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Solano Land Trust News December 2010

[Join or renew your membership today!](#)

It's that time of year to make decisions about end-of-year giving. Please consider Solano Land Trust. Your contribution, no matter how big or small, makes a huge impact on our ability to enhance the quality of life in Solano County.

Give online at:

www.solanolandtrust.org

Or send a check to:

Solano Land Trust
1001 Texas Street, Suite C
Fairfield, CA 94533

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This land is your land!

Holiday at the ranch
(members only)

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2011 commemorative

Please forward this email to a friend using the link at the bottom.

What's the perfect green gift?



The gift of membership to
Solano Land Trust.

What do you give somebody who loves the natural areas of Solano County? A gift membership to Solano Land Trust. It's easy. Just give us a call to set it up and we'll send a card with your holiday greeting. If you give a membership at the \$50 level or above, the recipient will also receive a copy of the Lynch Canyon Plant Guide.

Contact Deanna at deanna@solanolandtrust.org or
(707) 432-0150 x 205.

Solano Land Trust gears up to celebrate 25
years!

Deanna Mott, Associate Director

calendar

Tired Horses: A Poem

Save the Date

*Jepson Prairie
25th Anniversary Walk
Saturday, April 9, 2011*

*Rush Ranch
25th Anniversary Walk
Saturday, April 16, 2011*

*Lynch Canyon
3rd Annual Kite Festival
Saturday, April 23, 2011*

*Rush Ranch
21st Annual Open House
Saturday, April 30, 2011*



**Access Adventure
provides rides at the
Rush Ranch Open House**

*Farm Fresh Feast
at Russ Lester's
Dixon Ridge Farm
Saturday, May 21, 2011*

*4th Annual
Lynch Canyon Trail Run and
Community Hike
Saturday, June 4, 2011*

More details to come!

Upcoming Events

*Eagles, Hawks, & Other Raptors
Hike at Lynch Canyon
Saturday, Dec. 18, 2010;
Saturday, Jan. 22, 2011
10 a.m. to 1 p.m.*

*"Getting the Rush" at
Rush Ranch
3rd Saturday of every month
Dec. 18, 2010;
Jan. 15,* Feb. 19, 2011
Interpretive walk (9 a.m.)
Blacksmith demo (10 a.m.)*



Join us on the land in 2011!

Photo by Sue Wickham

Throughout 2011, Solano Land Trust will commemorate 25 years of working with the local community to protect working farms and natural areas in Solano County. This important work preserves our quality of life today and for future generations.

We are proud of what we have accomplished together. Since 1986 we have negotiated 19 agricultural conservation easements, two habitat easements, and eight open space land purchases; all adding up to 20,041 acres of protected land! These successes are due to a roster of dedicated staff, board members, farmers and ranchers, business partners, members, volunteers, and funders; all of whom share a common understanding and vision that support our mission.

Over the past 25 years, Solano Land Trust has grown and developed into one of the leading land conservation organizations in California. Being in the top ten percent of land trusts doesn't come without making complex decisions and taking measured risks. Nor does it come from a handful of staff and board members working alone. Getting here was a result of the combined efforts, ideas, and aspirations from people like you who value the critical work we do to protect our quality of life in our community.

Thanks to our collective hard work, we have hosted tens of thousands of visitors to our lands. Hikers, mountain bikers, artists, school-children, scouting and church groups, and others have explored the hills, valleys, oak woodlands, and prairie lands at Lynch Canyon, Rush Ranch, Jepson Prairie, and the King-Swett Ranches. Visitors can enjoy these treasured and rare open spaces knowing that they will be protected forever.

Reflecting on the past helps to pave the way for the future. This is definitely not the time to slow the momentum. Looking ahead, we will be reaching out to the community to update our strategic plan, which will enable us to be even more proactive and effective at achieving our mission. Part of the success of this plan will depend on the continued, and even increased, involvement of our community of supporters including business partners, members, and volunteers. Having the ability to reach a wider audience and a new generation of farmers will be important for the sustainability of Solano Land Trust and the preservation of our local agricultural land and view corridors. We are dedicated to keeping people connected with the land and educating those who question our purpose. Twenty-five years from now we want to be able to look back and know that what we did was right for this community. We want the land to tell the story.

Help us celebrate our 25th Anniversary by bringing your friends and family out to volunteer or explore on one of our properties, or by joining us at one of the many events we have planned throughout 2011. We thank you for your support over the past 25 years and hope you will continue to work

Native American display (10 a.m.)

Wagon rides (11 a.m.)

* Also on Jan. 15: NorCal Bats presents *Bats, our Insect Friends* from 1 to 2 p.m.

Eagles, Hawks, & Other Raptors Walk at Jepson Prairie
Saturday, Jan. 8, 2011
10 a.m. to 1 p.m.



Ferruginous Hawk
Photo by Larry Broderick

Get the Buzz on our Native Bees at Rush Ranch
Sunday, Jan. 23, 2011
1:30 to 3:00 p.m.
Entomologist and UC Davis Professor Emeritus Robbin Thorp talks about native bees

Bird Walk at Rush Ranch
Saturday, Jan. 29, 2011
10 a.m. to noon

King-Swett Ranches Saturday, Docent-led Hike
Feb. 5, 2011
9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Flyway Festival Raptor Tour at Lynch Canyon
Saturday, Feb. 12, 2011
Time TBD

Flyway Festival Raptor Tour at Rush Ranch
Sunday, Feb. 13, 2011
Time TBD

Lynch Canyon reopens to the public from Feb. 12 to Jun. 26, 2011, on Saturdays and Sundays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Operating hours beyond June 26 are subject to funding. Enjoy Lynch Canyon and show your support!

[More information about events](#)

with us as we move forward.

This land is your land: Explore, play and renew!

Join us for "Holiday at the Ranch" (members only)

Please join us for our annual holiday party, exclusively for Solano Land Trust members, on Thursday, December 9th from 5:00 to 7:30 p.m. at Rush Ranch. When you arrive, you'll find the ranch decked in festive holiday lights and Santa Claus to welcome your children and hear their Christmas wishes. Enjoy hot chocolate, apple cider, fine wines, delicious hors d'oeuvres, and desserts. You may also be the lucky winner of one of our special door prizes! We hope you can join the festivities and be honored for your contributions to Solano Land Trust. Rush Ranch is located approximately two miles south of Highway 12 in Suisun City at 3521 Grizzly Island Road.

Please R.S.V.P. to anne@solanolandtrust.org.

What's a few thousand feet in elevation gain between friends?

Sue Wickham, Project Manager



Artist Susan Schneider captures an image of this stately buckeye.
Photo by Doug Wirtz

Jim Walsh, our loyal and talented King-Swett docent, has been sharing his favorite vistas, rugged hills, and oak woodlands with hikers for over four years. His hikes alternate between the King, Vallejo Swett, and Eastern Swett Ranches, depending on the month (these ranches are collectively known as the King-Swett Ranches).

Last year, Jim had an idea - how about a special hike that would take visitors across all three ranches? Most visitors that hike these properties have never visited all three ranches, let alone trekked across them in one day. He ran the idea by me, and I knew how to make the hike a reality.

This November, Jim and I brought a group of 30 hikers for the first ever Cross-Ranch Hike. Hikers were given two options. They could take an easier interpretive hike through the center of King Ranch up a gradual ridge and into the steep valley of Eastern Swett Ranch, or they could test their

Volunteers Needed

Citizen Science Friday Land Stewardship

3rd Friday of every month
Dec. 17, 2010;
Jan. 21, Feb. 18., 2011
8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Lynch Canyon Land Stewardship

2nd Saturday of every month
Dec. 11, 2010;
Jan. 8, Feb. 12, * 2011
9 a.m. to 12 p.m.

* 25th-Anniversary Volunteer Day

Rush Ranch Land Stewardship
Saturday, Feb. 5, 2011
9 a.m. to 12 p.m.

King-Swett Land Stewardship
25th-Anniversary Volunteer Day
Saturday, Feb. 26, 2011
8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Contact Natalie at
volunteer@solanolandtrust.org
(707) 432-0150 x 200

We also have internship opportunities. Contact Natalie (above) for more information.

Sightings

What: Two white-tailed kites
locked talons and twirled to
the ground

Where: Rush Ranch
When: Early November
Who: Land Steward Ken
Poerner

What: A beautiful day!
Where: Rush Ranch
When: Late November

Who: Rush Ranch Educational
Council Docent Becky Mannion
took her students to the top of
the hill to keep them from
being distracted. She was
distracted by the beautiful day
and is considering planting
some native plants up there.

What: Burrowing owl, red-
tailed hawk and golden eagle
in one spot

Where: King Ranch
When: November 17
Who: Volunteers Linda Sonner,
Maggie Ingalls, and Janet
Mackey

endurance and hike over four ridge tops to the Orchard property and up and out through Blue Rock Springs Park in Vallejo.

It was a cool morning as we began the day viewing the sunrise from the top of King Ranch and peering at the overhead raptors with our early-birder volunteer Mary Beth Crittendon. There was excitement in the air as hikers, many of whom had never visited the area before, gathered to meet hike leaders Jim Walsh, Ken Poerner, Linda Sonner, and me. As the fog swirled, the endurance hikers caught glimpses of Suisun Marsh, Vaca Hills and beyond. The interpretive hikers stopped for Western meadowlarks, and heard stories about the land from Land Steward Ken Poerner and to learn about plants from Docent Kate Mawdsley.

Both groups reached the Orchard in record time and were greeted by volunteers Alan and Alice Plutchok who offered a local organic lunch made by MagPies catering. Robin Leong from Audubon gave the hikers a tour of the Orchards in search of mid-day birds, and Natalie DuMont, Solano Land Trust's volunteer and outreach coordinator, helped organize and shuttle departing hikers to their cars.

Six hardy hikers continued through Vallejo Swett Ranch to Blue Rock Springs Park. They were greeted by a view of the San Francisco Bay to the Golden Gate, and a welcome downhill path to waiting cars.

This hike was such a success that we will do it again on November 5, 2011. Save the date! And remember, you have to be a member to come, so join today!

Discovering owl pellets at Rush Ranch

Aleta George, *Vistas* editor



During a field trip to Rush Ranch to learn about wetland ecology and the Suisun Marsh, UC Berkeley Environmental Studies' students conducted an impromptu lab experiment in the field. After hikes to Suisun Hill and the Patwin Village at the edge of the marsh, the students stood around talking in front of the Kit House.

"Aren't those owl pellets?" asked one of the students as she pointed to a bunch of pellets at the base of the olive tree. For most of us, the pile of pellets would look like dirt clods, but these students had started the day learning about the resident barn owls on the ranch. As they talked, the students peered into the dense foliage of the tree, and spotted a barn owl with its white, heart-shaped face. The student who first noticed the pellets took her penknife and began dissecting one of the pellets and with a little prodding she removed a small rodent skull and a few bones.

Owls, like other birds, eat their food whole. They have no teeth and can't chew their food, so they tear it apart and swallow large chunks. In the owl's digestive tract, the non-digestible food is separated in the gizzard, which forms the harder materials into pellets. The bird must expel the unwanted food (by regurgitating it) before it can take another meal. This waste comes out in the form of pellets.

Several barn owls live at Rush Ranch. They come and go as they please through an opening near the roof, and you can almost always find them snoozing in the rafters if you visit Rush Ranch when the barn doors are open. Barn owls nest in trees and in the owl boxes provided for them in the barn. Most ranch owners encourage barn owls to live on their properties to keep rodent populations down.

Last year, a brood of barn owls was raised in a eucalyptus tree behind the barn. The clutch is usually three to six eggs, which the female incubates for



Green darner dragonfly
Photo by Nicole Byrd

What: Green darner dragonfly
Where: Cross-ranch hike
When: November 6
Who: Executive Director Nicole Byrd



Support your local farmers and ranchers. Click on the image to learn how.

Solano Land Trust has been protecting working farms and natural areas in Solano County since 1986.



Solano Land Trust
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about a month. The parents provide food for the owlets until they fledge at about one month old. It's likely that the barn owl that the students saw in the olive tree was one of these youngsters. Barn owls are short-lived, with a life expectancy of only one-to-two years in the wild.

Are you curious about learning more about owl pellets? Head out to Rush Ranch and conduct your own lab experiment and learn from our interesting resident owls.

In addition to barn owls, Rush Ranch is home to other species of owls. Land Steward Ken Poerner reports that there is at least one pair of great horned owls nesting now. He hasn't seen them, but can hear them in the evening. There's also a confirmed sighting of a wintering burrowing owl.



Join or renew today for your 2011 commemorative calendar!

[Join or renew](#) your membership at any level and receive this beautiful calendar. To order extras for holiday gifts, contact [Anne](#). Individual calendars are \$15 plus shipping.

Tired Horses

by Richard Strong, *Great Basin Poems*

Knowing what's to be done
knowing the horses are tired
the bay mare needs shoes,
(my children need shoes)
the year is getting late and-
great God! The wine is good.

All that is accomplished is living,
getting the hay put up,
cattle off the summer range
in the fall of the year.

Richard Strong has run cattle, served as director of the Nevada State Cattle Association, and worked for the Farm Bureau. He currently lives in Orinda, California, and is a consulting soil scientist. Contact him at voiceofthesoil@gmail.com.

(707) 432-0151 x 209
info@solanolandtrust.org
www.solanolandtrust.org

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