



# WONDERS

PLACER LAND TRUST NEWSLETTER

Spring 2023



*Volunteers Andy Polick, Jeff Morton, and Jim Haagen-Smit protect young oaks at Taylor Ranch Preserve, August 2022*

## Restoring Oak Woodlands... One Acorn At a Time

The region between Raccoon Creek and the Bear River represents the largest contiguous area of oak woodlands remaining in Placer County. Home to our Big Hill Preserves, this area contains some of the last roadless areas in western Placer County. Over 300 species of wildlife inhabit Placer County's oak woodlands, including mountain lions, bobcats, several species of hawk, rodents, snakes, owls, and songbirds.

But oak woodlands – particularly blue oaks – are struggling in some of these areas. We are seeing a lack of younger oak trees, which would naturally replace the older generations of trees.

The majority of the woodlands where blue oaks grow on our preserves are agricultural lands used

for cattle grazing. This is great for fire safety and control of some invasive species, but it also makes it harder for new trees to get established. In some of these areas, land was originally cleared for grazing by the systematic removal of oaks.

This long history of grazing, in conjunction with other native grazers, has made it hard for tender young saplings to take root and thrive. It typically takes 10 years of protection from grazing for a sapling to be strong enough to withstand further grazing. And of course, many animals eat acorns: rodents, insects, birds, deer, and wild pigs all rely on them as a food source. Drought has also increased mortality of older oaks. In a natural woodland setting, there would be enough acorns to

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*Recreation Manager Christy Claes maps the location of an oak sapling*

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feed wildlife and still produce new trees, but some of the woodlands in our area need a little extra help... which is where our Oak Regeneration Project comes into play!

This project aims to increase the regeneration rate of oak saplings on our Preserves by planting new oaks and protecting them from grazing and wildlife. Our team of staff and volunteers identifies existing young oak saplings and protects them with fallen branches, building barricades that mimic natural oak "nurseries" to decrease predation from grazers like deer and cattle. Saplings are then carefully mapped for tracking. In the fall, we will also begin collecting acorns from our preserves and planting them to grow more stands of young trees.

In addition to tending young oaks, Placer Land Trust works with our grazing tenants to implement a conservation grazing model which consists of seasonally rotating grazing areas and stocking cattle at a lower density for a lighter graze. Together, these strategies are helping to regenerate our oak woodlands and ensure their beauty and benefits for generations to come!

***Want to help Placer Land Trust regenerate oaks? Do you have a group or organization that would like to participate in this project? Email info@placerlandtrust.org or call 530-887-9222 to learn more and get involved!***



*Above left: a young, unprotected blue oak sapling is vulnerable to grazers.*

*Above right: Volunteer Andy Polick gathers fallen branches to build a protective cage, seen in the foreground.*

## Welcoming Our Newest Board Members

We are delighted to welcome **Kate Nitta** and **Loren Clark** as the newest members of our Board of Directors!

Kate Nitta is an attorney with the California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle), where she works on a wide-ranging array of issues related to solid waste and recycling in the state. She is a Placer County native and grew up on five beautiful acres in Penryn, where her parents still live. Land stewardship has been part of her family for generations, particularly in the form of her family's historic Loomis farm, Nitta Ranch, which has been producing peaches and other produce since the early 1900s. Kate has also been a member of our Community Council since 2019.

Loren Clark is a multi-award winning public servant who retired from a 30-year career with Placer County, where he served since 1986, most recently as Assistant Director of Placer County Community Development Resource Agency. Loren was also part of the team who received the Governor's Environmental and Economic Leadership Award for the Placer Legacy Open Space and Agricultural Conservation Program. He has had a close working relationship with Placer Land Trust since



its inception, was the recipient of the 2016 Conservator of the Year Award, and is proud of the many years that Placer County and Placer Land Trust have worked together toward our shared vision of conservation.

We're glad to have Kate and Loren on our Board, and we're looking forward to learning from their fresh new perspectives!

# DOUBLE your donation – *and your impact!*

# Big Day of Giving

MAY 4

**The first \$70,000 in donations will be DOUBLED!**

**Big Day of Giving** is THE online giving opportunity of the year that unites and inspires our community to support the hundreds of nonprofits that make the greater Sacramento region an amazing place to call home. It is a critical fundraiser for Placer Land Trust as it helps us raise the funds needed to keep our mission moving forward. Over the past nine years of our participation, the investment of members like you have allowed us to permanently protect and care for 7,000 acres in Placer County, and more is needed to continue this vital

work for our lands, waters, wildlife, and ways of life. **Mark your calendar to help Placer Land Trust continue to protect these essential resources through Big Day of Giving!**

Big Day of Giving is **May 4th, with early giving starting on April 20th!** Most giving takes place online starting on April 20th, but we can also accept gifts made directly to Placer Land Trust via check or cash. All checks and non-electronic gifts should be mailed to 922 Lincoln Way, Suite 200, Auburn, CA 95603. Please allow enough time to ensure we receive your gift by May 4th.

**Exciting News** – some generous Placer Land Trust members have already come together to create a **\$70,000 matching fund** that will double donations made between April 20–May 4, while funds last! A huge thanks to **Emigrant Trails Greenway Trust, Mary Ann Flemmer, Graeme & Debra Plant, and an anonymous donor** for making this fund possible, and thank you in advance to all who plan to participate this Big Day of Giving!

## Show the region how much you value protected land this Big Day of Giving:

1. **Donate TODAY through May 4th** at [www.bigdayofgiving.org/placerlandtrust](http://www.bigdayofgiving.org/placerlandtrust). All major credit cards are accepted, and gifts made through a Golden 1 Credit Union debit/credit card earn additional funds for Placer Land Trust. \*
2. **Share your support!** Please tell your friends! Follow us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter **@placerlandtrust** and share our posts. Or introduce a friend to one of Placer Land Trust's public preserves and help us get the word out to protect the land that gives life and makes our future brighter.

\* You can also give to Placer Land Trust directly via **check, cash, stock, donor advised fund, IRA charitable rollover**, etc. Simply mail your donation or drop it off at our office: Placer Land Trust, 922 Lincoln Way, Suite 200, Auburn, CA 95603. We must have it by May 4 for it to be included in our Big Day of Giving totals. If you have any questions, please contact Kara at [kara.walker@placerlandtrust.org](mailto:kara.walker@placerlandtrust.org) or 530-887-9222 x109.

**THANK YOU** for being part of our community of supporters who are protecting the quality of life in Placer County for generations to come!

[www.bigdayofgiving.org/placerlandtrust](http://www.bigdayofgiving.org/placerlandtrust)



## Join the "Broom Battle"

### *Invasive Plant Removal Days at Canyon View Preserve*

We're doing it again! Placer Land Trust needs help removing an aggressive invader from Canyon View Preserve! Brooms are a group of shrubs native to parts of Africa and Europe and have been spreading rapidly throughout many parts of the U.S. They are such successful invasive species not only because they grow rapidly, but each plant can also produce thousands of seeds that remain in the soil for many years. In addition to out-competing native plants, broom is also highly flammable, increasing the risk of wildfire.

The next Broom Battles will be taking place on **April 29 and May 20**. We will be removing the broom with tools and by hand pulling. We'd love your help, so please check out the links below to learn more and sign up! This is a family friendly event, best suited for adults and youth ages 10 and up; minors must be accompanied by an adult. Visit [www.placerlandtrust.org/calendar](http://www.placerlandtrust.org/calendar) for more details and to register!

## Upcoming Events

**Saturday, April 29** - "Broom Battle" - Invasive Plant Removal Day

**Saturday, April 29** - Mountain Bike Open Preserve Day at Big Hill Preserves

**Sunday, April 30** - Wildflower hike at Harvego Bear River Preserve

**Sunday, April 30** - Preserve Open House at Weygandt Doty Ravine Preserve

**Sunday, May 7** - Birding Stroll at Big Hill

**Thursday, May 11** - Geology/Hydrology hike at Big Hill Preserves

**Saturday, May 13** - Long-Distance Hike at Harvego Bear River Preserve

**Saturday, May 20** - "Broom Battle" - Invasive Plant Removal Day

**More event info and registration:**  
[www.placerlandtrust.org/calendar](http://www.placerlandtrust.org/calendar)

**Follow us on Facebook to hear about upcoming hikes and events:**  
[www.facebook.com/placerlandtrust](http://www.facebook.com/placerlandtrust)

## A Land Affair: Celebrating Lasting Legacies



Each spring we honor donors who help Placer Land Trust succeed through legacy gifts. If you named Placer Land Trust in your trust, will, or estate, we want to celebrate YOU! Please let us know if we are part of your future plans, so that we can be sure we understand your vision for the future and invite you to A Land Affair. If you're already a member of our Forever Society, THANK YOU! Please stay tuned for more information about A Land Affair taking place in May.

To learn more, visit [www.placerlandtrust.org/forever-society](http://www.placerlandtrust.org/forever-society), or contact Assistant Director Laura Baker by email at [laura.baker@placerlandtrust.org](mailto:laura.baker@placerlandtrust.org), or at 530-887-9222 x115.

## April 30 - Weygandt Doty Ravine Preserve Open House

We're holding a special Preserve "Open House" so that everybody can come experience this beautiful place in Lincoln! Enjoy family-friendly games and activities, learn about our super-cool Beaver Restoration project, birdwatch in the lush wetlands, bring a picnic, and take in the sights and sounds of Doty Ravine Creek. Registration is encouraged but not required; all registered attendees will be entered into a drawing to win a gift basket! Visit [www.placerlandtrust.org/calendar](http://www.placerlandtrust.org/calendar) to learn more and register.



American bittern at the Preserve. Photo: Phil Robertson



Assistant Director *Laura Baker* (left); Community Engagement Manager *Eden Rock* (right)

## Staff Transitions

We are so pleased to welcome our new Assistant Director, **Laura Baker**! Laura is an environmental lawyer who brings a wealth of experience from her time with the U.S.

Environmental Protection Agency, as founder of an outdoor adventure company, and in leadership roles at UC Irvine School of Law and UC San Diego School of Medicine. She grew up in Sonora, California and is thrilled to return home to Gold Country. She's also an avid runner and running coach, backpacker, and all-around adventure-seeker, and you can usually find her out exploring the trails in her free time.

And with Laura Baker as our new Assistant Director, our Operations Director **Eden Rock** is stepping into her new role of Community Engagement Manager!

Eden has been a vital part of Placer Land Trust's success since she joined the team in 2016. She revived our Community Council, led the process of hiring many of our staff members, and scouted and managed the move to our new office location, all while juggling the behind-the-scenes work of keeping our organization running smoothly. We're thrilled to be keeping her talent and passion in her new role as Community Engagement Manager, where she'll be sustainably growing our capacity through our volunteer program, as well as expanding our community partnerships and involvement.



Last year, the Foster family visited all seven locations, including Cisco Grove Gould Park (above) and Rock Creek Preserve (left).

## The Preserve Passport Program Is Back!

June is National Great Outdoors Month, and to celebrate, our Community Council is hosting their annual Preserve Passport Challenge! Get an early start and participate in any of the activities below **between May 15 and June 30** to benefit from being outdoors and earn cool prizes!

**Visit** any of eight selected Placer Land Trust preserves (see our website below for the full list).

Or – new this year – **join a planned activity** such as a docent-led hike or an Open Preserve Day organized by Placer Land Trust. Check out the Event Calendar [below/website] for an activity that fits your interest!

Visit [www.placerlandtrust.org/passport](http://www.placerlandtrust.org/passport) for details on how to participate, links to learn more about the preserves, and to earn your prize!



2022 participants *Addie and Ellie Anderson* point out wildflowers to dad *Brian* at Canyon View Preserve.



*Henry Duesing* surveys the view at Canyon View Preserve.

*The protected lands in Placer Land Trust's care are the ancestral lands of the Maidu, Miwok, Nisenan and Washoe tribes. These lands were forcibly seized, and these tribes were unjustly treated. Although Placer Land Trust cannot change the past, we seek to work with local Native American tribes where we can to help address this injustice.*



*Volunteers triumph over invasive broom at Canyon View Preserve*



PLACER LAND TRUST  
922 LINCOLN WAY, SUITE 200  
AUBURN, CA 95603



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## Pie Party on the Preserve

The 2023 Pie Party on the Preserve was a smash hit! Partygoers enjoyed gorgeous spring weather, exploring the Laursen Bear River Preserve trails, and of course, a huge selection of delicious pies. Thanks to all who joined us to make it such a delightful event!

