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## Solano Land Trust News September 2011

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Help us save Rockville Trails!

[Learn more here](#)

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Solano Land Trust  
1001 Texas Street, Suite C  
Fairfield, CA 94533

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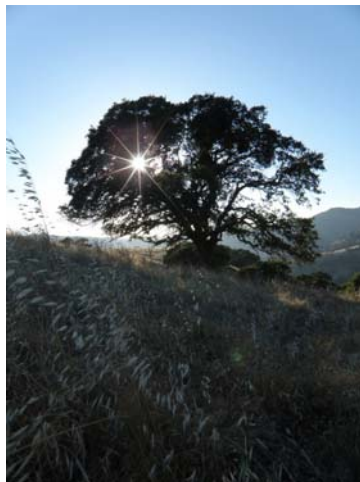
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Lynch Canyon: Blackberries to  
raptors

Help build a trail

### Solano Land Trust staff find inspiration at Rockville Trails with hiking enthusiast and TV personality, Lorrie Sullenberger

Deanna Mott, Associate Director



**Autumn light at Rockville Trails**  
Photo by Nicole Byrd

Last month, a small group of us spent the morning at Rockville Trails to explore various ways to tell others about this beautiful property and its importance. Until you actually spend time discovering its uniqueness, you can't convey to others how amazing these 1,500 acres really are. Joining me were Executive Director Nicole Byrd, interim Land Transaction Manager Janet Mackey, and Lorrie Sullenberger, fitness expert, hiking enthusiast, TV personality, and wife of Sully Sullenberger, pilot of the Hudson River rescue fame.

We daydreamed about the past and the future. While on the land, it is easy to imagine a time when Patwin Indians walked the oak forests and stood on the highest mesa to look out on the valleys below. The sheer ruggedness of the property, and the 360-degree views from many vantage points, are what make it so special. It has a calming and healing power that feeds our souls and puts things back in perspective.

As the four of us meandered down a hillside, we came across a treasure of blackberries, some ripe for picking. We discovered a small stream and a giant fig tree, remnants of an old home site that made us want to go back in time and meet the family that once lived there.

We imagined future trail connections and reflection areas, children's

Rush Ranch book for sale

## Special Events

Rush Ranch  
Our Stars & Planets  
Friday, September 16  
Indoor presentation at 7 p.m.  
Outdoor viewing begins at dark  
[www.rushranch.net](http://www.rushranch.net)

Grand Opening  
Seeing Solano: Artists work  
from Solano Land Trust lands  
Saturday, October 8  
3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.  
[Vallejo Museum](#)

A Toast to Ag and Open Space  
Winterhawk Winery  
Sunday, October 16  
11 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
[More info here](#)

## Get Moving Outside

King-Swett Ranches  
Docent-led Hike  
Saturday, October 1  
Saturday, November 5  
9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

King-Swett Ranches  
25th Anniversary  
Hike for Members & Business  
Partners  
Saturday, November 5  
8 a.m. to 2 p.m.



Photo by Doug Wirtz

Lynch Canyon  
Birds of Prey Tour  
Saturday, September 24  
Sunday, November 13  
10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Lynch Canyon  
25th Anniversary Hike for  
Members & Business Partners  
Saturday, October 22  
10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Please note: Lynch Canyon is closed until March 17, 2012, except for docent- and staff-led events. Partial yearlong closure

interpretative paths, and stargazing lookouts. It's easy to let your imagination flourish when there's nothing but you and nature.

Rockville Trails is as beautiful in late summer when the grasses have turned golden-brown as it is in late winter when the rain has turned it green and lush. Soon the entire community will be able to enjoy this magnificent property.

Stay tuned to learn how you can help us save Rockville Trails! For more information, contact Associate Director Deanna Mott at [deanna@solanolandtrust.org](mailto:deanna@solanolandtrust.org) or (707) 432-0150 x 205.

[Check out the NBC story on Rockville Trails!](#)

## In loving memory of Frank Morris

Natalie DuMont, Volunteer and Education Coordinator



**Frank Morris in his element**  
Photo by Jeff Janik

On Sunday, August 28, we lost a dear friend and a dedicated member of Solano Land Trust's board of directors. On that day, Frank Morris passed away suddenly due to a heart attack.

Frank is dearly missed. He was a life-long learner, a gifted teacher, and a passionate community member. He loved water, and he followed his passion by becoming a hydrology expert. In Solano County, his career included years of service at the Solano

County Water Agency and the Solano Irrigation District. He focused on water availability, water quality, and regional planning.

Frank was passionate about volunteering as well. He gave his time and energy in many ways. For years he served on the boards of Solano Land Trust and the Green Valley Landowners Association. He was also a longtime member of the Blue Ridge-Berryessa Natural Area Partnership and the Putah Creek Discovery Corridor, a volunteer for the WaterWays education program, and a docent for Solano County Parks at Lake Solano.

Among Frank's many side projects, he was compiling nature photography, researching Patwin history and culture, designing guided tours, and planning education exhibits. On top of all this, he loved getting out on the water and kayaked at Lake Solano nearly every Friday evening.

Frank left us a legacy of love and respect for land and water. Solano Land Trust is planning a permanent memorial for Frank at Rush Ranch, one of the places he most loved. He is with us in spirit, and his passions will live on.

## Aim for Ag and Open Space hits the bull's eye

Aleta George, eVistas Editor

On a breezy and beautiful day in August, US Rep. Mike Thompson, 1st District, attended Solano Land Trust's Aim for Ag and Open Space, and nabbed an award for Advanced Class Champion. It's not Thompson's first shooting event or award. He was on

is due to lack of funding for operations and maintenance

Rush Ranch  
Get the Rush!  
(Nature walk, blacksmith shop,  
and more)  
Saturday, September 17  
Saturday, October 15  
9 a.m. to 1 p.m.



### Nature walk Photo by Natalie DuMont

Please note: Rush Ranch will have limited access on September 24, October 1, and October 22 due to private events.

For more event information and directions go to [www.solanolandtrust.org](http://www.solanolandtrust.org)

### Volunteers Needed

Citizen Science Friday  
Location TBD  
Friday, September 16  
Friday, October 21  
8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Volunteer Appreciation BBQ  
Rush Ranch  
Saturday, October 8  
Noon to 3 p.m.  
(Solano Land Trust board members cook and the food is not to be missed!)

Lynch Canyon  
Volunteer Day  
Saturday, October 8  
Saturday, November 12  
9 a.m. to Noon



### US Rep. Mike Thompson and Executive Director Nicole Byrd display their awards

Alexandra Wampler, 18, won high overall shooter with 46 out of 50 target hits. Executive Director Nicole Byrd, who had only fired a shotgun once before this event, hit nine out of fifty, earning her the Duck and Cover Award.

The event, new to Solano Land Trust, was a success. "We had a different demographic," said Byrd, "including many of our Rush Ranch neighbors in the Suisun Marsh. This gave us a venue to reach out to them, for them to learn about us, and to have fun doing it."

Solano Land Trust plans to repeat the event next year, but will likely move it to late spring.

the Democratic team that won the Congressional Shoot-Out held in Maryland in May 2011.

"I had a great time and it was very encouraging to see so many sportsmen and women out to support a terrific cause," said Thompson. "Protecting our open space and agricultural heritage has been one of my top priorities and I look forward to continuing to work with the Solano Land Trust on these crucial issues."

## Raise your glass to ag and open space at Winterhawk Winery

Deanna Mott, Associate Director



Join Solano Land Trust and Winterhawk Winery for A Toast to Ag & Open Space on Sunday, October 16, during the 6th Annual Fun Family Farm Days in Suisun Valley. Enjoy live country music, fresh BBQ, Winterhawk wines, a chance to win raffle prizes, wagon rides provided by Access Adventure, and most importantly-come out

and support Solano Land Trust!

Winterhawk Winery owner, Don Johnson, knows the importance of supporting his community, and has been a consistent supporter of Solano Land Trust fundraising events.

For the past two years, the winery has opened its doors to the public every Saturday for wine tasting, live music, and food where locals can enjoy an afternoon in the heart of Solano County. Recently, Johnson has also started hosting events for public benefit organizations such as Solano Land Trust on Sundays. This is a no-cost way for organizations to do outreach, educate a different market about their mission, and earn 20 percent of wine sales that day.

Stop by [Winterhawk Winery](#) and enjoy an autumn day in Suisun Valley with us. Cheers!

## Food & Farming: Larry's Produce a Suisun



Rush Ranch  
Volunteer Day  
Saturday, October 31  
Saturday, November 5  
9 a.m. to Noon

Vallejo Swett Ranch  
Community Work Day on the  
Ridge Trail  
Saturday, October 29  
9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Please RSVP to Natalie at  
[volunteer@solanolandtrust.org](mailto:volunteer@solanolandtrust.org)  
(707) 432-0150 x 200

## Community Events

27th Annual  
[Coastal Cleanup Day](#)  
Saturday, September 17

Solano Grown  
Everything Eggs Workshop  
September 21  
9 a.m. to Noon  
[www.solanogrown.org](http://www.solanogrown.org)

Lake Solano Tours  
Saturday, September 25  
Saturday, October 8  
Sunday, October 23  
10 a.m. to Noon  
[Solano County Parks](#)

Suisun Valley  
[Fun Family Farm Days](#)  
Saturday and Sunday  
October 15 & 16  
11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

## Food & Farming

**Support**  
**Solano County farmers**

## Valley staple for over 25 years

Tracy Ellison, Conservation Project Coordinator



**Late- summer bell peppers**  
Photo by Tracy Ellison

You have to be up before the birds to catch Larry Balestra, owner of Larry's Produce. When I arrived at 7:30 a.m., he already had four hours of work behind him.

The parking lot of his farm stand at the corner of Suisun Valley and Ledgewood roads in Suisun Valley was empty, but not for long. The staff was in full swing getting ready to open when I asked Larry what was on his mind that morning. "I have crews ready to pick, orders to fill and farm work to be done," he said.

The Balestras have farmed in Suisun Valley for generations. Larry and his wife, Lisa, opened the farm stand in 1986 to provide fresh, local produce. In 25 years they have built a business that has withstood the ups and downs of Mother Nature and the economy. "We want to provide fresh produce that is affordable for the public," he says. It's a great place to buy in bulk for canning or a family BBQ. A majority of the produce is locally grown, but Larry also supplies what his customers need so that they don't have to make an extra trip to the supermarket.

Larry has two favorite seasons, spring planting and fall harvest. "I like the cooler weather, colors, and great fall produce." He grows over 35 different pumpkins and gourds for the fall season, which are great for decorating.

Larry's Produce donates produce to many community groups, including Solano Land Trust. "It just feels good to give and I like to do it," he says, before running off to get that day's chores done.

## Lynch Canyon News & Views: From blackberries to raptors

Aleta George, eVistas Editor



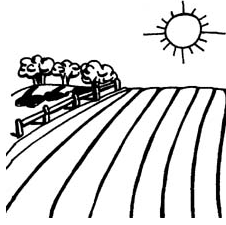
**Golden eagle on an eye-level roost.**  
Photo by  
NewmanArtography

Docent Earl Swenerton and his wife, Maylien, walked along Lynch Creek Road in late August, keeping an eye out for a rare albino squirrel. They came upon a blackberry patch in the sun, and stopped for a few. Who can resist ripe berries?

"Yip, yip, yip," is how Swenerton described the cry coming from the sky. "We saw three golden eagles climbing the thermals on the hill to the east, the late afternoon light glistening off the golden mantles of the two adults," he said. "Yip, yip, yip," cried the juvenile as it banked and displayed distinctive windows on its wings.

It's just such a sighting that raptor enthusiast Larry Broderick promises on his Lynch Canyon raptor tours in the fall.

"A pair of eagles at Lynch and another at King-Swett Ranches have had several successful nesting seasons, so I feel confident that we will see at least one or more resident golden eagles on our tours," he says of these impressive birds with seven-foot wing spans.



Community Supported  
Agriculture:

[Eatwell Farm](#)  
[Shooting Star CSA](#)  
[Soul Food Farm](#)

Farm stands:

[Castaneda Bros. Produce](#)  
[Erickson Ranch](#)  
[Larry's Produce](#)  
[Saechao Family Farm](#)  
[Sunny Slope Orchard](#)  
[The Vegetable Patch](#)

Farmers' markets:

[Benicia](#)  
[Dixon](#)  
[Fairfield](#)  
[Green Valley \(New!\)](#)  
[Vacaville](#)  
[Vallejo](#)

## Sightings

**What:** Getting depth measurements in a stock pond  
**Where:** Vallejo-Swett Ranch  
**When:** July 2011  
**Who:** Project Manager Sue Wickham took this photo of Volunteer Doug Wirtz in a pond undergoing repairs



**What:** Milky Way so vibrant it looked like a cloud  
**Where:** Rush Ranch night sky  
**When:** Late August  
**Who:** Joseph Hoberg, Rush Ranch caretaker

**What:** Family of great-tailed grackles (adult male and female)

Broderick is in his fourth year of leading birds-of-prey tours for Solano Land Trust. Solano Land Trust is not the only group who benefits from his enthusiasm and keen eye for raptors in the field. Broderick is also a go-to raptor guy for Sonoma Land Trust, and is a tour leader at the Winter Wings Festival in Klamath, Oregon.

Upcoming tours at Lynch Canyon are on Saturday, September 24, and Sunday, November 13. See the [events calendar](#) for more information.

## Save the Date: October 29-Trail building with Solano Land Trust and the Bay Area Ridge Trail Council

Sue Wickham, Project Manager



On October 29, Solano Land Trust and the Bay Area Ridge Trail Council will team up with volunteers to work on the Vallejo Swett connector trail. Join us to hack weeds, level the trail, repair fences and gates, and enjoy the views. Ken Poerner, Solano Land Trust's land steward, will lead volunteers on this community workday sponsored by the Coastal Conservancy and a "Hands-On" grant. Meet at Blue Rock Springs Park at 9 a.m. End by noon. Bring water, sturdy shoes and gloves.

Solano Land Trust has worked with Bay Area Ridge Trail Council for many years. Beginning at Lynch Canyon in 1997, we obtained Coastal Conservancy funding for a trail at Lynch Canyon to connect to the regional system around the bay. The high ridgeline trails at Lynch Canyon that are part of the BARTC system are gems and well worth the effort to get up there.

Solano Land Trust inherited a second trail in the BARTC system when we purchased the Vallejo Swett Ranch. BARTC had previously constructed a connector trail from Greater Vallejo Recreation District's Blue Rock Springs Park through the Vallejo Swett Ranch to the City of Vallejo's open space trail overlooking Columbus Parkway.

Join us to work on Vallejo Swett connector trail!

## Book for Sale

*Rush Ranch Cowboys and Conservation: Preserving Open Space, Protecting Nature, Challenging Disabilities*

by Tom and Steffni Muehleisen

and two fledglings)

**Where:** Lynch Canyon reservoir

**When:** August

**Who:** Docent Jim Walsh

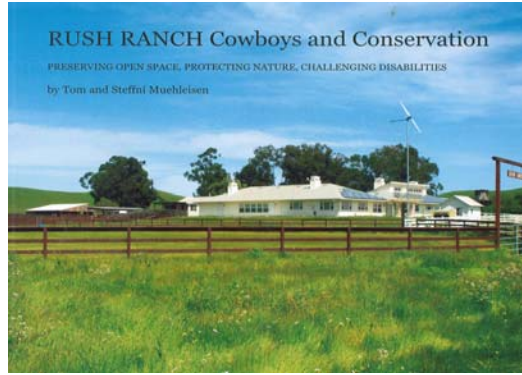
Solano Land Trust  
has been protecting  
working farms and natural areas  
in Solano County since 1986.



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All profits go to Solano Land Trust partners Access  
Adventure, Rush Ranch Educational Council, and San  
Francisco Bay NERR.

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