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Crowley Hilltop Preserve Protects Deer Migration

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A property that has been used as a passageway by migrating mule deer for generations has recently been preserved by Eastern Sierra Land Trust. A large knobby hill on the property inspired the ESLT Board of Directors to name the property: *Crowley Hilltop Preserve*. This new preserve protects 33 acres of sagebrush scrub, scattered pinyon pines, mountain mahogany, Jeffrey pines, and Sierra juniper on the sloping land near the community of Crowley Lake.

The property's significance as a migration corridor for the Round Valley mule deer herd motivated the California Department of Fish and Game and the ESLT to identify it as priority conservation land. The migratory corridor is increasingly being squeezed between new developments, Highway 395, and the steep-sloped ridges of the Sierra Nevada. These impacts threaten the viability of the mule deer herd's future. With funding from the California Wildlife Conservation Board, ESLT purchased the sloping 33-acre property that had been slated for development. This purchase ensures that this important section of the Round Valley mule deer migratory corridor will be protected forever.

"A lot of time and energy went into this project," says Karen Ferrell-Ingram, the ESLT's Executive Director and orchestrator for this preserve, "we're excited and proud to be new landowners."

Notable features of the property include a small meadow and year-round creek crossing its southeast corner, remnants of Old Highway 395 traversing the property, and the large knobby hill that is visible from Long Valley. In addition to protecting important wildlife habitat, the preserve buffers neighboring public land and conserves a scenic vista for those fishing on Crowley Lake.

"The Crowley Hilltop Preserve is the first preserve for the ESLT," adds Karen. "We hope to bring neighbors and anyone else who is interested out to the property in the spring to share the wonderful views, interesting native plants, and flourishing wildlife."

For more information on this and other private land conservation projects in the Eastern Sierra, visit www.easternsierralandtrust.org, or call ESLT at 873-4554.