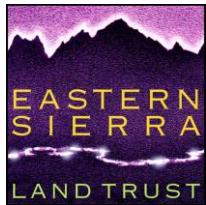


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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 18, 2016

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Wilderness Protected for Humans and Wildlife Alike

Experience Eastern Sierra Land Trust's new Black Lake Preserve at their Conservation Celebration on May 14th

When Michelle Browner first visited Black Lake, she found a landscape that spoke to her soul. She felt what early settlers must have experienced when they first explored the American West. Breathtakingly beautiful, the land before her was rugged, remote, and alive with strange plants and wildlife.

Thanks to Michelle, this unusual Eastern Sierra landscape is protected forever – and now you can experience its wonders for yourself. Eastern Sierra Land Trust (ESLT) will be holding a Black Lake Preserve Celebration on May 14th, and they invite the community to join them as they commemorate this conservation success with birdwatching opportunities, a walking tour, and a picnic lunch on the land.

Located northwest of Benton along Highway 120 in the Adobe Valley, Black Lake is a rare wetland in the midst of the desert. Rimmed by wet alkali meadows, Black Lake serves as a critical water source for wildlife. It has been designated by the National Audubon Society as part of the Adobe Valley Important Bird Area, and for good reason: from waterfowl to songbirds to raptors, a diverse array of species flocks there – particularly this time of year, when breeding season is in full swing.

To Michelle Browner, Black Lake was something truly unique. “From the beginning, I felt very deeply that this was a special place,” she recounts. “When I first saw the Adobe Valley, I already had the idea in my mind that I wanted to do whatever I could to conserve it.”

Michelle remembers feeling that she, “could not, and would not ever want to have the land around Black Lake developed.” So when the parcel went up for sale nearly twenty years ago, Michelle jumped at the chance to purchase Black Lake and the surrounding meadows.

Concerned about the landscape’s long-term future, in 2014 Michelle Browner approached Eastern Sierra Land Trust to consider options that would conserve Black Lake long beyond her lifetime. “I decided that I wanted to make an outright land donation to the Land Trust, to ensure that the property would remain protected forever,” Michelle explained.

With the future of this unique place now secure, Eastern Sierra Land Trust invites you to join them as they celebrate its preservation and thank Michelle Browner for her generosity and foresight. May 14th is International Migratory Bird Day – and in its honor, ESLT will be joined by Eastern Sierra Audubon to commemorate the conservation of the Black Lake Preserve.

Planning to attend the celebration? Don't forget to bring your binoculars! Eastern Sierra Audubon members will be on hand to point out unusual bird species, and California Native Plant Society representatives will share information on unusual flora that can be found in the area's wet alkali meadows. Following an interpretive walking tour of the property, guests will sit down with Michelle Browner and her conservation partners to share a catered picnic lunch on the land.

Eastern Sierra Land Trust's Black Lake Preserve Celebration will take place on Saturday, May 14th from 9am – 1pm, and attendance will be limited to 50 guests; advance reservations are required. To reserve your place, please contact Sara Kokkelenberg, ESLT Stewardship Coordinator, at (760) 873-4554 or sara@eslt.org.

To learn more about Eastern Sierra Land Trust and their efforts to conserve wild and working Eastern Sierra lands, please visit www.eslt.org.

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Sample low-resolution images below, high-resolution versions attached to email. For additional images, contact Marguerite Merritt at marguerite@eslt.org.



Picture Caption: Thanks to the foresight and generosity of Michelle Browner, Black Lake and its surrounding wildlife habitat is now protected forever. See the new Black Lake Preserve for yourself at ESLT's Black Lake Preserve Celebration on May 14th! Photo © Randy Keller.



Picture Caption: A diverse array of birds can be seen at Black Lake, particularly this time of year. May 14th is International Migratory Bird Day – join Eastern Sierra Audubon and Eastern Sierra Land Trust at this unusual landscape, and don't forget to bring your binoculars. Photo © ESLT Staff.