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Journeying with the Round Valley Mule Deer

Eastern Sierra Land Trust and Tim Taylor with CA Dept. of Fish & Wildlife to Host Mule Deer Migration Corridor Field Trip on March 7th, 2-4 p.m.

At this time of year, many animals that call the Eastern Sierra their home are preparing for a long journey. When food and shelter become scarce in the winter, most migrate to warmer areas often at lower elevations. The local Round Valley mule deer herd is no exception.

Twice each year, the Round Valley mule deer herd embarks on a particularly risky migration journey. These deer must make their way through a narrow bottleneck in their pathway, right near the community of Swall Meadows. This bottleneck is only one mile wide, with Wheeler Crest rising dramatically on one side, Owens River Gorge dropping off on the other, and the busy Highway 395 running in between.

The Round Valley mule deer herd faces this challenging journey not once but twice every year, as they move between their winter range on the valley floor to their summer range in the High Sierra meadows. They follow the same path each year, forming what biologists call a migration corridor. Some deer travel more than 50 miles on each dangerous biannual migration.

What makes it so dangerous? In addition to the perils of crossing Highway 395, accelerating human presence, challenging winters, raging wildfires, and droughts have made the mule deer herd’s migration increasingly difficult each year. These factors make it harder and harder for the deer to find ample food and shelter along the well-traveled route.

In 2001, local residents noticed these challenges and took action. They teamed up to form what would become Eastern Sierra Land Trust (ESLT). Over the years, ESLT has worked with private landowners to permanently protect 269 acres of private land in addition to the 176-acre State Wildlife Area along the Round Valley mule deer’s migration corridor. Their protection of this area keeps the herd’s migration pathway open and safe.

On Saturday March 7th, from 2-4 p.m., Eastern Sierra Land Trust invites you to come learn about our impressive Round Valley mule deer herd while we explore a portion their migration corridor. Timothy Taylor, a mule deer expert, a wildlife biologist, and Environmental Scientist with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, will accompany the group. He will share stories, information, and updates about the deer as they admire spectacular valley views and search for wildlife together.

This free event is open to all ages; for more event information (including meeting location) and to RSVP, please contact Marie, ESLT Education Coordinator and AmeriCorps member, at marie@eslt.org or (760) 873-4554.





Photo caption 1: Environmental Scientist Tim Taylor with CA Dept. of Fish and Wildlife speaks to attendees at last year's ESLT Mule Deer Migration Corridor Field Trip © Kristen Stipanov, ESLT



Photo caption 1: Photographer Thierry Montoya attended last year's ESLT Mule Deer Migration Corridor Field Trip, and captured beautiful images of the deer. Photographers and cameras are welcome at this event. © Thierry Montoya



Photo Caption 3: Mule deer spotted among the sagebrush along their migration corridor near Swall Meadows © Bill Dunlap