



Eastern Sierra Land Trust

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Important Wildlife Migration Corridor Expanded

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In an exciting new project, John and Ivie Wilson, longtime landowners in Swall Meadows, have just sold 60 acres of critical deer habitat to Eastern Sierra Land Trust (ESLT) for permanent preservation. To ensure that wildlife have room to roam, ESLT works with farsighted landowners who want to permanently protect the critical habitats on their land.

John Wilson is the great-grandson of Owens Valley pioneer Joseph Swall. These newly preserved 60 acres are the last remaining of the 1,000 acres that Joseph Swall purchased in 1910. John and his sister, Joann Huffman, remember their dad, Robert J. Wilson, patrolling the land in his airplane to make sure trespassers weren't bothering the deer. R.J. ran the ranch after Joseph Swall retired to Bishop, and soon found out that the high elevation fruit ranch was a risky enterprise so he started a successful construction business. "My dad would be very pleased to see that the last piece of land will be left open space to allow a critical migration corridor to the Round Valley wintering ground," said John Wilson.

ESLT partnered with California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) and received a grant from the Wildlife Conservation Board to purchase the property from the Wilsons. "This is an important and strategic acquisition to protect migration habitats that benefit the Round Valley Deer herd. The acquisition was made possible only by the cooperative partnership of the landowner, Eastern Sierra Land Trust, Department of Fish and Game, and the Wildlife Conservation Board," stated Jon Wilcox, Senior Land Agent for the Wildlife Conservation Board. The Wilson's commitment to wildlife preservation is evident because they have sold the property to ESLT at a significant discount from fair market value.

Combined with adjacent land owned by CDFG (also purchased from the Wilsons) and ESLT's existing conservation easements, this property helps ensure a safe passage through the migration bottleneck for many species of wildlife. "We will manage this land for wildlife, from deer to golden eagles to migrating Monarch butterflies. This is a wonderful day for wildlife and the people of California who value the amazing natural wonders of the Eastern Sierra" commented Karen Ferrell-Ingram, ESLT executive director. The Round Valley mule deer herd travels through the migration corridor twice a year. In the spring the herd migrates north and west to the high Sierra and then makes the opposite trip south in the fall—funneling thousands of animals right through several growing communities! It was this miracle of migration that

first prompted the founding members of ESLT to start a nonprofit here dedicated to preserving vital lands for people and wildlife.

The Round Valley mule deer herd is one of five migrating deer herds in the Eastern Sierra. The natural phenomenon of large mammal migration is threatened around the world and in the Eastern Sierra. With the continued support of its members and the Eastern Sierra community, ESLT will keep working to preserve wildlife migration corridors in the Eastern Sierra.

Land trusts play a significant role throughout the United States in preserving and stewarding the nation's wildlife habitats, scenic lands, and family farms and ranches by partnering with private landowners. There are currently over 47 million acres preserved by land trusts across the country, twice the size of all National Parks combined. It is the members and volunteers of these nonprofit organizations which help bring about these significant accomplishments. A recent census by the national Land Trust Alliance shows that in 2010, there were almost 5 million land trust members and 350,000 volunteers throughout the US.