

Conservation Deal to Protect Habitat, Views



Photo by John C. Bruckman

“They’re kinda like sea monkeys!”

You may have heard this description of vernal pool fairy shrimp. These tiny crustaceans can be found swimming in vernal pools, located in Southern Oregon and California. A popular spot to view vernal pools is atop the Table Rocks – but only in early spring.

Vernal pools are a unique land feature in Southern Oregon. This landscape is an undulating landform with low-lying depressions and swales interspersed with low mounds. Water perches in the low-lying depressions and swales because of an underlying soil hardpan.

One area with a large concentration of vernal pools is the Agate Desert near White City. Only 23% of Agate Desert vernal pool and mound habitat remains intact.

The Southern Oregon Land Conservancy, working with numerous local, state, and federal partners, is nearing completion of an exciting conservation project that will protect 132 acres of land covered with vernal pools in the Agate Desert. It will also protect the scenic views along Highway 62 near Eagle Point.

The soon-to-be-conserved land is next to the Wood House

property - which landowners Diana Gardener and Jud Parsons conserved with the Land Conservancy in 2008.

Vernal Pools are home to many special plants and animals. In fact, a vernal pool is basically an entire ecosystem. And they are only active a few months a year!

Once the pools dry up in late spring, all of the animals and plants enter a period of dormancy until the following winter. Over 500 large-flowered woolly meadowfoam (*Limnanthes floccosa ssp. grandiflora*) plants, a federally and state-listed endangered plant endemic to the vernal pools of Jackson County, are documented on the property.

This property will be managed as part of Oregon’s newly-formed Vernal Pool Mitigation Bank. The goal of this project is to protect the last remaining intact vernal pool systems in Southern Oregon. Working with landowner Running Y Land and Cattle, a subsidiary of Wildlands, Inc., the Land Conservancy will soon become the permanent steward of 132 acres of high-quality vernal pool habitat.

This project will also protect the beautiful view along Highway 62. That’s something that everyone - even our little Southern Oregon sea monkeys - can appreciate.

New Land Steward Hired

The Land Conservancy recently welcomed Kristi Mergenthaler to the staff team.

Kristi became our first Land Steward in February after working as a botanist for the past eight years, surveying for rare



Kristi Mergenthaler

In her position at the Land Conservancy she'll be working with landowners of conserved properties to ensure the terms of our conservation agreements are upheld. Specifically she'll visit and meet with landowners throughout the year to review management plans and develop protocols for responsible stewardship.

plants, collecting native plant seeds, and conducting vegetation studies in Southwest Oregon.

She'll also be assisting with new conservation projects by identifying and documenting important conservation values on the land.

Kristi is passionate about sharing her love of plants and the outdoors with the young and young at heart. She led the Land Conservancy's *Loving the Land* Program in April and is conducting hikes and work parties on our conserved lands.

In addition to her full-time job, Kristi serves on the Board of Directors of the Siskiyou Field Institute and the Siskiyou Chapter of The Native Plant Society of Oregon where she is the Program Coordinator.

She spends her spare time hiking and exploring the wilds of Southern Oregon and is also a Neighborhood Coordinator with the Talent Food Project and volunteers with the Crater Lake Ski Patrol.

Welcome Kristi!

A Rare Discovery by Kristi Mergenthaler

I pushed past some buckbrush. It was starting to rain. Maybe my instincts were wrong. Ducking under a branch and past some coyote scat I looked up and there it was, White Fairypoppy (*Meconella oregana*), the rare plant I was searching for in Sams Valley. I knew there was a large population of this plant on an adjacent Bureau of Land Management property and I strongly suspected it also lived here on private land we protected.

Honestly, I'm madly in love with this small white annual poppy with its small fruit that pokes straight up like a mini white ba-

nana. It grows tucked along the edges of buckbrush in chaparral, a threatened habitat in Southwest Oregon. The State of Oregon is considering listing White Fairypoppy as a threatened



An endangered lily

or endangered species. Many botanists believe that remnant populations occur primarily on private lands.

I also spotted numerous lily leaves in a secretive little opening in an oak woodland surrounded by old growth chaparral. Could the federally endangered Gentner's Fritillaria (*Fritillaria gentneri*) also grow here? A few weeks later in late

Upcoming Events

June 4 2011 Annual Meeting at Eagle Mill Farm • Farm Tour & Complimentary Lunch for all members • 11am - 2pm • 100 Eagle Mill Rd, Ashland

June 5 Scotch Broom Removal Party at Siskiyou Mtn Park • Bring water, gloves and wear long pants • 10am - Noon • Meet at the top of Park St, Ashland

June 12 Hike the Pacific Crest Trail • Join Kristi Mergenthaler on a moderate hike on the PCT • 9am - 1pm • Meet at the Northwest Nature Shop at 9:00am

June 24 Brown Bag Lunch at the Land Conservancy • Meet staff attorney Alex Liston Dykema for a conservation Q&A • Noon - 1pm • 84 4th St., Ashland

RSVP, Questions: 541-482-3069
or info@landconserve.org

April I turned a corner and my stomach lurched, eight gorgeous Gentner's Fritillaria plants were flowering. The biggest plant was three feet tall and supported four red flowers. I found two more sites on the property that day. Gentner's Fritillaria is endemic to our region and is only known in portions of Jackson and Josephine County with a small area in California.

This is the power of conserving lands. We often protect organisms or ecological processes not apparent when a conservation agreement is being established. When the landowners conserved their Sams Valley property in 2002, White Fairypoppy and Gentner's Fritillaria were quietly and safely tucked away - just waiting for discovery.

Valley View Winery Hosts Wine Tasting on June 26

There's nothing better than a Sunday afternoon drive out to the beautiful Applegate Valley to explore our local wineries.

Please join us at Valley View Winery on Sunday afternoon, June 26th to enjoy some great wine and hors d'oeuvres and learn more about the Southern Oregon Land Conservancy.

Mike Wisnovsky, co-owner of Valley View, is hosting the event at his winery located just 9 miles from Jacksonville on Upper Applegate Road. We'll have live music playing from 1-3 pm.

There will be a great selection of local raffle prizes and Valley View is donating 15% of the proceeds from every bottle of wine purchased that day to the Land Conservancy. There is no charge to attend this event.

So gather some friends and make your way to Valley View Winery on Sunday, June 26 from 1-3 pm. Please call us at 541-482-3069 to RSVP and for more details.

See you there!

Ask Alex

Staff Attorney
Alex Liston Dykema



Q You use the term “perpetuity” when describing your projects. How do you ensure land is protected forever?

A It may seem that the most important work we do is securing protection for special properties. Every time we protect another piece of our landscape, or another natural sanctuary, it is in the papers and our newsletter.

It is certainly true that this is a great time to share our success and tell you and the rest of our community what we are doing to secure our region's most valuable natural resources.

Similarly, there is a growing body of work discussing the legal constraints on land trusts and their role as stewards. We protect land, not just for ourselves, but for our entire community both now and in the future. Beyond the statutory requirements, both from the tax code and from our status as a non-profit organization, we have an obligation to you, our members, our land owners, and our community to ensure that the lands we agree to protect will hold their conservation values for all future generations.

To do this right, we have to visit each property at least once a year. We have

“Stewardship is not an extra, it is a core element of any solid land trust.”


While there is no doubt it is exciting when we sign the final documents to protect another parcel, it is also only the beginning of our work. It is when we record a conservation easement or take title to a property that we also take on an obligation to ensure that land's protection in perpetuity. It is then that we become stewards of the land. And, while we do not usually manage the property ourselves, we are responsible for monitoring and protecting it forever.

Stewardship is not an extra, it is a core element of any solid land trust. In fact, it is such an important component that the Treasury Department regulations governing tax deduction for conservation easements specifies that the holder of the easement must “...have the resources to enforce the restrictions...” Without adequate resources and stewardship, the IRS won't allow a deduction for an otherwise solid conservation easement.

to document its initial condition and any changes over time. We have to look for any violations of the original protections, either intentional or inadvertent, and make sure they get remedied. All of this is stewardship.

Stewardship is at the core of our mission. A special stewardship endowment fund covers these annual costs and assures that we can continue monitoring the land in perpetuity. In many ways stewardship is the hardest function to support financially, but we can never leave it behind.

After all, no matter how well-written a conservation easement is, or how well we document a property's condition, no matter how careful we are in selecting projects, ultimately, success depends on our ability to steward these lands forever.


**Save the Date:
9/10/11!**


The Ninth Annual Conservation Celebration will take place 7-10pm on September 10 at Paschal Winery. It promises to be the best one yet!



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Founded in 1978, the Southern Oregon Land Conservancy protects special lands in the Rogue River Basin for current and future generations by working cooperatively with landowners and communities.

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Welcome to Our New Members!

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