

GOOD DIRT

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ANDERSON VALLEY LAND TRUST

WINTER, 2019

COYOTE BRUSH

BACCHARIS PILULARIS

You may have noticed during the last couple of months unassuming bright green shrubs scattered throughout the Valley that were displaying fluffy cream-colored puffs atop their foliage... this common plant, often dismissed as a weed, is *Baccharis pilularis*, commonly known as coyote brush, or sometimes coyote bush. What you're seeing in late fall and into early winter is the whitish feathery "pappus" that adheres to the tiny seeds on female plants and allows the seed to be dispersed by wind. This is such a successful mechanism that the plant is widely distributed about much of the state, as the seeds sprout readily where they land. It grows in several natural habitats, including coastal bluffs, oak woodlands, and grasslands, where it is considered a secondary pioneer plant, meaning it colonizes easily where other plants have been removed, usually through cultivation or fire. Some speculate that's where its common name comes from, as it is wily like a coyote.

Coyote brush is evergreen, and takes on forms from an upright shrub to a prostrate ground cover, the latter usually found in coastal habitats. It ranges from only a couple to ten feet tall or sometimes more, but in any case the small leaves are evergreen, wedge-shaped, rough to the touch, and a lively green color. Flowers are small, either yellowish or white depending on the shrub's gender, and are rich in pollen and nectar, making the plants an excellent source for beneficial insects and pollinators, including predatory wasps and native butterflies, among many others. It is particularly important for these insects due to its late flowering when most other plants have already bloomed.

Although somewhat invasive in nature, *Baccharis pilularis* is relatively popular in the landscape trade, most often used for a soil-binding ground cover or in native landscape re-vegetation projects as an upright shrub. Coyote brush is not fussy about soils, takes full sun or light shade, and is quite drought resistant once established. Many cultivars are available, propagated from male clones to avoid self-sowing.

Indigenous people in Mendocino County were known to use the brittle stems for arrows, and other Native Americans has several uses for the plant as well.

Lastly, it seems a fitting plant to highlight for Anderson Valley - the botanical name derives from Bacchus, the Roman god of agriculture and wine!

IMPROVING INSTREAM FLOWS FOR FISH AND WATER SUPPLY RELIABILITY FOR NAVARRO WATERSHED LANDOWNERS

No matter where you live or how you get your water in the Navarro Watershed, there are things you can do to improve the reliability of your water supply and the health of our streams and wild salmon runs. With our Mediterranean climate there is always more water available during the winter and less water available during the summer dry months. Water use in the Navarro, however, follows an opposite pattern – we use 82% of our water during the summer. Taking water from streams when flows are naturally low, threatens water supplies for both people and salmon. Throughout the year, there is enough water overall to meet the water needs of people, farms and fish in the Navarro River watershed. On average, farms and homes use only about 1% of the total runoff. To improve water security, we must reduce reliance on summer diversions and meet more of our water needs using water stored during winter and spring. Depending on your water use and needs, different tools and approaches will be appropriate. The tools we're promoting are the following:

Water Storage: Store wet season water for use in drier months to reduce your need to take water from the streams in the summer – specific options may include: diverting stream water or rainwater capture during the wet season and storing in ponds or tanks.

Coordinated Timing of Diversions: Coordinate with others in your community the timing when each of you take summer water from the river to reduce the number of users taking at once.

Water Conservation: Reduce your summer water demand through water conservation, specifically irrigation efficiency. (Cont. on Page 2)

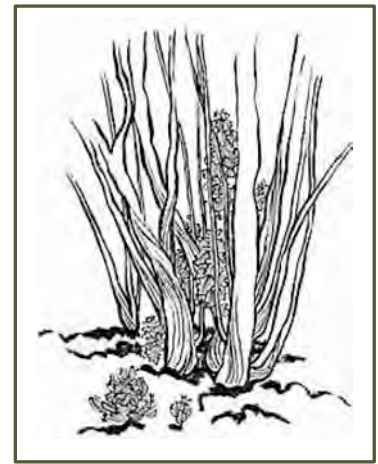


Coyote Brush

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE:

We are fortunate to enjoy the support received from your annual donations from those of you in Anderson Valley and beyond. Many have placed conservation easements on their land to help protect the beauty, natural resources, and rural character of Anderson Valley. And others have volunteered their time supporting our activities. On behalf of the AVLT Board of Directors, Thank You!

The core mission of AVLT has always involved working with property owners that want to conserve their land in perpetuity with a conservation easement. With that responsibility we commit to scheduling the board and staff time to monitor each easement, which we do each year. We also are pleased to have the opportunity to continue our educational outings and lecture series, presenting a variety of topics throughout the year, and inviting notable naturalists and scientists to enhance our understanding of the physical world around us. All of this takes time and resources, and while we enjoy some grant support from organizations such as the Community Foundation of Mendocino County and the East Bay Community Foundation, we primarily rely on the generosity of our individual donors, like you. It is for these reasons that I hope we can depend on your generosity again this year with a tax-deductible donation in any amount.



As we move forward into a new year and the challenges ahead, the AVLT Board of Directors will continue exploring new means and methods to enable us to be more effective in serving the community and preserving the beauty of Anderson Valley. We welcome your comments and suggestions about how we may accomplish this. Please share your thoughts with any of our Board members, or contact us by e-mail at avlt@mcn.org.

Thank you for reading *Good Dirt* and thank you for your continued support of the Anderson Valley Land Trust!

Patrick Miller
President, Anderson Valley Land Trust Board of Directors

IMPROVING INSTREAM FLOWS (CONT.)

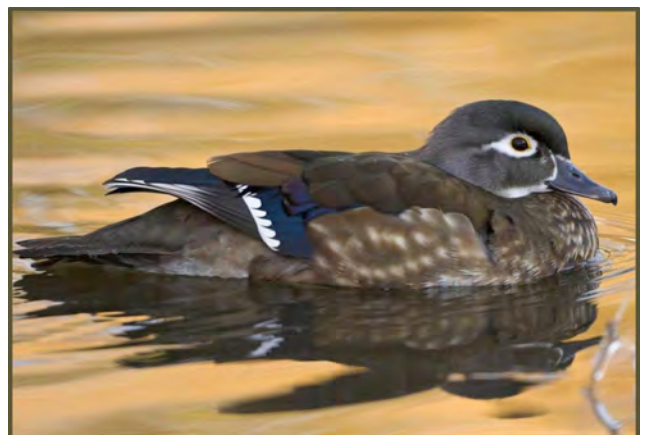
Groundwater Storage: Increase infiltration of rainfall runoff and the health of soils on your property to help replenish groundwater supplies that reduce irrigation needs and contribute to baseflows in the summer months.

Collaborative Water Management: To reduce reliance on summer diversions, store water from the wet season and increase groundwater infiltration. Recognizing the need to work together, we developed what we are calling Collaborative Water Management – a watershed approach incentivizing individual water users to collectively and voluntarily implement projects and management efforts to improve their water supply reliability and instream flows for fish. To learn more please visit: <http://mcrd.org/resources/flow-enhancement>.

The Navarro Flow Enhancement Partnership: The Mendocino County Resource Conservation District, The Nature Conservancy and Trout Unlimited are partnering to conserve natural resources through technical assistance and funding opportunities to help Navarro landowners and residents develop resource conservation projects carried out on a strictly voluntary basis.

THE PASSAGE OF TIME

Maureen Bowman recently sold her land in Anderson Valley and decided to return to the Bay Area full time. She and her late husband Michael placed a conservation easement on the land in 2006. Since conservation easements last forever, she knows that although the property has new owners, the forest, oak woodlands, and beautiful valley views will continue to be protected. We wish Maureen well and thank her for her dedication to the community and strong support of AVLT. In turn, we welcome the new owners to Anderson Valley and look forward to working with them to fulfill Maureen and Michael Bowman’s vision to protect the land.



Female Wood Duck

WELCOME, JESSE RATHBUN

New Anderson Valley Land Trust Board Member Jesse Rathbun has spent most of his life in Mendocino County. He was born in Big Sur and his family moved here when he was four years old. He attended Butte College and Humboldt State University, where he studied Rangeland Resources. Since returning to Mendocino County he has worked with local businesses including Navarro Vineyards, Anderson Valley Farm Supply and Pennyroyal Farm, and is currently working in maintenance and operations at Roederer Estate.

Jesse is an avid mountain bike rider and expert mechanic, which led him to founding and opening Boonville Bike Works in 2014. In addition to the bike shop, he implemented a program in the local schools to teach youth about bike handling and safety, and coaches the high school mountain bike team. His connection with the outdoors and appreciation for the rural landscape of Anderson Valley bring a valued perspective to the diversity of the AVLT board.

Jesse lives with his fiancé, Julia Berry, on her family's historic ranch on Greenwood Ridge.



The Organic Birder By Chris Bing

My dad, George Bing, first got interested in bird watching by way of a boy scout merit badge sometime around 1939, in Ohio, and he never stopped loving birds until his last day. Once, when joining him on a bird walk, I admitted to not bringing my binoculars. He assured me it wasn't a problem because I was an organic birder. What a compliment he bestowed on me. It's not how fancy your optics are, it's more important that you enjoy the experience.

So, on to the bird of the moment.

Wood Ducks are like floating jewels. The drake has a feather pattern unrivaled in the world of American waterfowl. My best sightings have been on my own stretch of Mill Creek here in Philo. Mostly I see them in the winter and the first time I spied them the creek was frozen along the edges. There were four or five ducks swimming in a large pool at a bend in the creek where the California Conservation Corps (CCC) had placed large wooden debris some years earlier to help scour out a hole for the salmon. My road runs just above the area where the pool is located and I could creep up on the flock without them seeing me. They are very skittish birds and will fly away if they see me first.

Another splendid sighting I had was when I spotted some ducks swimming downstream in my favorite swimming hole in Mill Creek. As I strained to look at them in my binoculars from the upper bridge that crosses the creek I heard a faint "peep". I looked down into the water to see a hen Wood Duck swimming directly below me and off she flew, but not before I got a good look at her as she looked up at me with that little Cleopatra eye-ring of hers.

That's what I have to say about the Wood Duck (*Aix sponsa*) for the moment. If you would like more information you should pick up a bird book.

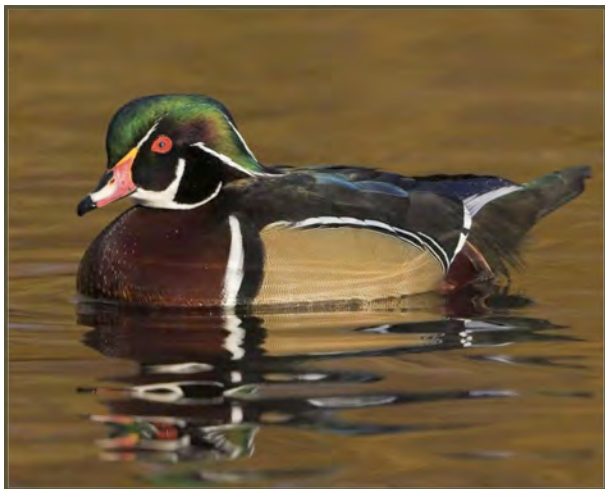
Wood Ducks on Mill Creek

A few facts about Wood Ducks:

Wood Duck drakes are the most vividly colored of all North American ducks. The head and crest are metallic green and purple, with a white line extending from the base of the bill above the eye and another behind the eye along the crest; the throat and neck are also white. The breast is chestnut with white flecks, and the lower breast and under parts are white. The mantle and wings are metallic blue and green; sides are buff, finely vermiculated with black. The drake has red eyes without an eye ring. His bill is red, with a yellow band at the base and a black line above the nostrils to the tip. Legs and feet are dark yellow.

A group of ducks is called a number of different things, including a flock of ducks, a flight of ducks, a bunch of ducks, a team of ducks, a raft of ducks, a paddling of ducks, and a flush of ducks.

Wood ducks are mainly vegetarian, feeding on aquatic plants, seeds, nuts and fruits. They also eat insects, snails, tadpoles, and



Male Wood Duck

salamanders. Wood ducks are "dabbling" ducks and forage for food while swimming.

Wood Ducks are sexually dimorphic - the male has bright colors for courtship displays, while the female has dull colors to blend in with the environment.



Coyote Brush Flowers

INSIDE DIRT

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE COYOTE BRUSH IMPROVING INSTREAM FLOWS
WOOD DUCKS WOODY BIOMASS TO BIOCHAR

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AVLT OUTSIDE: FOREST MANAGEMENT FOR FIRE MITIGATION: A LANDOWNER'S PRIMER

Landowners have been tutored on how to protect their homes and their access routes in case of a wildfire, but many of us have forest land on our properties and may not be fully aware of the steps we can take to protect ourselves and our neighbors from the speed and ferocity of a wildfire through proactive management of this forest land. Sonoma State University's Center for Environmental Inquiry, The Redwood Forest Foundation, Inc. and Anderson Valley Land Trust are presenting a program to help you learn the steps you can take, depending upon the type of forest you have on your land, to mitigate the severity and duration of a wildfire. Learn about the tools and techniques from a diverse group of forestry experts willing and anxious to share their knowledge so you can gain the skills to be environmentally ready. The program will include information and a demonstration of a conservation burn and the creation of biochar.

The field outing will take place in early April.

Once the date is confirmed the invitation will be sent to our e-mail events list.
If you are not already on that list, please contact us at avlt@mcn.org or call us at 707-895-3150.