



BIG SUR
LAND TRUST

CELEBRATING 45 YEARS



The Great Backyard Birdwatch and the Pleasures of Noticing

BY JANETTE EDWARDS

There I was, a decidedly non-early bird, shivering at 8:30 on a Saturday morning, along with a group of 15 birders about to embark upon Big Sur Land Trust's February "Great Backyard Birdwatch." They were an impressive bunch, all laser-focused and properly outfitted in layers of cotton and fleece. My thin French sailor's shirt was poor defense against the chill, a lapse in judgement I blame on having been long out of touch with mornings outdoors. Yet I was indifferent to my discomfort: the sun boring slowly through the grey sky assured me we were going to have a spectacular day.

I listened to the group's murmurs and muffled hoots as they spotted favorite birds in the trees across the street. They were so species savvy! I felt a pang of envy as they called out their birds, especially since I, a fledgling, could only spot the always-obvious woodpeckers. Amanda Preece, our knowledgeable and personable naturalist guide, mobilized our migration to Songbird Preserve. As we set off, I looked up to notice—really notice—the lines of meticulously spaced holes encircling the

tree branches. Work of the woodpeckers, Amanda explained, necessary for extracting sap and insects. I was amazed by the eerie symmetry, the deliberateness with which the birds had drilled these bands around the branches. Why were they so perfect? Did the woodpeckers ever make mistakes, or decide to start over? I let loose my own murmur of satisfaction, the kind that comes when something that has long escaped your attention finally captures it. It felt great.

In the preserve, we walked slowly along a path that crossed a small field and briefly followed the Carmel River before looping back to the entrance. Though recent flooding had left bright patches of grass in its wake, the area looked pretty beaten up with confusions of broken, denuded bushes and limbs piled high along the now-receded river. Ignoring the wreckage, Amanda set up her high-powered telescope. Tipped off by the distinctive pattern of lichens on leaves atop the piles of branches, she spied a brooding Anna's Hummingbird in

Continued on page 2

Indigenous Partners: Helping Us Move Forward

It's an exciting time to be working in land conservation because how we care for land is foundational to addressing environmental challenges and many of our socio-economic issues. There's a growing understanding that Indigenous peoples are still very present and active in our communities. Our President & CEO Jeannette Tuitele-Lewis shares how Big Sur Land Trust is partnering with local tribes and Indigenous communities.

We're hearing more and more about Indigenous peoples' involvement in conservation efforts. Why is this collaboration so important?

It is important to distinguish between conservation-related values and the modern American Conservation movement. Indigenous people have been living their conservation-related values since time immemorial. Despite the brutal history of Indigenous slavery, broken treaties, and forced displacement, Indigenous peoples continue to uphold a sacred responsibility to care for the land of their ancestors.

Indigenous involvement in the modern American Conservation movement has grown slowly and steadily. Collaborating with Indigenous groups honors their enduring relationship with the land while creating opportunities to care for the natural and cultural resources of our region. Many land trusts are wondering how to incorporate the best of conservation science with traditional land management practices and multiple ways of understanding the land to improved habitats, wildlife, and communities. As land-based organizations with long-term stewardship obligations, we see land as a solution for addressing many of our environmental and social challenges. Collaborating with the first stewards of the land is a natural fit and long overdue.

How are conservation organizations like Big Sur Land Trust working with tribes?

Transferring land into tribal ownership is just one way that agencies and conservation groups are working with tribes. Other active partnerships in Monterey County include co-stewardship and protection of biological and cultural resources; co-creating education materials that help amplify Indigenous perspectives of place; and cultural and access agreements for ceremony and tribal/cultural gatherings.

Speaking from experience, working with tribes is new for many conservation organizations and we need to learn how to be present in the right way. Conservation groups – especially land trusts – can be very project-driven. Our traditional core work

Continued on page 2

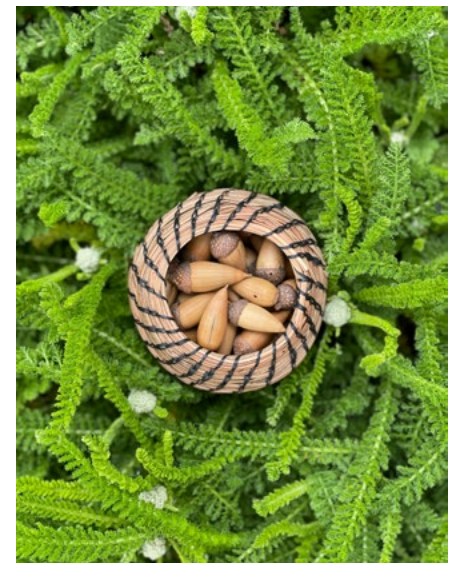




Photo by Bradley Dunbaugh

The Great Backyard Birdwatch and the Pleasures of Noticing

Continued from page 1

her camouflaged nest. We took turns peering through the lens, admiring the tiny, vulnerable creature so bravely protecting her young. It occurred to me that this recent upheaval in nature which had made such a sorry mess may actually have given the birds more and better places to hide. The morning was supplying me with many such counterintuitive thoughts, and I liked it.

By this time we all understood that Amanda possessed a few superpowers. She crouched in front of a tall bush and produced a series of non-human “shoo, shoo, shoo” sounds that flushed several birds out of their shelter. She pointed out a chickadee with its scratchy three-note pulses; she heard a single chirp and cried, “California Towhee!” When I asked her how she knew, she explained the Towhee had a particular sound, “like the squeak a tennis shoe makes when it turns on a gym floor.” Pretty precise and, yes, that was it. With such diversity of birdsong existing in one small area, catching these minute distinctions was, to me, fairly astonishing. Still, if it was the result of regular practice and not simply preternatural

hearing, it added an intriguing dimension to birdwatching, namely the conscious development of noticing, of zeroing in and connecting. Valuable stuff that certainly applies outside a wildlife preserve.

Our morning ended with thank yous all around. I, for one, left with a revised appreciation for Big Sur Land Trust, the Monterey Audubon Society, and all organizations that get us up and out and remembering what an amazing world we live in. Returning to my backyard with its own tangle of trees and bushes, I was greeted by a couple of cranky blue jays, the quail family that scuttles between my house and my neighbor’s, and a sudden chirp behind me that turned out to be my little dog with a squeaky toy, all vying for my attention. I obliged... I noticed. And I look forward to noticing more.

Janette is a volunteer writer for Big Sur Land Trust. A Professor Emeritus of the Defense Language Institute, she is a Monterey resident with a love for the natural world. Amanda Preece is the Environmental Advocate for the Monterey Audubon Society (MAS). Check bigsurlandtrust.org/event for MAS’s birding walks through our nature preserves.

Indigenous Partners: Helping Us Move Forward

Continued from page 1

is steeped in real estate transactions, land-use planning, environmental science, and legal agreements. Although these can be helpful tools, it’s easy for conservation groups to move into “project drive” mode, which can be at odds with Indigenous decision-making processes and often moves faster than the speed at which we can build trust between partners.

I often get asked by colleagues about our work with tribes. One Indigenous leader shared that their tribe was inundated with requests and that sometimes it would be easier to provide information to all the groups at once. To support this effort, Big Sur Land Trust helped bring together a cohort of nine conservation organizations including 28 people who are currently working with tribal partners on various projects and initiatives. In the spring, we launched a learning journey that included a deep dive into the history of Federal Indian Law and California Indigenous history in a conservation context. We gathered in Carmel Valley to ground ourselves in shared values and in our collective commitment to learn and to put our learning into actions that benefit Indigenous partners through our conservation work.

BSLT is working with the Ohlone Costanoan Esselen Nation (OCEN), the Esselen Tribe of Monterey County (ETMC), and several Ohlone cultural groups that are not organized as a tribal government. Depending on the project, we may be working with one tribe or multiple groups. To protect cultural resources during restoration and construction, Indigenous partners are involved in our major green infrastructure efforts including Carmel River FREE and our Carr Lake Park projects. They are also providing guidance on interpretive displays.

Big Sur Land Trust was one of several partners that supported the acquisition and transfer of land back to ETMC. We have been providing technical expertise and advocacy with State funders on other projects. Tribes and cultural groups have held gatherings at Glen Deven Ranch and Mitteldorf Preserve. I am really excited about developing co-stewardship and access agreements with Indigenous partners on BSLT’s nature preserves.

How can people learn more about the Indigenous people of our region?

We are building a list of many good resources that you can find at: bigsurlandtrust.org/indigenous-communities-resources/. I also recommend looking for events hosted by or in partnership with local tribes and Indigenous cultural groups by going directly to their websites.





The Inspiration Behind John Wineglass's *Sacred Land Concerto*

On May 20, the *Sacred Land Concerto for Violin and Orchestra*, commissioned by the Monterey Symphony with support from Big Sur Land Trust, premiered at Sunset Center featuring soloist Edwin Huizinga. The piece started with an intense violin theme that John heard at the beginning of his stay at Big Sur Land Trust's Glen Deven Ranch.

Barbara Rose Shuler's *Intermezzo* column for the *Monterey Herald* described it beautifully, "It was a powerful honoring of the rugged and ancient beauty of our south coastal lands and the Esselen natives whose ancestors have dwelt here for thousands of years...Edwin Huizinga played as if he rose out of the Big Sur earth itself to share its truth in the language of bow and strings, to share the spirit of the land. Esselen tribal chairman Tom Little Bear Nason offered blessings and the haunting music of a redwood flute."



Learn more about the inspiration for this music and why John dedicated the 3rd movement to Lana Weeks, former Director of Development at Big Sur Land Trust.



Celebrating Our Youth Outdoor Programs Funders!

Thank you to our generous funders. You make it possible for us to nurture the next generation's enduring bond to the natural world and inspire conservation-minded leaders. For the past 10 years, over 1,500 youth have been served!

Anonymous | Alaska Airlines | American Camp Association | California Coastal Conservancy
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The IRA Charitable Rollover Gift Annuity Plan: Give from your IRA and receive a lifetime of payments

Donors over 70½ can now receive a lifetime of payments in return for a contribution to Big Sur Land Trust (BSLT) from their IRA account. This gift plan combines a charitable gift annuity and a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) from an IRA. Let's see how it works.

Charitable Gift Annuity – A charitable gift annuity is a simple contract between you and Big Sur Land Trust promising to pay you a fixed amount of money each year for life. The gift annuity contract is issued to you in exchange for your charitable contribution. The amount BSLT will agree to pay you depends upon your age at the time of your gift and does not change for the rest of your lifetime. We invest and manage your contribution and your payments are backed by our financial resources.

Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) – A QCD – or "charitable rollover" – is a contribution from your IRA directly to Big Sur Land Trust. You can make a QCD if you are at least age 70½ at the time of your gift. Unlike other distributions from your retirement accounts, you pay no income tax on a QCD, although there is no charitable deduction for your contribution. However, your QCD contribution counts toward your Required

Minimum Distributions from your IRA without creating taxable income for you.

Charitable Rollover Gift Annuity – Under a new law effective in 2023, some donors can make a QCD in exchange for a charitable gift annuity. There are some rules and limitations:

- You can exercise this option only once during your lifetime
- There is an aggregate limit of \$50,000
- The entire payment you receive from your charitable gift annuity will be subject to income tax
- You can include your spouse as a recipient of the annuity payment
- There is no income tax deduction for this contribution, although there is no tax on the QCD either

For more information, please contact Kate Mitchell Mehle, Director of Development at kmitchell@bigsurlandtrust.org or (831) 886-7813. We would be happy to work with you and your advisors to help determine whether this new option is right for you.



Photo by ROS Volunteer Ben BSMF

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Thank you for a successful Race for Open Space!

During April and May, over 400 people ran, walked, hiked and volunteered at Glen Deven Ranch, Mitteldorf Preserve, Marks Ranch, or one of our special Adventure Courses. Each of these stellar humans generously helped to raise funds supporting Big Sur Land Trust's work throughout Monterey County! We're also grateful to Alvarado Street Brewery for brewing up a delicious batch of Hoppy Hiker beer for our Adventure Course participants and as a fundraiser. We hope to see you at next year's Race for Open Space!



Conservation Excellence



DONOR PRIVACY POLICY: Big Sur Land Trust will not sell, trade or share personal information or send mailings on behalf of other organizations.



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Help us name a new park in Salinas!

We hosted a well-attended community meeting on July 13th to inform residents about the naming process and gather their ideas for the new 73-acre park Big Sur Land Trust is building at Carr Lake in the heart of Salinas.

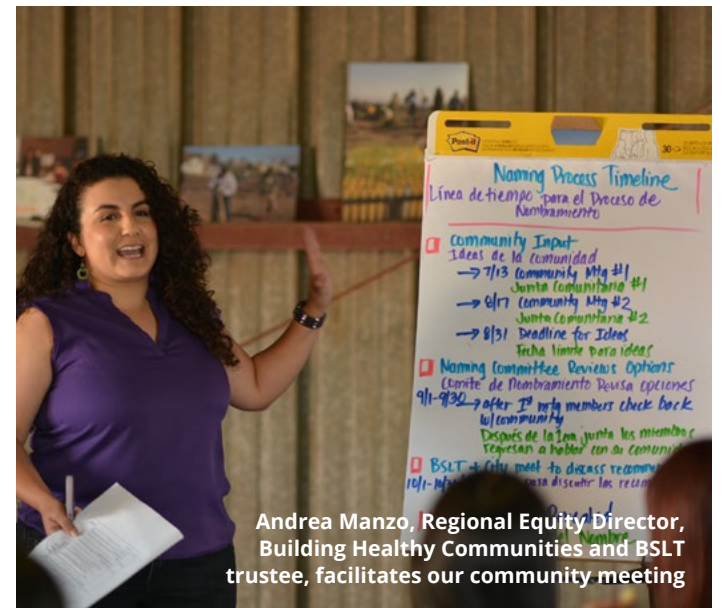
A committee of community members will select the top three names for Big Sur Land Trust and the City of Salinas to consider. The name will be revealed in late 2023 before the six-acre neighborhood park construction begins! To submit your ideas for naming the park, please scan one of the QR codes below before August 31st. Visit bigsurlandtrust.org for more information on the park project and upcoming community meeting dates.



Naming of Future Park at Carr Lake in Salinas



Nombrando Nuestro Futuro Parque en Carr Lake en Salinas



Andrea Manzo, Regional Equity Director, Building Healthy Communities and BSLT trustee, facilitates our community meeting



A tribute to Skip Lloyd

Skip Lloyd's leadership and collaboration on Big Sur Land Trust's board resulted in significant conservation achievements throughout Monterey County. We are saddened by his passing and are deeply honored to have known and worked with him.

During his multiple terms from 1995 through 2003, over 13,000 acres were conserved – most notably, the 9,898-acre Palo Corona Ranch property in 2002. Portions of this land were transferred to Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District to create Palo Corona Regional Park and to the California Dept. of Fish and Wildlife to create the Joshua Creek Ecological Preserve. Some of the other lands conserved under Skip's watch include:

- Land at Odello East from Clint Eastwood and Margaret Eastwood – the future site of a \$56M flood management and biodiversity conservation project co-sponsored by BSLT and the County of Monterey.
- Glen Deven Ranch in Big Sur through a bequest by Dr. Seeley and Virginia Mudd. This year marks the 10th anniversary of summer camps for Salinas Valley youth.
- 125 acres at Martin Dunes in Marina, an amazing dunes habitat restored by BSLT.
- BSLT also acquired the 1,312-acre Point Lobos Ranch property in 1993 and finalized transferring the land in 2003 to CA State Parks to create what is now known as Ishxenta State Park (pronounced "eesh-henta").