

NEWS & VIEWS

FALL 2016

Tri-Valley
Conservancy

PRESERVE LAND.
CONNECT COMMUNITIES.
ENRICH LIFE.



The reappearance of Tule elk in the Tri-Valley is an enormous benchmark for conservation efforts. Supporters like you have brought them back from the brink of extinction.

Tule Elk Are Making a Comeback Thanks to Your Help

by Laura Mercier, Executive Director

TULE ELK: RANGER PATTI COLE; LARPD; TOP OF PAGE: PHOTO © KERRY JOY MCGEEHEE

Go ahead. Call it a comeback. You and your fellow open space supporters have earned it. There were once six species of elk roaming our continent. Today, only four species remain including our local native Tule elk, which are so few in number they are under California Department of Fish and Wildlife protection. For more than a century, Tule elk have been a Focal Species for conservation not only in the state but for the whole continent. Tule elk range covers such a large part of California's landscape that when we protect habitat for them we are also helping many other species.

A Tule elk comeback is an indicator that your conservation efforts are succeeding! The Bay Area is a biodiversity hotspot, which means there are more threatened plant and animal species that need your help right here than just about anywhere else in the country. Since many other plants and animals benefit from the same resources that endangered species need, protecting land for Tule elk benefits the entire ecoregion. When a species that was on the brink of extinction begins to reappear, it's a fantastic sign that we're on the right track.

Weighing in between 375 to 700 pounds on average, Tule elk are the smallest elk in North America. The young calves can even be mistaken for deer fawns with their light brown spotted coat. Once the males become yearlings, or "spikes", they can be more easily recognized by their single thin antler. As adults, the male bulls drop their antlers each year and grow new sets, each more impressive in size and number of tines than the last.

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ON THE BRINK OF BEING EXTINCT

These elk that used to inhabit most of California were nearly extinct following the Gold Rush. By 1870, the State's Tule elk population had dropped from 500,000 to less than 10 according to the National Park Service. The severe decline of the elk was largely a consequence of simultaneous hits from heavy hunting and habitat loss as land was converted to agriculture and ranching. Four years passed without a single Tule elk sighting. When landowner Henry Miller's ranch workers spotted a few elk while draining a marsh to plant fields, he decided to protect them. Fortunately these last few surviving elk included a mating pair, and by 1905 their numbers had risen to 140. Over time, the growing herds were reintroduced to protected areas across the state including the Mount Hamilton area just south of the Tri-Valley.

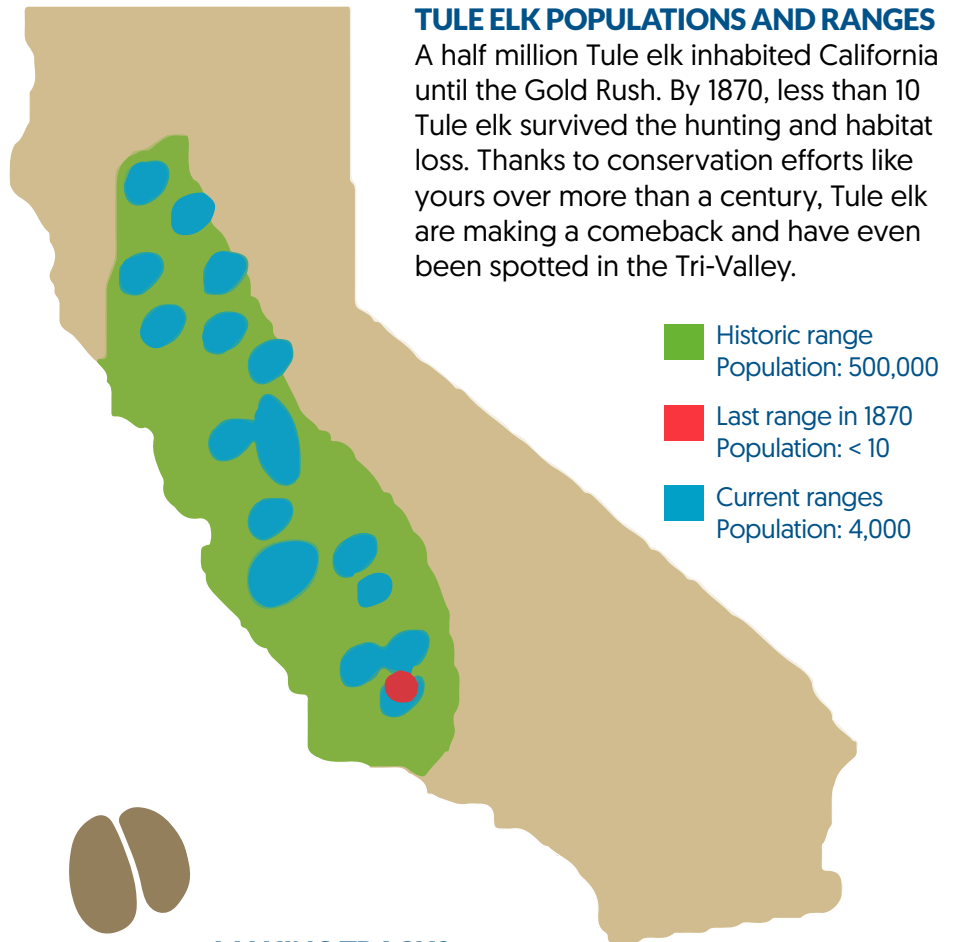
LINKING LAND

After the land linking Sycamore Grove Park, Camp Arroyo and Del Valle Regional Preserve was preserved with your help in 2009, Tule elk began to cautiously appear in Sycamore Grove Park. With the addition of those upper acres to Sycamore Grove Regional Park, thousands of acres of undeveloped land protected for watersheds and parks stretch all the way to Sunol Regional Wilderness, and allow us to see Tule elk in Livermore. As grazers and browsers, they will make their way across large open areas eating native grasses and plants. Stragglers from a new herd that branched off from Mount Hamilton and established themselves in Sunol are sometimes seen early in the morning at Sycamore Grove Park. They have even left their tracks around Cattail Pond, where many of you have volunteered to help restore the pond area for wildlife such as these magnificent creatures.



MAKING TRACKS

Tule elk roam across fairly large areas and have left tracks along Cattail Pond in Livermore's Sycamore Grove Park. You can look for evidence of their visits by checking for tracks like these.



Conservation efforts like yours are indeed paying off. With your continued support, we and our partners can help other threatened wildlife return to the Tri-Valley, like protecting habitat for burrowing owls in North Livermore. Sycamore Grove Park's Chief Ranger, Pat Sotelho, hopes to see yellow-billed magpies return to their nests in the sycamore trees. The magpies declined and then disappeared over the last fifteen years. But thanks to supporters like you and great organizations like the Livermore Area Park and Recreation District, these stories can have a happy ending, just like the Tule elk.



TULE ELK: MATT GALLAGHER, LARPD

YOU CAN MAKE A DONATION TO HELP PRESERVE MORE LAND FOR THREATENED WILDLIFE, LIKE THE BURROWING OWL, OR VOLUNTEER TO RESTORE WILDLIFE HABITAT LIKE CATTAIL POND AT TRIVALLEYCONSERVANCY.ORG

*Tri-Valley
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ALL THAT JAZZ
A GALA FUNDRAISER FOR TRI-VALLEY CONSERVANCY

Friday, November 4th

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Casa Real at Ruby Hill Winery
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TriValleyConservancy.org

(925) 449-8706

Freeze Frame Photography Competition Winners

CAPTURING BEAUTY FOREVER, SAVING LAND FOREVER

by Meghan Hornbacker, Summer Intern



Livermore Farm Land by Janice Wei



Harvest, Hill and Hay Fields by Jake Siders

Can you imagine what the Tri-Valley looked like before we started building our roads, stores and homes? The open spaces that you help protect preserve the valley's beauty that people have enjoyed for generations. These lands give us places to play, explore, unwind, discover, and grow food.

Freeze Frame plays an important role in helping us preserve local land by showcasing its many uses as well as its picturesque landscape. When our community members can see the many ways we utilize our land, it builds an appreciation and sense of value for open spaces. It also inspires

future generations to get outside, explore, and discover real natural beauty. Local photographers, youth and adult, went to work to find the perfect shot that captures the allure of the Tri-Valley and shows why many of us are proud to call it home.

Congratulations to our top winners and all who entered. You play a pivotal role in showing our community the importance of preserving our wide open spaces.

Winning photographs will be featured in our 2017 Calendar, a travelling exhibit, and other communications throughout the year.

WINNING PHOTOGRAPHERS

ADULT

1st Place:
"Livermore Farm Land"
by Janice Wei

2nd Place:
"After The Rains"
by Brad Rank

3rd Place and People's Choice
"Sunset Over the Vineyards"
by Barry Zupan

YOUTH

1st Place and People's Choice:
"Harvest, Hill, and Hay Fields"
by Jake Siders

2nd Place:
"Cherry Blossom"
by Kaitlyn Pang

3rd Place
"Orange Poppies"
by Kaitlyn Pang

YOU CAN VIEW ALL OF THE TOP FREEZE FRAME PHOTOS AT TRIVALLEYCONSERVANCY.ORG.

TO CONNECT MORE YOUTH WITH THE OUTDOORS, DONATE TO DISCOVERY YOUTH IN NATURE PROGRAM!

HUNDREDS OF BOYS AND GIRLS WENT ON THEIR FIRST HIKE!

As our schools lose funding for field trips and environmental education, we're partnering with local schools to make their lessons come to life with outdoor adventure. It's making a BIG difference. But we can't do it without you.

50%
OF STUDENTS HAD
THEIR FIRST HIKE

100%
OF STUDENTS
WANTED TO
PROTECT
OPEN SPACE

Tri-Valley
Conservancy
Discovery
Youth in Nature Program

Please donate this Giving Tuesday, November 29th, to help students have these critical educational experiences.
(925) 449-8706 • TriValleyConservancy.org

Preserving Paradise, Now and for Generations to Come

AN INTERVIEW WITH BOARD MEMBER LORI SOUZA

by Laura Ness, Writer and Supporter



Board Member Lori Souza is focusing her retirement on her great loves; her community, its amazing open spaces like Ravenswood Historic Site, and her family including her dog Spencer. She envisions protecting North Livermore's rolling hills and unique habitats with techniques that were successful in South Livermore.

After nearly four decades, Board Member Lori Souza is swapping working in her community for volunteering in her community. She retired in August from the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory as the Associate Deputy Director for Operations. Her 39-year career there began as a computer systems operator, but she has been in operations for the last 25 years. Souza notes that the Lab is a great employer, encouraging people to move around and explore new career options. Now, she plans to focus on enjoying retirement and supporting her community with the Tri-Valley Conservancy as a Board Member, LANDGuild and Heritage Society supporter.

Raised in Fremont, Souza moved to Livermore in 1980, at one point owning a five-acre property on the north side of town. Lori and her husband, Bryan Balazs, who is a chemist by training and now works as a program manager at the Lab, currently live across from the Ravenswood historic site, surrounded by vineyards and olive orchards. They walk daily with their dog along the beautiful trails, often going to Holdener Park, off Hansen, and occasionally taking Wetmore out to Sycamore Grove.

Land conservation and open space preservation are really important to Lori, having witnessed how the once beautiful apricot orchards and ranchlands of Fremont became housing developments and malls. She praises the careful mindset towards growth that the civic leadership of Livermore exhibited during the rapid expansion of other East Bay communities in response to the rise of Silicon Valley.

Initially, Souza became aware of Tri-Valley Conservancy through reading their newsletters. She was impressed by the people serving on the board and by their high caliber of leadership. At one point, she attended one of their events and realized she was surrounded by many

like-minded people who shared her values and whose company she really enjoyed.

Inspired by Tri-Valley Conservancy's mission and vision, she wanted to become involved, saying, "I care deeply about conservation and sustainment of our 'paradise.'"

Not long after, she agreed to join the non-profit organization's Board. "I was compelled to serve because I thought I could help, and I knew several board members so I have confidence in their leadership. The power of a strong team to make a positive impact is remarkable."

She praises the work that the Tri-Valley Conservancy has done and wants to expand it. "My goals are to expand into the preservation of the north side of the Livermore Valley. I believe we need to replicate all of the fine work that has been accomplished with the South Livermore Valley Plan and apply it to the north side."

Although Souza says it's a long way from becoming a "project" per se, she'd like to see the alkali flats preserved, accessible perhaps by a series of boardwalks that would enable people to appreciate the area without impacting it.

Souza is also a member of both Tri-Valley Conservancy's LANDGuild and Heritage Society, saying, "My involvement with both are the result of my personal commitment to Tri-Valley Conservancy. I believe in the mission and vision, and I trust the organization to use the resources wisely. I think before individuals commit their personal finances to a 'cause,' they will need both a compelling reason and to trust that the money will be used wisely."

She hopes other landowners will work with the Tri-Valley Conservancy, observing, "I think they need to know it's a partnership, and it's an active partnership. We don't just get papers signed and walk away: this is a partnership in perpetuity. That means active ongoing exchange of ideas and a common purpose."

Souza would be pleased to see more varied uses of land, and not necessarily just agriculture, although she fantasizes about the return to roses and hops. "I understand that in our rich history, both were grown here and were commercially viable. I'm not sure that could be true today, but wouldn't it be beautiful to have acres of roses?"

You can help protect more land by making a donation or joining the Heritage Society to leave a legacy for future generations as Lori has.



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Mark Your Calendar

NOVEMBER 4, 2016

Jeans & Jewels & All That Jazz—
6pm–11pm at Casa Real

NOVEMBER 25, 2016

Black Friday Hike—10am–12noon
at Sycamore Grove Park

NOVEMBER 29, 2016

Donate on Giving Tuesday to
connect youth with the outdoors
at TriValleyConservancy.org!

DECEMBER 15, 2016

Volunteer Appreciation—
Details will be forthcoming!

JANUARY 25, 2017

Board Installation Dinner

APRIL 13, 2017

Livermore Valley Uncorked Wine
Celebration—Palm Event Center

JULY 1—31, 2017

Freeze Frame 2017 competition—
photo entries accepted. See our
website for details

NOVEMBER 3, 2017

Jeans & Jewels—6pm–11pm
at Casa Real

DECEMBER 13, 2017

Volunteer Appreciation—
Stay tuned!!

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Want more details about any of these events? Call 925.449.8706, email info@TriValleyConservancy.org, or visit us online at TriValleyConservancy.org.

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