

President's Report *by Tony Taylor*

With only one page left on my 2007 calendar, it's time to take a quick look back at another exciting year of challenges and achievements here at the ESLT. Looking first at our primary mission of protecting and preserving scenic, rural lands, we have helped protect over 3500 acres of critical wildlife habitat, scenic vistas and open space this year. And by the end of the year we will add an additional 900 acres to that total when we complete our conservation easement at Benton Hot Springs Valley.



With great thanks to many of you, our financial health continues to keep pace with our growing land protection success. In the 3rd quarter, your support was supplemented by the award of several important grants that will continue to sustain our work.

One of these grants was awarded by the Department of Conservation's California Farmland Conservancy Program. This two-year grant will be used to underwrite our farm and ranch protection program. As a result we have hired John McGurke, a half-time Agricultural Lands Specialist (see page 5).

With some sadness but great appreciation for her 3 1/2 years of ESLT leadership, we accepted the resignation of our Executive Director, Julie Bear. Julie now has an important position with the state Sierra Nevada Conservancy (see page 5). We are working to have our new ED in place by early 2008.

Finally, three of our staff and three board members attended the

continues on page 5



Mono Craters reflected in Mono Lake.

Photo by ©Stephen Ingram

Land Conservation Update

by Karen Ferrell-Ingram

An exciting conservation easement project we're currently working on in the Mono Basin reinforced to us the importance of all of our conservation partners, especially our members! The ESLT was trying to assist a landowner in finding the perfect, conservation minded buyer for a very large property in the Mono Basin. After having one set of potential conservation buyers walk away, we mentioned our project to a supporter visiting our booth at the Bishop Home Show. Two days later we received a call from one of her friends who has now purchased the property and is in the process of donating a conservation easement that will restrict all future subdivision. When the donation is completed, he will be receiving significant federal tax benefits for his charitable contribution, and the scenic and natural qualities of the beautiful Mono Basin will be preserved in perpetuity.

We are looking to grow our circle of active conservation partners because we need everyone's help to achieve our mission. If you'd like to learn about unique and important properties that come to our attention, please add your name to our our Conservation Buyer Program. There is no obligation or cost to join the team and no guarantees. Farmers are invited, too! We'll notify you when we hear of a special property that needs just the right owner and maybe magic will happen again, just like in that magical Mono Basin. ■

The Swift Gray Fox by Stephen Ingram

At breakfast one day last year, my wife, Karen, and I looked up to see a covey of quail flush from the sagebrush, followed closely by a gray fox who held one unlucky, fluttering quail in his mouth. This startling act of predation was exciting to observe, and it gave us a new sense of respect for this small, handsome predator.

Gray foxes (*Urocyon cineroargenteus*) are among the smallest members of the dog family, the canids, weighing only 7 to 13 pounds and standing 12 to 16 inches tall at the shoulder. The gray fox is closely related to the smaller island fox, native to six of California's Channel Islands, but is a distant cousin to the red fox and kit fox. (The Sierra Nevada red fox, a native subspecies of the Eastern red fox, is very rare and seldom seen in the Eastern Sierra, though it has been documented in the High Sierra west of the Mono Basin). Strong, hooked claws enable the gray fox to climb trees—the only canid with this skill. In Bishop, they have been seen curled up among the branches of a red willow tree. This agile predator can also run for short distances up to 28 miles per hour.

Gray foxes mate from February through March, and females give birth to a litter of 3 to 5 pups in April or May. Rocky slopes, burrows, and hollow trees serve as dens for a gray fox mother and her pups. Although the males stay with their mate and help care for the young until they are independent at four months old, father foxes do not share the same den with their offspring.

The gray fox occurs from southern Canada through Central America to Colombia and Venezuela. In the Eastern Sierra, gray foxes are most common in the foothills above the Owens Valley up to at least 8,000 feet. Gray foxes are occasionally seen in Swall Meadows where there is a diversity of habitats, including rocky arroyos with dense shrubs, meadows with willow thickets, and forests of Jeffrey and pinyon pine. The 72 acres held as conservation easements by the ESLT in Swall Meadows safeguard important gray fox habitat, and provide a steady source of quail, rabbits, mice, insects, berries, and other foods favored by these omnivorous foxes. ■



A gray fox catches the late afternoon light, Swall Meadows.

Photo by ©Joel St. Marie

The Eastern Sierra Land Trust works with willing landowners to protect vital lands in the Eastern Sierra for their scenic, recreational, historical, agricultural, botanic and wildlife values.

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ESLT Gift Items

It's not too early to do your Christmas shopping, and the ESLT has another new option for your gift-giving ideas. We now have a classy, silver, 12-ounce insulated cup to add to our line of shirts and caps. Prices and items are listed below; add \$3.00 for shipping costs. Call **760-873-4554** to order.



- Insulated cup with ESLT logo: \$10
- Women's V-neck shirt with silkscreen logo, in ivory or blueberry: \$20
- T-shirts with silkscreen logo, in denim: \$15
- Men's polo shirt with embroidered logo, in sterling: \$30
- Ball cap with embroidered logo, in beige: \$15

Thank You For Your Support!

Thanks to all of our donors, and those who gave us permission to print their names here. We do our best to keep accurate records. Please notify us of any errors so that we can correct them in our member database.

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Lands and Legacy Contributes to ESLT Cooffers

by Cheryl Chipman

A warm fall afternoon and scores of world class landscape photographs provided a perfect backdrop for the 2007 Lands and Legacy event at the Mountain Light Gallery. Over 100 people enjoyed the Sweetwater Trio play throughout the evening, ate scrumptious food by Anything Goes Fine Catering, and got some fabulous

deals on numerous auction items. Twenty-two people were delighted to win an assortment of raffle prizes—from gorgeous posters to gift certificates to note cards. All in all, the evening was a resounding success and helped raise nearly \$9,000 to continue our work. Don't miss next year's event!



From left, Jan Hunewill, Nancy Cook—the high bidder for a stay at Hunewill Ranch, and Bruce Tulloch.



From left, Sherryl Taylor and Karen Ferrell-Ingram enjoying the festive evening.

STAFF CHANGES

by Stephen Ingram

The changes in the staff of a growing non-profit organization offer opportunities to reflect on the past and plan for the future. The Eastern Sierra Land Trust has benefited greatly from the hard work and commitment of Julie Bear, our first Executive Director, who resigned in September to take a new job with the Sierra Nevada Conservancy as their Mt. Whitney Area Representative. We are all lucky to have Julie working locally on behalf of the Sierra Nevada. We'll miss her warm presence at the ESLT office, but look forward to working with Julie and the Sierra Nevada Conservancy in the future.

The ESLT would like to welcome Heather deBethizy as our new Membership and Office Coordinator. Originally from North Carolina, Heather discovered Bishop three summers ago as a Student Conservation Association intern for the Inyo National Forest. After graduating from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Heather

decided to get back to the land she had discovered in college—the Eastern Sierra. “Bishop is where I learned to backpack, fly-fish, and enjoy really tall mountains!” Heather recalls. “I had just graduated, finished traveling in South America, and wanted to put my new experiences and knowledge into practice. I was lucky enough the ESLT was hiring, and now I am very excited to be a member of the ESLT team and to be making a positive difference for our rural lands.”

The ESLT also welcomes John McGurke as our Agricultural Lands Specialist, a new position funded by the Department of Conservation's California Farmland Conservancy Program. John will work in collaboration with landowners to preserve the scenic and economic value of Eastern Sierra agricultural lands. John became a permanent resident of Bishop in 2006 when he and his wife, Mary, volunteered for a season with the wilderness program at White Mountain Ranger Station. After five months of exploring the incredible backcountry on the Inyo National Forest, they are now here to

President's Report

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4-day National Land Trust Rally in Denver in early October. With over 2,000 other committed land trust professionals and volunteers, we were inspired by amazing successes, challenged by the hard work yet to be done, and educated on the latest, best practices in our field.

Again, I want to thank you for your continuing support of our work, and wish you a very happy and meaningful holiday season. ■



Heather deBethizy and John McGurke

stay. Before being hired by the ESLT, John spent over 12 years managing several education and conservation programs for non-profit organizations in California. “On a personal level, I am very excited to be working toward the preservation of agricultural lands due in part to my father running a cow-calf operation on a small farm in North Texas,” John says. When not working for the ESLT, you can usually find John doing something outdoors—hiking, running, climbing, scaring fish with his fly rod, or coaching the Varsity Boys Soccer Team at Bishop High School.

We're very fortunate to have Heather and John as vital staff members of our growing organization. ■

Your Investment Counts

by Cheryl Chipman

Yes, it's coming, the end of another year! We have accomplished so much together in 2007: we have assisted with permanent protection of 3740 acres in the Mono Basin, preserved 10 additional acres in the narrowest part of the Round Valley mule deer migration corridor, and we are on the verge of closing a conservation agreement on Benton Hot Springs Valley rangeland and wildlife habitat. We hosted a Living with Wildlife Festival, celebrated our accomplishments at a festive gala, and added more than 300 members and four new staff to our ranks. We couldn't have done it without your investment in the Eastern Sierra and your belief in land conservation. Thank you!

It follows that we need your continued support to sustain our efforts. We have several projects spanning from Inyo County to the Bridgeport Valley in which we are in the preliminary phases with landowners to work on conservation agreements.

Please remember the Eastern Sierra Land Trust in your end of year giving. You will soon be receiving our end of the year request for a special contribution. Especially important to members age 70.5 or older: you may disperse your IRA holdings directly to the charity of your choice without having to receive it as taxable income. Currently, this provision ends December 31, 2007, so the time is right to consider such a gift now. Please call us if you have any questions regarding an end of year gift or memoriam gift. ■



Photo by ©Stephen Ingram

Winter is coming! Please support the Eastern Sierra Land Trust!



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