

## Dream With Us *by Julie Bear*

When did you last make time to dream, not daydream but really focus on dreaming about what you wanted to do in your life? Think back to your childhood for a moment and recall what inspired you most back then.

I dreamed of becoming a famous singer, living in a tree house, teaching children, and becoming an archeologist. Nowadays I dream of exploring and conserving wonderful places in the Eastern Sierra, playing the piano more, always being curious, staying fit, being with my loved ones, and yes, still living in a tree house one day.

I'm fond of saying that we at Eastern Sierra Land Trust love helping people's dreams come true.

We are working with one of you now to conserve land that has been in your family for four generations: undeveloped meadows, springs, and seeps, next to one of the oldest settlements in Mono County. Another of you dreams of keeping a family-owned farm together and prospering for generations to come. Several of you are making a collective dream come true, keeping a critical corridor open for deer migration and for many other wild creatures. Many of us dream of keeping much of the land owned by Los Angeles in Mono County just as it is today.

Here at Eastern Sierra Land Trust we dream of working farms and ranches, interconnected lands for habitat, beautiful views, historic places and promoting conservation as a way of protecting our rural quality of life. Our dreams are coming true because of all of you—our members who dare to dream along with us and support our lasting work. Thank you. ■



*White Mountains reflected in the ponds of Benton Hot Springs Valley. Photo by Karen Ferrell-Ingram*

## Grant Award Sends ESLT Over the Moon

*by Karen Ferrell-Ingram*

Sometimes we describe it as “when the planets are aligned” and once in awhile it has to happen: a landowner comes to the ESLT with property that is rich in habitat, water, beauty, history, and local importance and, at almost the same time, a grant program is announced that is focused on protecting just such lands. Whether it is an astronomical phenomenon or just good timing, the ESLT is thrilled to have received a \$2,247,000 grant from the Sierra Nevada Cascade Conservation Grant Program to purchase a conservation easement on approximately 900 acres of Bill Bramlette's ranch in Benton Hot Springs Valley in eastern Mono County.

The voluntary land protection agreement will permanently preserve the undeveloped meadows, springs, seeps, and uplands in Benton Hot Springs Valley, adjacent to the historic settlement of Old Benton. Resources on this land are incredible: 114 bird species have been spotted there, rare spring snails inhabit the springs, water is abundant in the meadows, and limited cattle grazing provides economic benefits.

The ESLT is proud to partner with fourth generation landowner, Bill Bramlette, on his plans to permanently protect his valuable undeveloped land and we look forward to assisting him as he works to restore and enhance the historic buildings found in Old Benton. Stay tuned for more information on this exciting project as we complete the easement process and invite our members and supporters to celebrate with us on the land. ■

# Winter Dwellers of the Sierra

by Tammy Branston

The California quail (*Callipepla californica*) was adopted by the California Legislature in 1931 as our official State Bird and is one of America's most interesting game birds. This gallinaceous (chicken-like) bird is a member of the Phasianidae Family and is related to turkeys, pheasants and grouse. These stout-bodied birds have strong feet and legs designed for life on the ground and a distinctive tear-drop shaped head plume called a top-knot. California quail are capable of short, swift flight but prefer to run to escape danger.



Photo: Stephen Ingram

California quail do not migrate and tend to spend their entire lives in an area usually two miles in diameter. Unlike most birds, this species is monogamous; the male takes only one mate during the mating season and assists in egg incubation and caring for the young. The male will also spend time perched motionless on a post, to warn his mate and young when danger approaches. This ground-dwelling bird needs cover for roosting, resting, nesting, escaping from predators, and protection from seasonal changes, and often take shelter in brushy vegetation and streamside thickets. In the fall season, their diet consists of seeds and fruits from woody plants, but once the winter rains begin, their diet switches to forbs and grasses.

During the fall and winter months California quail are highly gregarious birds, gathering into groups that average 50 individuals. These groups are called coveys and in certain situations, can include as many as 1,000 individuals. While their vocal repertoire includes fourteen different clucks and calls for alarm, aggression, and maintaining contact and courtship, the most familiar call we tend to hear is for contact, a three-note assembly, "chi-ca-go." Then at the start of early spring, their social behavior changes. The covey will break up, find mates, and spread themselves into different habitat to nest and rear their young.

Protecting habitat and cover for many wildlife species, including these year-round residents, is what the ESLT aims to accomplish through the preservation of important Eastern Sierra landscapes. ■

*The mission of the Eastern Sierra Land Trust is to protect and enhance vital lands in the Eastern Sierra for their scenic, recreational, agricultural, historical, botanic and wildlife values.*

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## ESLT RECEIVES SOUTHERN HOSPITALITY IN NASHVILLE

by Stephen Ingram

Executive Director Julie Bear and Lands Director Karen Ferrell-Ingram received scholarships to attend the National Land Conservation Conference in Nashville, Tennessee, from October 11-15. The 2006 Rally, put on annually by the Land Trust Alliance, attracted 2000 land conservation professionals. Among the offerings were field trip options, half and full-day seminars, and more than 120 workshops ranging from legal and tax issues, to partnering with other land trusts, to habitat restoration. ■

## *In Memoriam*

We wish to thank those who recently made donations in memory of Jean Shelton. Jean was passionate about the Eastern Sierra land that she lived on—property which is forever preserved in a land protection agreement. We extend our condolences to Jean's generous family and our sincere thanks for choosing the ESLT as a recipient of donations in Jean's honor. ■

# Giving Thanks

We are very grateful to the Eastern Sierra individuals who take time out of their busy days to give us their energy, enthusiasm, knowledge and skills. Without their efforts and participation in our work we would not be able to achieve the results—nor claim the successes that we have. Moreover, the collective spirit of their contributions also rekindles our own fire as it is another validation that the work we do is important to others.

The Eastern Sierra Land Trust would like to thank the following people who have given generously of themselves this past year:

Jo Bacon  
Dr. Patricia Brown-Berry  
Mary Canada  
Lynn Cooper  
Joy Fatooh  
Jim Fox  
Shasta Ferranto  
Jack & Marilyn Ferrell  
Sandy Hogan  
Chris Howard  
Jan Hunewill  
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We also want to additionally thank Stephen Ingram and Rick Kattelmann for their ongoing contributions of the beautiful Eastern Sierra photographs we use.

## Volunteer Spotlight

The list of accomplishments that Jo Bacon contributed to the ESLT is long and impressive. Starting early in our history as ESLT's web-master, Jo this year was eager to take on a bigger challenge and designed a custom membership database for the ESLT. If you've ever worked with databases, you'll know this was no small task. Jo came frequently to our office to regularly update the database to our specific needs and walk us through its intricacies. Jo continues to assist with our website and other computer needs, and we thank her for being an important member of our volunteer family! ■



*We can't get enough of Jo Bacon's wonderful smile. Photo: Kendra Knight.*

## NEW TAX INCENTIVES FOR CONSERVATION ON PRIVATE LAND

*by Michelle Pettit*

This past August, land trusts throughout the United States saw Congress and the President take an important step in helping landowners protect their land's scenic and rural qualities. The President signed legislation (Section 1206 of HR 4) that includes increased tax benefits for landowners who preserve their land by donating a voluntary land protection agreement, commonly known as a conservation easement.

What this means for Eastern Sierra landowners is that better conservation tax incentives allow ranchers, farmers, and other landowners to get a much larger benefit for donating valuable development rights to their land.

It also confirms that Congress, the IRS, and the private sector have all taken action to build confidence in private land protection—further confirming that land trust tools are becoming more widely accepted and can be beneficial to landowners in the Eastern Sierra.

Landowners who donate a conservation easement can see a larger immediate benefit in federal income tax savings. They can also lower their estate taxes, which will benefit those who want to pass their scenic land or working family farms and ranches on to their children and grandchildren.

The new law also protects the public interest by including a significant tightening of the rules for appraisals of all donated property, including stiff penalties for inflated appraisals.

It is important to note that the new incentive applies only to easements donated in 2006 and 2007, though the land trust community will be working hard to make the incentives permanent.

For more information on the expanded tax incentives, visit our web site or call the office at 760.873.4554. ■

# Giving and Gifts

Once again, the Eastern Sierra Land Trust can help you complete your shopping list this holiday season. An ESLT **gift membership** is a great way to share the Sierra with friends and family. Recipients will receive regular membership benefits and will also receive two blank notecards picturing property preserved through a land protection agreement. Please fill out the attached membership envelope with the lucky recipient's contact information; and tell us your name as the gift-giver and any personal message you would like us to include.

Please remember that a **year end gift to the ESLT** will go a long way toward helping us complete several important land conservation projects in 2007. While we have been successful in obtaining grant funding for critical land protection agreements, these grants do not cover other necessary costs such as legal counsel, appraisals and title reports, and land resource assessments. Your financial gift will help us take full advantage of our grant awards and successfully protect critical wetlands, migration corridors, and working farms and ranches in the Eastern Sierra. Thank you from all of us at the ESLT for your continuing support! ■



Photo: Stephen Ingram

## Party Planning

If you missed our big 5th Anniversary party last January, keep an eye out for upcoming details about our next Land and Legacy celebration. It's a great way to meet with kindred spirits and share your love for the Eastern Sierra.

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