

Solano Land Trust

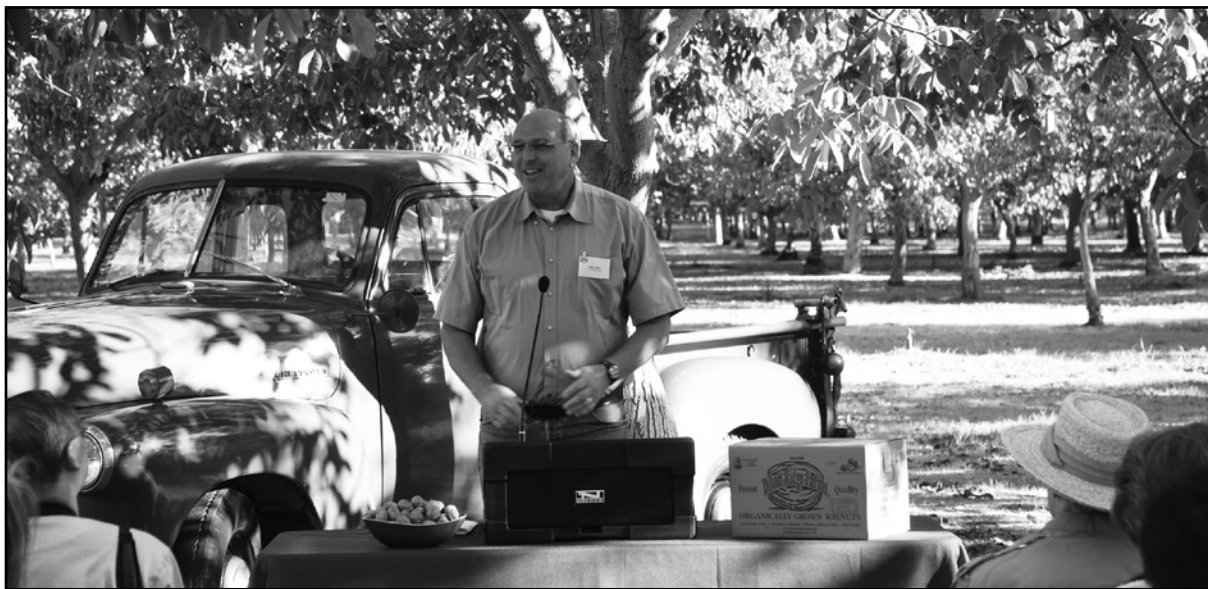
VISTAS

www.solanolandtrust.org

Spring/
Summer
2010

Dine on local, seasonal foods while supporting Solano Land Trust

Aleta George, Editor



Board Member Russ Lester at home under the canopy of his walnut trees

Photo: Dixon Ridge Farms

Last year, walnut farmer and Board Member Russ Lester floated the idea of hosting a fundraising dinner for Solano Land Trust at his farm, but as any walnut farmer can tell you, it's best to wait for the right graft in order to bear quality fruit.

The right combination of talents came together when Lester's idea met Gary McRae, a member of Solano Land Trust's development committee. McRae suggested that executive chef Lauren Kiino prepare the gourmet, four-course meal for the dinner. Kiino fits the bill perfectly. She is co-owner of Il Cane Rosso, a small eatery in the San Francisco Ferry Building that serves casual, locally-sourced meals with many ingredients from Solano County farms.

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President's Message

Ian Anderson, *President*



Walking out the door at daybreak with coffee in hand, it is uplifting to see all the lush green grass and grain crops soaking up the late February sun. If only a farm could be copasetic and endearing on its own, but the reality is that facing daily challenges head-on is

what it takes to be a good farmer. It does seem to be the challenge that keeps me ticking. Stagnant is one thing that farming is not. Just the economics of fluctuating commodity prices and input costs keeps a good farmer up at night making plans. What was profitable last year may not be in the coming year. Setting new goals and priorities on our farm is as ongoing as the sun coming up each day.

Setting priorities and meeting challenges at Solano Land Trust are also ongoing. I have been extremely impressed with our entire staff this past year when frozen funding alone would have put the average staff in a tailspin. Our staff continues to accept this hurdle, dealing with a sizable pay cut through furloughs.

Our latest challenge will be to say good-bye later this year to Teri Engbring, volunteer and education coordinator. But with challenge comes opportunity. While we will miss Teri's passion and enthusiasm, the staff and board are excited to welcome Miriam Sachs Martin, our incoming volunteer and education coordinator. Teri and Miriam will work together this spring to transition Miriam into the job. Stay tuned for Teri's retirement party in June.

Spring is the time of renewal and to be young at heart whatever your age. I will try something new this year when I attend the California Council of Land Trusts conference in March. I am excited to be a part of a caring group of people who value land, and attending this conference will help me to learn new ways of accomplishing this.

I have also written my charitable gift check to Solano Land Trust because I believe in what we do. Please join me by being a volunteer, visiting one of our sites, and of course, making your pledge, too.

Seasonal Foods

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The result of this winning combination is the inaugural Farm Fresh Feast on May 8, 2010 at Lester's Dixon Ridge Farms in Winters. Kiino hasn't yet settled on the menu, but you can count on chicken from Soul Food Farm in Vacaville, lamb from board member Ian Anderson's ranch, and, of course, a yummy walnut-based dessert. Dinner, served beneath Lester's 35 year-old walnut trees, will include wine pairings with local wines.

"By showcasing local, seasonal food, we can highlight the value of local agriculture and the value of supporting Solano Land Trust," says Lester, who has been on the board of Solano Land Trust since 1995.

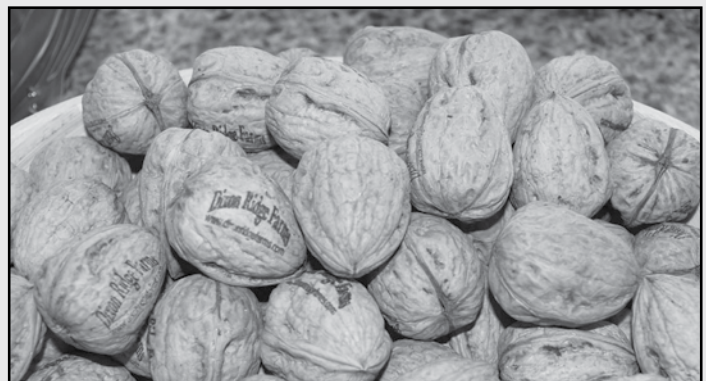
Kiino, who has a background in environmental geology, appreciates local, seasonal foods for several reasons. One of her reasons is purely practical. "The food doesn't have to travel as far so it has more integrity when it arrives," she says. "It's a quality as well as a taste issue."

Activities include carriage rides by Access Adventure, live music from the popular Dirty Water Blues Band, and talks by local agricultural experts including the president of California Farm Bureau Foundation, Paul Wenger. Lester will also offer a tour of his organic, sustainable walnut operation. He has reduced energy use on his farm by 45 percent through efficiency, an 18-kilowatt solar array, and a 55kW biomass generator that converts walnut hulls into energy.

FARM FRESH FEAST

Come enjoy the flavors of Solano County

- What:** Farm Fresh Feast
- Where:** Dixon Ridge Farms, Winters
- When:** Saturday, May 8, 2010
Doors open at 4:30 p.m.
Dinner served at 6:00 p.m.
- Why:** Support Solano Land Trust & learn about local food sources
- How:** Go to www.solanolandtrust.org to buy tickets or call Development Director Greg Peterson at (707) 432-0150 x 205. Sponsorships available!
- How much:** \$95 for individual dinner seats





Executive Director's Perspective

Nicole Byrd, Executive Director



This is my favorite time of year. Our hills are glowing bright green with life and the trees and flowers are starting to bloom. The spring rains have washed the air clean and the low hanging clouds frame the best views of the year. The mild spring weather is a wonderful time to get out and visit our properties, get some exercise, and reconnect with the natural world that is only minutes away from our busy lives. Like most businesses, we still face many of the same economic challenges that we did last year, but the fresh spring air always invigorates and inspires me.

Spring is also a busy season for us at Solano Land Trust. The staff is actively stewarding our lands by putting in new plantings, mowing trails, and fighting weeds.

We're also planning our busy spring events calendar. On Saturday, April 24 we're

celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Rush Ranch Open House, which has grown from just a few visitors to over 1,000 adults and kids who come out to explore the marsh and get a taste of old-time ranch life.

We're unveiling a new event this year, Farm Fresh Feast, set for Saturday, May 8. I'm so pleased that the president of California Farm Bureau Federation, Paul Wenger, will be a speaker at the dinner. On May 15, we'll celebrate our partnership with Solano County and the opening of Lynch Canyon at the Explore Lynch Canyon anniversary event.

On June 5, I'll be making my trail-running debut at the Third Annual Lynch Canyon Trail Run and Community Hike. I challenge you to join me! What better way to exercise than on the trails of our treasured Lynch Canyon? Board members and development committee members Elizabeth Fry and Darrin Berardi, plus Solano County Parks Manager Dan Sykes, Brandon Minto from Congressman Garamendi's office, and Solano Land Trust staffer Anne DeLozier have taken up my challenge to run the 10k with me. Those who have taken up the Community Hike Challenge include Dawn LaBar (Lois Wolk's Office), Anthony Russo (B & L Properties), Sandy Pearson (Solano Economic Development Corporation), Scott Greenwood-Meinert (Gaw Van Male), Solano Land Trust Business Partner Mike Fortney (Placer Title), Solano County Treasurer Chuck Lomeli, Vistas Editor Aleta George, and Board Members Bob Berman and Sean Quinn.

Join us! Take the challenge head outside, get some exercise and be inspired at our properties this spring.



On the move at the 2009 Lynch Canyon Trail Run and Community Hike

Anonymous donor gives matching gift to Solano Land Trust:

Double your 2010 gift by pledging now!

Great news! Solano Land Trust has received a \$20,000 matching gift pledge from a generous, anonymous donor. For a limited time, you have the rare opportunity to double your 2010 gift to us. But you'll have to do it this spring because we need to match the \$20,000 by June 1, 2010!

Your gift will help us protect working farms and natural areas in Solano County for future generations. It will help us provide educational opportunities for schoolchildren, keep agriculture viable, and allow you, your friends and family to explore, play and renew at one of our beautiful properties.

We have worked with our partners to achieve

some great successes in 2009 including the protection of almost 500 acres of high-quality farmland in the Dixon/Davis greenbelt. We had over 6,300 visitors to our properties, assisted by over 350 volunteers who helped us lead hikes, teach kids and steward our lands. We still have a lot of work ahead of us this year, including keeping our beloved Lynch Canyon open to the public.

Help us keep Solano County a great place to live. Double your gift by sending your tax-deductible contribution today! Use the envelope attached or make your secure donation online at www.solanolandtrust.org.

Have you renewed your membership this year? Please renew or join us now!

Science on the land: Charting the migration of California tiger salamanders

Ben Wallace, *Conservation Project Manager*

On an early spring morning at Jepson Prairie Preserve (a major population center for the California tiger salamander), biologist Christopher Searcy and his research team were monitoring salamander pitfall traps when they found a garter snake with a suspicious lump in its throat. “We squeezed out the contents and found a tiger salamander inside, half swallowed but still alive,” says Searcy.

They measured it, released it, and the salamander was fine.

That’s a good thing because Searcy has been a bit concerned about the drop in numbers of this federally threatened species since he began monitoring them

go to Harvard University where he earned a biology degree, and now to UC Davis where he is in his fifth year of a doctoral program, which includes the study of salamanders in vernal pools.

Salamanders come to life with the rains. After the vernal pools fill in early winter, adult salamanders emerge from gopher burrows where they have spent the summer, and migrate to the vernal pools to breed. After the eggs hatch, larvae require at least 90 days to develop before the vernal pools evaporate in the intense summer heat. “If the pool dries out before May 15 you get zero percent recruitment for the year,” says Searcy. In other words, an entire generation of young larvae dies. Luckily, in most years, the pools stay full into June or July, and the young ‘metamorphs’ emerge from the water and migrate across the Prairie into new burrows.

Too much water can also be a problem. If the pools stay inundated all year, fish would eventually colonize the pool and would wipe out all the salamander larvae, says Searcy. Salamanders have adapted to this precarious balance by breeding in pools that remain inundated long enough to complete the breeding cycle but dry out every year so that fish won’t colonize. Moreover, juveniles typically live a few years before breeding, so that there are always several generations of juveniles in the terrestrial landscape. If one generation of larvae does poorly, succeeding generations of adults will have a chance to breed. This life history provides a buffer against the natural variability in the environment.

Science in the service of conservation

Searcy’s work is part of a larger study led by Shaffer to learn how the salamanders are using vernal pool grassland ecosystems. In 2002, Shaffer’s team began setting up an array of drift fences at Jepson Prairie to study the dispersal of salamanders. By 2005, 165 drift fences had been set out in arcs of increasing distance from the vernal pools, each with a set of pitfall traps to capture salamanders during their migration. Each year, the research team collects demographic information on migrating salamanders, and then releases them.

Their findings have significant implications for habitat conservation. They have learned that the



A tiger salamander being measured before its release

Photo: Vide Ohlin

in 2005. “The first year I arrived we captured and released 8,000 salamanders,” he says. “Last year we only captured 500.” The likely cause of the decline is the drought of the last three years, typical of the cyclical wet and dry years of the central California climate.

Searcy is a UC Davis graduate student in the lab of Brad Shaffer, one of the leading experts on the ecology of California tiger salamanders. Their studies are just one of many projects designed to study how salamanders are connected to the rest of the vernal pool ecosystem and how best to conserve their habitat for the future.

From generation to generation

Searcy is following in the footsteps of his grandfather, Nelson Hairston, an eminent ecologist and professor at the University of North Carolina. His father, biologist William Searcy, is known for studying bird behavior and “dialects” of birdsongs within a species. Chris’s formative years in field stations inspired him to

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In memoriam: Docents Dave Warner and Moira Neuterman

Teri Engbring, Volunteer and Education Coordinator

Solano Land Trust staff and volunteers are saddened by the recent deaths of two terrific volunteers, Moira Neuterman and Dave Warner. “Our volunteers bring so much love and life into our programs,” says Teri Engbring, volunteer and education coordinator. “It feels like we’ve lost members of our own families.”

Moira worked as a Jepson Prairie docent for 12 years before passing away last year. “Moira was unduly modest about her skills as an interpreter of the landscape and plants at Jepson,” says lead docent Katherine Mawdsley. “But she was out there year after year, sharing her knowledge and love of vernal pool magic.” Thanks to Jepson docents like Moira, Solano Land Trust has been able to share the bounty and beauty of Jepson Prairie with hundreds of guests each year.

Dave Warner was Lynch Canyon’s first docent. He led at least one monthly hike for more than four years, and helped research and develop the Lynch Canyon docent training program. Hundreds of visitors learned about the park’s trails, plants, wildlife, and history from this gentle, inspiring man. He called us from the hospital just days before his death to request back up for his February 27 hike. It turned out to be the day of his funeral. That morning, docents Jim Walsh and Doris Klein (who was filling in for her friend) met at Lynch Canyon and noticed a majestic golden eagle circling unusually close, about 25 feet above them. Jim wondered if it was Dave’s way of saying hello or goodbye.

With the permission of Dave’s beloved wife, Jackie, his family, friends and fans are invited to a Dave Warner Memorial Hike at Lynch Canyon on Saturday, May 15, 2010, at 9 a.m. We could think of no better way to remember and appreciate his many contributions to our community.

Dave Warner Memorial Hike, Lynch Canyon, Saturday, May 15, 2010, 9 a.m.

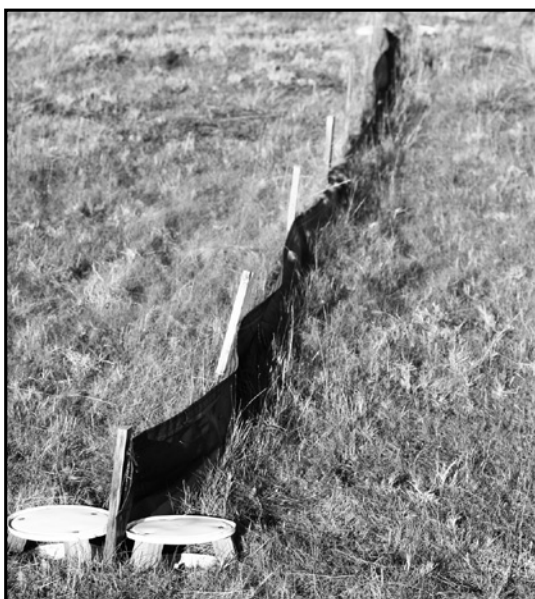


Solano Land Trust will always feel the caring, inspiring spirit of our dear friend, Dave Warner, from the valleys to the ridge tops on every Lynch Canyon trail

Photo: Solano Land Trust

Salamanders

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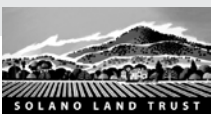


Drift fence and capture buckets along migration route

Photo: Adam Clause

salamanders travel much further than people had previously thought. “We have found that to conserve 95 percent of the population’s habitat, you have to protect all land within 1.4 miles of the edge of the pool,” says Searcy.

Today, the biggest threat to California tiger salamanders is loss of habitat. Solano Land Trust is bucking that trend. Twenty-five years ago, Jepson Prairie was an isolated preserve, initially acquired by the Nature Conservancy. Since then, a large network of open space and mitigation preserves has been protected around Jepson, creating a core habitat preserve for California tiger salamanders and the many other special status plants and animals that live there.



Business Partner in Conservation: First Northern Bank

Development Director Greg Peterson sat down with Owen “John” Onsum on the bank’s 100th anniversary.



- Q.** How does it feel to be 100?
- A.** It feels great, although it’s the bank that’s 100, not me. Our bank has survived the Great Depression and twelve recessions including the current economic downturn. We’ve gone from one branch to eleven, and from \$75,000 in deposits to over \$650,000. We intend to stay local because it enables us to respond more quickly to our customers’ needs and changing conditions than most banks.
- Q.** Why did you choose Solano Land Trust as a Business Partner?
- A.** We helped secure the creative financing to purchase Lynch Canyon, and have made contributions ever since. We love being a Business Partner since Solano Land Trust does such good work locally. We also share a board member, Sean Quinn.
- Q.** What do you do to help the environment?
- A.** We’ve recently added solar panels to the roofs of four branches, and have four hybrid courier cars. We are also a partner with Yolo Land Trust.
- Q.** What is your policy on employee volunteerism?
- A.** We strongly encourage our employees to volunteer through a contest called the Franklin Program. It lists volunteer opportunities, and rewards employees who volunteer the most. Already this year, some employees have over 100 hours of volunteer service. Later in the year we are giving every employee \$100 to give to a local charity of their choice. First Northern will also soon be selling a cookbook from recipes sent to them by various community members. Proceeds will go to local food banks.

Solano Community College aquatic team and others help out at volunteer workdays

Ken Poerner, Land Steward

The Solano Community College aquatics team knows how to swim laps, but they are probably not as accustomed to shoveling hay. The group got a taste of old time ranch life when Coach Scott Parrish brought his crew to Rush Ranch for a team-building volunteer workday on a cold February morning. Access Adventure volunteer Robert Boardman helped them spruce up the barn, which meant clearing out the hay duff (six inches deep in some places) in preparation for another round of hay storage.

Over the past few years, Parrish and his students have consistently volunteered for Solano Land Trust. The crews helped to dismantle a barn at the Wilcox Ranch and the old stallion stable at Rush Ranch. They also helped build the overlook at Lynch Canyon. “I believe in the preservation of open space and agriculture in Solano County,” says Parrish, “and I want to educate my student athletes about what we have out there.”

Groups and individuals help Solano Land Trust care for over 10,000 acres of working rangeland and habitat on a tight budget. Solano Land Trust gets help from Rodriquez High School students, the Solano County Probation Department, and Travis AFB, among others.

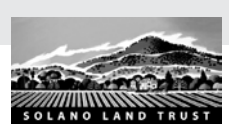
Workdays provide a great opportunity to support Solano Land Trust, which provides thousands of acres of open space and hundreds of activities to the community every year. “Community involvement through volunteer days, memberships and donations is really the cornerstone of our organization,” says Executive Director Nicole Byrd. “Without the support of our community we simply would not be able to function at the level we do.”

A big thanks to all the organizations and individuals that participate in Solano Land Trust workdays. And don’t forget, the new Furlough Friday workdays offer another chance to support your local land trust. To find out more about our volunteer workdays download the activities listing at www.solanolandtrust.org.

“Without the support of our community we simply would not be able to function at the level we do.”

Nicole Byrd,
Executive Director

Thank you contributors!



We want to thank all those who contributed in 2009 to help Solano Land Trust preserve working farmlands and natural areas in Solano County. With you as partners, we work with farmers and ranchers to protect their lands; we steward our lands and open them to the public; and we provide education about the value of open space and agriculture.

Business Partners

All Star Rents
Bay Area Barns & Trails
Grant Bennett Associates
Conservation Partners
Cunningham Engineering Corporation
Deloitte Services LP
Edgcomb Law Group
enXco Development Corp
Favaro Lavezzo Gill Caretti & Heppell
First Northern Bank
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MV Transportation
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Sierra Orchards
Stillwater Sciences
Syar Foundation
Terra Realty Advisors, Inc.
Utility/Landscape
Local 355 J.L.M.
Valero Benicia Refinery
The Wiseman Company

Government Agencies and Other Organizations

Bay Area Ridge Trail Council
CA Dept of Conservation (CA Farmland Conservancy Program and Weed Management Areas)
CA Dept of Fish and Game (Ecosystem Restoration Program)
CA State Coastal Conservancy
CA State Horsemen's Assc. Region I
CalTrans
City of Fairfield

Fairfield Suisun Sewer District
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Outdoor Writers Association of California
PG&E
SF Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve
Solano County
Solano County Water Agency
Tri-City & County Joint Powers Authority
USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program, EQIP Program, WHIP Program)
U.S. Dept of Defense
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Valcore Recycling
Vallejo Sanitation & Flood Control District

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 Logo design based on
 original art by Don Birrell

Our Mission Statement

Solano Land Trust is a private, nonprofit organization whose mission is the preservation of agricultural lands, open space, and resources through the acquisition of land and conservation easements, education, and land management.

Activities & Events

For directions to our properties and up-to-date news on events go to www.solanolandtrust.org

All events are free and no reservations are needed unless otherwise noted. For more information contact Teri Engbring at volunteers@solanolandtrust.org or (707) 432-0150 x200. With the exception of Suisun Hill Trail across from Rush Ranch, dogs are not allowed on SLT properties.

Jepson Prairie Preserve

Tour the prairie with trained docents every Saturday and Sunday at 10 a.m. through May 9. Learn about vernal pool ecology, flowers, tadpole and fairy shrimp, tiger salamanders, and other interesting critters. A \$2-5 donation is requested. To schedule a group larger than five, contact Teri at (707) 432-0150 x 200 or volunteers@solanolandtrust.org. You can also tour the docent triangle on your own seven days a week during daylight hours. This should be a great wildflower year at Jepson!

King and Swett Ranches

The King and Swett Ranches are currently open to the public only during staff- or docent-led activities.

Scenic Hikes and Birding

Saturday, Apr. 3, Jun. 5, 2010. 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

(Note: May hike is cancelled)

Moderate pace. Meet at the Park-and-Ride lot at the Hiddenbrooke Parkway/American Canyon Road exit at I-80.

Furlough Friday Land Restoration

Friday, Apr. 16, May 21, Jun. 18, 2010.

9 a.m. to noon.

Specific site and project TBD. To sign-up contact Sue at (707) 432-0150 x 207 or sue@solanolandtrust.org.

Lynch Canyon Open Space

Lynch Canyon is open to the public Sat. through Mon. from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. No drinking water onsite. As a Solano County Park, there is a \$5 per-day, per-vehicle parking fee.

Docent- and Ranger-led Guided Hikes

Saturday, Mar. 27; Apr. 11, 17, 24; May 22, June 26

9 a.m. to noon. Moderate difficulty.

Volunteer Workdays

Saturday, Apr. 10, May 8, Jun. 12, 2010. 9 a.m.

Bring gloves, water, and snacks. Parking fee waived for working volunteers.

CA State Horsemen's Assn. Scavenger Hunt

Saturday, Apr. 10, 2010

For info contact Sue at (707) 447-7477 or Sue367@earthlink.net.

Second Annual Kite Festival

Sunday, May 2, 2010. Noon to 4 p.m.

All ability levels welcome. Bring your own kite.

Adventure in your Backyard: Explore Lynch Canyon

Saturday, May 15, 2010. 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Wildlife, wagon rides and more. All events are free. In April, get the detailed schedule at solanolandtrust.org.

Third Annual Trail Run & Community Hike

Saturday, June 5, 2010. 8 a.m.

For info go to lynchcanyontrailrun.com.

Rush Ranch Open Space

Rush Ranch is open 7 days/week from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. The Suisun Hill Trail is open seven days a week, dawn to dusk.

Getting the Rush

Saturday, Apr. 17, May 15, Jun. 19, 2010.

Join us for any or all: Guided Interpretive Walk (9 a.m.); Blacksmith Shop Demonstration (10 a.m.); Access Adventure Carriage Rides (11 a.m.). Heavy rain cancels.

Volunteer Workdays

Saturday, Apr. 3, May 1, Jun. 5, 2010. 9 a.m. to noon

Get some fresh air while helping with ranch, trail, or native garden maintenance. Meet at the Kit House.

20th Annual Open House

Saturday, Apr. 24, 2010. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Activities include old-time music, ranch life demonstrations, wagon rides, and wildlife demonstrations. New this year: Kids Art Station and live bat exhibit.

Solano Land Trust
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