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Keeping Up with the Round Valley Mule Deer

Eastern Sierra Land Trust and CA Dept. of Fish & Wildlife to Host Mule Deer Migration Corridor Field Trip on March 12

The past three years have been hard on Eastern Sierra wildlife – and our mule deer herds are no exception. Are you wondering how the deer are faring in the wake of severe drought and wildfire, including the 7,000-acre Round Fire? On March 12, join Eastern Sierra Land Trust (ESLT) and California Department of Fish & Wildlife for a tour of the Round Valley mule deer herd’s migration corridor, and hear from experts about how the deer are coping with these recent challenges.

Twice a year the Round Valley mule deer herd travels between its winter range on the valley floor and the alpine meadows of the Central Sierra. As the deer search for nutritious forage, they keep to the same trails they have followed for generations.

But as human presence has increased, the Round Valley herd has faced new obstacles. Most of the herd migrates north through the community of Swall Meadows, where their route traverses a narrow bottleneck: limited by the steep cliffs of Wheeler Ridge to the west and the deep canyon of Lower Rock Creek Gorge to the east. In addition to the constant danger posed by vehicles, development has hampered portions of the deer’s limited habitat – making finding food and shelter along the route more difficult.

Concerned by the effect that increased residential development would have on the deer’s annual migration route, a group of concerned residents teamed up in 2001 and formed what was to become Eastern Sierra Land Trust. Today, ESLT has permanently protected 269 acres of private land in addition to the 176-acre State Wildlife Area along the migration corridor, which has made the deer’s passage safer and forage along the way more assured.

On Saturday March 12 from 2-5pm, Eastern Sierra Land Trust and CA Dept. of Fish & Wildlife will lead a tour on a portion of the Round Valley herd’s migration corridor. The afternoon will be spent enjoying spectacular valley views and keeping on the lookout for deer making the journey northward. Mule deer expert Timothy Taylor, Biologist for the CA Department of Fish & Wildlife, will share updates about the effects that the Round Fire and other recent events have had on the mule deer.

Eastern Sierra Land Trust has hosted similar tours of this migration corridor in previous years, but March’s event, “will be different from what we’ve done in the past,” commented ESLT Executive Director Kay Ogden. “With respect for our friends and neighbors in Swall Meadows and their ongoing rebuilding efforts following the Round Fire, we’re going to explore a separate section of the corridor. And with growing interest in how our mule deer herds are coping with the aftereffects of drought and wildfire, we want to focus on this timely concern this year and share what experts have learned about their status.”

This free event is open to all ages, and will involve some moderate walking; attendees are asked to please leave dogs at home. For more information (including meeting time and location) and to RSVP, please contact Catherine Tao, ESLT Education Coordinator/AmeriCorps member, at catherine@eslt.org or call (760) 873-4554.

Eastern Sierra Land Trust works with willing landowners to protect vital lands in the Eastern Sierra region for their scenic, agricultural, natural, recreational, historic, and watershed values. To learn about ESLT's work and how you can get involved, please visit www.eslt.org.

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Sample low-resolution images with captions pictured below; high-resolution versions are attached to email. For more images, please contact Marguerite Merritt, ESLT Communications Coordinator, at marguerite@eslt.org.



Caption: On March 12, join Eastern Sierra Land Trust and California Dept. of Fish & Wildlife for a tour of the Round Valley mule deer herd's migration corridor.



Caption: Wondering how local deer herds are coping with the recent challenges of drought and wildfire? At the upcoming Mule Deer Migration Corridor Field Trip, experts will share stories and updates about the resilience of these amazing animals.