

OPEN SPACES

Thoughtful Words From A Founder Of The Ojai Valley Land Conservancy, Ellen Hall

Something about the air here makes me feel at home. Taking a deep breath and walking the riverbed through the Ventura River Preserve electrifies my senses. The pond with its gliding migratory birds at the Ojai Meadows Preserve does the same. It is a comfort, like being in a familiar motherly embrace.

When I arrived in Ojai from Los Angeles in 1980, I was riding my bike down Creek Road and unexpectedly tears welled up at the beauty and the feel of the sycamore and oak lined creek. I thought, "This place needs to be preserved! Maybe it could be made a National Park or a UN Heritage site?" It turned out that others were thinking along the same lines. Our little band of land lovers grew in size and skill until we formed the Ojai Valley Land Conservancy (OVLC) in 1986.

Through the tireless efforts of many, especially Richard Handley, we spent years convincing people that "Open Space" was valuable and as a community we needed to invest

in its future. When the value of our open spaces finally broke through the consciousness of most residents, we purchased and restored the historic wetland next to Nordhoff High School. Then we were on a roll, protecting over 2,000 acres. The Land Conservancy's efforts are now moving down the Ventura River to protect our rare wild river and its banks. But there is still much to be protected.

It is very important for our children to experience the natural world, to roam in nature and have the freedom to explore its rugged and pristine beauty. Properly cultivated, a child's love of nature matures into ecological literacy and we have the next generation of preservationists. What a great legacy we will leave to the children of Ojai if we continue to protect and preserve the open spaces of our extraordinary valley.

To me, the land is sacred and we are its caretakers. The Ojai Valley Land Conservancy is the premiere vehicle for fulfilling the responsibility for this care.

"It's not going to happen tomorrow. But if we start today, in 25 years, we might have something worthwhile, something very precious."

-Former Ojai Mayor Frank McDevitt in 1986 when talking about the OVLC.

The Ones Before Us

A heartfelt thank you from today's Ojai Valley Land Conservancy staff and Board of Directors to all of those who came before us. It is so tempting to call out specific people, but everyone that has ever contributed time or financial support to the organization is to be honored

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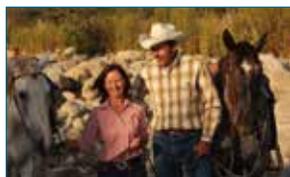


Above: Ellen Hall at an Ojai Valley Land Conservancy event in 2002.



Above: Leanne Campbell, Richard Handley and Harold Glenn accepting volunteer awards in 2005.

Left: Stefanie (long time board member) and Wiley Coeler on the Ventura River Preserve with their horse friends in 2008.



Ojai Valley Land Conservancy

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Above: Grateful OVLC staff at a recent team meeting. From left to right, back row: Ron Singer, Darcy Gamble, Brad Meiners; Middle row: Greg Gamble, Marti Reid, Brian Stark, Betty Bisaccia, Lorraine Walter; Front row: Todd Bertola, Rick Bisaccia, and Lauren Ward.

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this 25th year. Thank you to the Founders, early Advisory Council and Board of Directors. Thank you to all of the business sponsors, donors and volunteers, past and present, without whom there would be no Ojai Meadows Preserve, Ventura River Preserve or land conservation precedent. Trail work is difficult and we have a steady crew of volunteers who keep the preserves safe for us to use. We are grateful to these unsung heroes of recreation.

There are a few supporters who have left us along the way for various reasons and we, as a collective group, are sorry for letting that happen. If you choose to become members again we will make you proud. Thankfully the Ojai Valley is full of great causes, all of them contributing to what is special about the valley.

Please join us September 8, 2012 from 4pm to 8pm at the Ojai Meadows Preserve (details on page 5) to give thanks to the people who came before us in hopes of inspiring our children to continue what our parents began. Happy 25th Birthday Ojai Valley Land Conservancy! We are humbled by the Land Conservancy's community and honored to be a part of it today and into the future.

The Ojai Valley Land Conservancy's goal is to protect an additional 2,020 acres by 2020, adding to the roughly 2,000 acres already conserved. By then the conservation education center at the, not yet open, Ventura River Steelhead Preserve will be a bustling hub of research and educational activity for all ages. We will be adding new trails, trail connections and it is our hope that the Ojai Meadows Preserve will be a wildflower destination spot each spring. Raise a glass to all the benefits we derive from community supported open space.

New Bridge Makes Meadows Preserve More Accessible!

After over a decade of transformational improvements, the Ojai Meadows Preserve finally received a long needed bridge. This bridge allows people of all mobility levels to complete the interpretive loop trail at the preserve. The bridge also serves as a perch for wildlife and a wildlife viewing area for meadow visitors.

Please join OVLC in thanking two anonymous donors who, with their generosity, got the bridge project off the ground. Without this lead gift there would not be a bridge today. We also owe thanks to numerous individual donors and the following: Ojai Valley Lions Club, Carpinteria Lions Club, Consol Enterprises, Specialty Crane, Mar Landscaping, Ojai Sanitary District, Ojai Lumber and to Dave Hunt for serving as the project manager.

Speaking of bridges, the OVLC has heard from residents of Meiners Oaks that they too need a bridge in order to access the large pond area for wildlife viewing. There is a large drainage ditch which is not owned by the Ojai Valley Land Conservancy that splits the Ojai Meadows Preserve. Meiners Oaks and Besant Meadow are on the west side of the preserve and the wetland is on the east side of the preserve near Nordhoff High School. The staff at the OVLC hears you and is open to suggestions from the community about how to get this done.

Greg Gamble and Ojai Lions Club's Doug & Tami Winbury, Dave Hunt, Jay McArthur and some family members, and Carpinteria Lion Mike Dawson.



Steelhead Preserve Education & Conservation Center One Step Closer To Becoming Reality



Above: The not yet open Ventura River Steelhead Preserve at last July's community celebration. Buildings in background will be used as the Education & Conservation center serving Ojai Valley, Ventura and surrounding communities.

The State Coastal Conservancy in May awarded the Ojai Valley Land Conservancy \$111,000 for the design and permitting of an education and conservation center at the Ventura River Steelhead Preserve. This brings OVLC to roughly \$200,000 raised of our original \$250,000 goal for the Steelhead Preserve Campaign. An important factor in the Coastal Conservancy's decision was the community's demonstrated support for the campaign by contributing roughly \$100,000 to date. As part of discussions with the Coastal Conservancy, and if the OVLC can raise an additional \$50,000 in the

community, the OVLC has been invited to request an additional \$189,000 for the facilities and site modifications necessary to establish the Education & Conservation Center. More than a thousand elementary school students use OVLC preserves each year for environmental education, and this facility will enable OVLC to expand this number and enhance our successful "Wild About Ojai" educational program for the entire community. **Please consider a generous gift to the Steelhead Preserve campaign to enable OVLC to open the preserve and the education & conservation center to the public.**



Bush poppy at Ventura River Preserve

Thousands Of Plant Babies Need Your Help

The Ojai Meadows Preserve nursery exists to grow cuttings of

native plants which will ultimately save the OVLC from spending money on new plants. Ron Singer, the part-time nursery manager at the Ojai Meadows Preserve, and his helpers are preparing for fall planting by raising thousands of plants through potting and nurturing cuttings and sprouted seeds. The late rains and long sunny days brought a flush of growth to our local plants. This growth and the nursery crew's hard work helped fill nursery cutting trays.

Deerweed, a perennial favorite of butterflies and an important pioneer species in Ojai Valley's chaparral, has been the nursery's great-



From left to right: southwestern willow flycatcher and a clay colored sparrow.

Two New Birds Spotted At The Ojai Meadows Preserve

Recently, two new bird species were recorded at the Ojai Meadows Preserve. There are now 176 species on record who use the meadows in some way or another. Thirty-six breeding species are documented. The southwestern willow flycatcher is a federally endangered species so when our bird sources confirmed its presence we were all excited. Why not become an expert on the birds of the Ojai Meadows Preserve? You can begin by downloading the latest Ojai Meadows bird checklist online at ovlc.org/preserves/ojai-meadows-preserve/.



Ventura River Preserve on a very pretty overcast day in June. Photo by Les Dublin,

est success. The nursery crew's work gathering seeds last summer and fall is paying off through thousands of young plants in 2 inch pots.

The crew is also excited about the success of the young bush poppy, toyon and mountain mahogany. Thank you volunteers Sara Termond, Ava Schleder, Kaitlyn Simpson, and Molly, Adetije and Curt. If you or someone you know is interested in native plant cultivation or you just want to get your hands in the soil for a good cause, please contact Nursery Manager, Ron Singer at singer86@gmail.com.

Upcoming OVLC Events - Mark Your Calendars

Wildland Fire Prediction & Technology: Wild About Ojai

August 4, 10 am: Attend a morning of cutting-edge information about wildland fires. Presented by Ojai's own Doug Campbell wildland fire specialist and his colleague, Bruce Schubert, wildland fire prediction model technologist. A sneak peak of the prediction software is located at www.emxsys.com. RSVP before July 30th by calling OVLC's office (805) 649-6852 x2 or at marti@ovlc.org.

Blue Moon Walk & Champagne Sipping *Special event

August 31, 8:30 pm to 11:00 pm: An event like this only happens once in a blue moon! Join Rick Bisaccia and Darcy Gamble for a gentle stroll under full moonlight on the Ventura River Preserve. Meet at the Old Baldwin trailhead. Participation is limited to 16 guests and the cost to walk and sip is \$25.00 per person for members and non members alike. RSVP before August 24th by calling OVLC's office (805) 649-6852 x6 or at darcy@ovlc.org.



25th Birthday Party on the Meadow

September 8, 4 pm to 8 pm: If you had a good time at last summer's Steelhead Preserve celebration then you will definitely want to join this party. Details on page 5 and the back cover. Just \$25.00 for 25 years gets you food, entertainment, and a possible introduction to OVLC's special guests. Members are welcome at no charge if you bring your own chairs and food. Tickets must be purchased before August 31st to get advance pricing. Please RSVP.

The Chaparral Ecosystem: Wild About Ojai *Back by popular demand

October 6, 10 am talk and 12 pm walk: Richard Halsey, Director of the California Chaparral Institute will present on Ojai's remarkable shrubland wilderness, after which he will lead a hike on the Ventura River Preserve. Meet at OVLC's headquarters at 10 am for the talk and 11:45 am at the Old Baldwin trailhead for the walk. Please RSVP before September 29th by calling OVLC's office (805) 649-6852 x2 or at marti@ovlc.org.

OVLC Native Plant Sale

October 6, 1 pm: The nursery at the Ojai Meadows Preserve is prolific and OVLC would love to offer some home-grown natives for sale at excellent prices to the community. This plant sale will be at the Old Baldwin Trailhead. If you attend the Chaparral Ecosystem Wild About Ojai event the plants will be set up for your shopping pleasure after your walk. Plants may included California fuschia, sages, purple nightshare and more.

OVLC Movie Premier

Fall 2012! The upcoming OVLC movie is in production and will celebrate the 25 year history of the Ojai Valley Land Conservancy.

Annual Appeal Kick Off (end of year)

November 1, the Ojai Valley Land Conservancy will keep with its long standing tradition of mailing an end of year greeting and support solicitation. In 2012 OVLC is doing more conservation work than ever. At the end of the year please consider a gift beyond your recent spring membership contribution.

Fall Herb Walk with Lanny Kaufer at the Ojai Meadows Preserve: Wild About Ojai

November 3, 9:30 am to 11:30 am: Learn about native plants with Lanny Kaufer. More about Ojai and southern California herb walks at herbwalks.com. Meet at the Highway 33 turnout just west of Nordhoff High School. Bring binoculars and note-taking materials. This event is free to current members and \$10.00 for non-members.

Blue Moon Event

An event like this happens once in a blue moon! In 7 out of every 19 years, 2 full moons will fall in the same calendar month. The second of the month's two full moons is popularly referred to as a blue moon. The next blue moon by this definition will happen on August 31, 2012.

\$25 per person includes a guided hike by nighttime naturalist Rick Bisaccia and a gentle 2 mile stroll followed by a picnic of champagne/Martinelli's and fine chocolate. Only 16 people can participate, so sign up before it sells out. Meet at the Old Baldwin trailhead at 8:30 pm.

Must be happy sitting on a blanket on a river beach. No dogs or people under age 21 allowed. Please RSVP with payment before August 24th to Darcy at (805) 649-6852 x6.

HAPPY 25TH BIRTHDAY OVLC!

You are invited to OVLC's birthday party.

Where: Near the eucalyptus grove at the Ojai Meadows Preserve.

When: September 8, 2012, 4 pm until the dancing ends.

Who: All OVLC members (new memberships are included with purchase of a meal ticket.)

Cost: \$25 per person for prepaid ticket - includes entertainment and barbeque *Event is free for members who bring their own food and chair. \$35 at the door.

Mail in registration form on the back of this newsletter or call to purchase tickets. Tickets will be emailed.



Each ticket is \$25.00 - that is \$1 a year for the past 25 years!

Ticket includes chicken, tri-tip, garlic bread, salad and beans and entertainment into the night!

No-host Bar.
\$4.00 per New Belgium microbrew
\$4.00 per glass of Old Creek Ranch wine
\$1.00 for soda
Free lemonade and water.



Special reading of Dr. Suess' *The Lorax* by actor Carol Garramone at the reading circle.

Special surprise guests will mix and mingle with guests of all ages.



John & Carmel Whitman of Old Creek Ranch Winery are sponsoring the wine.



Live Music!

Old Creek Ranch Wine & New Belgium Beer!

Dancing!

Raffle!

Barbeque!

Face Painting!

Kids Tattoos!

Special Guests!

4:00: Party begins.

4:15 to 5:15: Meadow nursery and restoration update tours.

4:00: Bar opens.

4:30: The Lorax read by Carol Garramone.

4:30 to 5:00: Music by Smitty and Julija.

5:00 to 5:30: A look back on the past 25 years and awards.

5:30 to 6:30: Barbeque open.

5:30 to 6:00: Music by Smitty and Julija.

6:00: The band *Action Down* gets the party started. actiondown.com

6:45: Happy birthday song, cake cutting, raffle winners announced.

Dance into the night to celebrate community supported open space.

OVLC's Board Of Directors Grows

OVLC welcomes **Sandy Buechley** who moved to Ojai in 1964. Here she raised two now grown sons who attended Monica Ros, San Antonio and Nordhoff.

Sandy's sons and their families are frequent guests to the Ojai home of their childhood and they all have a passion for the outdoors, the mountains, trails and the beauty of the Ojai Valley. They also love their current homes in the mountains of Colorado and Utah.



While her children were young, Sandy managed the business office for Monica Ros School and later assisted in establishing, building and managing the Ojai Valley Racquet Club (now known as the Ojai Valley Athletic Club). Sandy has spent the last 30 years at Patagonia.

Sandy and her late husband, George, shared a deep appreciation for the work of the OVLC and have been friends and supporters for nearly ten years.

OVLC also welcomes new Director **Ann Oppenheimer**. Ann, a retired corporate meeting planner and publisher of resource guides for special events has loved Ojai since the 1940s.

Ann first came to Ojai when her grandparents moved to the valley and began ranching. She's thrilled to be a part of protecting the "views, trails, water & wildlife" that her grandparents fought so fervently to preserve. Now her grandchildren are discovering the many treasures the Ojai Valley holds.

She and her husband Harry, split their time between their home in Ojai and their farm outside of Chicago. Together they enjoy tennis, swimming and hiking the many gorgeous trails surrounding Ojai.



2012 OVLC Business Sponsors

This year OVLC began to simplify business sponsorships in the same way membership renewals are being streamlined. Now instead of rolling business sponsorship renewals, OVLC's spring sponsor drive deadline is May 31st. At the beginning of June the large traveling banner is ordered and sponsorship placement is then determined for the event which takes place in the summer or fall of each year. Sponsors will be announced each summer in the Ojai Valley News. This year we have some exciting additions and some sad departures. Take a gander at our open space loving businesses to the right.

Welcome New Staff

Lauren Ward works on the restoration field crew.

Raised in Ojai she has long had an interest in Chumash culture, backpacking, the Sespe, nature study and photography, which she shares



with her son Iain and daughter Layla.

She has also worked for the City of Ventura's interpretive outreach program, teaching children about local and natural history. In addition to OVLC, she works part time at Lynda.com.

Brad Meiners also works on the restoration field crew. Brad has a deep knowledge of local plants. He is also interested in geology, local backcountry history, natural history and photography. Brad has worked in various roles for the US Forest Service in the Ojai and the Mount Pinos Ranger Districts. He has been a firefighter, wilderness ranger and a tree climber to name a few.

The third member of the restoration field crew is Todd Bertola who was introduced in last summer's newsletter. We are very proud of Todd, Lauren and Brad for their exceptional restoration interest, knowledge and hard work even when the sun gets hot!

THANK YOU BUSINESS SPONSORS

VENTURA RIVER LEVEL
Patagonia

OJAI MEADOWS LEVEL
Old Creek Ranch Winery
Rabobank

SAN ANTONIO LEVEL
Channel Islands Sportfishing

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Ojai Valley Inn & Spa
Ojai Community Bank
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Associates

Vintage Production California

SULPHUR MOUNTAIN LEVEL

Barnhart & Barnhart Insurance

Heritage Financial
Index Fresh

Meiners Oaks Ace Hardware

New Oak Ranch

Ojai Rexall Drugs

The Oaks at Ojai

Waite, Jacobs & Atkinson,
(Attorneys at Law)

Wildland Fire Specialists, LLC

IN-KIND SPONSORS

bitVision

New Belgium Brewing Co.

Frameworks of Ojai

Ojai Phone Book

Ojai Valley Directory

Ojai Valley Lions Club

Ojai Valley News



New Members From March 6 - July 6

Bill Brothers & Susie Ault
Gene Beery
Nellie & Chris Cohen
Linda Compat
Larry Smith &
Dorothy Dron-Smith
Les & Donna Dublin
Nancy Escher
Milan & Sandra Fiala
Donna Freiermuth
Juleby & Paola Hirsch
Sabine Hoppner
Richard & Carole Keller
Jerry Maryniuk & Diane Bertoy
Peter Stazicker & Jinx McCune
Ira Minor
Patrick Praetorius
Citrus Glen Elementary PTA
Emily Thomas
Jeanette Gardner &
Jim Townley
Mike & Marsha Vaughan
Teresa Wadlington
Dorothy Wallstein
Greg & Mary Wood

Memorials

From Emily Fay, Lorene Rose
Jarvis, Betty & Rebecca Jones
in memory of **Virginia Unruhe**

From Alice Ragland in memory
of **Earl Ragland**

Thank you 4th of July Volunteers

Donna Turner, Gerald Kam,
Jamie Weil, Kevin Grigsby,
Marti & Dan Reid, Todd Bertola,
Lauren Ward, Ruth Walker and
family, Larry Rose & Lisa Lar-
ramendy and Trevor & Monica
Marshall

“Like” OVLC’s Facebook Page

We know that social networking is not everyone’s cup of tea, but for some it is an easy way to connect to the people and groups around them. The Ojai Valley Land Conservancy has a Facebook page with 475 people who “Like” the page and in turn receive a feed of OVLC posts. Our Preserve Manager, Rick Bisaccia recently became an administrator of the page and now you can have regular access to what is happening on the preserves. He posts several times a week about wildlife, trails, and other preserve topics.

Meiners Oaks School Wins Eco Challenge

This article was *copied verbatim* from www.greenribbonschools.org/activity-detail.php?id=1088 used for the OVLC newsletter in hopes that more people will know about the amazing things being done in the Ojai schools to teach about nature. All of the schools in Ojai have become green ribbon schools.

While becoming a green ribbon school the Meiners Oaks School hiked, bird watched, and observed the Ojai Meadows Preserve adjacent to their campus. The following program won them the eco challenge awarded. This article including photos can be found at

“Our Ojai Valley Land Conservancy, 58 acres, Ojai Meadows Preserve

This expansive protected area is next door to our campus. It is convenient and a wonderful opportunity to get exercise and learn at the same time. We tried to go twice a month, during Physical Education class. Other classes went once a month, or once a trimester. Before we entered the preserve we reviewed rules of respect, silence, walking at all times, and to use our senses to evaluate our surroundings.

Adding an activity to each hike helped peak interest in the students and led them to continue involvement in an expedition manner. The field guides were simple and small. We put students in groups of 6-8, one carried a backpack with supplies for

their group in ziploc bags. They had field guides which they recorded and drew what they saw, heard, smelled, and felt. We also made bird watching kits which contained a bird checklist, bird identification chart, pencils, and binoculars. The bird watching groups were 3 students to a kit. They really enjoyed each of these activities. They did them several times at different areas of the preserve. When engaged in task they recorded with their groups on the recording documents, this gave evidence of understanding and mastery. This also reflected quiet moments in time where as individuals they observed and relayed many different and exciting discoveries

For management purposes we did permission slips far in advance, made sure they all had water, sunscreen, and hats if necessary. We had 2 adults for 2 classes, one in the front of the group, and one in the back. This also gave opportunities to the special needs students who joined us many times and enjoyed all aspects of the hikes.

About halfway through the year the students’ really looked forward, and still do, to our hikes. Their enthusiasm, recorded data, respect of animal habitat, and enjoyment of their surroundings was evident. Once we entered the preserve an ownership took place, and they became protectors, and showed passion to continue restoration and preservation.

One of our last hikes involved a cross-age student pairing. The sixth grade took their Little Buddy class, Kindergartner and First Graders, to the meadows. They held their hands and led them to a place that they now knew well, and were anxious to teach them all they had learned. On this day we saw two adult egrets and their baby. We also had a red-tailed hawk circling above us. This was a magical moment and drew such excitement from the students and adults.

This nature adventure cornerstone has many possibilities. Students have suggested to do animal prints with plaster a paris, sketching, drawing animals, plants, and doing plant identification. All grades are involved with the meadows in some aspect, whether it be exploring, planting, observing, recording, restoring and respecting. *continued on page 8...*

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

...*Meiners Oaks from page 7*

In our final Green Ribbon Schools assembly we wrote a motto, "It takes a Village to Pay It Forward". This was true for this cornerstone, each grade adapted the environment for their level. We also attached a song, "Shrek", and the characters from this film to this activity. Shrek, Donkey, and Puss n' Boots were made with posters to help students remember the association between nature adventure and our neighbor, Ojai Meadows Preserve. The sixth graders played the song on the violins, and they did a skit on bird watching and being observant.

This cornerstone was very successful at Meiners Oaks School. All students participated and were able to benefit from this wonderful preserve."



OVLC Birthday Party Tickets

I, _____, would like to purchase _____ tickets at \$25.00 each for a total of \$ _____.

Please email/mail my tickets to me at _____.
If this purchase includes tickets for people other than the names on your OVLC account please list the names of each additional attendee below.



- Check enclosed payable to OVLC
- Credit card # _____
- Visa MasterCard American Express,
- Exp date _____ Signature _____

* Purchase of ticket includes a membership to the OVLC if one is not already a member. Buy a ticket for someone who is not a member; include their name above, and they will be welcomed as a new member. Please include their full name, address, and phone or email of possible. *This event is free if you bring your own food and chair.* **RSVPs regardless of ticket purchase are appreciated. Tickets are for dinner and entertainment and proceeds support OVLC's work.**

CALL FOR TICKETS OVER THE PHONE AND TO RSVP.



Come see the Ojai Meadows Preserve at dusk and enjoy what nature has to offer after 25 years of love. Photo by Les Dublin

RENEWED YOUR MEMBERSHIP? Please renew before the OVLC birthday party on September 8, 2012. Call 649-6852 to check your status.