

Conservancy Hosts 8th Annual Music Festival in Support of Open Space

For the eighth year, the Ventura Hillsides Conservancy will present its annual Ventura Hillsides Music Festival. This year it's on Saturday, September 25, 2010, with gates opening at 11:30 AM.

The show will once again unfold in beautiful Arroyo Verde Park and solidify its place as a family-friendly, community tradition. All proceeds will support numerous Conservancy open space projects.

Featured top performers include Emmylou Harris, Colbie Caillat, The Gin Blossoms, and WPA.

Singer-songwriter **Emmylou Harris**, whose work in the early 1970s helped kick start the alternative-country movement, will headline. Harris recorded her first album in 1969 and two years later she began touring and recording with Gram Parsons. The material they recorded together before



Country Music's Hall of Fame Artist Emmylou Harris

Parsons' death in 1973 helped blaze alternative-country's path. Her most recent album, *All I Intended to Be* (2008), debuted at No. 4 on Billboard's country albums chart. It featured collaborations with Dolly Parton, Vince Gill and the McGarrigle sisters. That same year she was inducted into the Country Music Academy's Hall of Fame.

Colbie Caillat is a homegrown star, having called Newbury Park home for most of her life. Her first album, *Coco* (2007), included hit singles "Bubbly," "Realize," and "The Little Things." In 2008, she recorded a duet with Jason Mraz, "Lucky," which won a Grammy. In 2009, her second

album, *Breakthrough*, was nominated for Best Pop Vocal Album at the 52nd Grammy Awards. She was part of the group that won Album of the Year for her background vocals and writing on Taylor Swift's *Fearless*.

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Board of Trustees Adopts

5 YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

by Matthew Sayles

Ventura Hillsides Conservancy Executive Director

Earlier this summer, the Ventura Hillsides Conservancy's Board of Trustees convened a Strategic Planning weekend retreat. The retreat was facilitated by Paquita Bath of Aligning Visions, whose firm is dedicated to planning, facilitation, and capacity building services for mission-driven organizations, with an emphasis on conservation organizations and land trusts.

Under Bath's guidance, the Board developed and approved a Five-Year Strategic Plan. This Plan stipulates the five-year vision, goals, steps, and actions that the Ventura Hillsides Conservancy will take to preserve the hillsides, canyons, waterways, and open space that contribute to the unique character and natural environment in the Ventura region.

The plan lays out strategies for a dramatic increase in the Conservancy's ability to advance its mission while continuing to build the organizational capacity needed to manage lands and sustain funding. You can read the full document on the web at www.venturahillsides.org.

Here are the "Top Five Goals" for the Ventura Hillsides Conservancy to accomplish over the next five years as established by the new Strategic Plan:

1 Acquire a high visibility property for quality public recreational access while continuing to acquire

parcels that contribute to the ecological health of the region.

2 Establish an endowment fund and access to public funding mechanisms that will ensure the effective acquisition and long-term stewardship of Ventura Hillsides Conservancy properties.

3 Diversify funding so that no more than 25% of operating funds for the Ventura Hillsides Conservancy comes from any one source.

4 Complete management plans on all properties and provide effective stewardship of our lands in compliance with Land Trust Alliance standards.

5 Ensure the long term sustainability of the Ventura Hillsides Conservancy by strengthening the board, committee structure, and volunteer opportunities.

Positive Forces Aiding Our Work of Preservation

The Ventura region has beautiful hillsides, two large coastal rivers with valuable estuaries, and the Mediterranean landscape that defines the high quality of life that entices residents and visitors to the southern Central Coast of California.

But over the past few decades the natural resources contributing to an enriched quality of life have been compromised by ongoing urban development.

However, we have identified numerous positive factors that will aid our mission of preservation over the near and distant future. They include the following:

- There is a profound love of place and nature in the Ventura region. This generates an abundance of opportunities within the Conservancy's interest area to protect and restore hillsides, riparian areas, and expand public access to open space and recreational areas. The steady growth of the Conservancy and its credibility as a voice for conservation have now enabled it to consider larger efforts in acquisition, stewardship, and community engagement.
- Today's youth have less exposure to nature than prior generations, but when given the opportunity to experience natural areas in the region, their enthusiasm and identity as regional stewards grows.
- The current economy has created a greater focus on job creation within

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Ventura Hillsides Conservancy

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— OUR MISSION —

To preserve the hillsides, canyons, and open space that contribute to the natural environment and unique character of the City of San Buenaventura and the surrounding region for the benefit of present and future generations.

VHC is a proud member of the Land Trust Alliance and of the California Council of Land Trusts

Visit www.lta.org.



Legal Settlement Yields Land Donation



Ventura River near Cañada Larga area. (Photo by Derek Poultney)

The Ventura Hillside Conservancy will be the beneficiary of up to twenty-five acres of Ventura River bottomland to be held for conservation purposes. The final transfer of title is expected by year's end.

Through an April 28, 2010 judgment of Ventura County District Attorney Greg Totten, Mr. Shull Bonsall agreed to donate the acreage to the Conservancy. Bonsall was accused by California Department of Fish and Game of altering a part of the Ventura River watershed on his Cañada Larga property without a permit. Instead of paying civil penalties and admitting wrongdoing, he acceded to donating some of his nearby land to the Conservancy.

Recognition of the stature of the Conservancy, combined with our continuing efforts to serve the natural environment in our community earned us the credibility to make this type of adjudicated donation possible.

The pending land donation will add significantly to our Ventura River holdings. As the Ventura River Parkway project moves forward, the Conservancy is positioned to become an important conservation partner with public agencies and private landholders.

FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN *Continued from page 2*

the community. This complements behavioral changes founded on a greater awareness of sustainable lifestyles including more bike riding, less use of plastic, and a greater appreciation for local and organic agriculture. These trends support the ecological sustainability principles that the Conservancy promotes.

- Tourism will remain a bedrock economic driver of our community. Increasing the ability of both visitors and residents to mountain bike, hike local trails, access scenic views, and learn more about the local environment are parts of a new wave of "place-based" tourism that relies on sharing the unique attributes of our central coast landscape, seascape, and lifestyle with others.

- Philanthropy grows as organizations prove their ability to manage lands and funds effectively. The Ventura Hillside Conservancy has earned the trust of its donors and members, allowing for the opportunity to explore larger, more ambitious programs and land acquisitions.
- The Conservancy's ever-expanding group of high-level advisors and its strong, committed Board will create ongoing opportunities for recruiting talented staff and partners.

The Conservancy looks forward to advancing this five-year strategic plan and becoming ever more successful at meeting the aspirations of our children, our neighbors, and our community in reclaiming public access to the beautiful and varied environment that inspires us daily.



Ventura Hillside Conservancy Outlook

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Colbie Caillat

The **Gin Blossoms** join the festival on the eve of the release of their fifth studio album, *No Chocolate Cake*, scheduled for September 28, three days after the Festival. The band comes to Ventura as part of an extensive U.S. tour, and will depart for an Asian tour shortly after the Arroyo Park appearance. Powered by their melodic, Grammy-nominated top ten singles, the eleven-track *Cake* tour will display the Tempe, Arizona band in their top form. Their songs such as “Hey Jealousy,” “Found Out About You,” “Till I Hear From You,” and “Follow You Down” helped define an era as well as selling 30 million records worldwide.

Kicking off the Festival will be **WPA**, a new ensemble featuring Glen Phillips from Toad the Wet Sprocket and Sara and Sean Watkins from Nickel Creek. Their appearance will mark the return of Phillips, who played a solo set at the 2004 Festival.

The Festival will afford a rare opportunity to enjoy superb live music in one of Ventura’s most beautiful outdoor settings, using the contours of the grassy hill in Arroyo Verde Park as a natural amphitheatre. Concertgoers are encouraged to bring low-back beach chairs, cushions, and blankets.

The venue opens at 11:30 AM, to allow for full enjoyment of the food, booths, and kids’ play area. The music begins at 1:00 PM.

The Gin Blossoms





WPA

General admission is \$45. Tickets are still available at Salzer's Records, Great Pacific Iron Works, Simone's Coffee & Tea, Pete's Breakfast House, and The Wine Rack in Ventura, and on the Conservancy's website: <http://www.venturahillsides.org>. Special \$150 Gold Circle and other special ticket packages are available only on the Conservancy's website.

Current, new, and renewing members who took advantage of the July pre-sale will gain early entry to the festival grounds at 11:00 AM for prime seat selection.

Parking will be provided at Ventura College with free shuttle buses to the Festival grounds. Concertgoers are encouraged to walk, bicycle, carpool, or even skate to the event, and to refrain from parking in residential neighborhoods near Arroyo Verde Park. The Festival will again offer a secure bicycle and stroller parking corral.

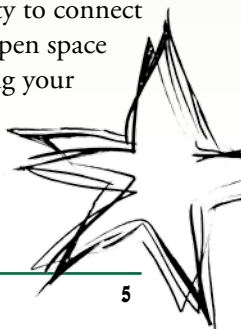
Food and beverages will be available at the concert. Picnics and small coolers are welcome but glass, alcohol, and pets are not permitted. No cameras or recorders are permitted in the Festival grounds.

The Ventura Hillsides Music Festival is sponsored in part by a host of community partners including Patagonia, Crowne Plaza Ventura Beach Resort, 95.9 the Octopus, Live 105.5 FM, L'Acoustics, Rat Sound, Firestone Walker Brewing Company, Castoro Cellars, the Ventura County Star, Channel Islands Harbor Marina, and Ventura Harbor Boatyard.

As with the past festivals, the Hillsides Conservancy dedicates itself to producing a sustainable event, with biodegradable food and drink containers and onsite recycling and composting centers.

The latest details about the 2010 Festival are available on the VHC website: <http://www.venturahillsides.org>.

The Ventura Hillsides Conservancy's annual fundraiser has become a popular local celebration of music and conservation that represents the best opportunity to connect with the community about the importance of open space preservation. We hope to see you there and bring your friends and neighbors.





Volunteers Pete Trevino, Rachel Fleming, Trustee Brooke Ashworth, Volunteer Coordinator Lee Sherman, Volunteer Royce Camilo and Executive Director Matt Sayles braved poison oak and ticks and to prevent all of this garbage from washing downriver. (Photo by Derek Poultney)

Volunteer Clean-ups at our Ventura River Properties: What a Haul!

The Ventura Hillside Conservancy has acquired three contiguous parcels through generous donations of the Waldo and Moore families. The rich riparian acreage is located just below Foster Park between the bike path and the Ventura River. On our first clean-up excursion, we removed an amazing amount of trash from the properties. The photo is worth a thousand words—of trash talk.

We extend a hearty “Thank You” to everyone who came out and helped with our clean ups on June 12 and July 17.

We would like to acknowledge and thank E.J. Harrison and Sons for their generous donation of assistance with removal and disposal.

Care to help next time?

We invite you to join us and learn more about our plans for the land and get involved with our restoration activities. The next Ventura River properties clean up will be conducted sometime in the fall. For a great way to see our conservation parcels up close, please email Lee Sherman at the address below to become a clean-up volunteer and receive our notifications of our future events: ls Sherman@venturahillsides.org, or call 805-643-8044.

SHUFFLE OFF THAT BAG FROM BUFFALO EXCHANGE

Buffalo Exchange is a company dedicated to sustainable practices and works to protect the environment by buying used clothing directly from the public and either trading it or re-selling it at their stores.

As their website explains: “Buffalo Exchange isn’t a consignment store—it’s quicker than that: if we accept your items, you can get cash or trade on the spot. You’ll get the most money for your clothes if you’re willing to accept trade instead of cash for your clothing.”



Furthermore, Buffalo Exchange donates to local nonprofit agencies in the community through its Tokens for Bags® program. Shoppers at their stores are encouraged to accept a token instead of a bag for purchases, and Buffalo Exchange donates five cents to one of three featured charities of the customers’ choosing.

This program has generated nearly \$338,000 for hundreds of nonprofits since 1994, saving 6.8 million bags.

We are pleased to announce that the Ventura Hillside Conservancy has been chosen as a recipient of Buffalo Exchange’s Tokens For Bags program. The Conservancy will be featured from July-December 2010 at the Buffalo Exchange’s 532 East Main Street, Ventura location. So, when you sell or shop there, be sure to request a token rather than a shopping bag, and be sure to deposit your token in the Conservancy’s slot!

Meet Outlook Editor and Conservancy Advisor Bob Chianese

Our *Outlook* editor, Bob Chianese, will head off to Bulgaria in late September for a Fulbright Senior Specialist grant at Plovdiv University. He will lecture on environmental approaches to literature. His verse-drama *Orpheus Re-Membered* re-conceives this Thracian poet figure, who hails from modern Bulgaria, as an environmental troubadour using art to instill consciousness about preserving nature.

Chianese, a retired professor of English at CSU Northridge, has been assembling panels of speakers and giving papers at various conferences on the crossovers among the humanities, the arts, and sciences, particularly ecology, for the last twelve years. This year he co-curated the art exhibit, “Inspired by Science,” at Southern Oregon University as part of the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science–Pacific Division. He has recently been elected to serve in 2012 as president of this organization, the first humanist in that capacity in its 100-year history.

Least Bell's Vireo:

Threatened Bird in Our Midst

by Robert Louis Chianese

Most of us who turn an eye to local birds will have likely seen the black and gold Orioles of spring chattering up the yard. But what of less colorful or unremarkable birds? Will we notice them? And what if they are secretive or easily spooked...or in short supply? Our rich open spaces of western Ventura County serve as sanctuary for such birds. Preserving the hillsides, valleys, and open space areas directly benefits them.

There are 289 threatened and endangered plant and animal species in California: 111 animals and 178 plants. The Least Bell's Vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*) is one of them and needs our local riverside habitats to survive.

The Least Bell's Vireo is a small gray bird about 4 to 5 inches long that visits southern California from southern Mexico in spring and summer to breed. John Audubon named them after his friend John Graham Bell, who explored the Missouri River with him in 1840. One of four subspecies of Bell's Vireo, this subspecies is "least" because of its size, not its importance. "Vireo" describes the more common greenish or "virene" variety of the bird and not our gray southwest version. Ours does have a thin white eye patch, which aids identification.

Nesting only three-feet off the ground near water, the Least Bell's Vireo usually remains sequestered in dense shrubs and small trees along stream banks. Coyotes and other mammals can snatch them out of their low nests. They eat spiders and insects.

With the removal of 90% of riparian habitat from the Central Valley and coastal and sierra foothills of California, the Least Bell's Vireo has disappeared from most of its range. It is now found only in riparian areas in Southern California—including the Santa Clara and Ventura Rivers.

By the time it was declared endangered by California in 1980 and by the federal government in 1986, only 300 pairs existed in the state. Habitat protection has assisted in greatly expanding their numbers since listing.

When grassland, development, or flood protection infrastructure replace riparian habitats, our local vireo gets displaced and becomes more susceptible to injury and death—even by domestic cats. Its older antagonist, the Brown Headed Cow Bird, also takes its toll by sneaking its

eggs into the vireo's nest so that the vireos wind up feeding cow bird hatchlings and underfeed their own.

Vireo eggs produce fledglings in ten to twelve days and then the monogamous parents build a new nest and make another brood of three or four, and maybe then another—a big numbers strategy.

The males are active songsters, with up to fifteen tunes. Youtube has a video of one in full throated song: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XWPi11Mmac0>.

Our excitement about preserving top species in and around our area, such as mountain lions, condors, and steelhead trout, should also turn to the small, seemingly bland critters that live in the shadowed, secluded reaches of our locale. Their unique character makes our region a richer place.

Even if we hardly ever see them, the Least Bell's Vireos can exist in our green imagination as valuable parts of an ecosystem we are dedicated to protect, for their sake and our sake too.

You can report any bird sighting to the e-Bird count website: <http://ebird.org/content/ebird>.

(With thanks to Jamie King for some valuable suggestions.)



Least Bell's Vireo is a migratory songbird that requires Southern and Central California river bottom land for nesting. Photo courtesy of US Geological Service

Andy Goldsworthy Film
at the WAV

Rivers and Tides

sponsored by the Ventura Hillsides Conservancy
and the Ventura Film Society

WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 1, 2010 7:00 PM AT THE WAV

Andy Goldsworthy is an unique eco-artist. He takes natural elements from the landscape and manipulates and weaves and balances and layers them together to form structures that ultimately fall apart or decompose or melt or, in some cases leave their permanent mark on the land. The ingenuity of his selection of materials—from twigs or ice chips or boulders—combined with his magic assembling of them into arcs, webs, spirals, weaving lines, etc., make them wonders to behold. They are not so much natural structures as artistic, man-made ones asserting their place in the natural landscape, at least for a time.

Rivers and Tides: Andy Goldsworthy Working with Time (2001) follows the British site specific sculptor through various projects mostly in winter and around his home area in Scotland. We witness his frustrations and successes as he attempts to bend nature, here mainly water, to his gentle will.

Reviewer David Loftus says of Goldsworthy at work that “Not a single abstract spiritual or philosophical term

turns up – the sculptor employs direct and concrete words only—but the effect is like a 90-minute session with a Zen master showing us how to be here, ‘now.’”

The Conservancy is pleased once again to collaborate with the Ventura Film Society to screen this film. The Society supported our inaugural Wild and Scenic Environmental Film Festival in March, 2010.

Rivers and Tides will show at a unique venue—the Working Artists Ventura (WAV) community at the WAV building, 175 South Ventura Avenue, where it meets E. Thompson Boulevard.

The date is Wednesday December 1 at 7:00 PM, and the cost is \$10. The public and WAV resident artists and Hillsides Conservancy members are cordially invited. A brief discussion will follow the film.

