



BACK COUNTRY LAND TRUST

OF SAN DIEGO COUNTY

Summer 2006

Second Quarter

Season of Change

By Noelle Collins, Executive Director

We had hoped with this newsletter to be sharing good news. What that meant to me is that we would have completed the acquisition for Wright's Field and moved on to comprehensive land management. As it turns out, we couldn't afford the nearly \$5 million purchase price for the 142 acres we had under contract. The timing and price just weren't right.

We know that we are not alone in our love for the Field. Your support has been more than we could have ever hoped for. We thank you and encourage you to stay involved with us as the next chapter unfolds. See page 6 for more about Wright's Field.

With 230 acres in BCLT ownership, there are many exciting opportunities ahead for the existing Wright's Field Preserve that include you! We'll begin with surveying and marking our boundaries on the land we own, continue monitoring for rare plant and animal species, and begin some trail restoration and weed removal. We'll be looking for support from scout troops, school groups, and anyone else who is interested in devoting time to your Preserve.

Thanks to Board member Linda Richards, we had an active spring and summer connecting people to place through walks, tracking training, and stargazing. And with thanks to V.P. Tim Todaro and everyone he recruited, we held another annual cleanup in Wright's Field. The 4-H girls also did tremendous work! See page 5 for more about the fun things we've been doing out on the land.

We've also been involved in many other conservation projects, and some internal team-building. As some of our Board members take some time off, we have a new Board President leading our team. Ann Pierce has a vision to expand our education program, partner more closely with teachers and students, and work with curriculum that educates all of us about our intact cultural

and natural resources. Read more about our leadership transition on page 2. Our outgoing President, Don Hohimer was featured in the May 2006 edition of *San Diego Home and Garden* magazine.



Photo by Andy King, The King Photography Studio, Alpine

We've just accepted a donation of 82 acres of natural open space within the Peutz Valley watershed. The donor, generous beyond our expectation, is also gifting to BCLT an endowment to provide for the long-term management of this land. There's already a conservation easement in place with the County, and BCLT will work with the neighbors to see that this land is managed for its habitat, watershed, and cultural resource values.

Thanks to a sizeable grant from the San Diego Foundation's Environment Working Group, we're expanding our reach even further into San Diego's back country and focusing our acquisition work on the Campo and Potrero areas to protect critical watershed lands and wildlife corridors. Collaborating with the Conservation Biology Institute and The Nature Conservancy we will be implementing the Las Californias Binational Conservation Initiative.

Through our San Diego ROOTS Sustainable Food Project, we've established a school garden at Morse High School in the City of San Diego. The garden is part of a Small Learning Academy called *Terra Nova* and is inspiring students to make healthy choices and develop marketable job skills. Garden Teacher Julia Dashe is helping the program to grow. *Terra Nova* was mentioned in the August 2006 issue of *San Diego* magazine. See page 4 for more about *Terra Nova* and ROOTS.

Shakespeare said, "there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so." Despite our disappointment, there's good going on and we hope you'll join us in it.

ANN PIERCE ELECTED BCLT BOARD PRESIDENT



This past May, the BCLT Board of Directors elected Ann Pierce to fill the President's seat. After 12 years as a volunteer board member, the Land Trust remains close to Ann's heart and she has exceptional leadership skills to

move the land trust forward. George Barnett has been elected to fill the Treasurer position.

Ann will guide BCLT into accomplishing the goals outlined in its Vision 2013 Strategic Plan to connect people to place. "In 2003, we created a plan that involves hands-on management of our preserves, expanding our education programs, and exploring partnerships with new people, businesses, and governments," says Pierce.

These partnerships include stronger involvement with local youth. We've always had a strong link to students. Our Youth for Conservation Program has involved students from our local middle school as well as Granite Hills and Steele Canyon High Schools in environmental and public service projects. In 2002 BCLT's *Do Your Part for the Planet Day* complimented the efforts of AUSD staff members Jane Firth and JoAnn Binaci to share the benefits of recycling.

"We are an organization whose entire board shares a commitment to youth," says Ann. "Kids are our greatest natural resource."

Wright's Field presents special opportunities for students--an outdoor classroom, living laboratory, recreation area, cultural resource, and living history experience all in one relatively small package--and it's right in the center of town. We're also expanding our project portfolio and taking on more conservation land in the back country.

"We are an organization whose entire board shares a commitment to youth," says Ann. "Kids are our greatest natural resource."

Five years ago, Pierce and former board president Yolaine Stout implemented a standards-based component of the sixth grade science curriculum combining Joan MacQueen Middle School (JMMS) classroom instruction with field trips walking to the Wright's Field Preserve next door.

"We're excited to work with some incredible teachers who use Wright's Field for outdoor lessons in science, history, and art; supplementing classroom instruction with hands-on learning, expanding the opportunity for students to excel. This year ANSA, the Alpine Natural Science Academy, is moving to the JMMS campus and we are eager to partner further, introducing kids to the unique environment of the field as well as a host of possible science-related careers."

Her dedication to students, a reflection on her 13 years on the PTA, 10 years as an art docent with local schools, and in 1997 as the Chair of the district's Bond Measure that resulted in funding the construction of the new Joan MacQueen Middle School, were the strengths which moved the Alpine School Board to appoint her to a vacated seat in 2003. She was subsequently elected and currently serves as a Trustee of the AUSD, putting kids first.

Ann's a student, herself, working on her Master's Degree in School Counseling at San Diego State. Her work this year in urban settings re-emphasized just how fortunate Alpine's students are. "Our sixth grade curriculum focused largely on *sympiosis*, the cooperative, mutually beneficial relationships between species." Ann sees this principle as hugely beneficial to students as a model and reminder that relationships are critical in our lives, as well as our connection to the world in which we live. "Without question, the natural world holds incredible opportunities for learning, while allowing critical thinking skills to develop."

(Continued on page 3)

2nd Annual

Photo Contest Call for Entries

Submit your photos for the second annual Wright's Field photo contest. We'd love to see your best work. Historical photos will also be accepted.

- We need High Resolution (at least 300 dpi) photos for submission. (Anything below 300 dpi will not be considered.)
- Digital photos are preferred, if possible.
- If prints from film, 8 x 10 prints are required.
- \$5 entrance fee per photographer.
- No limit on number of entries per person.



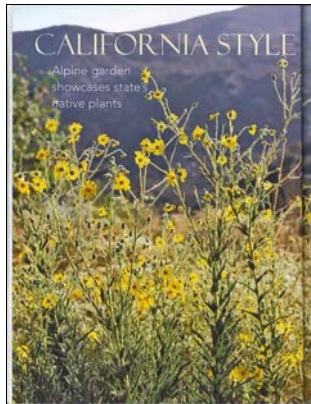
All entries become property of BCLT and will be considered for the 2007 Wright's Field Calendar.

Deadline: September 15, 2006.

Mail or Drop off in Person To: Back Country Land Trust, 2612-A Alpine Blvd., Alpine, CA 91901

(Continued from page 2)

Education has always been an area of emphasis for the BCLT Board. Don Hohimer, who recently decided to take a year off from the Board to settle in as a new Principal at Hillsdale Middle School, spent nine years volunteering as a BCLT Board member, five of them as Board President. Under Don's leadership, BCLT preserved almost 1,400 acres in San Diego's back country worth an estimated \$4,500,000.



The Hohimer's native plant garden was featured in the May 2006 issue of *San Diego Home & Garden* magazine.

Prior to Don's leadership, Yolaine Stout, founding member of the Land Trust, (pictured with her husband Dave) served as



President. Yolaine is a retired Granite Hills High School teacher and remains committed to BCLT's mission and the preservation of Wright's Field.

THANK YOU

Jim Brozo
and
Don Hohimer

(and your families)
for serving on the BCLT Board of Directors until 2006. You are true ambassadors for land conservation and we continue to benefit from your enduring wisdom and guidance. We look forward to your return.

ANNUAL CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SALE

Saturday October 28, 2006
10:00am

Joan MacQueen Middle School
2001 Tavern Road, Alpine

First come, First served

ROOTS: The Terra Nova Garden at Morse

San Diego Roots Sustainable Food Project (ROOTS) and San Diego Urban Farms, in conjunction with the San Diego Unified School District, have broken ground on a 4,000 square foot organic garden/learning center at Morse High School in southeast San Diego.

With a ban on junk foods in California schools scheduled to begin in 2007, Terra Nova's garden and emphasis on fresh, healthy food offers a positive solution to the growing epidemic of childhood obesity.

Modeled after Berkeley's Edible Schoolyard, the garden is the centerpiece for Terra Nova, a Morse High School small learning community that focuses on Environmental Science, Nutrition and Culinary Arts.

Beginning in the fall of 2006, Terra Nova academic classes will include 300 to 400 students from grades 10–12. The program will empower students to think critically and to solve real-world problems through the study of environmental preservation, sound agricultural practices, nutri-

tion, culinary production and broader business applications.

All Terra Nova classes will participate in the garden and the creation of food. By being involved in all aspects of cultivating the garden and

So that they can begin seeing the connections between what they're learning in math and science and what they might be doing as adults.

—Principal Rocio Weiss

enjoying food they have grown themselves, Terra Nova students will awaken their senses and learn the transformative values of nourishment, community, and stewardship of the land.

Initially, the cafeteria staff and students in the culinary arts program will use produce grown in the garden to prepare wholesome, delicious food for student and staff

lunches. Longer term, the project envisions expanding into an after-school and summer youth entrepreneurial garden program that will teach teenagers about creating sustainable local economies around the growing and selling of fresh, organic food.

Future plans call for an even larger garden on the campus. According to Morse High Principal Rocio Weiss, the long-range goal is to develop a one-acre site as a campus mini-farm that develops business and post-school job skills for students as well as good eating and cooking habits.

“One purpose would be to increase the relevance of what the students are learning in their core subjects,” Weiss said, “so that they can begin seeing the connections between what they're learning in math and science and what they might be doing as adults.”



Terra Nova Fundraiser Success! By Mel Lions

Our "What's Growing On" fundraiser for the Terra Nova Garden, held June 5 at Region restaurant in Hillcrest, was a wonderful success. Thanks to all who attended! After expenses, the event raised \$3,500 for the garden, now under construction at Morse High School in the Skyline Hills area of San Diego.

With the help of some of San Diego's finest chefs and the hard work of students, teachers, administrators and volunteers, the night included tastings of food prepared by Michael Stebner and Allyson Colwell of Region, Jeff Jackson of The Lodge at Torrey Pines, Jason Seibert of Cafe Cerise, and Joe Cochran of the Art Institute. They were assisted by students of Morse's culinary arts program.

The night featured a talk by the students of the school's garden club, who told the crowd about their experience installing the



garden this school year, turning a weed-filled lot into a flower- and food-growing beauty. They spoke of the epidemic of diabetes and obesity among today's youth, and how it can be countered with a proper diet, beginning with fresh produce from a garden. Their experiences inspired them to make life-changing decisions about what they eat, begin a composting program from the school's kitchen waste, and learn about the amazing work of worms.

Principal Rocio Weiss, a longtime advocate of fresh food in schools, told of her desire to see the garden expand into a larger, 1.6-acre site on campus, big enough to grow food to use in the school's cafeteria and sell at a local farmer's market. Inspired by the garden, the school is creating the Terra Nova Academy, a small learning community within the larger school that will focus on environmental science, culinary arts and nutrition.

FIELD NOTES by Linda Richards

Photos by Beverley Todaro and Linda Richards

This year was full of community activities on Wright's Field, culminating with a family stargazing event in late June before the heat hit. Here is a recap. We'll plan more events soon. Check our website www.bclt.org.

April 29, "I Love a Clean Alpine"
A couple dozen people, including a group of very helpful 4H teens, helped with this year's 'I Live a Clean Alpine', where we cleaned up large sections of both the preserve and the option land. Three pickups and a trailer were on hand to haul loads to the dumpster. According to the event's leader Tim Todaro, the big score was 70 old tires, even though that meant dislodging a couple snakes from their homes. The day was beautiful, with folks pleased with the resulting feeling of a cleaner Wright's Field. "There were lots of flowers that day since it had recently rained, so picking' trash in the spring grass was actually satisfying," says Tim.



April 2nd and May 7th Sunset Walk
Over 40 folks showed up for the two sunset walks led by Michael Wangler. By the 2nd walk in May the wildflowers were in full bloom, delayed by the late spring rains. While we didn't find the chocolate lily, other wildflowers that signal a healthy grassland were plentiful, including blue dicks, winecup clarkia and lots of low-lying, tiny popcorn flowers and yellow lotus. Michael explained how the clay soil type – from gabbro rock formed by magma below the surface – leads

to poor drainage and is responsible for the large stands of grassland. He also pointed out the differences between the more open coastal sage ecosystem and the denser chaparral, as well as the healthy stands of Englemann Oak trees that are rare. If you want someone who knows his native plants and the geology of the preserve, Michael is the person.



Tuesday, April 18 Jr. Naturalist
Lee Kirchhevel, founding member of the San Diego Tracking Team and Wild Animal Park guide, conducted a naturalist program for kids age 8 to 12. Focusing on how to use our senses to observe more in the outdoors, Lee started out with lessons on how to use our peripheral vision and how to move quietly, emphasized by a game involving blindfolded volunteers acting as deer. Asked four months after the event what she took away, 11-year old Carolina Gould rattled off a long list, including learning about all the animal tracks in the mud -- mice, rabbits, and lots of dog tracks but not the mountain lion tracks everyone wanted to see. "I learned that the fibers from the yucca are the strongest fibers, along with human hair. We saw some ants that aren't local but others that were and are the main food for horned lizards, so it's important not to kill them. And I learned how to see how a falcon sees", which she added was 180 degrees. The adults enjoyed it as much as the children, and we've been asked to offer a similar class for adults next year.

June 10 Birds & Butterflies
It was a small group that joined ecologist

and butterfly expert Michael Klein to look for butterflies, including the rare Hermes Copper butterfly that only lays its eggs on the spiny red-berry plant. Those who stayed till the end were rewarded. During the first hour the group sighted a half-dozen butterflies, including Bernardino blues, checkered white, behr's metalmark and a fat and happy spinx moth caterpillar -- but no Hermes. Michael wasn't feeling too hopeful as searches the prior few weeks in a half dozen locations throughout San Diego County had resulted in zero sightings. The past forest fires had been detrimental to the Hermes, especially in nearby Crestridge Ecological Reserve, making the Wright's Field population critical. However, heading back Michael saw a small bright yellow butterfly flitter by. It was a male hermes that Klein estimated to be two days old or less, that was alighting on various bushes to establish his territory before the females hatched in a couple days. Dozens more were sighted during the next couple weeks, making Wright's Field's populations the second largest this year, next to the Cleveland National Forest. Michael calls the Hermes a diva butterfly that is on the consideration list for endangered species. "The Hermes only lives in San Diego County and some small areas in Northern Baja, only flies in late May and June and will only eat a host plant - the spiny red-berry - that has to be more than 15 years old. On top of all of this, they will not fly with temperatures below 70 degrees and they stop flying when it gets over 95 degrees. What a diva!," he says. (More...)



Plan B: BCLT Doesn't Buy 142-acres of Wright's Field

The BCLT Board of Directors and Staff have invested the past 2 ½ years and more than \$150,000 in making the 142-acre purchase of Wright's Field a reality. BCLT's goal throughout the process was to agree on a price that is fair to both the seller and the land trust.

"We've worked tirelessly to negotiate with the seller, line up funding sources, and complete our due diligence to secure this central piece of the Wright's Field Preserve," stated BCLT Board President Ann Pierce.

There was much disagreement among reputable appraisers in good standing with the Appraisal Institute about how the land was to be valued. The numbers were wide-ranging and the appraisers analyzed this land in many different ways, such that a reading of the appraisals had the appearance that they were analyzing different parcels of land. The values ranged from \$2.2 million to \$6.2 million, and a few numbers in between.

BCLT's initial offer in May 2005 was for the value determined in its ap-

praisal of \$2.2 million or \$16,000 per acre. The offer was rejected by the Seller who elected to have his own appraisal conducted. The two appraisals were far apart and the process for reconciling this discrepancy was provided for in the Option Agreement.

The Appraisal Arbitration process required the hiring of a third, neutral appraiser to derive a value for the property and convince at least one of the first two appraisers to agree. After a 3-hour arbitration, two of the three appraisers agreed on \$4.96 million as the value of the property, or \$35,000 per acre. BCLT did not have that much money in hand so BCLT approached the seller again, with a revised offer of almost \$4.0 million, cash in hand with a quick closing, which was again rejected by the Seller. Per the contract, the arbitrated price is the final price for purposes of the negotiation, but that amount was out of BCLT's reach.

"We were not in a position to pay more than twice our original offer for land that has been identified as a

priority conservation area within the County's Multiple Species Conservation Program Preserve design," said Noelle Collins, Executive Director of BCLT. "None of our funders could be convinced that the arbitrated price was justified." The seller is now in a position to sell the property to whomever he chooses.

BCLT will be fencing the property it currently owns to have clear boundaries and encourage hiking, walking, mountain biking, horseback riding and educational activities on its property, and will do everything it needs to do to protect the existing preserve lands. BCLT will also be busy doing hands-on preserve management and continuing its education programs with the local schools, including partnering with ANSA, Alpine's science institute that is moving to Joan MacQueen Middle School.

BCLT has several other conservation projects in progress in Alpine, Descanso, Jamul, Potrero, and Campo and will also be focusing its efforts on those.



Trevor Krantz, Peter Krantz, Heather McDowell

Field Notes: Cleaning Up Wright's Field



Ian Todaro, Noelle Collins, Tori Pool, Linda Richards, Ryan Pool, Tim Todaro, and Tom McDowell

(Continued from page 5)

June 30, Family Stargazing Night Brian Jennings, San Diego Astronomy Association member and Alpine resident, was a gracious leader, setting up five telescopes of his own on the basketball courts at Joan McQueen Middle School next to Wright's Field. The family event was well-attended. We saw the moon's craters up-close, along with Jupiter and its moons, and Saturn's bright ring. Other telescopes viewed twin stars, and a globular cluster, which is a spherical collection of stars that are tightly bound by grav-

ity. Globular clusters are pretty common, with about 150 in the Milky Way alone. One of the attendees was Stephanie Wells and her family, who all came away inspired by the event. "We never had such an opportunity, as a family, to see Jupiter's five moons before, or the craters of our own moon, so clearly and through such high-powered telescopes," she said. "It was a wonderful and inspiring event, and it stimulated a lot of new interest among our kids for gazing upon the stars."



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Please accept my tax-deductible contribution in the following amount (please circle one):

\$ 500 \$5,000 \$ 250 \$2,500 \$ 100 \$1,000 \$50

Other _____

Please send me the following:

—COTTON T-SHIRT **\$15** (White)
Medium Large Extra Large

—CHOCOLATE LILIES POSTER **\$10**

—CNPS Native Grasses Posters **\$24**
(set of 4 laminated posters)

—Plein Aire NOTECARDS (Set of 6) **\$10**

—SPORTS WATER BOTTLE **2 for \$5**

—COFFEE MUG **\$5**

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED

\$ _____

PRESERVE SAN DIEGO'S BACK COUNTRY

How You Can Support the Back Country Land Trust's Mission

1. *Share this newsletter* with a neighbor or friend.
2. Make a Contribution that is significant to you.
3. Participate in the *2006 Photo Contest*.
4. Contribute to BCLT's **Endowment Fund!**
5. Support our Annual California Native Plant Sale the Last Saturday in October.
6. Make a gift by Credit Card at www.bclt.org.
7. Name the '*Back Country Land Trust of San Diego County*' as a beneficiary in your estate plan.
8. Wear a **BCLT shirt** or use **BCLT water bottles, coffee mugs, and notecards**.
9. Donate Appreciated Stock.
10. Become part of the **Wright's Field Preserve Patrol**.



BACK COUNTRY LAND TRUST
2612-A Alpine Blvd
Alpine, CA 91901
MAIL: P.O. Box 1148, Alpine, 91903
(619) 722-6281 Fax (619) 722-6420

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Celebrating 15 Years of Preserving San Diego's Back Country

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Land trusts are effective because they offer beauty rather than fight ugliness, rely on voluntary cooperation rather than compulsion, and allow citizens to take direct action to protect the homeplace—an ancient and powerful motive.

They are fueled by love not anger, and their projects are place-based, tangible and permanent.

You can imagine your grandchildren appreciating your work.

Michael L. Fischer
California Coastal Conservancy