

## Watershed Futures – A Shared Connection

Kevin Munroe, Executive Director

A rust-colored bobcat hunting a hillside meadow east of Santa Rosa in Hood Mountain Park, Sierran treefrogs in Cotati so loud I can't hear my cell phone ring, and two Peregrine falcons diving on waterfowl over a wetland in Sebastopol – I've been privileged to witness all these sights since our last Meanderings, and am so impressed that each was within the Laguna's 254-square mile watershed. As I've watched winter wetland pools expand and flood into nearby fields at our Stone Farm office I'm reminded that water is flowing here from as far away as south Cotati, the west slopes of Hood Mountain and the streets of Santa Rosa.

Bobcats, frogs, peregrines and Santa Rosa streets are all part of the Laguna ecosystem and its many interconnected lives. Those connections bring to mind our county's shared challenges. Exciting challenges associated with living, and making a living, in and around wetlands; hiking and wildlife-watching, shopping and farming, eating and building inside an internationally recognized wetland. For 25 years the Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation has worked with your ideas and passion to make this balancing act work – it's time now to plan for the next 25 years. The future, and future of our shared watershed, starts now.

Over the next two years we'll be rolling out ideas and initiatives to meet these challenges and build for the future – ideas that come from our conversations with you and our many stakeholders. What do they look like so far? We'll expand our education efforts into new communities by exploring **High School** age programs, **multiple Citizen Science** projects, and **Urban Greening**



A Peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) perches with its prey.

Thomas Reynolds

initiatives to address climate change. We'll take a systems-level approach to restoration and conservation with our **Middle Reach Management Plan, Aquatic Foodwebs Research** and our **Adopt a Vernal Pool** program. Our outreach efforts will include **Watershed-wide Signage, 3D Watershed Models** and **Native Plant Identification Workshops**. And, our partnerships will include programs that connect

**soil, farming and great local food**, as well as leadership round-tables of Sonoma County's **most innovative farmers and vintners**.

These are all seeds, soon to sprout, as long as YOUR energy, input and support continue to make everything we do grow.

With your help, our board, staff and volunteers are working on a **five-year strategic plan** that includes these ideas and many more. All to address ambitious goals, enact strategies both bold and pragmatic, and ensure a thriving Laguna for our children. Stay tuned, keep your eyes and ears open – we hope to see you at new programs and projects being created to celebrate and preserve YOUR Laguna.

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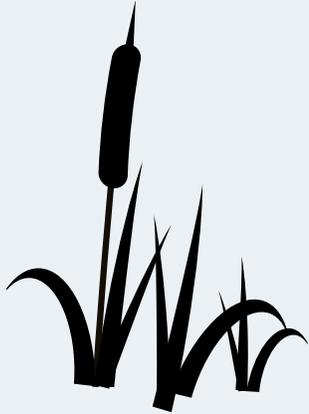
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Dr. Wendy Trowbridge, *Director of Restoration and Conservation Science Programs*  
Paul Weber, *Restoration Technician Specialist*

## **Laguna Members are BFF's to Salmon, Bobcats and Birds!**

Healthy Soil and Clean Water = It's what we all want. Our devoted Laguna members help fund large-scale restoration projects that address the tough issues facing the Laguna. The health of our soil and water in the Laguna Wetlands and Watershed affects everyone. What helps salmon, bobcats and birds also helps everyone living in our community. Your membership supports efforts to remove pollutants from our creeks and rivers, plant trees to create healthy habitat for wildlife, provide Learning Laguna to 1,500 students to connect kids and nature each year, mitigate climate change, and improve water quality and resources for all.

The Laguna is "here forever," and all of us will "forever" need its healthy soil and clean water. With your membership support, the Foundation will continue to lead and work with our partners to protect and restore our magnificent natural area.

## **Thank You!**

Everyone at the Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation wants to thank our many supporters for the incredibly generous donations that poured in last year. We met our 2015 End of Year Campaign goal of raising half-a-million dollars in our 25th year – an inspiring celebration of community and shared goals. Your overwhelming support has and will continue to make our many programs, projects and plans for the future possible. The Laguna must be a "forever" resource, and so the Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation must be a "forever" community. Thank you for being there for us and the Laguna – we look forward to building the next 25 years with you!

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## **Nature's Corner: Field Mustard**

*Hattie Brown, Conservation Science Programs Manger*



One of the earlier signs of spring in the watershed are the yellow fields of mustard in bloom. Not native, but naturalized throughout California, *Brassica rapa*, better known as Field mustard or Common mustard, is the most prevalent species of this genus on the Santa Rosa Plain. Often visible in vineyards, mustard functions as a cover crop preventing surface soil erosion and providing carbon to the soil as it dies back and decomposes. Is it a weed? As always, the answer depends very much on your point of view. The California Invasive Plant Council classifies its potential impact on native ecosystems as "limited," so you can feel ok about using the plant as a lovely photo back drop.

# History and Future of the Laguna Middle Reach

Dr. Wendy Trowbridge, Director of Restoration and Conservation Science Programs

Over its 22-mile course, the Laguna de Santa Rosa meanders from Cotati to Forestville. The middle section or “reach” of the Laguna includes the largest section of publicly owned land in this important wetland complex. It extends 5.4 miles from Hall Road in the north to Roseland Creek in the south and includes 2,100 acres of protected land. This area includes more than 7 miles of trails, including the new Laguna Discovery trail and the well-known Joe Rodota trail, which connects to the larger County wide-trail system.

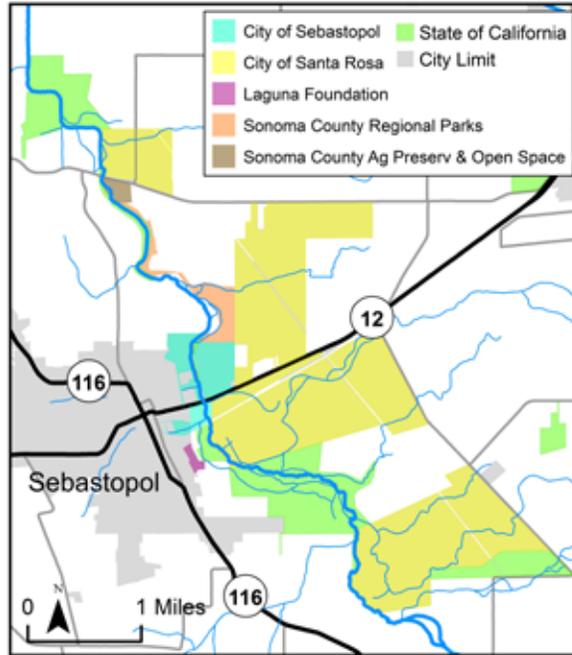
In addition to the Laguna Foundation’s small parcel of property, there are five major public land owners throughout this reach:

- City of Santa Rosa
- City of Sebastopol
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Sonoma County Regional Parks
- Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District

Each of these entities has a different set of management goals and public access policies, but they are all dedicated to the preservation of natural resources.



The now-drained Lake Jonive once attracted residents and tourists alike.



Map ID: 832-A ©2016 Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation. Data Sources: CDFW, LdSRF, So. County ISD, So. County PRMD. Cartography: Hattie Brown.

## Historic Land Use

The Middle Reach of the Laguna has not always been set aside for conservation. In the first half of the twentieth century, this reach of the Laguna was heavily impacted by the surrounding communities. There was an airport, a resort, a dump and a series of sewage ponds all in this short stretch of the Laguna.

At the turn of the twentieth century, Lake Jonive was a narrow, deep lake just south of Occidental Road where local residents and tourists could swim, boat and fish. Just a few years later, the City of Sebastopol created a sewage farm on the

banks of the Laguna and began discharging raw sewage directly into the Laguna. By 1913, there were massive fish kills in the lake and over the next 50 years Lake Jonive was drained bit by bit to make way for more farm land. From 1925 to 1935, Meadowlark Field was used as an airstrip and later became a disposal site for apple farming and production waste. By 1972, a California Department of Fish and Game report found that the Laguna was virtually devoid of life.

## Preservation

By the 1970s and 1980s, attitudes about the environment were changing. People were more interested in preserving the Laguna. In 1978, the City of Sebastopol connected its sewage system to the Laguna treatment facility thus ending almost 100 years of direct sewage discharge into the Laguna. Starting in 1979, the City of Santa Rosa purchased four farms, totaling 1,400 acres, in the Middle Reach of the Laguna as part of its recycled water program. By 1989, California Representative Doug Bosco proposed the creation of the Laguna de Santa Rosa National Wildlife Refuge, a 9,000 acre preserve to protect and enhance the water quality of aquatic habitats along the Laguna. Ultimately, his proposal passed the House but

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# Restoration Along the Middle Reach of the Laguna de Santa Rosa

Over 190 acres of riparian and oak woodland restoration; planted and funded by public and private groups including the Laguna Foundation over 25 years.



Map ID: 833 ©2016 Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation. Data Sources: LGSRF Aerial Image: Google Earth, 2016. Cartography: Wendy Trowbridge, Adrienne Gause.



For more details about these and other restoration projects, please visit our website at [LagunaFoundation.org](http://LagunaFoundation.org).

- ★ Laguna Environmental Center
- P Parking
- ~ Laguna de Santa Rosa and Creeks
- ~ Trails
- - - Proposed Trails
- Restoration Projects
- New Gravenstein Creek Project

## Middle Reach

*Continued from page 3*

did not make it through the Senate.

### Restoration

We may not yet have the 9,000 acre refuge that Representative Bosco dreamed of yet, but we have come a long way since the Laguna was declared to be devoid of life. Volunteers, nonprofits and public agencies have teamed up to restore more than 180 acres of riparian forest and oak woodland habitat between Highway 12 and Occidental Road. River otters and belted kingfishers are now a common site in the Laguna.

Many of the early restoration projects, like the Kelly Demonstration Wetlands (1989), were led by the City of Santa Rosa's Natural Resources Program and implemented by Circuit Rider Productions, Inc.

and local volunteer groups. In more recent years, the Laguna Foundation has taken on a larger role working with the landowners to obtain grant funding and build partnerships. In 2015, the Foundation worked with the City of Sebastopol and Prunuske Chatham, Inc. to create a management plan for the City's Laguna Wetlands Preserve. This plan will lead to further ecological restoration and improved access while maintaining the



*Restoration plantings maturing in Meadowlark Field 8 years after installation. Imagine how this area might be when this young girl is an adult!*

wild nature of this Preserve.

### Gravenstein Creek Restoration

Our newest restoration project along Gravenstein Creek is an example of the kind of collaboration that is necessary to make restoration projects a success. Our partners include the City of Santa Rosa, Sonoma County, the Federal Aviation Administration, LSA Associates, Inc.

and the Sonoma Ecology Center. We will be planting approximately 4,000 trees and shrubs on just over 9.5 acres of land along Gravenstein Creek on the City of Santa Rosa's Brown Farm. The first plantings along this tributary to the Laguna were completed by AmeriCorps volunteers in 1996. Our continued efforts will widen the riparian buffer along the creek providing important corridors for

wildlife movement, filter runoff and create shade necessary to keep the creek water cool and clean for native fish. While this area is not open to the public, you can see our newest restoration collaboration if you look south from the Joe Rodota trail as you travel between Santa Rosa and Sebastopol. Keep an eye out and follow our progress!

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## Laguna Discovery Trail Grand Opening April 23, 2016!



On Saturday, April 23 the Laguna Discovery Trail is making its public debut!

This new 1.2 mile trail was created as part of the

Southern Laguna Restoration project, a collaboration between the Sonoma County Water Agency and the Laguna Foundation. We worked with interns and

volunteers to plant more than 4,880 native plants and approximately 15,000 native grass seedlings over 30 acres. Six interpretive signs were created to inform visitors walking on the trail of the Laguna's unique and diverse environment and the benefits of a healthy ecosystem.

Join us to celebrate the completion of the project! Laguna Foundation staff and volunteers will lead fun and informative walks throughout the morning that provide insight into restoration work that has taken place while focusing on the wonder of the area. *See website for details and to reserve your spot.*

## Laguna Explorations and Learning

*Most of the programs listed below take place (or at least begin) in Heron Hall at the Laguna Environmental Center. Please visit our website for more details at [www.LagunaFoundation.org](http://www.LagunaFoundation.org)*

### **Spring Stories for the Young at Heart: A Storytelling Evening for Families with Ane Carla Rovetta**

Saturday, March 12, 7:30-9:00pm

FREE. Pre-registration required.

### **Spring Birding in the Laguna Series: Birdwatching and Natural History Walks with Lisa Hug**

Saturday, April 16 and Sunday, May 22, 8:30am-1:00pm

\$45 per walk. Pre-registration required.

*Celebrate spring by exploring special Laguna locations with an engaging expert.*

### **The Absolutely Amazing Dragonflies of the Laguna de Santa Rosa: Presentation by Kathy Biggs**

Thursday, March 24, 7:00-8:30pm

\$10 at the door. No RSVP necessary.

*Learn about the more than 50 species of dragonflies that inhabit the Laguna de Santa Rosa!*

### **Weave a Coiled Straw Basket with Charlie Kennard**

Sunday, April 3, 9:30am-3:30pm

\$80. Pre-registration required.

### **Laguna Discovery Trail: Grand Opening Walks**

Saturday, April 23, Choose from: 8:00am, 9:00am, 10:00am & 11:00am.

\$10. Pre-registration required.

### **Every Name Tells a Story: An Introduction to Plant Identification with Peter Warner**

Thursday, April 28, 7:00-8:30pm

Details available on our website.

### **Day of the Child - Día del Niño**

Saturday, April 30, 10:00am-4:00pm, FREE!

*Learn about wetlands and the plants and animals of the Laguna watershed. Sponsored by the Sonoma Environmental Education Collaborative.*

### **Nestward Migration: Docent-led walks to the Cormorant nesting site at Delta Pond**

Saturday, May 7, Your choice of 8:00am or 8:45am.

\$15 per person. Pre-registration required.

*This tour sells out fast every year! Reserve your spot for a rare view of the nesting site of these intriguing birds.*

### **Behind the Scenes Exploration of Irwin Creek**

Saturday, May 21, 5:30-8:30pm

\$25. Pre-registration required.

*Join us for a special evening adventure on the full-moon.*

## Share Your Love of Nature!



**Train to become a Laguna Guide to deepen your own understanding and Laguna sense of place then share your enthusiasm, appreciation and knowledge with the community.**

If you enjoy the outdoors and talking to others about the natural world, you will likely enjoy training to volunteer as a Laguna Guide! The Foundation offers a wide variety of classes, walks, talks and workshops for the community to learn more about the natural world and to express their appreciation of nature through art. Laguna Guides are an integral part of all the public education programs!

Guides volunteer in a variety of ways from greeting and engaging visitors during Open House at the Laguna Environmental Center, tabling at trails and community events, assisting with classes taught by local experts and even leading or co-leading trail walks. We offer the training and the opportunities and you decide where and how you would like to contribute. Train with a friend and volunteer together as a way to deepen your relationship and have quality time together. Participate to show those close to you the value of volunteerism. Get involved for personal enrichment and enjoyment!

The Laguna Guides program is a fun and engaging way to learn about the diverse habitats, flora, fauna and ecosystem services of the Laguna while making new friends. The 8-session course takes place on 4 Wednesday evenings: May 18, June 1, 8, 15; and 4 Saturdays: May 21, June 4, 11 & 18. Join us! We know you will be deeply rewarded by your training and Laguna Guide experiences!

Visit our website for more details or contact Christine Fontaine at [Christine@LagunaFoundation.org](mailto:Christine@LagunaFoundation.org) or (707) 527-9277 xt.102.



Founded in 1989, the Laguna Foundation is a place-based organization focused on the Laguna de Santa Rosa. We are a 501(c)3 non-profit with the mission to restore and conserve the Laguna de Santa Rosa, and to inspire public appreciation of this Wetland of International Importance. The Foundation conducts educational programs, implements conservation science and restoration projects, works with landowners and public agencies to protect and improve Laguna resources, and advocates for appropriately managed opportunities for the public to enjoy the Laguna.

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California Current by Nina Antze

### Visit Our Art Gallery in Heron Hall!

#### California Flora: Botanical Paintings in Colored Pencil by Nina Antze

Showing now through April 24.

#### Natural Inspirations: The Russian River Watershed in Fabric Fabric Arts by the Pointless Sisters Art Quilt Group

On display May 2 through Sept. 13.  
Opening reception May 15, 3:00-5:00pm.

Reward yourself by visiting us anytime Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm.  
Because of the variety of uses of Heron Hall, please call ahead to be sure the exhibit is open to the public.



John Hanses

### Join the Legacy Society

Help ensure that the Laguna is a healthy part of our community forever. Please provide lasting support by remembering the Foundation in your will or estate plan.

*"Leave a Legacy for your children and future generations. Ensuring healthy soil and clean water is one sure way to do that so I have included the Laguna de Santa Rosa in my estate plan. Join me as a member of the Laguna Legacy Society." - C. Engle*

To join the Legacy Society or to find out more about planned gifts, contact Bev Scotland, at (707) 527-9277 xt. 106 or email [Bev@LagunaFoundation.org](mailto:Bev@LagunaFoundation.org).