



JOHN MUIR LAND TRUST HORIZONS

Protecting the places that make the East Bay special

SPRING 2017



Fernandez Ranch

ALL THAT RAIN!

If you enjoy the striking seasonal contrasts of our East Bay landscapes, this is a great time to lace up your hiking boots. The unprecedented winter rains have mixed a palette of greens that will challenge even the most prolific local artist. Wildlife enthusiasts are thrilled. Sparkling reservoirs accent rolling hills studded with stately oaks. While we celebrate these upsides, a few downsides need attention as well.



HEALTHY HABITAT

“The record-setting winter precipitation has set the stage for verdant hillsides, and breathes new life into trees and shrubs affected by drought,” says Jake Schweitzer, Senior Ecologist at Vollmar Natural Lands Consulting. “An abundant supply of food, water and cover supports a diverse web of life throughout the Bay Area. Wildlife reproduction rates are directly tied to plant growth.”

“The rainfall is good news for aquatic habitats and the wildlife they support,” continues Schweitzer. “For example, the extended ponding season within vernal pools and stock ponds is beneficial for California red-legged frogs and California tiger salamanders — two locally-occurring amphibians that are severely threatened by development and invasive species.” Frogs and salamanders get more time in water, allowing them to fully metamorphose and then migrate to upland shelter before the dry season. “Many threatened and endangered fairy shrimp, a food source for numerous other aquatic species and birds, have also benefited by being able to complete their life cycles.”



Visit a John Muir Land Trust property to take all this in. Look for an owl, coyote, red-tailed hawk, deer, fox, turkey or the Alameda whipsnake as you wander down trails at

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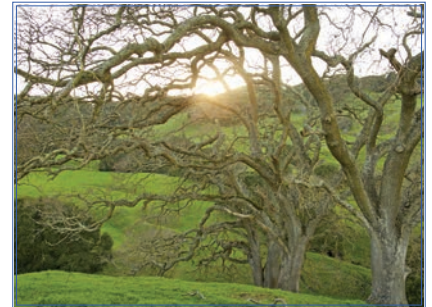
ALL THAT RAIN! *Continued from page 1*

Fernandez Ranch. Scan 360 degrees of rich Contra Costa splendor from the top of Acalanes Ridge. The ridge at Dutra Ranch or the top of Mt. Wanda will reward you with stunning panoramic views of the snow-topped Sierra Nevada to the east and Mt. Tamalpais to the west. When driving along Highway 4 near Hercules look for the property we've named Contra Costa Goldfields after the endangered flowers that concentrate their growth here. Spring is the best time to enjoy these bright yellow daisy-like flowers.



CLEAN WATER

Visitors to Mt. Wanda will enjoy listening to streams meandering down the hillsides accented by the drumming of woodpeckers hidden in trees. The importance of trickling creeks comes to mind on the many East Bay Municipal Utility District trails adjacent to Carr Ranch in Lamorinda. These creeks flow into the Upper San Leandro Reservoir — a source of water for tens of thousands of East Bay families. “We enjoy the benefits of water being continuously filtered through the soil at Carr Ranch to sustain healthy habitat and excellent water quality. The Carr family took great care of the land to preserve the soil, the plants and wildlife habitat,” explains Jenesse Miller of EBMUD, our partner in protecting this vital resource.



“We rely on volunteers to help with trail maintenance and smaller projects to bring everything back to healthy, normal conditions. But there are also major expenses.”
— Glen Lewis

WATCH YOUR STEP

There are downsides to all the rain, and that means more than just the direction you might take by losing your footing on a slippery trail (please be careful out there). In January, the views at JMLT properties were much different: flooded streams, trails covered by landslides from saturated hillsides, fallen trees, ruts in roads and disrupted drainage. This damage is expensive to repair.

REPAIR AND RESTORATION

“It is common to see trees falling during winter months when the wind blows and the ground is so saturated. With this much rain, the number of fallen and uprooted trees is unusually high,” reports Glen Lewis, ranger for JMLT. Heavy rains also wash away topsoil, becoming problematic when it is time to replant. “We rely on volunteers to help with trail maintenance and smaller projects to bring everything back to healthy, normal conditions. But there are also major expenses. Repairing property damage such as ruts in roads, drainage, landslides and replanting trees requires hiring contractors and renting heavy equipment,” he adds.

YOU CAN HELP

Our five-year drought is hopefully behind us, and we are enjoying the delightful sights and sounds of spring. Yet, we have work to do to bring our properties back to prime condition. We rely on your generous financial support to meet these needs. Thanks to everyone who donated last year, and please consider contributing to ongoing stewardship by making a spring gift. Most important of all, get outside and enjoy!



Fernandez Ranch. Collapsed culvert underneath the road blocks the channel with sediment.



Fernandez Ranch. Work is needed to bring our properties back to prime condition.



Sky Ranch. Ranch roads built 100 years ago lacked proper slope to provide for runoff.



Dutra Ranch. Oversaturated soil slides downhill and obstructs trails.