OPEN SPACES

The newsletter of the Ojai Valley Land Conservancy

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Mission: OVLC protects and restores the open space, wildlife habitat, watersheds, and views of the Ojai Valley for current and future generations.

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FROM THE DIRECTOR

At the OVLC, we think about community, because quite candidly we couldn’t be here without the support of our generous community. OVLC preserves are the places where the community comes to rejuvenate, exercise, or simply reflect. While COVID-19 has altered how we gather, with physical distancing in place and community and volunteer events on hold, OVLC is still a community-based organization. Therefore, we have the responsibility to speak up when our community is suffering. And we want to state loudly and clearly that OVLC open spaces are a place where everyone is welcome, and inclusion is the rule not discrimination.

The deeply disturbing and tragic murder of George Floyd (and many other people of color before him) as well as the recent racially charged incident in Central Park have us thinking about how we can ensure inclusion and safety in the outdoors.

I have birded in the Ramble in Central Park and all over the world. In 30 years of birding as a white man, I have never had any interaction that comes remotely close to what Christian Cooper experienced. Mr. Cooper merely asked someone to put her dog on its leash, as he was trying to observe a Mourning Warbler, a bird which stays close to the ground and therefore would be readily flushed from the Ramble by an off-leash dog. While having dogs on leash is a rule in most of Central Park (and most nature preserves including all OVLC preserves), he was met with a sickening reaction. We need to do better.

Over the years, the land trust movement has been working to expand its understanding of how conservation can be meaningful to the broadest cross-section of society. We still have a long way to go at the OVLC, but one of the small steps we are in the process of undertaking includes adding a Spanish translation to our informational kiosks.

We are thinking about the national discussion taking place on racial discrimination, and reiterate that OVLC preserves are open for everyone. Having said that, we recently took the highly unusual step of hiring a private security firm to try to manage use on the Ventura River Preserve. While this might seem contradictory, use of the preserves has skyrocketed since schools, sports, and other activities have closed/been cancelled due to COVID-19. Unfortunately, over-crowding and over-use have started to damage the river.

This decision to more strictly enforce the rules of preserve use was not taken lightly, but the trampling of vegetation and lack of care was damaging the very resources that OVLC is tasked to protect. In these hot and ecosystems, it takes a very long time for vegetation to recover from trampling along the river or regrow over new unsanctioned trails. One of our biggest challenges at the OVLC is to encourage enjoyment of the outdoors and broaden our community, while also ensuring that this does not impact the natural resources that are essential to our mission. The last thing that we want to see happen is for our river to be loved to death.

The recent surge of visitors also presents an opportunity to engage new constituents and grow the land conservation movement. We need to consider the types of amenities and infrastructure that we offer that can simultaneously be more welcoming while helping to control the unintentional impacts of overuse. As a community we need to welcome visitors who are less familiar with the great outdoors with a spirit of inclusion. Then, more folks will believe what OVLC supporters already know, and was best said by the transcendentalist Henry David Thoreau: “In Wildness is the preservation of the world.”

The real beneficiary, of course, is Ojai.

Just by including the Ojai Valley Land Conservancy in your estate plans, you can help protect the beauty of Ojai for generations to come. A bequest is a simple way to support the OVLC in the future while retaining control of your assets during your lifetime. By making the OVLC a beneficiary of your will, trust, retirement plan, life insurance policy, or financial accounts, you ensure your values will be passed on after you.

Cover Photo: Ojai Meadows
Preserve by Nathan Wickstrum
Together, our community will help protect Ojai’s open space for everyone to enjoy, forever. Thank you to our Wild About Ojai partners who help make this possible. Visit a participating business today and take part.

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Used baby diapers, empty beer cans, human feces, and punctured floatation devices have no place on the preserves. Similarly, the OVLC is very conscientious in where it places trash, trying to minimize the environmental impact of our presence in nature, yet every day we find new trails down to the river. At this time in particular, when the preserves are seeing more use than they ever have before, the impacts to nature, and particularly the river, are upsetting. However, while the actions of few may be dominating our time and efforts, we would like to say “thank you” to the many who have come together to help us.

Thank you to everyone who has helped the OVLC through this challenging time. The notes of thanks that your write with your gifts are sent around to the staff to bolster their spirits as they have to clean up yet another mess at the river. The bags of trash you collect so the staff doesn’t have to don’t go unnoticed. Your gifts are sent around to the staff to bolster their spirits as they have to clean up yet another mess at the river. The bags of trash you collect so the staff doesn’t have to don’t go unnoticed.

We look forward to having our volunteers back in the field. We are grateful for the support they give us throughout the year. If you are out and about and you see our staff in the field, please remember, they are trying their best to cope with their new realities too. A kind word over a complaint is appreciated any day. Enjoy the trails.
WHAT’S IN BLOOM?

1. Hummingbird Sage (Salvia spathacea)
   Unlike other sages, it’s the only native sage with reddish-pink flowers, and instead of behaving like a shrub, it grows from rhizomes and forms dense colonies that provide wonderful groundcover in areas like Wills Canyon.

2. Woolly Bluecurls (Trichostema lanatum)
   This evergreen shrub looks like something out of a Dr. Seuss book, but it’s one of our favorites! The next time you’re out hiking on the backcountry trails of the Ventura River Preserve treat your nose to the wonderful scents of woolly bluecurls. You'll smell hints of lavender, cedar, and possibly even mint. It’s in the mint family, after all!

3. Sticky Monkeyflower (Diplacus aurantiacus)
   Named for its resinous leaves and flowers resembling the face of a grinning monkey, sticky monkeyflower is a great pollinator. They attract bees, birds, butterflies, and are seemingly deer resistant. You can spot this beauty in bloom on any one of the preserves and in restoration zones!

4. Elegant Clarkia (Clarkia unguiculata)
   The elegant clarkia is having a great year. Found in dense little patches of oak woodland understory on the Ventura River Preserve and coloring the hillsides of Valley View Preserve, the four-parted bright pink flowers of the elegant clarkia will certainly brighten your day.

5. Deerweed (Acmispon glaber)
   Are you wondering why the mountains are looking so yellow and vibrant this year? Well that’s because the native shrub commonly known as deerweed is playing an important role in ecosystem recovery after the Thomas Fire. Deerweed seeds have a thick coating that sometimes only a fire can crack, and typically two to four years after a fire deerweed will dominate the landscape. The deerweed is currently playing a crucial role by transferring nitrogen from the air back into the soil. This much needed nitrogen was lost during the fire and many of the larger plants that will come in the next stage of recovery need this nitrogen to grow. Deerweed can be found throughout the Ventura River, Valley View, and Ilvento Preserves.

6. Scarlet Bugler (Penstemon centranthifolius)
   This herbaceous perennial with it’s fiery red hot bugle-shaped flowers is a tough plant to miss. Predominantly pollinated by hummingbirds, scarlet bugler differs from many other plants found in chaparral as all parts of the plant are smooth and hairless. This is probably due to the fact that the plant likes to live in well-drained soil with little water retention. Scarlet bugler would make a perfect drought tolerant plant for your yard. Be on the lookout for this gem when you’re hiking the preserves.
IN MEMORY OF

Allan Jacobs
from Lois Barnes & Steven Jung

Bob Dreger
from Mike Bixley

Brian Zeiner
To help protect the views from your back porch.
from Angela Heald

Cesar Mendoza
from Greg & Martha Lepine

David Rowland
This gift is in honor of our dear and loyal friend,
David Rowland, who did so much for us and who
we miss each and every day.
from The Grace Family

Erik Bjornstedt
In loving memory of Erik Bjornstedt who
loved and climbed the Ojai mountains from
from Barry & Chris Betlock

Hugo Ekback
from Linda & Boris Chaloupksy

John G. Avildsen
from Anthony Avildsen

John G. Bee DVM
from Susan Bee

Laurence Merritt
In loving memory of Larry from your Book Club
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from Patricia Kingsley

Martha Mandel
From us!
from Lauren Johnson

Nordi Sloman
from Linda & Boris Chaloupksy

Pat Duncan
from Carla & Jason Estey

Robert Dreger
from Kate Delgado

Sara Roxanne Schneider
from Thalma Agid

IN HONOR OF

Bettyanne Sessing
Happy Mother’s Day to the woman who gives us
strength and guidance, encouraging us always to
give back to those we love.
from Jayce Cheldin

The Seniors in the Ojai Valley
from Gables of Ojai

David Paulson
from Chip Paulson

Carolyn, Gil, Aiden, Tyler and Brady
Vondriske
from John & Kathy Broesamle

Cody Carolin
We are so honored to have been part of your
special day in Ojai—here’s to another way of
keeping Ojai special forever! xoxo
from Pam & Alan Bergman

Dorothy Kaplan
Happy 96th Birthday!
from Jerry & Kerry Holden

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Guilietti

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Nicholas Weissman Facebook Fundraiser
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Judith Grim, Kaz Phillips, Randy Armstrong,
Eve Martey, & Nicholas Weissman

The OVLC Staff
from Jill Forman & David Young

Acknowledgments: 1/15/20—5/21/20

CREATURE FEATURE

Monarch Butterfly

One of the most iconic travelers that passes through the
Ojai Meadows Preserve every year is back—the monarch
butterfly! This species relies entirely on milkweed for
its survival and reproduction. We all know this beauty
of a butterfly is poisonous, but have you ever wondered
why? The poison comes directly from the food they
eat—milkweed. Milkweed is also the only plant where
monarchs will lay their eggs since the caterpillars are very
hungry once they emerge from their cocoons. Because of
habitat loss and other environmental factors, populations
of monarchs are declining. Lend them a helping hand
and plant some native milkweed in your yard to create
a “highway” for passing tourists. Or if you're more
interested in other ways to help, consider some citizen
science projects such as iNaturalist or Western Monarch
Milkweed Mapper.

Have you been hiking or walking and gotten pricked by a
thistle? If it’s around this time of year, you probably have.
They have a bad reputation for their ability to reproduce
and take over fields as a weed. But thistle blow your mind
(pun intended)—did you know that not all thistles are
weeds? In fact, there is one that is endemic and native
to California—the cobwebby thistle (Cirsium occidentale).
It looks very much like its name and is ecologically
important. Cobwebby thistles serve as an important
source of pollen and seed for native bees, butterflies, and
birds. In fact, goldfinches relish the seeds and feed them
to their young. This species of thistle blooms March to
July, so next time you’re on one of our preserves, keep a
sharp eye out!
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New Owl Boxes
OVLC, with the help of Jesse Grantham and Kevin McLeod, hung two barn owl boxes at the Ventura River Preserve last month. One of the boxes is visible from Wills Canyon Trail, the other is along Orange Grove Trail (although it is pretty hidden). The boxes were hung for ecological restoration as we are helping the barn owls by providing an optimal nesting cavity and then in turn will help us with rodent control at our oak restoration project.

Still Building!
With the stay-at-home orders in place, we have stopped work on the timber bridge over Olive Creek on the Allan Jacobs Trail. However, all the pieces are here and the foundations of the bridge are just about set. Within a short period after the lockdown is lifted, we’ll be finished with the substructure of the bridge and then onto the superstructure. At last we’ll have a bridge complete!

Our events have looked pretty different over the past few months and it’s possible that they will stay that way for a while. We were overwhelmed with the support of our online plant sale and social distanced rattlesnake training for dogs. We miss being able to bring our community together! We thank you for supporting the events that we have hosted and hope you will be patient with us as we figure out what events will look like in the future. That being said, we hope to bring you Mountainfilm on Tour in some form this year. It’s our favorite event of the year and we know that it’s also become a special tradition for many!

Stay tuned for event updates.

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Photo by Marc Alt.
Mountainfilm on Tour ‘20 is sponsored by Gojai

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If the text is green you’re up to date, if it’s orange send in the enclosed envelope, it’s time to renew!

Help us build this bridge!

The 2017 Thomas Fire destroyed the Rice Canyon Bridge and cut off an access point to the northern-most trails in the Ventura River Preserve. As you may be aware, OVLC has been working with the Lake Casitas Water Management District to replace the bridge at Rice Canyon Trail over the diversion canal on the Ventura River Preserve.

With your help, the bridge will reopen access to Rice Canyon Trail and Kennedy Ridge Trail on the Ventura River Preserve. The bridge will make loop ing up and around the preserve so much easier. Hikers, mountain bikers, and equestrians will have access to even more trails to spread out as they explore remote areas of the preserve. For those of you who know the preserve, the Rice/Wills loop has long been a favorite trail and we are all excited to finally have it restored!

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