Good Dirt

The Newsletter of the Anderson Valley Land Trust

Summer, 2019

Poison Oak *Toxicodendron diversilobum*

Much to the chagrin of many a landowner, this pesky California native readily grows near your house or on your trails. Yet it can be enjoyed from a safe distance for its beauty, its helpful role in erosion stabilization, providing berries and nesting sites for birds, its role as a nursery for young oaks, and its oil utilized as a spectacular black lacquer.

Toxicodendron diversilobum is one of our most widely distributed native plants and inhabits a number of diverse plant communities. It is as likely to be seen as a multi-stemmed shrub on an exposed hillside as it is a woody vine climbing a hundred feet or more up a coastal redwood. Beyond its chameleon-like ability to adapt to a given environment, poison oak is also deciduous, making identification difficult at times. The most telling characteristic is the three-lobed leaf with slick, shiny red foliage as it emerges in the very early spring, spring and summer green leaves, spectacular fiery red and yellow autumnal foliage with white berries, and light brown bark in the winter.

The scientific name alone is enough to frustrate the careful botanist as it appears to have changed from *Toxicodendron diversilobum* to *Rhus diversiloba* and back again as many as four times in the last several decades.

Beyond its painful notoriety, poison oak plays an integral role in our ecosystem. It is a species that thrives in disturbed areas of earth. In the wake of fires, grazing, flooding, or landslides, poison oak will be one of the first plants to take root. Consequently, it is one of the most difficult plants to eliminate from the landscape due to its extensive, highly regenerative root system's ability to resist fire and drought.

(cont. on page 2)

History and Defense of Conservation Easements

A conservation easement is a legal arrangement whereby an area of land is protected in perpetuity from specific types of development. In legal terms, the easement creates a set of permanently enforceable rights in real property, held by a private nonprofit corporation – typically a land trust like the Anderson Valley Land Trust. These rights generally impose a set of promises not to do certain activities on the encumbered land. Conservation easements are permanently enforceable by the easement holder. Conservation easements are often welcomed by landowners because they achieve the goals of land protection without regulation or adversity, and usually without any government oversight.

The term "conservation easement" emerged in the late 1950s when journalist William Whyte advocated using private land-use controls to accomplish landscape preservation. By the time Whyte coined the term, however, the procedure he'd described was already established. During the 1930s and 1940s, the National Park Service purchased easements protecting almost 1,500 acres in Virginia and North Carolina to safeguard scenic vistas along the Blue Ridge Parkway, plus easements protecting another 4,500 acres in Mississippi, Alabama, and Tennessee to maintain scenic vistas along the Natchez Trace Parkway. The Federal government discontinued the practice of purchasing scenic easements in the 1950s, but the concept of a conservation easement as a land protection tool was now in place.

Coincident with the advent of federal scenic highway easement legislation, states began enacting legislation authorizing the use of conservation easements to accomplish a broad range of land conservation goals.

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Painted Lady Butterfly – page 3

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE:

Our newsletter, Good Dirt, gives us an opportunity to highlight some of the work we do throughout the year, let you know about upcoming events, and share a few things we think you will find interesting. Behind the scenes, we are continually looking for new projects to preserve our rural landscape, as well as working with landowners and existing conservation easements. This keeps the all-volunteer AVLT board of directors quite busy.

In addition to creating new conservation easements, AVLT is committed to offering educational activities throughout the year featuring lecture and learn classroom programs and outdoor field outings. We rely on your individual donations as well as support from grants that enable us to continue these programs.

This year, AVLT received a Community Enrichment grant from the Community Foundation of Mendocino County to offer a number of free educational activities in 2019/2020 to increase public awareness of our local natural resources and strategies to protect them. We will be working with a number of local/regional environmental and natural resource organizations and agencies, such as the Navarro River Resource Center, Mendocino County Resource Conservation District, Hendy Woods State Park, AV Unity Club, AV Volunteer Fire Department, Galbreath Wildlands Preserve/Sonoma State University, and others on a series of free indoor presentations and outdoor field events led by experts in their respective fields.

In closing, I would like to take the opportunity to say Thank You! to my friends and colleagues on the Anderson Valley Board of Directors, and to Trey Petrey, our office coordinator. These individuals do a great many things that are never published in the pages of Good Dirt, and make it possible for AVLT to continue our conservation work and educational programs.

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

Patrick Miller
President, Anderson Valley Land Trust Board of Directors

POISON OAK *(cont.)*

Early explorers took poison oak back to Europe for its ornamental qualities. The plant has a number of other virtues: the Chinese have used the unguent urushiol as a shiny black glaze in their lacquer ware; American Indians wove baskets from its roots and made a dye from the sap that they used in basket designs; they also used it to cover baked foods in fire pits. *Toxicodendron diversilobum* has been used both in Europe and America in the pharmacopoeia. Its browse value for foraging wild and domesticated animals is rated by UC Davis as "good to fair" for horses and deer. The town of Columbia, California even holds an annual "Poison Oak Show" that bestows awards for best arrangement, largest leaf, most potent-looking red leaves, and best bonsai!

Urushiol is the powerful toxic oil in every part of the plant, except the pollen, that causes a severe rash among roughly three-quarters of the exposed human population. The rash is the result of the body's immune system reacting in an effort to purge the poison.

Often the unwary victim does not know that he or she has been exposed to poison oak, however, active rinsing immediately after contact can greatly reduce the severity of the reaction. After the urushiol has bound to the skin there are no automatic cures beyond time and endurance. If you spend time outdoors, the best prevention is learning to identify the many stages and forms of poison oak you may encounter and studiously avoiding it. Since soap removes the body's own protective oils, making clean skin more susceptible, shower after hiking rather than before.

And, of course, remember the old adage, 'leaves of three let it be, berries white poisonous sight."

Written by Bon Goodell with contributions by Jane Miller

THISTLES!

Written by Kate Marianchild

Before you weed those prickly things from your garden, look a little closer. Thistles (and mallows) are hosts for caterpillars, including the migratory Painted Ladies. Look for caterpillars ranging from tiny and blackish to larger and whitish, often hidden under webbing. For those of you new to butterfly life stages: the caterpillar that hatches out of the egg is the first instar. That caterpillar eats and eats until it's too big for its skin, and then it molts (sheds its skin). The new caterpillar stage that emerges is the second instar. Each instar looks different from the previous one. There are five instars altogether.

SPRING PROGRAMS AND FIELD OUTINGS

Understanding the benefits of introducing native plants into your garden landscape was the topic of *Grow Wildlife Gardens,* one of the spring educational series events presented by AVLT and Galbreath Wildlife Preserve on April 6, 2019. Patrick Miller, AVLT Board President and a Landscape Architect, presented a slide show illustrating some garden scenarios featuring native plants and grasses, and shared topic questions with our panel that included Horticulturist Pam Callaghan, Author and Naturalist Kate Marianchild, Horticulturist Jane Miller, and Botanist Jade Paget-Seekins. The panel in turn had an opportunity to give their perspectives and answer questions from the 40 guests that attended the event, which was held at the Anderson Valley Historical Museum.

THE MISSOURI HOUSE SIGN

If you have been by The Missouri House and AVLT offices in Boonville you may have noticed there are new signs in front of the building. Tom Bickell crafted the signs from redwood milled from his property in Yorkville, Roy Laird custom made the flatiron hardware, and Odis Schmidt fine-tuned everything in his woodworking shop so that it fit together perfectly. Bill Chambers provided the redwood posts from lumber milled from his Boonville property, Jeff Burroughs assisted with the installation, and Trey Petrey worked on the design, painting and "general contracting" of the sign. We are grateful to everyone who donated the time, materials, wood and metalworking skills, and construction know-how to complete this project.

A few weeks later we traveled to Galbreath Wildlands Preserve for a day in the field with Emily Allen, a biologist and board member of the California Native Grassland Association and the Sanhedrin chapter of the California Native Plant Society, and Jen Riddell, PhD, a plant biologist and lichenologist and conservation chair for the Sanhedrin chapter of the California Native Plant Society. Our group of 22 participants visited several key areas in the preserve to learn about the abundant species of wildflowers, native grasses, lichen, as well as areas of riparian restoration in areas along a number of creeks in the watershed. There were many pleasant surprises along the way including the opportunity to get a close look at nesting bumblebees. Certain species nest underground, in places such as abandoned rodent holes, under sheds and in compost heaps. Magical!

The Galbreath Wildlands Preserve is a 3,670-acre (14.9 km^2) nature preserve in Mendocino County, California, established in 2004 as a gift from Fred Galbreath (1901-2000), a local rancher. The preserve, a former sheep ranch, is located near Yorkville. It is owned and managed by the Center for Environmental Inquiry at Sonoma State University.

A recent grant from The Community Foundation of Mendocino County will allow us to continue and expand our series of lectures and field outings, and create web-based tools in partnership with Galbreath Preserve and others. To be notified of upcoming events, write us at avlt@mcn.org with your name and email address or phone us at 707-895-3150 if you do not use email.

HISTORY AND DEFENSE OF CONSERVATION EASEMENTS *(cont.)*

By the late seventies, 40 states had enacted some type of conservation easement enabling legislation. In 1964, the IRS authorized a Federal charitable income tax deduction for the donation of conservation easements for the purpose of protecting scenic land adjacent to ~~a~~ federal highway. In 1980, Congress made the conservation easement deduction provision a permanent part of the Internal Revenue Code. As a result, a landowner donating a qualifying perpetual conservation easement to a government entity or charitable organization is eligible for a federal charitable income tax deduction generally equal to a proportion of the value of the easement.

Along with the potential for substantial tax benefits, conservation easements are attractive to landowners because they allow owners to protect their land in perpetuity while still maintaining full ownership and management of it. Voluntary easements appeal to conservation organizations because they increase the amount of land they can protect with little cost to the organization. Another benefit of conservation easements is their flexibility. Each easement can be carefully crafted to the needs of the landowner and goals of the land trust. For example, an easement might prohibit the building of additional structures, allow only sustainable forestry, or restrict the use of the land to agricultural purposes only. In this way, the parties tailor the easement to the specifics of the land itself and to the needs and desires of the landowner.

The growth in the number of acres protected by conservation easements has meant a corresponding growth in the number of land trusts acquiring easements. Over the years, the nature of land trusts, and purposes for land and conservation easements have evolved dramatically. By the end of the twentieth century land trusts were acquiring land and conservation easements, through purchase or donation, for a wide variety of purposes to conserve ecological communities, agricultural and forestlands, historic sites, scenic vistas, and the fabric of local communities. In 2017, the Land Trust Alliance reported 1363 land trusts operating in the United States, varying in size from large sophisticated national and international organizations, such as the Trust for Public Land and The Nature Conservancy, to small local organizations run exclusively by volunteers such as the Anderson Valley Land Trust. The Federal tax incentives and the state enabling statutes have been primary drivers of growth in both the use of conservation easements as a land protection tool and the number of land trusts operating in the United States. Federal, state, and local conservation easement purchase programs, as well as state tax incentive programs, have also played significant roles.

Acquiring conservation easements is just the beginning of the process of protecting the land they encompass. Protection requires ongoing monitoring and enforcement of easement conditions. The very purpose of state and federal laws supporting conservation easements is that they serve a strong and permanent public interest. When a conservation easement is created, therefore, there is a legitimate public concern that the easement holder will have the capacity and resolve to monitor, enforce and defend the restrictions of the easement in perpetuity.

Reported violations of conservation easements are relatively rare, but as the many conservation easements created in the last decades "age," new owners may have different ideas about land use than did the owner who created the easement. If these new owners do not understand or respect the easement, enforcement issues may arise.

Land trusts presented with legal challenges have a particular responsibility to their mission, donors, members and the public at large to defend their conservation easements. It is in the public interest that donors, agency funders and the public as a whole demand and support the thoughtful, contextually appropriate and powerful enforcement actions necessary to ensure conservation objectives over the long term. Accordingly, institutions, such as Anderson Valley Land Trust, with the capacity, political will and community support for monitoring and enforcing conservation agreements, are critical to the success of land conservation, protecting open space, and helping to mitigate rapid climate change.

AVLT 2018 Financial Statement

Statement of Activity as of December 31, 2018

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds*
Current Assets		
Operating Accounts	$30,668.99	
Pioneer Stewardship Fund		$28,317.51
Stewardship Endowment*		$275,270.54
Other Current Assets	$2,051.50	$21,583.68
Total	$32,720.49	$325,171.73
Donations	$31,435.00	
Grants	$4,500.00	
Special events	$5,825.00	
Total Support & Revenue	$41,760.00	
Expenses		
Operating Expenses	$30,512.21	
Easement Defense		$38,776.00
Special Events & Workshops	$1,972.74	
Portfolio Value Decrease		$12,365.90
Total Expenses	$32,484.95	$51,141.90

* restricted funds for the continuing protection of our easements.

Thank You to Our Generous Donors

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Grants

Frederick E. and Anne R. Barstow Fund
at East Bay Community Foundation
The Community Foundation of Mendocino County
Friends of Rancho Navarro

In-kind Donors

Field Notes and Farm Bites Event

Christina Jones and Aquarelle Catering
Filigreen Farm
Balo Vineyards
Bee Hunter Wines
Donkey and Goat Wines
Yamakiri Wines and Sin Eater Cider

Grow Wildlife Gardens

Pam Callaghan
Jane and Patrick Miller

Missouri House Sign

Tom Bickell
Jeff Burroughs
Bill Chambers
Roy Laird
Odis Schmidt

INSIDE DIRT

AVLT Board of Directors

Karen Altaras Barbara Goodell David Hopmann Nancy Hornor
Glynnis Jones Patrick Miller Rachel Turner Williams Steven Wood

Contributors:
Barbara Goodell, Bon Goodell, Glynnis Jones, Jerry Karp, Kate Marianchild
Jane Miller, Patrick Miller, Rachel Williams, Trey Petrey

Thank you to the AVLT Volunteers
at the 23rd Annual Legendary
Boonville Beer Festival

Lariel Duffy, Glynnis Jones, Barbara Goodell, Rob Goodell, Jane Miller, Patrick Miller
Bridgett Shank, Julia Sheng, Christian Weiss, Rachel Williams

Thank you!
Anderson Valley Brewing Company
For the generous community support.

Saturday, April 27th 2019
Boonville Beer Festival