



Vol. 11 #1

Solano Land Trust

VISTAS

www.solanolandtrust.org

Spring
2004

Inside

Volunteer Highlight

Kathy Blume

Many *Vistas* readers have enjoyed spectacular views of Suisun Marsh, the Carquinez Strait, Mt. Tamalpais, and Mt. Diablo while exploring the King, Eastern Swett, and Vallejo Swett Ranches with volunteer hike leader Kathy Blume. Each month Blume takes the public to a different part of the 3,900 wild acres that make up the King and Swett Ranches. Hikers almost always see several different kinds of wildlife. All of the ranches are productive cattle grazing areas, so hikers also get a first hand look at local agriculture.

If you drive on Interstate 80, Highway 680 or Lake Herman Road, you have seen the rolling hills, coast live oaks, and grasslands of the King and Swett Ranches. These lands are only accessible to the public through Blume's hikes. The land forms a critical part of the 10,000-acre Sky Valley-Cordelia Hills Open Space project. This project is a partnership of public and private groups including the cities of Benicia, Fairfield, Vallejo, Solano County, and Solano Land Trust. The goal of the project is to preserve and protect these open spaces by working with ranching and farming families, and where appropriate, acquiring lands for public recreation and wildlife conservation efforts.

Wendy Low, Pat Moran & Karen Swan

Blume has been leading hikes on the King and Swett Ranches for over two years. She did not originally intend to be a hike leader, nor did she expect that she would have such incredible hiking opportunities right here in Solano County. She previously enjoyed the solitude of hiking solo, mostly on Mt. Tamalpais and Mt. Diablo. Former SLT Executive Director Pam Muick tempted Blume with an opportunity: "Don't you want to hike on these lands?" Blume gave it a try and fell in love with the properties.

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Kathy Blume leads a hike at Eastern Swett Ranch

Photo: Bob Moran



President's Message

Sean Quinn, *President*



Photo: Bud Turner,
WildLight Photography

Solano Land Trust depends on individual members of the community. In this issue, you'll see a number of remarkable people featured who offer time and money to support our projects, acquisitions, and educational programs. They are only a sampling of the many people who

have contributed in the last year. Everyone who volunteers or donates believes in what we do, and utilizes their own unique skills to make projects their own.

Gary Wyatt has volunteered with our sister organization, Rush Ranch Educational Council (RREC), for eight years. He is an RREC board member and an active docent for their Patwin Native American program. Jane Hicks, an original docent at Jepson Prairie, is on the SLT Board of Directors and a regular donor. Kathy Blume leads hikes for SLT and is involved in other local efforts to promote recreational open space. In addition to being a Friend of SLT, Gary Archer supports SLT land acquisitions by giving advice and brokering deals for us. Donor Joyce Kaumeyer says that she would love to be more involved in the children's educational programs at SLT but for now, she says making donations is the best way for her to support SLT.

If you would like to support Solano Land Trust programs and acquisitions but are not sure how best to match your time and talents, contact Karen Hellar, Administrative Assistant, at (707) 432-0150. ❖

Art on the Land

Capturing Clouds at Rush Ranch

Aleta George, *Editor*

How do you capture a cloud? You can't lasso it and you can't suck it into a straw. The only way to capture a cloud is through art.

Easier said than done. That's when a workshop comes in handy. I don't think that painter Randall Sexton or poet Molly Fisk can guarantee to teach you how to capture clouds — or barns, lilacs, tractors, or gently sloping grasslands for that matter — but they can give pointers and techniques to help you try.

On Saturday, April 3rd, Randall Sexton is coming back to Rush Ranch for a third time to teach his popular painting workshop. Sexton is a member of The BayWood Artists and The Outsiders Group and is a featured artist at the John Pence Gallery in San Francisco (currently exhibiting a one-man show through March 27th <www.johnpence.com> . Recent awards include Second Place at the 2003 Carmel Arts Festival and People's Choice for the Quick Draw Event at the Laguna Beach Plein Air Festival.

Local painter Howard Lute says he'll be back a third time: "I loved the day. It's always worthwhile and the quality of instruction is very high."

If you lean towards poetry, try the poetry workshop with Nevada City resident Molly Fisk. Fisk is new to Rush Ranch, but she's not new to teaching or writing poetry. A well-known California poet and experienced teacher, she will be leading an outdoor poetry workshop on Saturday, March 27th.

"Nothing beats writing outdoors," said Fisk. "The senses are more finely tuned, and it's possible — easy, in fact — to breathe more deeply. A poet's eye is necessarily trained on the specific, and what can be found in the field (and marsh and woods and dunes) is so much more interesting seen in person than imagined."

Fisk has recently finished two manuscripts, *The Green Glass Country*, and *Confluence*. Her published collections include *Listening to Winter*, *Terrain*, *Salt Water Poems*, and *Surrender*. A recipient of the National Endowment for the Arts and other awards, she teaches creative writing at UC Davis Extension, and is a California Poet in the Schools.

Both workshops are from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., and pre-registration is required. The fee for each workshop is \$75. A portion of the proceeds benefits Rush Ranch Educational Council. Contact Aleta George at (707) 429-3529 or aleta@lmi.net.

Learn more about Randall Sexton at www.rcsexton.com and Molly Fisk at www.mollyfisk.com. ❖



Ready to Go

Randall Sexton



Doe Bay in September

*Clouds low over the whale-backed islands, tide half-way in
and the choreography of morning begins again:
a kingfisher glides and swoops—harsh kikkireeki—to his perch
on a cedar limb, a seal's head splits the glassy water,
vee of his wake opening wide behind him. A heron lifts
her brocade wings and flaps—enormous and slow—
from one side of the bay's mouth to the other, rustles and
settles on a rock, alert and still. Kelp sways and dips and sways.
A second or two of silence and then below it the ear finds
what the eye cannot: old tune of salt water when a light-fingered
wind has riffled the channel—laps and gurgles interlocking and breaking apart
without a shore to magnify or interrupt them, a sound like blood
rushing through veins, like love loosed from a tight heart plunging
back into the world, entering everything—Heron's indivisible
breath, Seal's liquid eye, that white patch on Kingfisher's pumping wing,
everything that will miss us only in passing when we're gone.*

Molly Fisk

Kathy Blume

Continued from page 1

She sets a comfortable pace for all the participants, whether new or experienced hikers. Spring wildflowers, summer breezes, fall color, and winter clouds mean that the hike experience is different all year long. These lands are home to golden eagles, northern harriers, red-tailed hawks, Swainson's hawks, Cooper's hawks, burrowing and short-eared owls, coyotes, red-legged frogs, Calliope silverspot butterflies, elderberry longhorn beetles, bobcats, and curious cattle. Every hike is a fresh adventure and there is sure to be something enjoyable for everyone.

Blume's interest in these lands goes beyond leading hikes. She is an avid open space advocate and also volunteers for the Bay Area Ridge Trail Council and Friends of Solano Parks. She is looking forward to the day when the King and Swett Ranches will have hiking trails (trails have not yet been built) and be open to the public on a daily basis. Through Friends of Solano Parks, she is actively working towards getting a regional park district established in Solano County that would provide the funding required to open some of the properties more regularly. See back page for future hike dates.



We're Moving

Solano Land Trust is moving to 1001 Texas Street, Suite C, Fairfield, in late April. Look for an open house announcement in our next newsletter.

We invite everyone to visit us in our new space.

Executive Director's Message

Jim Ball, Executive Director



Photo: Bud Turner,
WildLight Photography

Driving through Solano County in the spring, I appreciate the green hills and rich dark brown of freshly plowed fields. I'm also very aware of the uphill battle our local farmers face trying to stay in business. Like me, you probably want to do what you can do to help

our farm families stay in farming.

One of the things we all can do is buy locally grown produce. I feel fortunate that on my way home I can stop at a number of countywide farm stands or farmers markets to pick up a bouquet of flowers for my wife or produce for a wonderful salad.

I especially look forward to the strawberry season. The taste of our Solano-grown berries is much better than those shipped in from other countries. Last spring I discovered that cherry lovers like me could pick their own cherries in Suisun Valley. I joined a lot of families having a great day in the country, and we all carried home pails overflowing with cherries.

All through summer and into fall our countywide produce stands are great places to shop. If you're looking for a taste of Solano, check out the new Napa Solano Harvest Trails map (produced by the Small Farm Center at UC Davis), which shows where to find local farm stands. You can get a copy at the Solano Land Trust office (please note that we're moving). Each farm stand in Suisun Valley offers a map of area farm stands, wineries and eateries as well.

If every household in Solano County spent \$50 a year on local produce, that wise investment would help local farms stay in business and preserve our agricultural heritage. ❖



Volunteer Highlight

Jane Hicks

Jane Hicks, SLT Board of Directors

I've been in love with vernal pools for so long, I'm not even sure when it all started. I think my fascination began in the early 1980s when I went on a UC Davis field trip to a sheep pasture south of Dixon. Here were beautiful wildflowers coexisting with lambs! Later on, when I saw an announcement for a wildflower walk at Jepson Prairie, I went for the hike and signed up as a volunteer.

I attended the first docent-training meeting and soon after helped to install a bronze plaque honoring an anonymous donor who made a sizable donation towards the purchase of the preserve. Another new volunteer and I scooted 90-pound bags of Redimix concrete along the banks of Calhoun Cut, where we set a frame I had cobbled together. We drove rebar into the ground, mixed and poured the concrete, and set the bronze plaque on top. As far as I know, the plaque with the anonymous donor's nom de plume is still there.

The docent program started the following spring. Although a biologist, I was working as a secretary at the time, and I was delighted to be doing something related to biology. The seasons passed, and I was amazed to notice that every week at Jepson Prairie was different.

Every season brings a special treat. Winter brings the filling of the pools and migrating waterfowl. In early spring, when the pools are full of all kinds of critters, the adobe lilies emerge. The shocking yellow goldfield rings come in mid-spring, and are followed in April by yellow mariposa lilies. The Colusa grass blooms in July when it's 100 degrees, and the rains of late fall start the cycle all over again.

A special camaraderie has grown among the Jepson Prairie docents and others who have spent many days at the preserve. Some of my best friends are people I've met at Jepson doing various things such as measuring grass transects, stacking eucalyptus branches in preparation for burning tree stumps, monitoring Colusa grass, searching for Solano grass (see below), going on wildflower walks, planting purple needlegrass, putting up signs, and just getting together for a picnic in such a beautiful setting.

I'd like to invite you to Jepson Prairie this spring. Solano Land Trust and the Jepson Prairie docents are hosting this year's open house on Sunday, April 18th, with wildflower walks and other activities beginning at 10 a.m. I hope to see you there! ❖

Jepson Prairie Open House

Sunday,
April 18th
10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

FREE

Volunteers Needed

- Trail building & property maintenance helpers
- Senior volunteers
- Docents at Lynch Canyon, Jepson Prairie & Rush Ranch
- Hike leaders
- Administrative support
- Graphic designers
- Public outreach event helpers
- Outdoor education event helpers

If you are interested in joining the team of volunteers at any of the SLT properties, contact Karen Hellar: (707) 432-0150 x 101 karen@solanolandtrust.org

Solano Grass

Julian Meisler, Conservation Planner

Solano grass (*Tuctoria mucronata*) is known from only three locations in the world, two in Solano County and one in Yolo County. Unfortunately, the Olcott Lake population at Jepson Prairie has not been seen since 1993. Even then, the population was too small to sustain. What caused its apparent disappearance? Hypotheses include altered hydrology, displacement by non-native species, over-collecting, and absence of grazing. It is declining across all locations, and it's not for lack of looking. The California Native Plant Society organizes annual surveys for this and other rare grasses. If you would like to participate in the annual rare grass surveys, please contact SLT. ❖



Solano grass (*Tuctoria mucronata*)

Drawing: Carol Witham



Volunteer Highlight

Gary Wyatt

Aleta George, Editor

If you've ever been to the Rush Ranch Open House you may have witnessed the flint knapping skills of Gary Wyatt. Sitting in the middle of a large blue tarp scattered with rock shards, Wyatt holds a piece of obsidian in one gloved-hand and an antler in the other. When he's finished whittling away at the rock, he produces a finely sculpted arrowhead.

Wyatt has volunteered with Rush Ranch Educational Council (RREC) for eight years. He got involved with RREC when Art Larson started the Patwin Native American program. Larson (now deceased) wanted to learn how to make arrowheads for the program and Wyatt couldn't say no to his friend. Wyatt took a class in arrowhead making with the East Bay Regional Park District, but that was just the beginning. It took him years of practicing several hours a day before he turned out a product he was happy with.

The Patwin program teaches visiting schoolchildren about the Native California Patwin culture. On Tuesday mornings in the spring and fall, 1,500 children and 350 teachers and parents come to the ranch for this outdoor field trip. The children are divided into groups to learn about different aspects of Patwin life. Wyatt teaches about tools for hunting and fishing. In addition to his flint knapping demonstrations, his station displays pelts, antlers, and arrowheads.

"With the diversity that we have in California, teaching about hunting and fishing is a good focus for all the kids, boys and girls alike," said Wyatt. "Everybody's ancestors beat two rocks together and went hunting."

Wyatt will be demonstrating his flint knapping skills at the Rush Ranch Open House on Saturday, April 24th. The Rush Ranch Open House is a great day to celebrate this unique SLT property. Learn about the natural and cultural histories of the ranch, take a horse-drawn wagon ride, and enjoy square dancing

demonstrations and live music. Watch experienced ranch hands demonstrate blacksmithing and cattle roundups. There is no admission fee for the event. ❖

Rush Ranch Open House

Saturday,
April 24th

10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

FREE

Smithsonian Exhibit in Benicia

Jim Ball will speak about Solano Land Trust and its role in preserving local lands on Wednesday, May 19th at a Smithsonian-sponsored exhibit called "Listening to the Prairie: Farming in Nature's Image" at the Benicia Public Library. Opening on May 1st and running for six weeks, the exhibit highlights the North American prairie and four farming families who are using methods to preserve the prairie ecology. "Listening to the Prairie" was organized by the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History Forces of Change program. SLT is also leading a hike at Lynch Canyon on Saturday, May 22nd with a focus on native grasses and grazing. Many other local organizations and individuals are participating in the free public events during the exhibit. For the full program schedule see the library's Web site at www.ci.benicia.ca.us/library.html.



Gary Wyatt & Mary Shaw prepare for Patwin program

Photo: Rebecca Mannion

Web Site Revised

Please visit our newly redesigned Web site at www.solanolandtrust.org.



Wish List

- Student watercolor sets with brushes
- Plant press
- Canoes and/or kayaks
- Life jackets
- Youth-sized ponchos and raincoats
- Ride-on mower
- Telescope
- Solano County history books
- Arts & crafts materials
- Park bench
- Small TV with VCR
- Special needs picnic table
- Special needs table and chairs

If you would like to donate any of the above items in good working order, please contact Karen Hellar at: (707) 432-0150 x101 karen@solanolandtrust.org



Gary Archer with artwork depicting Native American symbols for land

Photo: Steve Metcalf

Donor Highlight

Gary Archer

Steve Metcalf, Fundraising

Visiting Gary Archer in Dixon gives you the distinct impression that he knows Northern California farmland and open space like the back of his hand. The artwork and maps displayed in his office convey a precise knowledge and a historical appreciation for the land in and around Solano County.

Archer is the surviving partner of Archer & Ficklin, a land and commercial brokerage firm. A resident of the county for over forty years, Archer has given advice, identified properties, and brokered deals for SLT since its start. He is especially proud of his role in the acquisition of Lynch Canyon, a challenging process that took five years but proved well worth the effort. He was also involved in representing Escano Ranch, Suisun Valley Ranch, and the Beelard property — all of which met SLT's goal of preserving quality agricultural farms and ranches.

Working alongside the Department of Veterans Affairs, Archer is working to acquire a National Cemetery site to serve both Sacramento and Solano County veterans and their families. He is hopeful the site will come to fruition in the next few months. He also works with the Solano Economic Development Corporation and sits on the editorial board of *Comstock's Business Magazine*.

Archer said he contributes to SLT because the board is strong and the staff professional. "I have worked closely with Solano Land Trust through the years and expect to see continued success in their efforts to preserve farmland and open space," said Archer. ❖

Donor Highlight

Joyce Kaumeyer

Steve Metcalf, Fundraising

Behind a low, wrought iron fence, two young and friendly canines are running and playing. Joyce Kaumeyer explains that she doesn't have a dog run for Annie and Buster but she does have a butterfly and hummingbird run. She points out an array of flowering plants, herbs, and berries that are neatly arranged to provide an environment for Monarch butterflies and other species.

Originally from Ohio, Kaumeyer enjoyed playing in orchards and open spaces near her home. Because of her childhood experiences and her further explorations in California, Kaumeyer has developed a great appreciation for open space in the North Bay. She has lived in Solano County for thirteen years, and works as a chemical engineer at Conoco Phillips in Rodeo. Kaumeyer first became familiar with SLT activities when SLT made public its desire to protect Lynch Canyon.

Kaumeyer has since enjoyed many walks at Lynch Canyon, the King and Swett Ranches, and Rush Ranch. She hopes to see SLT preserve even more open spaces and is especially interested in seeing SLT's educational programs grow. She said that she would love to volunteer as a docent for the children's programs, but her job takes a large amount of her time. "That's why I contribute. Making donations is the best way for me to be supportive until I can take my early retirement," she said.

Kaumeyer is looking forward to more outings on SLT properties, and I'm sure that Annie and Buster can't wait for their next adventure exploring the designated trails at Rush Ranch. ❖



Joyce Kaumeyer with Annie and Buster

Photo: Steve Metcalf

Thanks to Everyone Who Contributed in 2003

We want to thank all of the donors, volunteers, organizations, and agencies that helped Solano Land Trust in 2003. Their assistance was essential to our efforts to preserve, manage, and educate the public about agricultural lands, wetlands, and open space in Solano County.

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Bay Area Ridge Trail Council
California Bay Delta Authority
Coastal Conservancy
Exxon
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Environmental Grassroots Fund
PG&E
Solano County Water Agency
Vallejo Sanitation and Flood
Control District

Memorial Gifts and Bequests

We hope you will consider Solano Land Trust in your estate planning. Memorial gifts and bequests are placed in our endowment fund so that these gifts can permanently support conservation in Solano County. We welcome inquires about bequests at (707) 432-0150 x 101.



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Our Mission Statement

Solano Land Trust is a private, nonprofit, public benefit corporation dedicated to the preservation of agricultural lands, open space, and wetlands within Solano County. Preservation is accomplished through acquisition, donation or purchase of conservation easements, public education and land management.

Activities & Events

Jepson Prairie Preserve

Docent-led Tours

Saturdays & Sundays, Mar. 6th to May 9th, 2004. 11 a.m.

Explore the wildflowers and specialized animals that live in vernal pools. A \$1 donation per person is requested. Groups larger than five should contact Kate F. Mawdsley at (530) 753-1091.

Rush Ranch Open Space

Rush Ranch is open to the public daily from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. For information about events contact Don Taynton at (707) 425-3706 or dontay@jccomp.com, or visit www.rushranch.org.

Spring Wildflower Walk

Mar. 20th, 2004. 10 a.m. – Free

Take a spring walk with RREC docent Don Taynton and learn about the area's wildflowers.

Poetry Workshop

Mar. 27th, 2004. 10 a.m. – \$75

Join California poet and teacher Molly Fisk for an afternoon of writing outdoor-inspired poetry. Prior registration required. Contact Aleta George at aleta@lmi.net or (707) 429-3529.

Painting Workshop

Apr. 3rd, 2004. 10 a.m. – \$75

Put your Rush Ranch impressions on canvas under the guidance of Randall Sexton, a popular California Impressionist. Prior registration required. Contact Aleta George at aleta@lmi.net or (707) 429-3529.

Rush Ranch Open House

Apr. 24th, 2004. 10 a.m. – Free

Join us at the 14th Annual Open House for wagon rides, walking tours, live music, and art show. Enjoy demonstrations of square dancing, blacksmithing, horseshoeing, cattle roundups, and working sheep dogs.

Marsh Plant Walk

May 15th, 2004. 10 a.m. – Free

Join Mary Shaw of the California Native Plant Society to learn about native and exotic plants of the Suisun Marsh.

Volunteer Workdays

First Saturday of the month:

Apr. 3rd, May 1st, Jun. 5th. 9 a.m. – Free

Get some fresh air while helping with ranch and trail maintenance. No experience or tools necessary.

Blacksmith Shop Demonstrations

Third Saturday of the month:

Mar. 20th, Apr. 17th, May 15th, Jun. 19th. 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. – Free

Watch or participate in the art of blacksmithing with local blacksmiths.

Lynch Canyon Open Space

Trail Care Days

Second Saturday of the month:

Mar. 13th, Apr. 10th, May 8th, Jun. 12th. 9 a.m. – Free

Help build and maintain trails. Snacks and drinks provided. Call Ken Poerner at (707) 580-6277.

Mountain Bike Rides

Tuesday evening (and possibly Sunday) rides with RATS bicycling club will start when the trails are dry. E-mail woodjazz@prodigy.net, or call Karen Swan at (707) 432-0150 x 110.

Scenic Hikes

Fourth Saturday of the month:

Mar. 27th, Apr. 24th, May 22nd, Jun. 26th. 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. – Free

Join Dave Warner for one of his popular Lynch Canyon hikes. Contact Karen Swan at (707) 432-0150 x 110 or kswan@solanolandtrust.org.

King and Swett Ranches

Scenic Hikes

Mar. 20th, Apr. 10th, May 22nd, Jun. 12th. 9 a.m. – Free

Explore these lands with Kathy Blume. Meet at the Park-and-Ride lot at the Hiddenbrooke Pkwy/American Cyn Rd exit at I-80. Co-sponsored with the Bay Area Ridge Trail Council. Call Kathy to RSVP at (707) 864-2108.

Solano Land Trust
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(707) 432-0150

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