



SOLANO LAND TRUST  
Vol. 15 #4

# Solano Land Trust

# VISTAS

[www.solanolandtrust.org](http://www.solanolandtrust.org)

Winter  
2008/09

## Inside

### Show your support for Solano Land Trust protected lands: Become a member today!

*Nicole Byrd, Assistant Executive Director*



*Join the party. Become a member of Solano Land Trust today.*

*Photos: Doug Wirtz & staff*

This fall, Solano Land Trust launched a new membership campaign with an enthusiastic goal of growing our membership to 2,000 in the next few years. We hope to see great results from our efforts before the end of this year.

An SLT membership is perfect for those who love what we do, but don't have time to volunteer. Or, for those volunteers who want to offer even more support to SLT, a membership will allow them

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# President's Message

Ian Anderson, *President*



As I write my message for the winter issue of *Vistas*, I am thinking how lucky it is to be in California in mid-November with 70-degree afternoons! That will soon change, but it is a welcome temperature for the 70 lambs being born each day on our ranch.

On our farm we gauge our productivity on the percent lamb crop that we raise. Our goal is to

raise 1.5 lambs per ewe. My employees and I have already marked 500 mother sheep that are raising twins. We also have 375 ewes that have given birth to one lamb. This equates to a lambing percentage of 1.57 lambs per ewe, a number that we are happy with. The true excitement of raising lambs, however, comes every morning when the mothers are breakfasting on alfalfa. During this time, the lambs go on a running rampage. They race from one end of the corral to the other and join in jumping contests and "king of the hill" games. This daily event brings a smile to even the grumpiest of farmers.



It is truly the time of renewal on our farm, with the planting of crops and the birthing of lambs. At Solano Land Trust, it is also a time of renewal. Our future productivity depends on all of us as a community caring about our lands. I won't ask

for your help mucking out the barn or feeding ewes morning and night, but I can certainly ask you to join Solano Land Trust or increase your donation if you already are a member. Measuring our productivity at SLT is a bit more complicated, but the joy of running, biking, hiking on, or even just viewing some of our lands, makes this membership push worth it. Our goal is 2,000 members. Please help us meet that goal!

## Become a member

*Continued from previous page*

to help us meet our financial goals.

The benefits of membership include free access to our new speaker series (see back page under Rush Ranch events), invitations to special events, and an annual discount at our Rush Ranch rental facilities. Plus, members will know that they are helping SLT continue to protect our special places in Solano County for future generations. Memberships are available at four levels: Member - \$50, Steward - \$100, Patron - \$ 250, and Sponsor - \$500. (Membership gifts are tax deductible.)

**Sign up as a new member before January 1 and your membership will include a brick at Rush Ranch!**

THANKS KEN POERNER—A LAND STEWARD WHO TEACHES BY DOING

As part of our membership drive, new SLT members will receive a commemorative brick to place in the Rush Ranch patio. All you have to do is sign up at the steward or patron level before January 1, 2009 to leave your legacy at Rush Ranch with a personalized four-by-eight inch brick. Members who sign up at the sponsor level and above can dedicate an eight-by-eight inch brick. (This offer is also available for existing members who increase their membership level.)

As we look forward to 2009, SLT will continue to work diligently to protect even more of our diverse habitat and the rich agricultural land that makes our region such a special place to live, and your membership is imperative to our continued success! SLT members are vital partners as we protect the natural areas in our region for our friends and families to enjoy.

Please become a member today by using the enclosed envelope or enrolling on our website at [www.solanolandtrust.org](http://www.solanolandtrust.org). Remember, a Solano Land Trust membership makes for meaningful gift giving this holiday season.





## Executive Director's Perspective

Marilyn Farley, *Executive Director*



In the fall issue of Vistas, I wrote that I expected to retire soon. That has been postponed until mid 2009, and I'm happy with the delay, as it will give me the opportunity to bring on Nicole Byrd, our assistant executive director in charge of fundraising. Nicole will fit in well with the rest of the staff, all of who are dedicated, gifted and self-motivated—and a joy to work with.

Non-profit sector employees choose this work because they believe in it.

It's definitely not for the pay or perks. I'll share a few examples to illustrate our staff's commitment. Project coordinator Sue Wickham spends a lot of time at King and Swett Ranches getting water to cattle, spraying for weeds, and planning for trails. Earlier this year, she became a little frustrated with the lack of money for minor tools and equipment, and offered a challenge: "I'll donate up to \$500 if staff, board and others will match it!" Sue is a consulting geologist by trade and has become a native plant expert. On weekends, which should be her own time, she's frequently in the field collecting seeds or overseeing work parties. On November 1, she supervised fall planting of our new Nature Center courtyard garden at Rush Ranch.

Teri Engbring, our volunteer coordinator, also donates prodigious amounts of her own time, often going the extra mile to make things special for all (see page 6 of this issue for more about Teri). She did a fantastic job in organizing our annual volunteer appreciation event that brought out 100 people!

Our administrative assistant, Jennifer Fernandez, has numerous duties, including managing reservations for our new Nature Center. Through her initiative, we have ads for the Nature Center on a bridal website. Jennifer even dressed up her young daughter as a bride, then staged and photographed a "wedding" at Rush Ranch. Due to the downturn in the economy, Jennifer and family have just relocated to the East Coast. We'll miss her.

Along the lines of NPR's Garrison Keeler's traditional closing statement, I'll close by saying that all of our employees are hardworking and above average. I'll tell you more about the rest of SLT's talented staff in my next column. ❖

### Are you a member of the Solano Land Trust team?

Only if you volunteer or contribute at the \$50 level or more. Benefits include our new speaker series, Vistas newsletter, exclusive member's-only hikes, tours, and special events, and a one-time discount for Rush Ranch facilities. Renew today by using the attached envelope or by donating online. Also, you can save paper and postage by reading Vistas online. Email [admin@solanolandtrust.org](mailto:admin@solanolandtrust.org) if you prefer to receive it by email.



Solano County Weed Management Area's annual meetings are free and open to the public. This year, a number of topics related to the control of invasive weeds in wildlands and rangelands will be addressed, including control of medusahead and perennial pepperweed, identification of A-rated noxious

weeds, potential problems associated with basal bark herbicide applications, and current laws and regulations. Private landowners, farmers, ranchers, and resource management agency personnel are welcome. Three continuing education credits will be available to attendees for Department of Pesticide Regulation certification. Please call Katherine Holmes at (707) 678-1655 x 118 to register for the class.

#### Solano County Weed Management Area

Annual Meeting

Thursday, January 8, 2009

9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon

Rush Ranch Nature Center

3521 Grizzly Island Rd., Suisun City

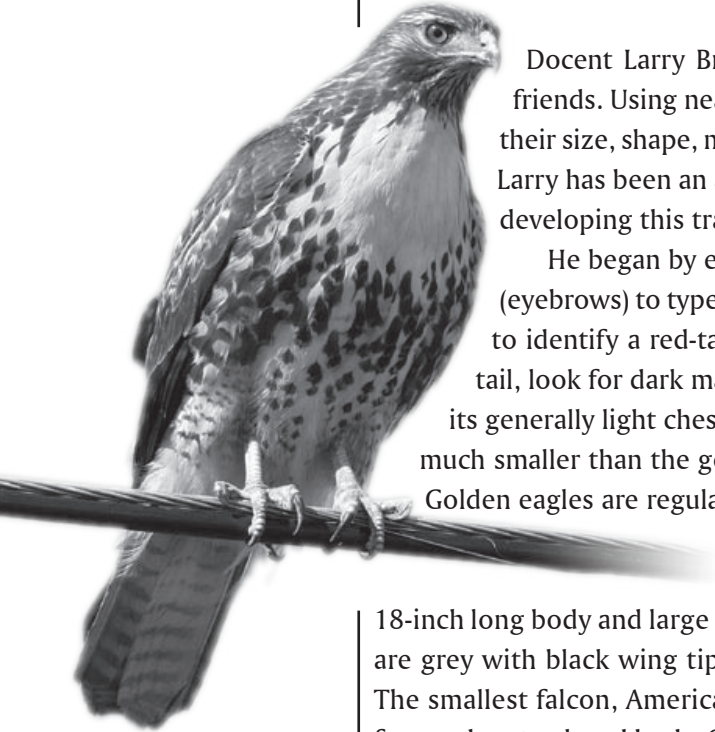


Owner Danielle Simpson leads Rock, the unassuming star of "Celebrate Adventure and Walk with Rock," Access Adventure's annual summer fundraiser

Photo: Wendy Williams

# Tips on how to identify local raptors shared at new Rush Ranch speaker series

Teri Engbring, Volunteer and Education Coordinator



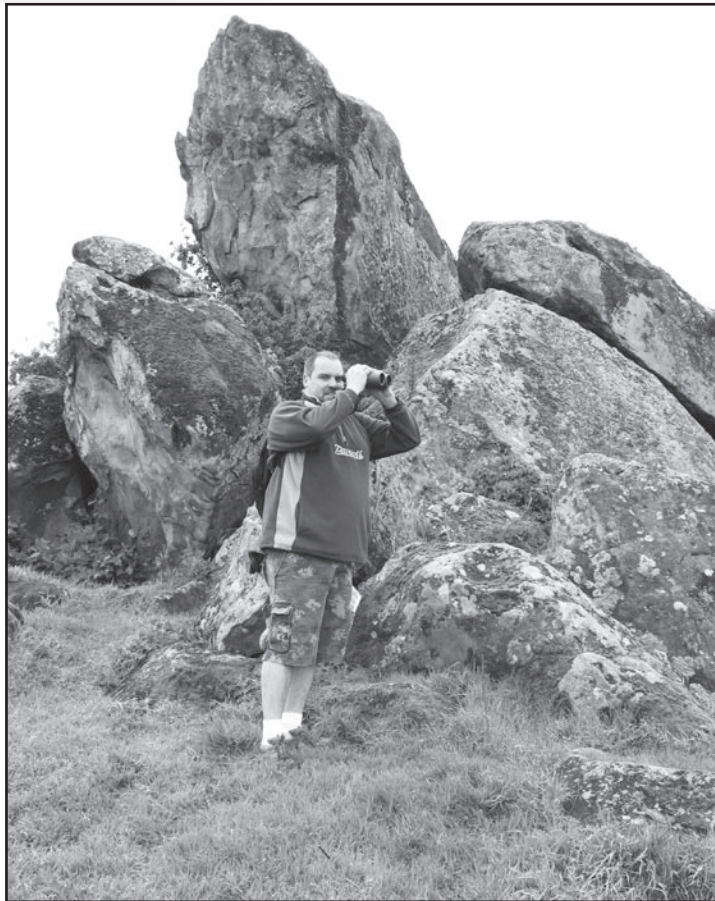
*In winter, look for red-tailed hawks perched on fence posts, highway signs, and high wires*

Photo: Sam Steiner

Docent Larry Broderick recently led a raptor identification workshop for docents and friends. Using nearly 100 photos of birds of prey seen on SLT properties, he demonstrated their size, shape, markings, color patterns, variations, behavior, prey, habitat and seasonality. Larry has been an avid bird and wildlife observer for 20 years, and spent hundreds of hours developing this training program.

He began by explaining a bird's anatomy from the crown (top of head) and supercilium (eyebrows) to types of wing feathers (primaries and secondaries). He explained the best way to identify a red-tailed hawk, the most common raptor on SLT properties. Besides the red tail, look for dark markings on the leading edge of its wings, and a streaked bellyband below its generally light chest. This large hawk has a 49-inch wingspan and length of 19 inches, but is much smaller than the golden eagle's 79-inch wingspan and overall dark brown body and wings. Golden eagles are regularly seen over the hills of Lynch Canyon and the King-Swett Ranches.

Another common raptor seen on SLT properties is the northern harrier, distinguished by the large white patch on the rump, slender 18-inch long body and large head with partial facial disk that channels sound to sensitive ears. Males are grey with black wing tips, and females have dark brown backs with rusty colored under parts. The smallest falcon, American kestrels, are nine inches in length and have bold vertical lines on its face and rust colored body. Only males have steel blue wings, but males and females can hover while hunting like white-tailed kites and rough-legged hawks.



Larry Broderick watching raptors at Lynch Canyon

Photo: Teri Engbring

The raptor workshop was the first program in the new Rush Ranch speaker series, an enrichment program for SLT's volunteers, members, and business partners. It is open to the general public on a space available basis. In November, Suisun Resource Conservation District executive director Steve Chappell gave a talk entitled, "The Amazing Suisun Marsh Ecosystem," which covered the past, present, and future of the Suisun Marsh ecosystem, a vital home to a wide variety of migratory and year-round wildlife at the edge of the San Francisco Bay.

The raptor ID workshop will be repeated on January 10 at 1 p.m. The next talk, "Climate Change: How it Affects Us and What We Can Do," will be presented by John Mott-Smith on February 5 at 7 p.m. Please call Teri Engbring at (707) 432-0150 x200 to sign up, as seating is limited. ❖

# Improvements are abloom at Jepson Prairie

Teri Engbring, *Volunteer and Education Coordinator*

Dedicated and knowledgeable volunteers of the Jepson Prairie docent program have managed and guided tours and classes of the unique vernal pools and prairie grasslands south of Dixon for over twenty years. The spectacular spring show of native wildflowers and rare aquatic invertebrates (tadpole and fairy shrimp) is a popular weekend stop for thousands of visitors each year.

In recent months, these volunteers worked with consultant Peg Henderson of the National Park Service to reorganize their group and examine potential site improvements. The results are a new coordinating team and the adoption of a concept plan to improve the visitor area at SLT's Jepson Prairie Preserve, including interpretive signs, trails, picnic areas, and ADA access.

Lars Anderson, chair of the Jepson Prairie docent coordinating team, received approval from the SLT board to proceed with fund raising and further planning of the site design. The coordinating team also includes Kate Mawdsley as secretary, and Liz Vasquez as chair of the facilities work group.

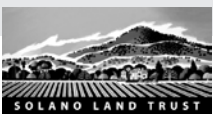
The Jepson Prairie docent training session (held each winter) is renowned for its depth in covering subjects from vernal pool ecology and identification of spectacular seasonal plants to endangered California tiger salamanders. Volunteers are needed to learn about this rare ecosystem, share the information, and inspire protection and preservation of the Preserve. Please contact Teri at (707) 432-0150, x200 if you can help. ❖

The Jepson Prairie Preserve welcomes new volunteers. The docent training program includes classes taught by regional experts on vernal pools, invertebrates, flower identification, and California's grasslands. Field trips include practical tips on giving interpretive tours while engaging audiences. Classes are held evenings in Davis, and Saturday field sessions at Jepson Prairie Preserve. For more information contact Teri Engbring at (707) 432-0150 x200 or [teri@solanolandtrust.org](mailto:teri@solanolandtrust.org).

*Docents CJ Addinton and Sean Marquis investigate aquatic invertebrates at Jepson Prairie*

**Photo:** Teri Engbring





## SLT's Teri Engbring puts heart (and extra hours) into her work

Aleta George, *Editor*



*Teri is a familiar sight at SLT events*

Photo: Doug Wirtz

I joined Teri Engbring, SLT's volunteer and education coordinator, on the back porch of the Rush Ranch Kit House for lunch. Both of us had packed cold leftovers. Keeping her binoculars nearby, she grabbed them often to look at birds darting through the eucalyptus trees or hovering in the sky. As pleasant as it was to chat and watch birds, we eventually had to get to the subject at hand: her. She didn't relish the idea of a profile, preferring instead to talk about her favorite subjects: birds, conservation, her family, and Solano Land Trust volunteers.

Like most people, I was accustomed to seeing Teri at events, but knew little about her. After just a few questions, the breadth of her life experiences amazed me.

She met her husband on an airplane in Micronesia when she worked as a liaison between the Micronesian and US governments. John, her husband, was working as an endangered species biologist surveying birds for the US Department of the Interior. They had a lot in common, but he was living in Hawaii and she in Washington, D.C., commuting to Micronesia.

Before she worked in Micronesia, she had been an assistant to Governor Dan Evans in Washington State, worked as an intern in the New York City jails after she had graduated from college, and also worked for the Weyerhaeuser Company.

After leaving her job in Micronesia, she accepted a job at a nonprofit in Oahu. That's where she and John married and lived on a 37-foot sailboat with no hot water or shower. When their second daughter was born, it was time to move on land. They stayed in Honolulu for another three years.

After Honolulu, the family moved to Olympia, Washington, which for Teri was coming home. Teri's single mother had raised Teri and her siblings in a drafty old farmhouse outside of Vancouver. Teri's happiest memories were of riding the neighbor's horse in nearby woods and fields. "That was my peace as a teenager," said Teri.

In Washington she worked for the Department of Natural Resources, and as a substitute teacher and journalist. She chose part time work while her girls were growing up, and volunteered as a Girl Scout leader and PTA president.

Now both of her daughters are in college. Laurel, 21, is a senior at the University of British Columbia, studying archeology and traveling the globe on digs. Gretchen, nearly 20, is a sophomore at UC Santa Cruz, studying political science and legal studies, and working for the campus sustainability office. "My whole family is extremely motivated to make a difference," said Teri, "especially in protecting natural resources."

When John was transferred to Sacramento ten years ago, they chose to live in Davis. After a short volunteer stint at the Yolo Basin Foundation and CA Fish and Game, she was hired as an interpreter and stayed for nine years. Then circumstances converged and it was time to move on.

Teri started at SLT last year. She supports 200 volunteers, including 50 new recruits in the last year. It's a full-time job, plus some, but she loves it. She goes the extra mile and works the extra hours because she wants to lend support to the active stewards of SLT properties. "When the volunteers need back up, I'm going to be there for them."

She says SLT volunteers are as dedicated as any she's found anywhere. "And I've been around," she said, "from New York City to Micronesia to Hawaii and back again."

Aren't we glad (and lucky) that she came back again. ❖

# Volunteers bag 1,000 pounds of trash on Coastal Cleanup Day

Ken Poerner, *Land Steward*

Rush Ranch was one of many California Coastal Cleanup Day sites in Solano County in September. We've been a cleanup site for the last eight years. Participation in the event has grown from about one dozen volunteers during our first year to over 60 this year, the 24th annual cleanup. Throughout California nearly 65,000 volunteers picked up one million pounds of debris.

The team at Rush Ranch was broken up into four groups. Teenagers from the Solano County Probation Department concentrated on the road next to the slough where people fish from their cars, and where there is the greatest concentration of trash. Boy Scouts worked on the Department of Fish and Game levee trail to the west, where they also picked up plenty of trash left by fishermen. A large contingent of Rodriguez High School volunteers showed up and was split into two groups. One group worked on the south side of Hill Slough, and the other worked with individual volunteers to clean up the Rush Ranch side of Hill Slough.

The tide was high this year so our take was not as great as when we have a low tide and can get out on the mud flats. We still managed to pick-up almost 1,000 pounds of trash and recyclables, including plastic bags, Styrofoam bait containers, and glass, plastic, and aluminum beverage containers. Throughout the state, cigarette butts are the most common item of trash.

It's unfortunate, but I have a feeling that we will be doing this for a long time since the people who contribute most of the trash are the ones least likely to help clean it up.

Farmers, ranchers, and growers who write about their land is the focus of the second annual Geography of Hope Conference in Point Reyes Station from March 20-22, 2009. For information go to [www.ptreyesbooks.com](http://www.ptreyesbooks.com).

## Rebuilding of stallion barn postponed for owl family

Mary Lou Fazel, *Access Adventure Administrator*

When volunteers started to dismantle the stallion barn at Rush Ranch last year, all work ceased when workers noticed a mother owl fly into the barn where a nest was discovered. Her babies have since flown away, but what remains of the barn still stands, looking like the façade of a building on a Western movie set.

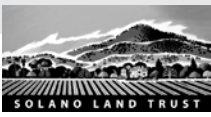
It won't look like that for long. Access Adventure and the Solano Land Trust have received a second grant from the Syar Foundation for \$50,000 in additional funding to rebuild the stallion barn. Syar's original grant of \$120,000 was used to build new fences for the pastures and paddocks, and to rebuild shelters. Once the barn dismantling began it was obvious that the basic structure was inadequate and renovation would be more complicated and costly than had been anticipated.

The Syar Foundation contributions have been instrumental in making Rush Ranch a safe place for visitors and horses, and we are grateful for their generosity. We look forward to seeing the construction underway soon. ❖



*Working barn or movie set?*

Photo: Mary Lou Fazel



**BOARD MEMBERS**

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John M. Vasquez, *Vice President*  
Darrin Berardi, *Secretary*  
Jeff Dittmer, *Treasurer*  
Bob Berman, *Immediate Past Pres.*  
Frank J. Andrews, Jr.  
Elizabeth Fry  
Jane Hicks  
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Russell Lester  
Frank Morris  
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**STAFF**

Marilyn Farley, *Executive Director*  
Nicole Byrd, *Assistant Executive Director*  
Teri Engbring, *Volunteer and Education Coordinator*  
Jennifer Fernandez, *Administrative Assistant*  
Rob Goldstein, *Land Transaction Specialist*  
Nick Meckler, *Field Steward*  
Jane Moody, *Bookkeeper*  
Cathy O'Connor, *Finance Officer*  
Jessie Olson, *Restoration Planner*  
Audrey Peller, *Land Transaction Technician*  
Ken Poerner, *Land Steward*  
Ben Wallace, *Conservation Project Manager*  
Sue Wickham, *Project Coordinator*  
Aleta George, *Editor, SLT Vistas*  
White's Graphics, *Graphics, SLT Vistas*  
*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 latest news on all of our events and directions to our properties go to [www.solanolandtrust.org](http://www.solanolandtrust.org) and click on the calendar.

*All events are free and no reservations are needed unless otherwise noted. For more information contact Teri Engbring at [teri@solanolandtrust.org](mailto:teri@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

Winter rain fills the vernal pools, creating a watery welcome for the special creatures and wildflowers that live here. Come spring, trained docents lead tours on weekends, but for now you can take a self-guided tour in the "Docent Triangle" seven days a week during daylight hours.

## 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

#### First Saturday of the month:

**Jan. 3, Mar. 7, 2009. 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.**

(Note: Feb. hike is cancelled)

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

### Volunteer Restoration Team

**Saturday, Dec. 20, 2008, Jan. 24, Feb. 21, 2009. 8:45 a.m. to 12:00.**

Assist in restoration. To sign-up contact Sue at (707) 432-0150 x207 or [sue@solanolandtrust.org](mailto:sue@solanolandtrust.org).

## Lynch Canyon Open Space

Lynch Canyon is open to the public Wed. through Sun. from 8 a.m. to posted closing time. Trail maps at parking lot kiosk. Carry your own water. As a Solano County Park, there is a \$5 per-day, per-vehicle parking fee.

### Scenic Hike with Docent Dave

**Saturday, Dec. 27, 2008, Jan. 24, Feb. 28, 2009. 9 a.m. to noon.**

Moderate difficulty.

### Volunteer Workdays

#### Second Saturday of the month:

**Jan. 10, Feb. 14, Mar. 14, 2009. 9 a.m.**

Bring gloves and a favorite planting tool. Water, snacks and parking fee available for volunteers.

## 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.

### Native Bees and the Agribusiness of Bees

**Sunday, Jan. 11, 2009. 1 to 3 p.m.**

Presented by Robbin Thorp and Phil Hofland.

### Rush Ranch Speaker Series (New!)

**1. Raptor Identification Workshop with Larry Broderick Sat. Jan. 20, 2009. 1 to 3 p.m.**

**2. Climate Change: How it Affects Us and What We Can Do, with John Mott-Smith Thursday, Feb. 5, 2009, 7 to 9 p.m.**

Limited seating. SLT volunteers, members, and their guests must RSVP to Teri at (707) 432-0150 x200. \$5 donation for others on space available basis.

### Bird Tour with Joanne Castro

**Saturday, Feb. 7, 2009. 9 a.m.**

An event of the San Francisco Bay Flyway Festival. Guided tour of winter birds from the marsh to the hills.

### Volunteer Workdays

#### First Saturday of the month:

**Jan. 3, Feb. 7, Mar. 7, 2009. 9 a.m.**

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

### Blacksmith Shop Demonstration & Access Adventure Carriage Rides

#### Third Saturday of the month:

**Dec. 20, 2008. Jan. 17, Feb. 21, Mar. 21, 2009. 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.**

Watch or participate in the art of blacksmithing and explore Rush Ranch on a horse-drawn carriage. Heavy rain cancels.

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