

OPEN SPACES

Ojai Valley Land Conservancy

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Daunting, Difficult, and Dramatically Rewarding Was the Creation of the Valley View Preserve

- Rick Bisaccia's First Hand Account

"As a reward for all of the hard work that led to opening up the new Valley View Preserve, Rick Bisaccia the most critical OVLC staff member in the field, was asked to write about the preserve opening odyssey. Whether you are hiking the trails or just gazing at the view from downtown, it is my hope that these reflections will enhance your enjoyment of the Valley View Preserve." Greg Gamble, Executive Director

The words, "Uh, I think there might be bears in here...." isn't exactly what you want to hear when you're crawling on your hands and knees under thick brush scouting a new trail for what was about to become the Valley View Preserve.

Back in December when OVLC was beginning to raise the money to buy Valley View, Executive Director Greg Gamble had an idea of what it would take to open the place to public use. He knew it would take considerable time and effort so he directed me to "get going" hoping for a June opening.

On an unseasonably warm New Year's Day 2013, OVLC trail volunteers Mike Gourley, trail guide author Craig Carey a couple of friends ,and I began the task of pathfinding what was to become the Fox Canyon Trail. While scouting it out, often on our hands and knees, we passed bear beds in the middle of the old trail. We also skirted and sometimes stepped in avocado induced bear scat. Carey and crew flagged and filmed, while Gourley and I snipped here and there, allowing the passage of upright humans. Because today's trail is so clear and open it is difficult for anyone to imagine the trail's dramatic transformation.

next page...



OVLC Preserve Manager Rick Bisaccia leads the way. Photo by Les Dublin



Inaugural hike after the June 15, 2013 trailhead opening. Scores of people headed up the Fox Canyon Trail. Photo by Les Dublin

CAUSE FOR CELEBRATION

...continued from the front cover

Though previously unnamed, the Fox Canyon Trail was originally surveyed and built in 1984, one year before the devastating Wheeler fire, under the supervision of John Boggs of the Ojai District of the United States Forest Service (USFS). The ravages of the fire and the subsequent erosion on denuded hillsides in addition to the property owner pulling his permission for public access led to the trail's demise. Twenty seven years later, by the time we were exploring in the footsteps of black bears, the trail had all but disappeared on the flinty, southern exposure above Shelf Road. Thankfully, the trail at the highest elevations had more or less been protected by a bushy ground cover.

That New Year's Day evening, after coming off the hill, some of us passed around a plastic bottle of Carey's single malt whiskey and lamented while being simultaneously enthused about how much raw work was yet to be done to make the trails a reality. We were struck by the feeling that 2013 was going to be exciting not only for us, but for recreationalists, neighbors, and Ojai visitors alike.

Once I had the go ahead I assembled a seasoned volunteer trail crew that spent many days working and sweating to turn our dreams into reality. I will never forget looking down at Shelf Road and wondering just how we would succeed in building a trail on the steep brush choked hillsides. By putting our backs into the work and taking one small step at a time, slowly the trails emerged.

OVLC also employed USFS packer/trails builder and CREW supervisor Mike Vaughan to build the lower section of the Fox Canyon Trail just above the trailhead on Shelf Road. For 3 weeks, Vaughan and a variety of strong young men and a woman from CREW toiled to wrest the trail out of the hillside. Ultimately they were successful in making a beau-

tiful thing to behold and to walk upon.

In the meantime other work was needed to turn the new preserve into a usable recreational amenity for the public. Together with members of the OVLC restoration field crew we planted signs and benches, built small spur trails going to the benches and hauled and installed directional signage throughout the preserve. While the property was in escrow I assembled everything possible, and with the help of Marti Reid, OVLC's Office Manager, we designed and produced custom preserve signs and decals. For weeks my wife and I stared out at the trailhead kiosk which sat in our backyard as I built it, all the while the chickens were wondering what it was doing in their space. When we finally moved the kiosk to Shelf Road on a flat bed dump truck it took ten people to move and erect the giant structure. There was also pipe, a barbed wire fence, chain-link fencing and other detritus of former years to remove from the preserve which was done by staff and members of Americorps, a domestic version of the Peace Corps.

I've had people come up to

me in town ecstatic about the new trails, the views and quality of the place, and I know then that all our hard work and the remarkable support of the Ojai community paid off in being able to protect and enjoy another piece of the paradise we get to call home.

Below is of the trail leading to the Oso Trailhead on the Ventura River Preserve (VRP). If you want some cool hiking this summer check out the highlands (Wills and Rice Canyons) on the VRP. Photo by Les Dublin



Below is the acknowledgement sign which includes all of the Valley View donors. If you contributed to the campaign, please take a look at this list with a magnifying glass to make sure you are represented accurately. One error was found internally and there must be more. We are collecting a list of corrections to be made at some point in the future. Please forgive our imperfections and embrace our humor.

Go to www.ovlc.org/2013/06/donorsign to actually see this sign.



Happy 10th Birthday Ventura River Preserve!

Just 10 years ago in June, OVLC's then Executive Director Jim Engel proudly announced that OVLC closed escrow on 2.5 square miles, which was going to be called the Ventura River Preserve-Rancho El Nido. Most people today refer to this special place as the Ventura River Preserve (VRP) or simply the river bottom.

In 2003 the acquisition of the Ventura River Preserve was the biggest protection effort ever by a land trust in Ventura County. The purchase was made possible by roughly \$800,000.00 local donor dollars and a \$3.1 million dollar grant from the California Coastal Conservancy. The property remained closed to the public for months after the closing as the

Conservancy worked to build trails and complete a resource management plan.

Thousands of hikers, bikers and equestrians have enjoyed the miles of trails made available to them through work done by then Engel, then Preserve Manager Janet Hanstad and OVLC's then Board of Directors led by Jim Jackson. Incidentally, despite Jim Engel and his family taking up residence in New Jersey he still supports the protection of the Ojai Valley and attended the trailhead opening of the new Fox Canyon Trail at the Valley View Preserve on June 15, 2013. Today through improving trails and amenities the OVLC continues to improve recreation at the Ventura River Preserve. Current Preserve Manager Rick Bisaccia and his cadre of trail volunteers do an outstanding job looking out for the

safety and usability of the widely used nature preserve.

There is also major restoration going on at the Ventura River Preserve. Along with the realignment of Rice Creek, tentative plans and funding may have OVLC removing and replanting the historic orange grove within the next year.

Ten years after the purchase of the Ventura River Preserve-Rancho El Nido, almost to the day, Executive Director Greg Gamble and Preserve Manager Rick Bisaccia cut the ribbon opening the Fox Canyon Trailhead at the new Valley View Preserve. This new purchase brings total OVLC preserved lands to over 2,000 acres. The enduring legacy of OVLC's work is that its protected lands are not just protected for 10 years or 20 years, but forever.

CELEBRATE: Nearly 150 new households joined the Ojai Valley Land Conservancy in the past 6 months.

Announcing OVLC's Annual Event - September 14, 2013

Let's come together to welcome and celebrate all the new OVLC members at this annual OVLC tradition.

When: Sat., Sept. 14, 2013, 3:00 PM

Where: Ojai Meadows Preserve in the Eucalyptus Grove

Who: All current OVLC members

Cost: \$20.00 per person for prepaid ticket - includes food and entertainment.

Buying Tickets: Buy tickets online (see link in center column) or there is a mail in registration form on the back of this newsletter. You may also call to purchase tickets (805) 649-6852 x2. Tickets will be emailed and are needed to eat.

* Event is free for members who bring their own food and chair. Food is \$30.00 at the door.

ENTERTAINMENT

Dr. Marc Irving Weber composer and guitarist will entertain OVLC members from 3:00 to 7:00 PM.. Prepared to be dazzled by his classical acoustic guitar.



Marc has composed for orchestra, band, mixed ensembles, choirs, and a variety of solo instruments. His live music reflects this training, but also draws from jazz, folk, blues, rock -- even Near and Far Eastern influences. His music is a rich tapestry woven from these diverse threads into a unified whole, hypnotic and compelling. Marc is available for performances and can be reached at 661-993-2540 or at drmarcweber@yahoo.com.

No-host Bar

\$4 per New Belgium microbrew
\$4 per glass of wine
\$1 per soda
Free lemonade and water

RAFFLE

Donations welcome.

MENU

Garden and chicken burritos, chips and salsa, and salad will be provided by Jim and Robs Fresh Grill for \$20.00 a ticket. Dessert will be provided by Cafe Emporium Bakery. Please purchase your tickets online at ovlc.org or by calling (805) 649-6852 or by mailing the form on the back of this newsletter.



Upcoming OVLC Events - Mark Your Calendar

Sat., July 20 - Wildlife Tracking Class - Wild About Ojai

Meet at 8:00, to 11:00 AM, at the Old Baldwin Trailhead at the Ventura River Preserve for a fun and informative morning. This is an interactive program with the Channel Islands Tracking Club. Learn the basics of animal tracking and animal sign identification. Please bring a sun hat and water. Must RSVP to marti@ovlc.org or call (805) 649-6852 x2 before July 18th. Free for members and \$10.00 for non-members. *30 maximum participants*

Sat., August 10 - Leapin' Lizards - Wild About Ojai

Meet at OVLC headquarters at HELP of Ojai's West Campus, 370 W Old Baldwin Road, A4 from 10:00 to Noon for a presentation called, "Leapin' Lizards and Other Cold Blooded Friends". This session is offered by Herpetologist Dr. Lawrence Hunt. Must RSVP to marti@ovlc.org or call (805) 649-6852 x2. Free for members and \$10.00 for non-members.

Sat., September 14 - OVLC Annual Member Celebration

From 3:00 to 7:00 PM at the Ojai Meadows Preserve, the OVLC will hold its annual celebration. This year's focus will be on celebrating OVLC members. Almost 150 new member families joined the ranks in the past 6 months; let's welcome them and show them a good time. Event details located on page 3 of this newsletter. Food tickets available, otherwise this is a free event for current OVLC members. Please RSVP either way.

Sat., October 5 - Native Plant Sale

Join OVLC plant expert and Nursery Manager, Ron Singer at the Ojai Meadows Preserve Nursery from 9:00 AM to Noon for a native plant sale. Signs pointing the way will be posted at S. Lomita and Besant Rd. No parking on Besant Rd.

Sat., October 12 - Intro to Orienteering – Wild About Ojai

Join us for an "Introduction to Orienteering" with OVLC Conservation Director Brian Stark. Meet at the Oso Road Trailhead at the Ventura River Preserve at 8:45 AM sharp. The class will take place from 9:00 to 12:00 PM. Please bring a hat, water and an orienteering compass. (*only if you have one*) Learn how to read a topographic map, how to use a compass and how to use the two together by testing your skills on an actual orienteering course. Must RSVP to marti@ovlc.org or call (805) 649-6852 x2 before Oct 10th. Free for members and \$10.00 for non-members. *25 maximum participants*

Sun., November 3- Ojai's Night Sky - Wild About Ojai

6:00 to 9:00 PM, Astronomy: Ojai's Incredible Night Skies with Moorpark College Professor Hal Jandor. Meet in OVLC's office parking lot at 370 W Baldwin Rd. In case of rain the event will be re-scheduled to Saturday November 9 same time and place. Must RSVP; free for members and \$10.00 for non-members.

Sat., November 9 - PAD YATRA: A Green Odyssey

At 3:00 PM at the Ojai Playhouse Theater OVLC will host *PAD YATRA: A Green Odyssey* as part of the Ojai Film Festival. Tickets available from OVLC or the Ojai Film Festival. Buy them early from OVLC at ovlc.org or by using the form on the back of this newsletter to ensure you get your ticket. See details on the next page and back cover.

Sat., December 7- Wild About Ojai

8:30 to 10:30 AM, Winter Migration Bird Walk at the Ojai Meadows Preserve led by expert Jesse Grantham. Must RSVP; free for members and \$10.00 for non-members.



Weather in the Ojai Valley from OVLC's Ilvento Preserve. Photo by Les Dublin



View of Thatcher School's Gymkhana Field. Photo by Les Dublin



Heading up the trail at OVLC's Ilvento Preserve. Photo by Les Dublin

Below is a photo of some weather conditions during the Pad Yatra. padyatrafilm.com Details on page 5.



Last Year of Conservation Tax Benefit?

“Tax incentives for donations of conservation easements have never been better than they are in 2013” according to Steve Small, an attorney who is a national expert in land conservation. Mr. Small says this because of the elevated tax rates in the higher tax brackets, and the growing belief that Congress will allow the expiration of a special tax benefit at the end of 2013.

The tax benefit Mr. Small is referring to is the “enhanced” deductibility of the value of donated conservation easements. Conservation easements are voluntary, permanent land use restrictions which protect the open space values on land by precluding certain types of land uses. More information can be found on OVLC’s website or by calling Greg Gamble at OVLC’s office, but in a nutshell for most taxpayers charitable contributions are deductible up to 30% of adjusted gross income (AGI) over 6 years. But for donated conservation easements of sufficient value, a typical landowner can deduct up to 50% of their AGI for up to 16 years. Farmers and ranchers can deduct up to 100% of their AGI for up to 16 years for agricultural conservation easements which require the landowner to keep land available for farming and ranching. Consult with your tax and legal advisors about your particular situation.

If you are curious about whether or not your land would qualify, or if you want to know how this might work for your land, contact Greg Gamble at the OVLC office for a confidential consultation. A variety of lands may qualify, but examples of OVLC priority lands include:

- Land / parcels of any size which are at least partially in the floodplain of the Ventura River, San Antonio Creek, Matilija Creek, North Fork Matilija Creek, and potentially other smaller creeks.
- Working farm or ranch land.
- Open space / semi-natural raw land. Usually larger parcels are required to qualify as “open space”, but certain circumstances like proximity to other open land can help smaller parcels qualify.
- Ridgelines and hillsides.

In order to qualify for the enhanced deductibility, the donation must occur before December 31st. Because an appraisal and other documents need to be prepared, the process of donating an easement can take 3 months or more, so call Greg soon at OVLC (805-649-6852 x1) if this is something you would like to consider.



Don't Miss Ojai's Opportunity To See PAD YATRA: A Green Odyssey

PAD YATRA: A Green Odyssey is the harrowing adventure of 700 people, trekking 450 miles across the Himalayas with a call to save the glacial region now devastated by the climate chaos associated with global warming. Battling the most treacherous terrain on earth, they faced long days of hiking straight up mountains, a super high altitude, low temperatures, a lack of food and more. These people spread their message of ecological compassion through a human’s most basic means by walking on foot, village to village, and showing by example.

Barely surviving injuries, illness, and starvation, the trekkers emerged with nearly half a ton of plastic litter strapped to their backs, triggering an historic green revolution across the rooftop of the world.



The PAD YATRA is winner of 8 International Awards, including Best Documentary and Audience Award Winner at 3 different festivals. padyatrafilm.com

Thanks to the annual Ojai Film Festival for a second year OVLC will host, as a fundraiser, a *Focus on the Earth* film. Last year OVLC hosted *Chasing Ice*, this year the film is even more exotic!

Join us at 3 PM at the Ojai Playhouse Theater on Saturday November 9, 2013. Tickets are \$10.00 and can be purchased in advance from OVLC. Use the back of this newsletter to mail in your order or go to ovlc.org. Ojai Film Festival Tickets will allow you access to the film as well. Last year we sold out, so buy now.

The “Eco-Pad Yatra,” organized by the non-profit Live to Love International (www.livetolove.org), is now an annual event that will continue around the world. In 2011, the Pad Yatra took place in Mumbai, India with 2,000 pounds of plastic litter collected and carried out. For Spring 2013, the government of Sri Lanka invited the Drukpa for an Eco-Pad Yatra to promote world cooperation and exchange over environmental issues.

New Year's Day 2013 on the Ojai Meadows Preserve. By Les Dublin



OJAI VALLEY LAND CONSERVANCY

Thank you sponsors for helping us protect the views, trails, water and wildlife in the Ojai Valley.

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Old Creek Ranch Winery
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WELCOME NEW MEMBERS (gifts made between 1/16/13 - 6/26/13)
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Terry Beckett
Roger Beerworth
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Carolyn Bennett
Elizabeth (BJ) Bianchi
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Elizabeth Blackwell
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Judith & Donald Diaz
Karin & Rod Dingman
Bob Dreger
Andrew &
Michelle Ellison
Carolyn Emmons
April Theriault &
Ken Eros
Jay Fields

Membership Drive 2013 Is Finally Under Way

Many of you have, out of habit, renewed your annual membership to OVLC already. If that is the case thank you! However, this article is the **official membership drive kick off** which usually happens in the spring. Because of the Valley View campaign earlier this year, the membership drive was postponed until now. All of the Valley View dollars will be used for that preserve. Keep reading to understand why your membership is important.

First, let's see if you can guess the answers to a few trivia questions about OVLC's creation of some of its highest profile open space preserves;

- How long has OVLC been working to create the new Valley View Preserve? **Answer: At least 15 years.** The first negotiation with the landowners was in the late 1990's if not earlier. The current round of negotiations resulting in the recent purchase started 2-1/2 years ago.
- How long did OVLC work to acquire and create the Ventura River Preserve? **Answer: At least 10-12 years.** The negotiation was carried out over the years by three successive executive directors overseen by multiple board presidents.
- What about the Ojai Meadows

Preserve next to Nordhoff? How many years of work? **Answer: At least 15** and the restoration will take at least 15 more – a total of over 30 years of effort.

The successful completion of larger projects providing bigger benefits to the community takes years of sustained effort. In my 16 years in the land trust business, the quickest I've seen a large scale project come together is two years, but more commonly it can be 10-20 years.

• **The last trivia question: How can OVLC afford to pay people to conduct 15 year negotiations, all while managing 2,000 acres of preserves for public use and enjoyment? Answer: Your membership support in the spring/summer, and your contributions to our annual appeal at the end of the year.**

I confided in a close advisor, and generous donor, telling him that I was uncomfortable asking for membership support from people who had so generously supported the Valley View acquisition. Many of you just gave, after all. This advisor said that this new Valley View Preserve made him want to give more, knowing how important it is to provide fuel for a successful organization to

go out and complete more of those 15 year negotiations, to create new Valley View Preserves.

We respectfully ask that you consider a gift now in this membership drive to enable us to deliver the next Valley View Preserve to the community.

Sincerely, Greg Gamble

Volunteer Highlight: Stuart Niebel

We welcome Stuart Niebel as OVLC's newest docent. Stuart was born and raised in northern California and came to Ventura County in the late 1970s to take a job with Ventura City Fire. After a few years in Ventura, Stuart moved to the Ojai Valley and has been



...next page

The docent program educates people about protecting the views, trails, water and wildlife of the Ojai Valley. Interested in docenting, call Marti at 649-6852 x2.

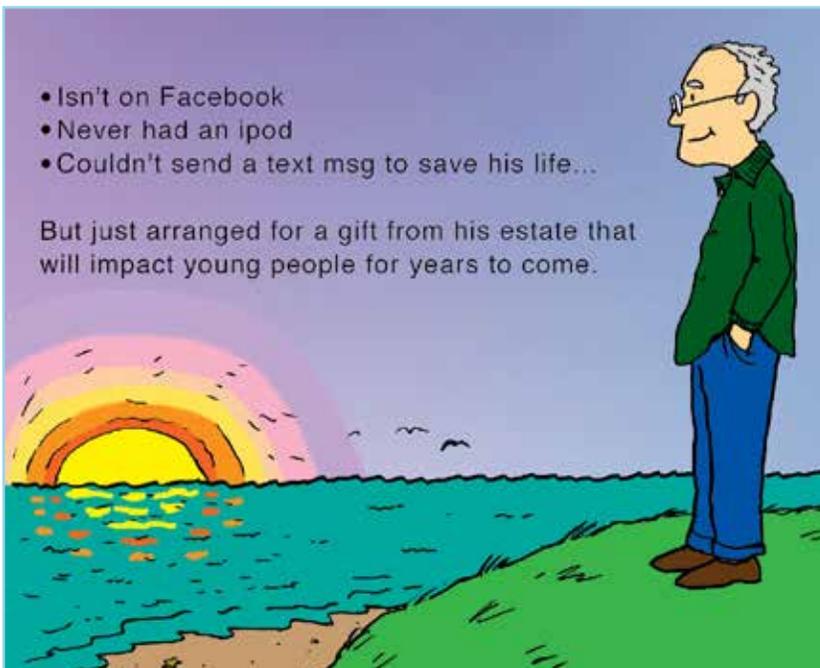
Membership Gifts

for Terry Beckett, Larry & Judith Beckett and Jeffrey Mann & Elizabeth Blackwell from Allan Jacobs

for Joe Rohde & Mel Malmberg from the Regan family

In Honor of

- John G. Bee DVM
- Sandy Buechley's passion for the cause
- Enrique Luis Candiotti, Father of Sebastian
- Amber Courtney, Love Herb
- Silvia Emhardt, our mom who loved the view of the Valley View Preserve from our house
- Lloyd Fellows' Birthday, Love Katie
- Herb & Adrian Kaiser from Charm Kaiser & Adele (Kaiser) Schmalenberger
- Hailey Klein
- Happy Father's Day to Thomas MacCalla
- Robert E. Martin
- Mount Meher
- Judy Mercer
- Ann and Harry Oppenheimer
- Dr. Rene's Birthday
- Ginger Wilson (3)
- Kevin, Rylan and Grace Wynn



- Isn't on Facebook
- Never had an ipod
- Couldn't send a text msg to save his life...

But just arranged for a gift from his estate that will impact young people for years to come.

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Thank you for your gifts in memory of the following:

- George Buechley
- Michael D. Hermes
- Grandpa Michael D. Hermes
- Henry "Hank" Maynard
- Greg McMillan
- Joseph Nesbitt
- Gerold Parsons
- Rudy Petersdorf
- Jim Ruch
- Douglas J. Theriault
- Ginger Wilson Smith
- Ginger Wilson (3)
- John & Ginger Wilson

Stuart continued... here ever since. He retired after 32 years with the fire department.

OVLC has a very special connection to Stuart. In 2010 he and his future wife Mary had their first date at a Wild about Ojai presentation by Rick Halsey on the chaparral ecosystem. Since that time they have become very active OVLC members.

Upon becoming a docent and after reading the existing materials, he pitched updating the old manual. We gave him the go-ahead, and the improved resource manual was rolled out at an April 11th docent training event. Stuart led his first tour in May.

Stuart spent hours researching the history and the common plant, bird and animal species found at the Meadow. He attended walks and other docent tours and talked to OVLC staff. The result of his hard work is a resource manual rather than a tour manual. There are sections on the history, restoration projects and a section with birds, animals and plants found at the Meadow.

Buy OVLC Annual Member Event and or Pad Yatra Tickets Here

I, _____, would like to purchase _____ annual event tickets (Sept. 14) at \$20.00 each, and _____ tickets for Pad Yatra (Nov. 9) at \$10.00 each for a total of \$ _____.

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

MAIL TO OVLC: PO BOX 1092 Ojai, CA 93024

The annual event on Sept. 14th is free if you bring your own food and chair. RSVP regardless of ticket purchase. Tickets are for dinner and entertainment. Pad Yatra tickets are for Nov. 9th at the Ojai Film Festival. Details for both events are located on page 4. Tickets will be mailed to you, so make sure we have your address. Tickets also available online and over the phone. **ALL PROCEEDS BENEFIT OVLC!**

RENEWED YOUR MEMBERSHIP? Please renew before the OVLC's member celebration on September 14, 2013. Call 649-6852.