

GOOD DIRT

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ANDERSON VALLEY LAND TRUST
DEDICATED TO THE PRESERVATION AND RESTORATION OF OUR UNIQUE RURAL LANDSCAPE
FALL, 2015

A Conservation Easement Change of Hands: River's Bend Retreat

In 1993, Todd and Marge Evans completed a conservation easement with Anderson Valley Land Trust that included provisions preserving the ecological values of 50 acres in Philo known at the time as the Wellspring Retreat Center. The Navarro River flows through the property on its way to the Pacific, and the land borders the old growth redwood forest of Hendy Woods State Park. The Evans hoped that the easement would address concerns over degradation in the water quality and quantity of the Navarro River watershed, and the dwindling of the native salmon fishery in the river. In addition, the easement was designed to limit the development of the remaining open space to benefit native wildlife and plant habitat. Wellspring closed at the end of October 2010, after struggling to maintain financial stability following the economic downturn of that era. Todd Evans enlisted the help of Laurie Adams, who had been involved with Wellspring for over a year and a half, and shared his sense of ministry and vision for the location. Together they worked on a plan for a smaller, seasonal business. He imagined several names and decided on River's Bend. Together they created the current logo with the river curving around the historic gathering area - the "Farmhouse" and Water Tower. The logo reflects the topography of the area – a bend in the river that creates a magical, deep pool serving as a sanctuary for steelhead Coho on their migration paths – and inspiring all involved with the retreat center to steward this place as a sanctuary for humans, as well.



Laurie Adams took ownership of the property in 2014. The history and mission of Wellspring meant a lot to Laurie. Her desire to preserve the sense of place as a retreat destination was an important part of her decision to purchase the land. Laurie describes River's Bend as "a retreat center and land based sanctuary to nourish the roots of the movement for regenerative culture."

"People have felt a sense of healing and creative energy in this place for many, many years," she says. "This is the amazing gift of land and creatures here. For me, our calling as the humans here is to share this gift in powerful ways that support the larger bioregion of the Bay Area in our common work to create a more life-sustaining culture for all beings. We are building relationships with a lot of people who are on the front lines, working for economic and eco-justice and need access to quiet places of natural beauty where there is a feeling of belonging and home. These leaders are healers and artists, restorative justice practitioners, and change-makers that are working with people of all ages and demographics to reconnect to ways of life that honor the earth and one another. I appreciate the opportunity to be in this creative, symbiotic relationship with collaborators in the urban areas, knowing that this work to sustain and share this beautiful eco-system also contributes to the livelihood and economic well being in the Anderson Valley."

(continued on page 4)



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: Your Gift May Live On Forever

Many of you support the Anderson Valley Land Trust with an annual donation. And some of you have placed conservation easements on your land to help protect the natural beauty of the Valley. Thank you.

In the last year, AVLT has been approached on a confidential basis by two landowners who would like to leave their properties to AVLT as part of their estate plan. Each of these land owners expressed a preference for AVLT selling their donated land, and using the proceeds to buy easements on critical parcels in the Valley that may be owned by people who aren't likely to benefit from a tax deduction, if they were to donate an easement to the Land Trust.

As you probably know, the IRS treats a donated easement as a donation of non-cash property. The donor can take an income tax deduction for the value of the donated easement. But for retirees and others who don't have much taxable income, the right to claim a deduction may not have much practical value. To encourage someone in that situation to put a conservation easement on their land, a land trust can pay them for the easement. This is common practice among land trusts that have an endowment to support such a program.

The inquiries from the two anonymous donors this year stimulated us to consider a program that allows all of our supporters to make a gift with the stroke of a pen – a legacy gift through your estate. All of these gifts would go into a special Easement Purchase Fund at AVLT. The money would be used to pay land owners for conservation easements that they grant to AVLT in situations where the donor's right to take a tax deduction for the easement doesn't provide strong motivation to just make a donation. Under this program your gift, established as part of your estate plan, would be a bequest to AVLT. It could be cash, securities, or land. If it were land, AVLT would plan to sell the land promptly and put the cash into the Easement Purchase Fund.

We want to hear your thoughts about this possible new program. Would you consider making a bequest to the Land Trust as part of your estate plan, to help fund the Easement Purchase Fund? Are you aware of any important properties in the Valley that you think would be good candidates for purchased (as opposed to donated) easements?

A final thought on the confidentiality of bequests. It seems that some donors would not mind if we publicized that they have made provision for the Land Trust in their estate plan. Others may feel differently, particularly if the bequest involved a gift of land. We think that any Easement Purchase Fund that we might set up should offer donors the option of confidentiality as to the bequest. Of course upon the donor's passing, any bequest of land would become public knowledge because AVLT would become the landowner of record.

We welcome your comments and suggestions on this idea. We see it as a valuable new addition to the Land Trust's tool kit for preserving and protecting the extraordinary environment of Anderson Valley that we all cherish. Give your thoughts to any Board member, or contact us by e-mail at avlt@mcn.org.

Thanks again for your support.

Sincerely,

David Hopmann

President, AVLT Board of Directors

AVLT Summer Fundraiser a big success!

The picturesque setting of Stoney Bottom Gardens was home to this summer's Picnic in the Garden, a sold-out event benefitting AVLT. Guests enjoyed delicious food from local producers and exceptional Anderson Valley wines under a perfect summer sky. Special thanks to Ginger and Walt Valen for the opportunity to host the event at Stoney Bottom – and to Walt for the curated tour of his favorite plants in the garden.

The event raised more than \$8000 to support AVLT's on-going conservation efforts. We greatly appreciate the generous support of those of you who purchased tickets and the donors who contributed items for the silent auction, which was a huge success. We hope to see you all at our events and interpretive programs in the coming months.

AVLT WELCOMES NEW BOARD MEMBER STEVEN WOOD

Please join us in welcoming Steve Wood to the AVLT Board of Directors. Steve has lived Anderson Valley since 1971. He moved here originally to work with special needs children as part of his alternate service during the Vietnam War. He has a lifelong interest in design, landscape, agriculture and community life. Steve has been an active volunteer with the Anderson Valley Elder Home Project since its inception. He is a licensed architect and now manages a small and varied design practice in Boonville.



Steve grew up in Seattle, and attended Reed College in Portland in the early 60's. Anti-war activism brought him to San Francisco for a period of counseling work with a Quaker group, during which he learned about Clearwater Ranch in Philo, then a residential treatment center for troubled children. Moving there, he married and moved on from counseling to a variety of jobs in the fledgling wine industry. He discovered an affinity for design and construction, becoming a general contractor for the next 20 years.

With his wife's help, Steve returned to college in the late 90's to study architecture, afterward pursuing a series of apprenticeships. He founded his own firm in 2009. Steve now enjoys working on a variety of challenging projects, in which he emphasizes collaboration with clients, other design professionals, and the craftsman he has come to know in the Valley. He especially values long associations with Pennyroyal Farm, Navarro Vineyards and Filigreen Farm, and their visions of sustainable agriculture.

Backyard Buzz: Native Bees

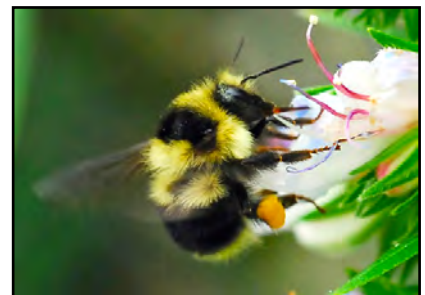
AVLT is hosting a two part series about native bees featuring Sara Leon Guerro from the Urban Bee Lab. There will be a talk in February followed by an interpretive walk in April, both in Anderson Valley. Honey bees, which are a critical link in agriculture, have received a lot of attention due to the serious pressure from the mysterious problem of Colony Collapse Disorder and a host of pathogens that threaten healthy bee populations. We often forget about the scores of other species of native bees that exist all around us. Bumblebees, for instance, are considered to be much more efficient pollinators than honey bees. They mainly forage for pollen rather than nectar, and transfer more pollen to the pistils with each visit. In this article Sara has profiled two interesting species of native bees. We hope you enjoy them and will join us for one or both presentations.

Sara Leon Guerrero is a Lab/Research Assistant at Urban Bee Lab, UC, Berkeley. www.helpabee.org

Bombus melanopygus (Black-tailed Bumblebees)

Fuzzy and adorable, black-tailed bumblebees (*Bombus melanopygus*) are the most common bumblebees in California. They can be observed visiting flowers as early as late December or early January. These charismatic pollinators are easily identifiable by their characteristic yellow and black stripes and bumbling flight pattern. Easily distinguishable from other common bumblebees (*Bombus vosnesenskii* and *B. californica*), they are medium to large, stout-bodied bees with an excess of pale yellow hairs. Unlike most of California's solitary native bee species, bumblebees are social, living in colonies with a three-caste structure (queen, workers, and male drones). However, unlike honeybees, bumble bees have small colonies, with fewer than 100 workers each year, that nest in abandoned rodent burrows, tussocks of grass, and even abandoned birdhouses. This means that each year, new queens are reared that will hibernate over the winter while the old colony dies off. The new queens emerge in late winter-early spring to begin the next year's colonies in new locations. Keep a keen eye out in early spring for extremely large bumblebees visiting lilacs, California poppies, and other early spring flowers. You may just spot one of these beautiful queens gathering provisions for her new colony.

(continued on page 5)



SUSTAINABLE DISCOVERIES is a one-day educational adventure during which participants visit unique and varied private landscapes where agriculture, landscape management, and conservation are combined to both reflect and enhance to the annual pulses of the land.

On September 26, the Sustainable Discoveries group visited the Highlands of Anderson Valley for our fifth Sustainable “D” outing. Sophia Bates and Tommy Otey led us on a walk through Acorn Ranch, an expansive 2200 acres, where we learned about their historic orchard restoration, heritage chicken breeding, and a unique breed of pig called Cinta Senese. The first Cintas, the Belted Pig of Siena, arrived at [Acorn Ranch](#) from Italy in 2012. Cintas are traditionally raised in the mountain forests of Tuscany, where they forage on acorns, chestnuts, and mushrooms. They were the original *free-range* critters. On the feathered side, Sophia is working under the guidance of the Sustainable Poultry Network to bring the Barred Plymouth Rock chicken back to its original standard of production as a dual-purpose breed (meat and eggs). With modern hybrids dominating the poultry industry, the birds are losing the characteristics they were once renowned for. The Barred Plymouth Rock chicken thrives in outdoor production systems and on the homestead.



Kurt Feichtmeir and Gerald Reis, the proprietors of [Ravenridge Cottages](#), were our hosts for a “locavores” lunch, artfully presented by Lisa Walsh Hale and Yorkville Market. Kurt and Gerald have created an inspirational retreat with accommodations overlooking the Dry Creek watershed. A visit to Yorkville Market offers an opportunity to stock up on locally produced sundries and wines, as well as artisanally prepared foods.

After lunch, we traveled a short distance up the road to Kit and George Lee’s [Old Chatham Ranch](#). The original dwelling was the fourth house built in Anderson Valley, beginning as a small mountain cabin in 1856. Kit treated us to a proper tasting of their estate grown extra virgin olive oil. Olives for the oil are hand picked, and the oil is fruity, pungent and spicy. George treated us to a vertical tasting of their Yorkville Highlands appellation cabernet sauvignon.

All in all, this was another terrific Sustainable D adventure. Thanks again to all our hosts for a fascinating and enjoyable day.

River’s Bend Retreat (continued)

Before coming to Anderson Valley, Laurie was attending graduate school in ministry at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, working as a hospice and hospital Chaplain, and studying embodied, earth-centered sacred practices with teachers such as Joanna Macy and Bill Plotkin, as well as permaculture teachers. Laurie also has experience with the work of land trusts - she worked for The Land Trust Alliance in Washington, DC, and members of her extended family work closely with community land trust organizations - so she is familiar with conservation easements. As a property owner, she appreciates the value of the collaborative efforts needed to steward the easement. This appreciation will help ensure her ability to sustain the business and the land in the face of a constantly changing environment.



As part of their restorative ecological work, River’s Bend is currently focused on a comprehensive plan to collaborate with the flow of water on the land; human impact has contributed to hard-packed surfaces and soil erosion, and

the River’s Bend staff will be implementing a wide range of ecological systems to increase rainwater infiltration into the aquifer, decrease run-off and increase the health of the ecosystem through soil building, plantings, swales, and a host of other strategies.

Special thanks to Laurie Adams for the generosity of her time and spirit to make this article possible.

River’s Bend Retreat Center www.riversbendretreat.org info@riversbendretreat.org 707-895-3990

Backyard Buzz (cont.)

Habropoda depressa (Digger Bees)

Another of California's early spring bee species is often not recognized as a bee at all. With their large gray bodies, digger bees (*Habropoda depressa*) do not fit the classic yellow and black striped appearance of the more recognizable honey and bumble bees. Fast-flying and noisy, these bees are often heard more than observed. (Keep an ear open and you will probably hear them buzzing Manzanita flowers.) Very common in wild lands and urban gardens, digger bees emerge between February and May, with peak activity in March and April. Like 70% of California's native bee species, *Habropoda depressa* females make their nests directly in the ground; hence the name, "digger bees". Females often create nests in aggregations where you can observe large numbers of males and females gathering to mate and deliver supplies. Look for gray bees flying low to the ground, and you might be able to follow them to a nesting aggregation.



Digger Bee

Ceanothus (California lilac, wild lilac, soap bush)

Beginning in late winter and lasting through late spring, *Ceanothus* species cover hillsides of Mendocino County in dazzling sprays of flowers, ranging in color from white to various shades of blue and purple. This large genus, with upwards of 60 species and a slew of varieties and cultivars, is limited to North America, with the majority native to California and the northwest. Ranging from low-growing ground cover to shrubs and robust trees, *Ceanothus* play vital roles in both wild lands and home gardens. In addition to being drought tolerant and very hardy, plants in this genus fix nitrogen, attract beneficial insects like predatory wasps and hoverflies, and are good sources of nutrition for wildlife; no wonder they attract deer in gardens! Some early California Indians used the leaves of some species to brew tea, while others used fresh and dried flowers to create soap (hence the name soap bush).



Ceanothus Julia Phelps

For California native bees, *Ceanothus* is an important source of early season pollen. Because the California bee season begins in late December-early January, when few flowers are blooming, *Ceanothus*, along with Manzanita and several non-native plants such as rosemary, are favorites of early season bees like bumble bees, digger bees, and mining bees. While nearly all species and varieties of *Ceanothus* are attractive to native bees, there are select cultivars that are highly attractive and readily available in most nurseries. For gardens with more space, gardeners looking for a flowering tree will find *Ceanothus* "Ray Hartman" to be an excellent choice. If space is a limiting factor, you can't go wrong with *Ceanothus* "Dark Star" or "Julia Phelps." Long-lived and requiring minimal maintenance, *Ceanothus* is a must-have for any aspiring bee habitat gardener.

The Spring/Summer, 2014 issue of Good Dirt included an article featuring Fred Martin, who had just completed an easement on his 40-acre homestead in Holmes Ranch. Fred's property is currently for sale. When we interviewed Fred he described the land as a paradise, full of natural beauty for wildlife, a mini wilderness with a house and five acres of gardens. Currently the garden is mostly ornamental, but it does include 24 fruit trees and two small vegetable gardens, with water and solitude. If you are interested in learning more about the property contact Fred or Janet Morris at 707-895-2607 in beautiful Anderson Valley.



SAVE THE DATES

AVLT HOSTS A NATIVE BEE PRESENTATION
AND INTERPRETIVE WALK WITH SPECIAL
GUEST SARA LEON GUERRERO FROM
THE URBAN BEE LAB AT UC BERKELEY.
LEARN ABOUT NATIVE BEES, PLANTS
AND PROMOTING HEALTHY BEE POPULATIONS.
PRESENTATION: FEBRUARY 27, 2016
INTERPRETIVE WALK: APRIL 23, 2016
BEE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR THE E-MAIL
ANNOUNCEMENT IN JANUARY!

INSIDE DIRT

**A CONSERVATION EASEMENT
CHANGE OF HANDS:
RIVER'S BEND RETREAT**

**WELCOME TO NEW BOARD MEMBER
STEVEN WOOD**

NATIVE BEES

CEANOTHUS

SUSTAINABLE DISCOVERIES



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