestone-loving bristlecone pines on the mountain tops, numerous plants and animals are highly dependent on their specific habitats. Over 80 mammal and more than 300 migratory and resident bird species rely on healthy plant communities in the Eastern Sierra.

The ESLT Wildlife and Plant Communities Program focuses on preserving the viability of habitats on private land. Although private land makes up only a small portion of Eastern Sierra lands, many private parcels

are important "puzzle pieces" that help keep the entire region productive. By offering landowners options such as conservation easements, the ESLT achieves one of its primary goals - protecting vital lands in the Eastern Sierra for their botanical and wildlife values, while helping communities maintain the natural and open-space



qualities that we all enjoy. There are currently two active projects in this Program area, both in Swall Meadows, in southern Mono County, where landowners are donating conservation easements to the ESLT. These easements are important because they will protect areas used heavily by the Round Valley migratory mule deer herd. Stands of antelope bitterbrush

and willows will be protected from future development, ensuring that deer will have food and cover as they migrate through Swall Meadows, the narrowest part of their migration route between their summer range in the high Sierra and winter range below Wheeler Crest. Easements on these two "puzzle pieces" will help minimize the fragmentation of the deer migration corridor, and guarantee future open space within the housing development. The meadow and bitterbrush-dominated plant communities within the migration route also provide habitat for a large diversity of other wildlife, including neotropical migrant and resident birds, mountain lions, kangaroo rats, numerous reptiles and a multitude of insects.

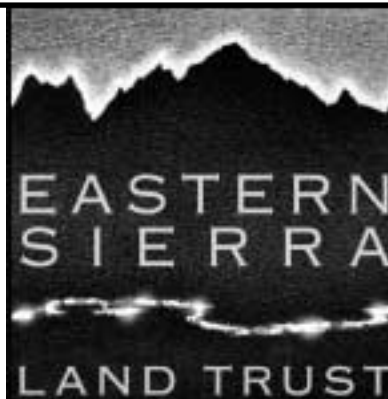
By working with local residents and land management agencies, we will play a role in maintaining the areas that are important to plants and wildlife, and those who value them.

Photo by *Stephen Ingram*

We welcome your comments.
Please contact us at:

Newsletter Editor
The Eastern Sierra Land Trust
P.O. Box 755
Bishop, California 93515

You can also contact our organization by calling:
Phone: (760) 935-4806 Fax: (760) 387-2961 or
email us at: info@easternsierralandtrust.org



Newsletter Contributors

Jenna Beck
Karen Ferrell-Ingram
Stephen Ingram
Rick Kattelmann
Lynnette Royce
Brian Stange
Sherryl Taylor
Tony Taylor

On the Wild Side...Raptors

Nonhuman residents of our rural landscapes

A common sight in the Eastern Sierra is the soaring hawk making effortless circles over a field of grass and willows and cottonwoods. While the open expanses of our rural lands have clear value to residents, ranchers and to the many tourists who are drawn to the Eastern Sierra, the birds and animals that depend on these diverse and productive lands are a little less obvious.

Perched on a cottonwood or fluttering above terrified prey, raptors find sustenance and shelter on the rural lands of the Eastern Sierra. The word "raptor" is applied to birds of prey. Among these raptor families are hawks, eagles, falcons, ospreys and owls. The ubiquitous Turkey Vultures in Inyo and Mono counties "have been found to be closer to storks, and have been reclassified in the past five years," says Tom Heindel. Tom and wife Jo, local ornithologists, are currently writing "Birds of Inyo County" and "Birds of Death Valley." Raptors have amazing abilities that enable them to thrive in our high desert area. Using their telescope-like vision, Red-tailed Hawks hunt while soaring high above ground. The Northern Harrier glides low over marshes and meadows using the element of surprise and sharp ears to catch mice, frogs and snakes. The Peregrine Falcon can reach speeds of 150 mph. when swooping down on a small bird. Many raptors migrate long distances. Some of the Swainson's Hawks that nest in the alfalfa fields of Hammil Valley may winter in Argentina while the Ospreys that nest at Mono Lake may be spending the winter in Chile.

Though most birds die in the first year of life before leaving the nest, the lifespan of an adult raptor can be well over twenty years, depending on its size. "There was an albino Red-tailed Hawk living north

of the Bishop golf course for twenty-two years," Tom Heindel recalls, "though such longevity is atypical." A raptor's lifespan is usually proportional to its size, so a larger bird, like a Bald Eagle, could live upward of twenty years while a hawk would normally only reach fifteen.

There are laws in North America that protect raptors from human predation, but the more imminent threat these birds face may be the destruction of their habitat. Many of the aerialist raptors, like the Red-tailed Hawks abundant in the Owens Valley, usually have contiguous populations, where one population of hawks flows into the next. This provides an ecological benefit by increasing variance in the gene pool, but also requires a contiguous ecosystem.

Although, a few raptor species may prey on chickens or trout, raptors are for the most part very beneficial to people and to agriculture in particular.



Many farmers and ranchers recognize the benefits of having raptors such as the Swainson's and Red-tailed Hawks nesting on their lands. These birds provide excellent gopher and ground squirrel control as the adults capture and feed these rodents to their young. The Heindels affirm that, "many raptors do great good as they keep rodent, rabbit, and grasshopper populations from reaching the huge numbers that would seriously damage crops." Owls, who "take over the bird of prey niche during the night," are appreciated increasingly throughout California as rodent exterminators. Because a single family of Barn Owls can eat over 1,000 gophers a year in addition to other small mammals, such as mice

and moles, many farmers are preserving nest trees and building owl nest boxes in order to encourage the birds to stick around and control rodent populations in their fields.

Because they feed at the top of the food chain, raptors also act as indicators of the condition of their ecosystems. The health of the raptor populations is important because it depends on and therefore demonstrates the health of the entire ecosystem underneath. Some raptors are specialists (like the Peregrine Falcon, who only preys on other birds) and some are generalists, but as predators they rely on healthy prey populations that themselves rely on adequate animal and vegetable food sources. In return, raptors keep prey populations in check and help maintain the balance of the ecosystem.

Below are the raptor species found in the rural valleys of the Eastern Sierra, including Round Valley, Owens Valley, Hammil Valley, Long Valley, Chalfant Valley, Benton, and the Mono Basin.

Raptors of the Eastern Sierra

Golden Eagle	Bald Eagle
Northern Harrier	Sharp-shinned Hawk
Cooper's Hawk	Northern Goshawk
Red-shouldered Hawk	Red-tailed Hawk
Swainson's Hawk	Rough-legged Hawk
Ferruginous Hawk	Osprey
American Kestrel	Prairie Falcon
Peregrine Falcon (rare)	Merlin
Common Barn-Owl	Short-eared Owl
Long-eared Owl	Great Horned Owl
Western Screech-Owl	Burrowing Owl

A New Approach to Rural Economic Development

The ESLT is sponsoring a presentation by the Sierra Business Council on "Investing for Prosperity," a recently released guide to rural economic development. ESLT members are invited to come and learn about this new approach that was developed with the guidance and input of an advisory committee of business and community leaders from throughout the Sierra. This approach recognizes the importance of investing in restoring and enhancing the natural systems of the region. Please join the ESLT Board and volunteers on Tuesday, June 3 at 7:00 PM at the Green Church at the intersection of HWY 395 and Benton Crossing Rd. Refreshments will be served!

For more information about "Investing For Prosperity" and the Sierra Business Council, please visit www.sbcouncil.org

The Benefits of Charitable Giving Funds

The Eastern Sierra Land Trust is a California nonprofit organization that accepts various gifts, including securities. The benefits of donating appreciated securities are many but instead of selling those securities and writing a check for the proceeds, a charitable giving fund may be a more efficient way to make a donation.

When appreciated securities are contributed to a charitable giving account, the full fair market value can be deducted without incurring any capital gains liability. This is in contrast to selling the securities outright and then donating the cash, which would then incur a capital gain. The lower tax bill means more money to contribute to the land conservation programs of the Eastern Sierra Land Trust.

Charitable giving funds are usually professionally managed by mutual fund companies and are offered through most financial advisors. A donor can usually decide when and to whom donations should be made from his or her charitable giving fund, although, the specific donation policy should be investigated for each fund. The donor is under no obligation or timeline to exhaust the funds or to keep giving to the same organization.

CONSIDER THIS SCENARIO:

Connie Sagebrush invested in a stock many years ago at a cost of \$50,000. Today the shares are worth \$100,000. Connie would like to direct that money towards funding the Eastern Sierra Land Trust's Mono Basin Program .

Connie has two choices. She can sell her \$100,000 worth of stock and donate the cash to the ESLT, in which case (assuming a capital gains rate of 20% on the profit of \$50,000), the ESLT will get \$90,000, not \$100,000.

Connie's other option is to contribute the securities to her charitable giving fund account. With this option, the earnings on her appreciated stock will not be subject to capital gains tax and she can give the full \$100,000 to the ESLT.

Another important point to consider is that through a charitable giving fund, the money can be invested and could potentially grow over time, tax free. This scenario could possibly allow Connie to donate a greater total amount to the ESLT than the \$100,000 she envisions today.

Interested supporters of the Eastern Sierra Land Trust should consult a tax or financial advisor to learn which method of giving is best suited to their unique situation.

Upcoming Events in the Eastern Sierra

Sierra Spring Sojourn -May 16-18 - Bernasconi Center, Big Pine

The Bristlecone Chapter of the California Native Plant Society offers a weekend of field trips and evening programs focusing on native plants which are blooming profusely in the Owens Valley, White Mountains and Sierra Nevada this year. Meals and accommodations provided. For more information: (760) 924-8742 or email to:sherryt76@aol.com

Volunteers Needed for Highway Clean-up! - May 21

The ESLT has adopted a stretch of highway that may have the best view in the state! If you appreciate views of Mt. Tom and Wheeler Crest, and "scavenger hunts," please come and help us keep this small part of the Eastern Sierra neat and tidy. The tools provided by Caltrans make it downright fun! We have scheduled a highway clean-up for Wednesday, May 21 at 8:00am. With enough help, we should only work about two hours. Please call Mary Canada at 934-3179 or 934-6150 or email to canada@qnet.com for information about the meeting place.

Investing For Prosperity - June 3, 7:00 PM - Green Church (HWY 395 and Benton Crossing Rd.)

Presentation by the Sierra Business Council on a new approach to rural economic development. See article on page four. For more information: www.sbcouncil.org or call 387-2913

Mammoth Lakes Roadside Geology - June 14 or 15 - 9:00 AM-4:00 PM

Dr. Steve Lipshie, author of "Geologic Guidebook to the Long Valley-Mono Crater Region of Eastern California" will give the big picture of local geology with emphasis on the last million years. The tour, sponsored by the Sierra Nevada Aquatic Research Station, begins with a slide presentation, includes seven stops and a hike at Inyo Craters. \$25 per person. For more information: (760) 935-4356 or email to:ldawson@msi.ucsb.edu

Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua -June 20-22 - Lee Vining

This 2nd annual event focusing on birds and the Mono Basin ecosystem offers field trips to Mono Lake shores, pine forests, Sierra canyons and crests. Seminars - including mist netting, bird banding, photography, bird calls - plus children's activities, and a picnic with live music fill out the weekend. \$25 registration includes any combination of events. Reserve early: <http://www.birdchautauqua.org>

Mammoth Lakes Jazz Jubilee -July 10-13 - Mammoth Lakes

Over 20 great bands, blue skies, puffy clouds and hot jazz in the cool Sierra! For more information: <http://www.mammothjazz.org>

Sierra Summer Festival -July 21-August 9 - Mammoth Lakes

Three weeks of excellent classical music in the SPIRIT OF AMERICA. July 21 to August 1, Mammoth Lake's own Felici Piano Trio and ten international guest artists perform six concerts during the Mammoth Lakes Chamber Music Festival. On August 8 and 9, the Eastern Sierra Symphony Orchestra concert, conducted by Maestro Bogidar Avramov, will feature music by a wide variety of American composers. For more information: <http://www.sierrasummerfestival.org>

NEWS FROM THE ESLT

The ESLT Board of Directors is happy to welcome Brian Stange as a new Director. Brian is a Bishop native with a long interest in natural resources. That interest combined with his background as a financial consultant with Washington Mutual gives Brian a broad base of experience in assisting the ESLT.

To help cover the expenses of our recent strategic planning session, the ESLT was honored to receive assistance from an important regional organization. We received a Futures Fund grant from the Sierra Nevada Alliance. This program was funded by the Robert and Lois C. Braddock Charitable Foundation and provides assistance to grassroots member groups in the Sierra Nevada. Many thanks to the Sierra Nevada Alliance!

Keeping Land in Agriculture, continued from page 1

program has been very successful, and currently covers about 40 percent (more than 16 million acres) of the privately owned land in California. For more information about the state program, please see the Department of Conservation's website: www.consrv.ca.gov/dlrp/LCA/.

California also has a more vigorous agricultural land conservation program under the Farmland Security Zone Act (sometimes called the "Super-Williamson Act"), passed in 1998. Through this program, the duration of the contracts is 20 years, the land capability requirements are more strict, and the tax assessment basis is only 65 percent of that under the base Williamson Act or 65% of its Proposition 13 valuation, whichever is lower. As of April 2003, no lands in Mono County have entered a Farmland Security Zone contract.

The Williamson Act program has been threatened by the California government fiscal crisis last year and again this year. The administration wanted to cut the state subvention funds (about \$40 million per year) to the counties and cities. The legislature restored the funding last year, but the issue is unresolved in this year's budget as of early May.

Although Mono County first tried to start a Williamson Act program in 1984, the county's program did not become fully active until 2000, when a rancher in the Bridgeport Valley urged the county to establish an Agricultural Preserve. Since then, more than 12,000 acres of land in Mono County have become protected under the Williamson Act contracts. Inyo County has yet to create an Agricultural Preserve. The current language establishing Mono County's Agriculture Preserves requires that the minimum parcel size is 40 acres and is considered as "prime" agricultural land (meets various soil productivity, crop production, or livestock use standards). All lands under Williamson Act contract in Mono County are assessed at the rate for open space zoning. The State of California has a special fund that compensates the county for any tax losses from this change in assessment. These so-called subvention payments amount to about \$5 per acre. So far, these payments appear to be a slight net gain for the county's property tax revenues.

It is possible to place a conservation easement on a property that is under a Williamson Act contract. This would allow the owner to possibly realize property and income and estate tax benefits. A conservation easement would ensure that the ranch or farm would remain in agriculture in perpetuity.

Mono County currently has three Agricultural Preserves: Bridgeport Valley, Antelope Valley, and Tri-Valley (Chalfant, Hammil, and Benton Valleys). The Bridgeport Valley was the first to be established and has the most contracts. where 43 parcels under six different owners, totaling 10,700 acres are under Williamson Act contracts. Five hundred acres are under contract in the Antelope Valley, and 1,400 acres are in Williamson Act contracts in the Tri-Valley Agricultural Preserve.

For more information about a potential Williamson Act contract on your property, please contact planner Gerry Le Francois in the Mono County Community Development Department at 760/924-1800 or glefrancois@mono.ca.gov.



The term "**working landscape**" normally refers to a farm, ranch or forest. More than a synonym for "open space", a working landscape represents a parcel of land with a commercial function. Working landscapes are often crucial to the environmental and economic health of a region. Working landscapes, particularly farms and ranches, are among the lands most threatened with subdivision and development. Because of this, many farm or ranch owners choose to place conservation easements on their properties to help keep their land both open and working in the future.

ANNUAL REPORT
of the
EASTERN SIERRA LAND TRUST
A Nonprofit Public Benefit Corporation
July 1, 2001 through June 30, 2002

Assets and Liabilities as of June 30, 2002

Assets:	All cash	\$39,086.48
Liabilities	None	0

Support and Revenue

Grants	28,000.00
Dues and Contributions	26,624.00
Total	54,624.00

Expenses	19,065.83
----------	-----------

Change in assets during fiscal year

Increase in cash	35,558.17
------------------	-----------

Change in liabilities during fiscal year	0
--	---

There were no transactions of the Eastern Sierra Land Trust that involved self-dealing during the fiscal year July 1, 2001 through June 30, 2002.

I certify that the foregoing Annual Report was prepared from the books and records of the EASTERN SIERRA LAND TRUST, without audit.

Rick Kattelman, Treasurer

Presented at annual meeting on October 12, 2002

The following generous supporters allowed us to include them in our Annual Report:

Sara J. Adams	Alisa and Todd Ellsworth	V. Kelly-Allen	Eileen Peterson
Ingrid Akerblom	Linda and Larry Emerson	Ann and Kevin Klinefelter	Phil Pister
Linda Arnold	John F. Emmel, MD	Mark and Linda Kenchelian	Sydney Quinn
Dick Arnold	Jacques Etchegoyhen	Jim and Sue King	Sorensen's Resort
Henry and Sue Bass	Jeanne Evenden	Robert Knox	Craig Roecker
Jenna Beck	Steven and Sally Faulstich	Gerald and Rosette Koch	Catherine Rose
Susan Bergit	Jack and Marilyn Ferrell	Penelope Koines	Bill and Barbara Schuck
Louis Booth & Heidi Fron	James and Susan Fousekis	Richard and Sylvia Koppel	Jake Sigg
Cheryl Bretton	Brian and Julia Ginna	Mark Langner	Wayne Smith
Dale Burger	Ralph and Lyn Haber	Andrea Lawrence	Brad Sniderman
Mary Canada	Myrna C. Hampton	Janis and Nolan Lloyd	Brian Stange
Chris Carpenter	Frank Hays	W. A. Lordge	Charles E. Steidtmann
Cynthia Clamp & Maryann Zylstra	Tom and Jo Heindel	Georgia Lowe	Genny Smith Books
Brian Clamp	Jeffrey Hereford	Peter and Carlotta Mann	Sarah Sheehan
Thomas and Jan Clifton	Jim Hoch	Dr. Jeffrey S. Marshall	Peggy Songster
Jack and Judy Coleman-Levy	Barbara Hodgkin	Theodore Mazzone	Frances Spivey-Weber
Mr. and Mrs. William Conlon	Wally Hofmann	Mary and Craig Meinhard	John and Jeri Taylor
Elaine Cook	Chris and Rhoda Holabird	Robert Meador	Tony and Sherryl Taylor
Dawn V. Cope	Bruce Horn	Andy Mills	Elizabeth and Jim Tenney
Jeff Darlington	David Ingram	Jennifer and John Montin	Brock and Diane Thoman
Dawson Family	Jack and Jane Ingram	Joe Mozdzen	Derrick and Mary Vocelka
Don M. Deck	John and Carol Ingram	Charles and Carolyn Noble	Kay Waters
Valerie G. Donahue	Stephen Ingram &	Jeanne Oakeshott	Michael L. Weber
Roger L. Duba	Karen Ferrell-Ingram	Craig Olofson	Wilma and Bryce Wheeler
Deanna Dulen	Rick Kattelman & Sally Gaines	Allen Olsen	Dieter Wilken
Ray Dutcher	Mr. and Mrs. Mike Kazeef	Carl and Helen Ondry	James and Kay Wilson
Kathy Duvall	Randy Keller	Mark Peery	Jane C. Witter



Eastern Sierra Land Trust
P.O. Box 755
Bishop, California 93515

NONPROFIT ORG
US POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT NO. 6
BISHOP, CA

Working to preserve rural landscapes



To our Faithful ESLT Supporters,

Many thanks to those of you who have responded to our recent membership renewal mailing. The path to establishing a new and effective organization is a long and winding one - to have a supportive membership joining us on this challenging path makes the journey possible. Maintaining the wide open views and the myriad wildlife habitats of the Eastern Sierra is our goal and your support is critical to our success.

As a member organization we also depend on you for help with projects, events, and planning. Volunteers fill our Board, our committees, and our project teams. If you would like to be more involved, please contact us - we welcome your help! Thank you again for renewing your membership and giving your support.

Sincerely,

Lynnette Royce
ESLT Membership Coordinator