

GOOD DIRT

The Newsletter of the Anderson Valley Land Trust, Incorporated
Fall 2009

Hochberg Family Homestead Newly Protected By Kathy Bailey

One of the simple pleasures of living in one place for a long time is watching the changes nature goes through over the course of a couple of decades. This can be particularly heartening when the land you are watching had not been well treated by a previous owner, but in front of your eyes under your tenure it begins to recover. Such is the backdrop of AVLT's newest conservation easement, donated by Charlie and Maureen Hochberg. Located on the high ridge on the north side of the Holmes Ranch near Navarro, the land had just been heavily logged when the Hochbergs purchased the twenty-acre parcel in 1988. Over the years they established a homestead, garden, and pond, and raised their daughter Deirdre there. Now semi-retired as a contractor, Charlie consults on construction part-time, while building up his photography business. Maureen continues to regularly commute to Ukiah where the sick and injured at the hospital are lucky to benefit from her well-honed nursing skills and nurturing warmth. Daughter Deirdre is now married and living in Oregon.



All the while the Hochbergs have owned property, the forest has been recovering. Birds and other wildlife are at home there, finding niches for foraging and breeding in the oaks and madrones, and particularly in the dead standing

Douglas fir snags, where pileated woodpeckers (see article on page 5), hawks, vultures, ravens, and the occasional golden eagle perch for a lookout. Newcomers to country living often fail to appreciate the vital importance of standing dead trees and the dead limbs on live trees. But after a few years of watching everything from hummingbirds to hawks perching on branches ranging from matchstick sized to huge, landowners like the Hochbergs find that the dead wood that naturally develops can be among their favorite landscape features. (See photo on page 3.) *(continued on page 3)*

In The AVL T Office...

By Barbara Goodell

Enthusiasm and competence immediately come to mind describing Shelly Englert, AVL T's 8-hour-a-week Administrative Assistant. Her primary jobs re to help to compile documents in order to create and maintain conservation easements and sending board members materials for our monthly board meetings.

Shelly and her partner, Jay Newcomer, came to AV ten years ago to house-sit for Jay's parents. They were fresh out of college with Environmental Science degrees and both had a strong desire to make a difference by lessening their carbon footprint on the planet. They wanted to live close to the land and produce the majority of their food. Shelly and Jay met like-minded friends in AV, settled in Yorkville Highlands, and now have two home-schooled children, Hannah (9) and Ethan (almost 5). They are very busy actualizing their principles with a very productive garden, fruit trees, and animals.



Photo by Erica Kesenheimer

Early in her career in Colorado, Shelly worked for a cutting-edge GIS firm using 7 1/2 -minute USGS quads and scanning them to digitize and create coordinates, thus introducing three-dimensional digital maps. Soon *National Geographic* began to employ this technique and now it is common. Later she worked for another company that used the same mapping system. Her job was to create hiking trails, spot elevations, and insert symbols for camping, fishing, biking, and other recreation.

AVLT has recently received a company grant from ARCVIEW for GIS software and a PG&E grant to help in purchasing a computer that can run the program. Shelly will learn how to create maps of the Navarro River watershed with layers showing geology, flora/fauna, flood zones, *etc.* so that the board may do more strategic planning to conserve resources where it counts the most. She will be taking some of the pressure off board member Patrick Miller's workload in creating the maps we need for each easement in delineating conservation and development zones. She will keep the AV easement map (and descriptive matrix) by Brent Levin up to date on our website and in our office, making it easier for the community to visually see what we are doing. She notes that everyone knows the Valley from the roads they travel, but looking from the aerial perspective reveals a different story.

Shelly explains, "The most challenging aspect of my job is prioritizing what needs to be done: when to complete thank you letters; answer phone inquiries, get the mail, update the website, lay out the newsletter, and complete responsibilities for board activities (easement monitoring reports, meeting materials, ordering preliminary reports, *etc.*)." We are very fortunate that she has superior organizational skills given the high volume of activity in our office and the few hours she works. Office hours are from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Mondays and Thursdays.

Shelly thinks it is exciting to help people with land conservation. "A small valley like AV can be protected," she says. "We need to protect this little gem of a place".

Hochberg – *continued from page 1*

Another wildlife-friendly feature of the Hochberg property is a small, unfenced pond on the woods, which provides a much-needed source of water, even in the summer. The impressive prints of a bear can sometimes be found in the mud along the water's edge, and a host of smaller prints are always on view.

Having watched the property become more lovely year-by-year, Charlie and Maureen realized they wanted to protect their land so it would continue to recover into the future. They turned to AVLT and found that donating a conservation easement would provide the sort of permanent protection they were hoping for.



Photo by Charlie Hochberg

The easement assures that the property will be managed as a low impact homestead into the future, even if the Hochbergs no longer own it. For instance, even if the County allows subdivision in the future, this parcel will remain in one piece.

A number of easement provisions assure that this forest will continue on a trajectory of recovery. One important provision of planning for the future of the forest is the allowance of limited timber harvest to thin out the overly crowded conditions that often develop after heavy logging but will keep the biggest trees intact. The proceeds of such a harvest could help finance needed forest restoration activities. However, if the owner decides the forest is recovering well enough on its own, no intervention is required.

Thanks to last year's lightning-sparked fire siege, we have all become more conscious of the need to take active measures to reduce fire danger. The Hochberg's new easement provides wide latitude for brush and understory thinning to avoid the build-up of the sort of fire ladder that can cause a firestorm of the sort that destroys forests and homesteads.

In the 1880s, when members of the Guntly family first owned the thousand-plus acres that later became the Holmes Ranch, they may well have thought their family would be around to manage the land as they saw fit into the indefinite future. However, by the time the ranch was sold in the early 1970s and became 64 mostly twenty-acre parcels, people realized that multi-generational land tenure was becoming rare. Yet owners still want to know their land will be well managed into the future. A conservation easement can be a practical answer. The landowner can specify a set of restricted activities that the land trust will enforce even after the property changes hands.

The Hochbergs' easement is AVLT's first on the Holmes Ranch and provides permanent protection for the conservation values of their property into the future. The effect if their foresight may be amplified as others in the area take the same step.

Thank You, Thank You!

In late August, AVLT held its annual thank you event---this year at Patrick and Jane Miller's home---for our donors, volunteers, easement holders, and advisory committee. AVLT board members provided food, beverages, and live classical piano solos. Participants enjoyed the enthusiastic and lively conversations and the acknowledgement of their role in the 2,396 acres AVLT is helping to protect.

It was during this event that our anonymous challenge grant was met. Alan Porter, in his welcoming address, emphasized that the AVLT simply could not do its work conserving the natural resources of Anderson Valley without the financial support of AVLT's donors and the dedication of its volunteers.

Many people walked outside to look at the panoramic view of Philo with the Boonville and Navarro hills in the periphery. Each person was poignantly reminded of the importance of the preservation of this beauty in our rural communities.



Photos by Lee Serrie

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By Barbara Goodell

AVLT has been publishing at least two *Good Dirt* newsletters a year since its founding in 1992. I was looking at the full collection recently in the office and was taken with the AV history they reveal as well the useful information they contain. My immediate resolution was to create an index of the articles for the Newsletter and Event section of our website (www.andersonvalleylandtrust.org). Currently, recent issues are archived on the website, but in the future all back issues and the index will appear. You can already access all thirty-five editions in hard copy at the office.

All 24 of our conservation easements have been featured, as the Hochberg easement is in this issue. Other titles that caught my eye were "Watershed Health: What Is It? Why Does It Matter?" "Field Work Illuminates Rich Habitat of the Navarro River Estuary," "What Is The Future of Anderson Valley?" "Speaking With Ted Bennett of Navarro Vineyards," and "Sudden Oak Death." A wide variety of AVLT-sponsored public service events have been announced---river restoration techniques, map and compass use, wildflower walks, Navarro River trail hikes, trail and road building workshops, easement celebrations, and the mechanics of conservation easements. Please send your email address to Shelly at avlt@mcn.org if you would like to receive email notice of future events.

Special Holiday Office Hours

We hope you will visit the AVLT office (to the right of Mosswood and in Tom Town) for some hot cider and cookies during the AV Chamber's extended shopping hours on Thursday December 17th. We'll be open for usual Thursday hours from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and then reopen from 5-7:30 p.m. to welcome you and to talk about the conservation of our beautiful valley.

The Pileated Woodpecker (*Dryocopus pileatus*)

By Bon Goodell

Beginning my day, intense mid-morning Indian summer sun warms the workplace. Tiny blue belly lizards bask. A few scrub jays fuss in the live oaks. Then from a half mile away across the canyon a wild laughing call erupts. A pause, then the call punctuates the still morning air again, this time in flight coming towards the abundant grape arbor nearby. I watch and listen as the duck-sized creature loudly approaches in a series of goofy swoops. It lands on the oak, scattering the jays, its triangular broad-shouldered body parallel with the upright branch it has clutched, its fire colored Mohawk standing on end and its eyes ablaze from the journey or perhaps the anticipation of a meal. It is, of course, North America's largest woodpecker, the pileated, and it has come to eat and stockpile grapes for the upcoming winter. It vocalizes again, a startling sound somewhere between a flicker and a howler monkey, then flies to the vines and begins to eat Pinot Noir grapes. Somewhere else in the distance a second one responds, most likely its mate.

Pileated woodpeckers are a keystone species acting as primary cavity excavators, their powerful large bills capable of burrowing into hard wood and snags. These holes later become habitat to other species including smaller woodpeckers and owls. Locally, pileateds have been observed carving a nest into a live old-growth redwood as well as rotted tan oak snags. Typically, these nest holes are round to triangular while food caches and forage holes are rectangular in shape. Sometimes a pair will spend months knocking out enough wood to create these nesting cavities. Often they will return to the same nest area year after year, although not necessarily using the same nest. Besides excavating into trees, the loud, series knock resonating through the forest is also to mark territory or attract mates. To brace themselves while hammering into a tree, these woodpeckers have unusually strong tail feathers that dig into the tree and allow them to work in an upright position. Feeding in this manner can be intense enough to attract other birds to pick up leftovers.

Along with the thought-to-be-extinct Ivory Billed Woodpecker, the pileated is admired by the human community not only for its size and bright splendor, but also as a totem animal of Native American Culture. Pileateds' bright red scalps are also harvested to adorn baskets and clothing, and to make headdresses. Some Northern Californian tribes still utilize these feathers for ceremonial and artistic purposes. Not surprisingly, the cartoon character Woody Woodpecker was modeled after the pileated woodpecker.

Most likely, if you have this magnificent bird on or around your property you would already know it. If there is mature forestland to live in and berries, nuts, grubs, beetles, and ants to eat, but no pileated has graced your land yet, there is good chance a pileated woodpecker will settle in the future as their population as a whole is stable and they have few direct threats besides logging and development. Once established in a territory, they tend to remain there permanently. You will probably hear this bird before seeing it, so keep an ear open for its loud, rapid knocking and distinctive, multiple-note, ringing call, and an eye out for that conspicuous red crest.



Photograph by Bates Littlehales

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

INSIDE DIRT



Hochberg Family Homestead Newly Protected. Charlie and Maureen have created a conservation easement to protect the forest and wildlife on their 20 acres.
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In The Office: Featuring Shelly Englert. Read about Shelly's background and her work in our office.
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Thank You, Thank You! An event where big thanks was given to our donors, easement holders, and volunteers.
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35 – 17 – 24 Thirty-five issues of *Good Dirt*, seventeen years since AVLT was founded, and twenty-four easements completed in Anderson Valley.
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Special Holiday Office Hours AVLT will provide hot cider and cookies for visitors in the office during the extended shopping hours on December 17th, sponsored by the AV Chamber of Commerce.
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Pileated Woodpecker: An AV Wildlife Portrait. The bio of the pileated woodpecker, an active and vocal neighbor, especially in the fall.
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