

# News



Southern Oregon  
**LAND**  
CONSERVANCY



## Upper Bear Creek Watershed Project

**S**OLC is pleased to announce our Upper Bear Creek Watershed Project. Many people know how special the Bear Creek watershed is. We would love to help keep it that way.

The Bear Creek watershed is a key watershed in Southern Oregon. Bear Creek, along with its feeder creeks, is an important tributary to the Rogue River. It provides critical habitat for recovering native fish populations. Ongoing riparian and in-stream restoration activities conducted by our partners continue to improve the water quality and fish habitat of Bear Creek.

The watershed also provides important contiguous habitat for native wildlife, as it is linked to the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument and corridors to the western Cascade, Siskiyou, and Klamath ranges. With cliffs and rock outcroppings, along with wonders

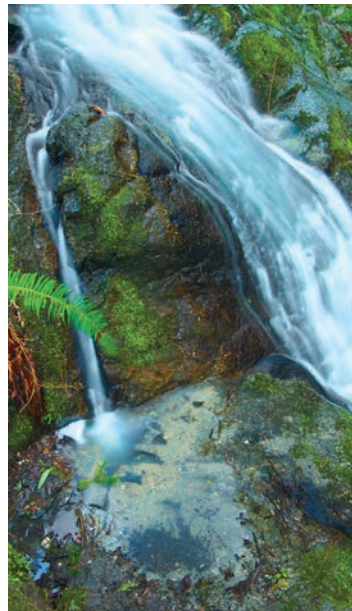


Photo by Frank Lospalluto

*“The watershed provides important contiguous habitat for native wildlife, as it is linked to the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument and corridors to the western Cascade, Siskiyou, and Klamath ranges.”*

like Grizzly Peak and Pilot Rock, and the forested slopes around Ashland, the watershed provides the scenic backdrop for the southern Rogue Valley. It is also abundant in recreation opportunities.

Key habitats in the project area include the mixed-evergreen forests of the southwestern Siskiyou, pine-oak woodlands, rimrock, and grasslands of the Cascade foothills, *(continued on page 6)*

# Director's Message

We are excited to launch a new resilient lands project, the Upper Bear Creek Watershed Project. The initial phase of the project will be completed in 2020, however the Conservancy's mission to help protect this vital watershed will be continuous. Thank you to our project grantors, **Gardner Grout Foundation** and the **Land Trust Alliance**.

With the stroke of a pen, in December, more than 800 acres of precious forests, meadows, riparian corridors, and pastures were protected forever. This is a gift from the heart. A gift for all of us, for future generations, for wild nature. We are honored to be the steward of this magical place.

Wild nature needs you. We secure wild places so nature can thrive,

wildlife can wander, and people can find beauty and quiet. Expanded and interconnected wildlands are central to our vision—keeping open space for wildlife, clean water, recreation, and working farms, ranches, and forests. The urgency of climate change and biodiversity loss challenges us to act, individually and collectively. Conservation is a natural climate solution creating natural carbon stores, wildlife corridors, cool fish-bearing waters, and more. Together we are building resilient and connected landscapes.

Thinking of the magic of nature brings me back to my childhood and fireflies. Those idyllic summer evenings in my backyard, graced by an enormous oak tree, surrounded by delightful woods and a meandering creek, chasing fireflies. These are my



earliest memories of my connection to nature. I am so thankful for the hours and hours I spent splashing in creeks, climbing boulders, catching fireflies, and playing with friends. Every time my mind wanders back to that special place it brings me joy. What captured your heart and sparked your love for nature?

*Cathy*

**Cathy Dombi,**  
*Executive Director*



## After the Dragonflies

Dragonflies were as common as sunlight  
hovering in their own days  
backward forward and sideways  
as though they were memory  
now there are grown-ups hurrying  
who never saw one  
and do not know what they  
are not seeing  
the veins in a dragonfly's wings  
were made of light  
the veins in the leaves knew them  
and the flowing rivers  
the dragonflies came out of the color of water  
knowing their own way  
when we appeared in their eyes  
we were strangers  
they took their light with them when they went  
there will be no one to remember us

—W.S. Merwin

In this poem, the late acclaimed poet, conservationist, and a self-taught palm tree expert W.S. Merwin captured the beauty and fragility of dragonflies and the heartbreak of the Anthropocene—the modern age of human-caused extinctions and the resulting diminishment in numbers of even once-common species. While mournful, this poem inspires conservation work.



# 809 Acres in Wolf Creek Donated to SOLC

*By SOLC Conservation Project Manager Paul Belson*

There is a serenity and beauty here—the soothing sound of the creek just below and the mist-shrouded evergreen-covered slopes, the sun peeking through. I am standing on a property SOLC recently acquired, and its picturesque beauty strikes me.

This diverse and beautiful 809-acre property in northern Josephine County in the Grave Creek watershed, was deeded to SOLC on December 23, 2019. The property is abundant. Most of the property, about 700 acres, is heavily forested with mixed-forest of coniferous and deciduous trees. With a history of periodic commercial logging behind it, the forest shows vigorous re-growth. Some of the adjacent lands are owned by the BLM and managed as late-successional reserves.

To the south, about 3,100 feet of Wolf Creek runs through the property, with riparian trees such as alder, big leaf maple, Oregon ash, cottonwood, and others. Wolf Creek is an important fish-bearing stream, providing habitat and cold water to the Rogue Basin. Sourdough Creek and tributaries flow through the property from the north, in addition to several seeps and springs.

The property is a great place to take a walk along several forest paths and through clearings and pastures. It is also a great place to take a swim. An earthen dam constructed in the late 1960s creates a 4.5-acre reservoir, often visited by waterfowl. The main house sits next to the dam, perfectly situated to enjoy the scene.

The acquisition was the result of

a unique and fruitful collaboration with a generous landowner who wished to donate the property. SOLC will sell the property subject to a conservation easement that will protect its important conservation values.

As a result of this win-win transaction, the donor is able to achieve a lifelong goal of leaving a legacy of conserved land, while at the same time supporting the mission of SOLC. Not only will this project result in the protection of this amazing property, but the proceeds from the sale will enable SOLC to work diligently on its mission to preserve special places in Southern Oregon. We are honored to protect and steward this property in perpetuity.



## Rogue River Preserve Updates



## Boxes for the Birds

A group of retired professionals, talented birders, and fast friends affectionately called the Binosaur (think binoculars + dinosaurs), recently volunteered during a misty morning and put up 30 bird boxes at the Rogue River Preserve. The boxes were crafted by Gary Schaffer, and 14 of them were made specifically for Lewis's Woodpeckers, a spectacular and declining bird.

At the Preserve and just a few other locations in the Rogue Valley, Lewis's can be observed fly-catching insects and flapping like crows all year long until breeding season when they seem to vanish. A once common breeding bird in Jackson County, now this colorful woodpecker apparently can't obtain the resources required to raise a family, so in May they head somewhere else, possibly to Klamath County.

These Lewis's boxes have been successfully used in Eastern Oregon. Will they work here? Will the Lewis's woodpeckers hang around and make babies? Stay tuned for an update on this biological mystery. While they were in the neighborhood, the Binosaur (Norm Barrett, Howard Hunter, Gary Schaffer, Jim Livaudais), also erected 16 swallow boxes and cleaned out older owl boxes.

## Floral News

Thanks to a U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service recovery grant, last winter SOLC staff sowed five pounds of beautiful large-flowered woolly meadowfoam seeds, a federally endangered species, to augment existing populations at Rogue River Preserve.

This lovely white flower is only located in Jackson County, growing around vernal pools in the Agate Desert, a unique landform of seasonal wetlands and mounded prairie located around the Table Rocks, White City, and Eagle Point area. We sprinkled seeds around the inner edge of the seasonal pools—especially in soil disturbed by gophers, a favorite location for this delicate annual flower.

Why all the bother? The admirable goal of the Endangered Species Act is to halt the decline and potential extinction of plants and animals threatened by human activity by implementing a recovery plan. If a species is sufficiently recovered, it is delisted. We hope the large-flowered woolly meadowfoam will soon join other delisted species like the Bald Eagle, Brown Pelican, and Eureka Valley evening primrose.

The grant also funded a professional rare plant and lichen survey. A small team of excellent botanists from Siskiyou BioSurvey discovered some new treasures: a rare pin lichen, *Sclerophora amabilis*, growing on the bark of a few old black cottonwoods in the floodplain forest; a rare moss, *Orthotrichum euryphyllum*, found on one rock by Kennedy Creek, a coho spawning stream; and numerous lovely popcornflowers, Austin's popcornflower and Greene's popcornflower, associated with vernal pools.

The surveyors also found a few more populations of white fairypoppy, a flower that is in the process of being listed under Oregon's endangered plant program. It grows tucked under shrubs in the buckbrush chaparral.



Left: Large-flowered woolly meadowfoam seeds  
Top: Large-flowered woolly meadowfoam flowers  
Bottom: Rare pin lichen, *Sclerophora amabilis*

Photo by Richard Callagan



*Two-Part Series: Land Trusts' Role in Climate Change and Climate Resiliency*  
**PART 1: Land Trusts and Climate Change**

**B**y any measure, these are critical issues for our times. Let's take a look at how land trusts are actively participating in the conversations and actions combatting climate change.

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change describes climate change as: *a change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods.*

Staff at SOLC, along with other land trust staff in the region, have attended several trainings and learning sessions about this pressing topic. As it turns out, research indicates that the work that SOLC and other land trusts are

already doing plays an important role in the solution.

Under an approach called natural climate solutions, the perpetual conservation of lands, along with improved land management practices, can increase carbon storage and reduce the release of greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere. The key strategies are: conserve the land to avoid land conversion; provide opportunities for ecosystem restoration; and improve forest and agriculture management.

By conserving special places in Southern Oregon—mixed-conifer forests, grasslands and agricultural lands, oak woodlands, and wetlands—we make a big difference, along with many other land conservation organizations around the world.

Part 2 on Climate Resiliency will be featured in our next newsletter

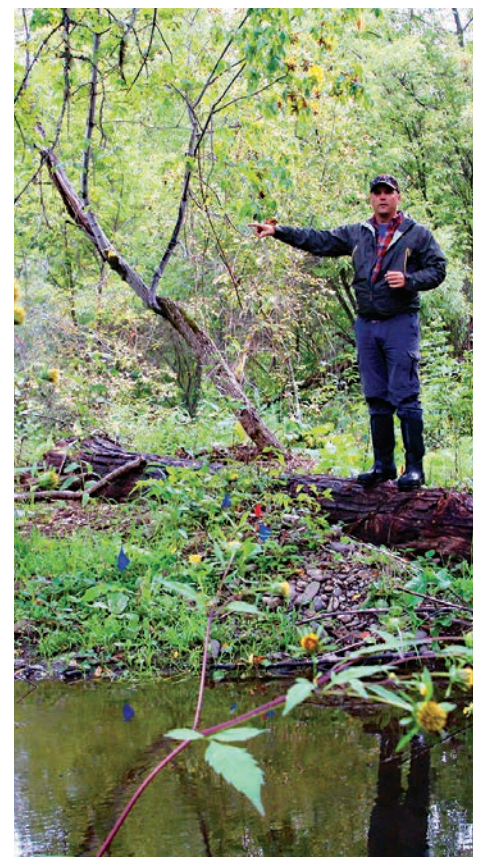


Photo by Linda Thomas

## Upper Bear Creek Watershed Project *(continued from front page)*

and mixed-conifer forests and meadows in the upper elevations. This area also captures a portion of the municipal watershed for the City of Ashland.

The largest population centers in Southern Oregon are located in the Bear Creek watershed. This means that the watershed faces increasing pressure from development. Subdivision of contiguous land, subsequent development, and conversion of lands with high conservation values all have the potential to negatively impact watershed integrity, fragment important habitats, and impair forest ecology. Regional conservation plans show that the priorities for the watershed revolve around reducing land conversion, development and fragmentation, and improving water quality and streamside habitat.

### Project Objectives

- Compile the most current available information about the biodiversity and ecology of the area so we are informed about the status of the watershed
- Converse with the land conservation community in the watershed regarding conservation priorities and build on existing partnerships and efforts
- Discover where opportunity and watershed function intersect to yield tangible conservation projects where we can protect special lands in the watershed in perpetuity

Efforts like these help keep special places in Southern Oregon special.

## Bear Creek Watershed Project Conservation Values

### Upper Bear Creek Valley Overall Conservation Values

- Beautiful views from the Upper Bear Creek Valley of contrasting grassland & forest
- Natural grasslands and forest store significant carbon
- Adjacent to the globally outstanding Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument and United States Forest Service lands
- Critical connectivity & wildlife corridors
- Important working forests, farms, and ranches

### Cascade Foothills: Grassland, Oak Woodland, Rimrock

- Haven for grassland birds in steep decline including the Western Meadowlark
- Habitat for one of the largest breeding colonies of Grasshopper Sparrows in Oregon
- Important winter ground for very uncommon raptors such as Rough-legged Hawk, Short-eared Owl, and Burrowing Owl
- Critical winter grazing for deer and elk
- Striking rimrock formations provide nesting for Golden Eagles, Peregrine Falcons, and Barn Owls
- Healthy oak woodlands support more animal species than any other habitat, from elk to bluebirds
- Rare plants such as Southern Oregon buttercup, Baker's globemallow, and roundleaf filaree

### Siskiyou Forests: Mixed Evergreen & Montane Forest, Meadow

- Ashland's water supply originates from the wet meadows and forests
- Forest habitat for rare Northern Spotted Owl, Goshawk, and Pacific fisher
- Outstanding opportunities for outdoor recreation
- The Neil Creek subwatershed is especially water-rich
- Lovely mountain pollinator meadows full of springs & seeps

# SOLC Launches New Website Pages Dedicated to Planned Giving

We are launching a section of our website completely dedicated to helping you navigate the worry-free ways you can support SOLC and create a permanent testament to the values that are important to you via planned giving.

Legacy gifts help ensure SOLC's financial security, so that we can make decisions about our future from a proactive, strategy-led focus instead of reacting to inevitable unknown issues and situations. SOLC has many options that offer a variety of benefits such as:

- Gifts in a will (bequests)
- Beneficiary designations (of all or part of a life insurance policy, IRA)
- Gifts from a donor-advised fund
- Gifts of appreciated stock

Benefits may include tax savings or income for life. We invite you to peruse [landconserve.plannedgiving.org](http://landconserve.plannedgiving.org) to explore your planned giving options. Give us feedback on what you find, and contact our Development Director Kelly Gonzales to discuss how we can assist you in realizing your goals. You can reach her at (541) 482-3069, x104 or at [kelly@landconserve.org](mailto:kelly@landconserve.org).

## Al Gave His Time and Treasure to Land Conservation During His Lifetime

## Al Factored SOLC into his Estate Plans for When He Was Gone

### Be Like Al

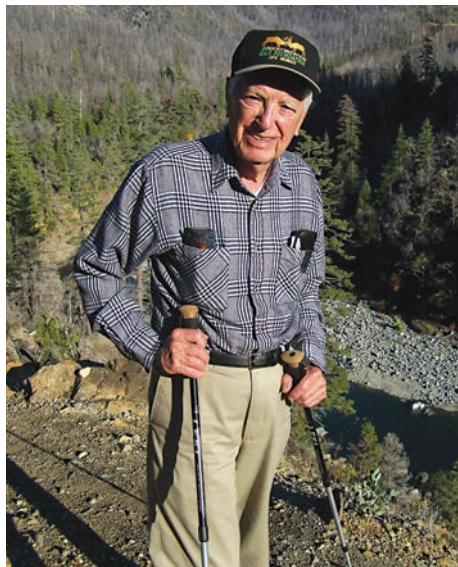
Alfred (Al) Buck wasn't a man of extraordinary means but he was generous with what he had. He was a loyal and giving member for more than 15 years before he passed on September 25, 2017.

He served as a volunteer on our Lands Committee and Trustee Council, and as a monthly office volunteer, helping with membership renewal letters every month. When he realized that SOLC needed more staff to fulfill its mission, he stepped forward and funded the first Land Steward position. He funded many SOLC special projects as well.

He spent most of his professional life working for the Department of the Interior, leading the Land and Water Conservation Fund when it was established in 1964 and implementing the Wild and Scenic

Rivers Act when it was passed in 1968. In 2010, then 93 years old, Al was named a Hero of Conservation by *Field & Stream* magazine.

He loved his family and he had a life-long passion for protecting open



Southern Oregon

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#### Our Mission

To protect and enhance precious land in the Rogue River region to benefit our human and natural communities.

#### Board of Directors

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- Sound Finances
- Ethical Conduct
- Responsible Governance
- Lasting Stewardship

space. Whether hunting in the fields and forests or fishing in the lakes and rivers, he shared his love of the outdoors with all around him. Al was committed to ensuring the places he valued so much would be protected long after he was gone, for his family and for others. With careful planning, he was able to take care of both in his estate plans.

If you have already included us in your estate plans, please let us know so we can ensure your wishes are honored. If you would like more information on how to do this, we can help you. Call our Development Director Kelly Gonzales at (541) 482-3069, x104 or email her at [kelly@landconserve.org](mailto:kelly@landconserve.org).



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# UPCOMING EVENTS

Top two photos by Linda Thomas



## Spring Hike & Learn Series

April–June, FREE, All Ages

There's no better way to learn about nature than by getting out onto the land. This spring join our expert hike leaders and outdoor educators on a hike-and-learn day (or two). All outings are free and open to the community but require pre-registration. Visit our website early in April to see the lineup. Then register well in advance as these hikes fill up quickly. See you on the trail!



Photo by Richard Jacquot



Photo by Linda Thomas



Photo by Richard Jacquot

## Member Picnic & Annual Meeting

Saturday, June 6, 2020 • Rogue River Preserve, Eagle Point

Food, fun, hikes, talks — Come meet friends, relax by the river, and explore the magnificent Rogue River Preserve! Each year we come together to celebrate the amazing support from our members. We also use this opportunity to bestow our Conservation Award, honoring an individual whose commitment to conservation has had a major impact on our region. This event is open to all SOLC members and includes a complimentary lunch. Bring a guest for \$15.

Photos by Tara Fisher



Photo by Jenny Warren

## New Member Wildflower Hike & Dinner

Thursday, April 16, 4:00–7:30 p.m.  
Jacksonville Woodlands and Community Center

Just after the first bursts of wildflower blooms, we welcome our newest members with a guided hike in the conserved Jacksonville Woodlands, followed by a locally-sourced dinner. This annual event is a great way to learn more about SOLC and to get to know other supporters, staff, and board members. Stay tuned for an invitation in the mail and check our website for more details. If you would like to become a new member, please visit our website or call our office for assistance.

SAVE  
these  
DATES

- » **Landmark Hike & Lunch: Saturday, July 11** at a newly conserved property near Howard Prairie Lake
- » **Conservation Celebration: Friday, October 16** at the Ashland Hills Hotel