

STERN SIERRA SIERRA Land Trust Newsletter www.eslt.org Spring/Summer 2022 and 2021 Annual Report Highlights

"I can think of no other area in California more deserving of protection than the majestic Bridgeport Valley." David Wood, co-owner, Centennial Point Ranch In this issue . . . **Ullman Ranch & Centennial Point Ranch** Two Visions Realized

INSIDE: Where we've been. Where we're going.

Where we've been.



Where we're going.

Eastern Sierra Land Trust was officially incorporated as a public benefit nonprofit on January 29, 2001. It was the result of the strong vision of landowners and conservationists in Inyo and Mono counties who recognized the need to create a land trust to protect the wildlife habitats and open spaces of the area's spectacular rural landscapes.

In 2003, the first protected 20 acres in Swall Meadows came to ESLT through an outright donation of the Ingram Conservation Easement from ESLT co-founders Karen Ferrell-Ingram and Stephen Ingram.

Conservation easements from other area landowners soon followed; these are voluntary, permanent agreements between landowners and the land trust to restrict development or subdivision of their properties.

Today, in 2022, twenty-one thousand acres have been protected. This is just the beginning. In our twenty-first year, we are committed to moving forward to protect more open space and working ranches, to preserve more critical wildlife habitat, and to educate our conservation-oriented community about the value of our ongoing projects.

As you read through this newsletter, I hope you are inspired as you see where we've been and where we're going, and that you commit to work together with us as stewards of the land to ensure the wonderful wild places we treasure remain the places we all love.

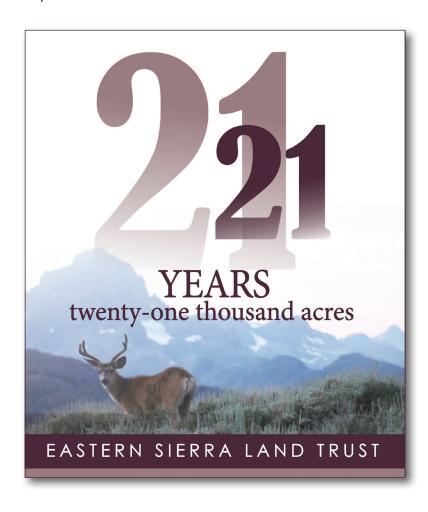
Kay Ogden, Executive Director/CEO

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221 community connections

In the beginning...

Eastern Sierra Land Trust was formed to protect the migration corridor of the Round Valley Mule Deer herd from future development. The herd migrates twice a year between their winter range in Round Valley and their summer range in the high Sierra meadows.

While the Mule Deer populaton in the Eastern Sierra remained steady last year, it has declined in recent decades by at least onethird, possibly by as much as 60% since the 1960s. Maintaining habitat connectivity within the movement corridors that link their winter and summer ranges is crucial in stopping this decline.

About seventy-five percent of the herd migrates through a bottleneck in Swall Meadows between the Wheeler Crest, Lower Rock Creek Gorge and Highway 395. Early on, ESLT worked with landowners in Swall Meadows to permanently protect 269 acres of the herd's critical winter range through conservation easements. This critical winter range is less than 5% of their



summer range, but must provide food and shelter for the majority of the herd during harsh winters.

ESLT continues to preserve this vital migration corridor through our land protection efforts and by educating residents about steps needed to save the Round Valley Mule Deer herd.

deer migration corridor field trip

Education is key to saving the migration corridor of the Round Valley Mule Deer herd. ELST recently hosted a field trip for Eastern Sierra residents and shared information about the herd and their migration corridor on March 16th. Participants gathered near Pine Creek to observe the herd in their natural habitat.

California Department

of Fish & Wildlife Human-Wildlife Conflict Scientist Daniel Taylor conducted the educational tour. Taylor gave a talk about the history of the Round Valley Deer Herd and their seasonal migration in Swall Meadows, gave an update from CDFW's recent annual count, and took questions afterward.

ESLT Executive Director/CEO Kay Ogden talked about our misson and the history of efforts to protect the herd. The group observed some does and their fawns. These mothers "teach" their young to follow their lead as they migrate between their summer and winter homes; this same migration route has been used by the herd for generations. "Eastern Sierra Land Trust is the key here," Taylor emphasized, "because they work to preserve the mule deer's critical winter

habitat and migration corridors."

The event was a big success. Ogden agreed, "The mule deer corridor field trip was the first big chance since COVID for people to get out on the land and learn more about the mule deer and ESLT's conservation efforts. It was so wonderful to be together in person

again. My biggest takeaway was the information from Dan's update that the does in the herd are in good shape ... better than last year. It shows that our efforts are really paying off."

The future ... mammoth lakes 395 wildlife crossing project See Page 4



Where we're going.

Keeping our promise of protection

The migration route of the Round Valley Mule Deer herd is an ingrained, learned behavior, passed down through generations from a doe to her offspring. The fact that their migration route now crosses a very busy HIghway 395 puts them in danger.

The \$52 million Mammoth Lakes 395 Wildlife Crossing Project will provide a solution to this problem. It is a collaborative effort of the Eastern Sierra Wildlife Stewardship Team (ESWST) composed of Caltrans District 9, Eastern Sierra Land Trust, Mono County, the United States Bureau of Land Management (BLM), California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), USDA Forest Service, Bridgeport Indian Colony, Defenders of Wildlife, the Town of Mammoth Lakes and the Los Angeles Department

Caltrans District 9, indicated that problems happen most frequently along the stretch of

Highway 395 in Mono County between the community of Crowley Lake and the Town of Mammoth Lakes.

The highest priority locations for highway wildlife crossings and "exclusion fencing" are at the Benton Crossing Road and just south of it near the Caltrans McGee Creek maintenance station.

Research has shown such structures reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions up to 90 percent or more. "Proper placement of structures and fencing is critical to the success of this type of effort," Rodriguez explains. The 8-foot high fencing ties into



of Water and Power. Caltrans is the lead agency due to its responsibility to maintain the state highway system.

It is still in the planning stages. Timing of full implementation depends on funding, but once fully-funded, it will consist of both overcrossings and undercrossings of Highway 395 as well as a stretch of "exclusion fencing" along the area where most problems have occurred. These incidents, "Wildlife Vehicle Collisons" (WVC), cause harm to both wildlife and drivers, and also create property damage and negatively impact the Round Valley Mule Deer population's survivability.

According to Caltrans Senior Biologist Katie Rodriguez, the agency's project lead, CDFW has monitored and researched mule deer migration in the Eastern Sierra for decades. For their annual population survey, they placed Global Positioning System (GPS) collars on mule deer in the five herds in Mono County. This helped them see where the deer moved during migration and where they crossed the highway. This, and the WVC data from

a structure about every mile, prevents wildlife from physically entering the roadway and "drives" them to the crossing structures instead. Increased signage to alert drivers to the times of year when deer migration is occurring are also planned as part of the project.

Mono County Supervisor Stacy Corless explains, "Right now, we are in a race against time and climate change to protect biodiversity and wildlife habitat. The Mammoth Lakes 395 Wildlife Crossing will help do both, while giving our mule deer and other animals a better chance at survival and reducing vehicle collisons. I am grateful to ESLT for taking on this important project."

"This project is important," Rodriguez agrees, "as it addresses one of the highest priority wildlife-vehicle collison hot spots that Caltrans and ESWST has identified in the Eastern Sierra... creating a safer pathway will facilitate continued success of the mule deer migration that has occurred for centuries."

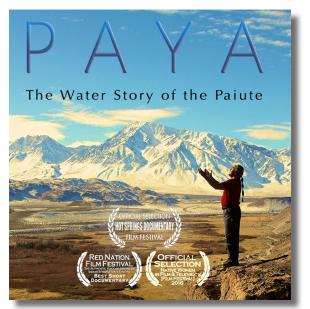
For updates on the project, visit www.eslt.org/wildlifecrossing.

wildlife mammoth lakes 395 wildlife crossing project

"We have lived in this valley since time immemorial and water is our lifeblood."

THE OWENS VALLEY PAUITE (NÜÜMÜ) are a people intricately tied to water. Generations lived in Payahüünadü, "the land of flowing water," carefully utilizing the water that descends in rushing streams from the heights of the Sierra Nevada to irrigate the land below. There were no fences in the valley; no sense of "mine" and "yours."

Their traditional way of life was irrevocably changed with the arrival of white settlers in the 1860s. The newcomers harnessed



PAYA film cover

the Pauite's existing intricate system of irrigation canals, diverting water for their own use. Construction of fences broke up large parts of the tribe's hunting territory. Conflicts arose between the tribe and the settlers. There were wars, a relocation of existing tribe members through an unfavorable land exchange, and the eventual diversion of water from the Owens Valley to Los Angeles through the Los Angeles Aqueduct.

PAYA: The Water Story of the Paiute chronicles the still-ongoing fight between the Owens Valley Paiute and the City of Los Angeles over the rights to this water.

In May 2021, in a joint partnership, The Owens Valley Indian Water Commission and ESLT hosted an online screening of the film, followed by a moderated panel discussion consisting of Native American rights activists and water protectors. It was very well received, with 370 people registering to take part.

The Owens Valley Indian Water Commission was formed in 1991 to negotiate tribal water rights with the federal government and the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power on behalf of the Bishop,

Big Pine and Lone Pine tribes. ESLT is equally committed to protecting access to water resources in the Eastern Sierra both for wildlife and for all who live there. We extend our thanks to Teri Red Owl and the Owens Valley Indian Water Commission for allowing us to join with our Paiute neighbors to share their important story.

A copy of the film can be purchased on the OVIWC website at www.oviwc.org. The panel discussion can be watched on the ESLT website at www.eslt.org.

MONITORING GRANT: NEW "EYES IN THE SKY"

It is ESLT's legal responsibility as an Accredited Land Trust to conduct annual monitoring of conservation easements to ensure that the agreements' terms and conservation values are being upheld.

This can be through onsite monitoring, Global Positioning Systems (GPS), digital photography of designated photopoints or Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapping technologies. Having over 21,000 acres to monitor is very challenging for staff.

A 2021 Remote Monitoring Grant from the Land Trust Alliance and The Nature Conservancy has already dramatically changed this. Monitoring standards allow aerial monitoring three out of five years, but it was difficult to accomplish this task due to the size and remote locations. In 2021, this grant funding allowed us to monitor 14,073 acres of easements using satellite imagery. "This was a highly sought-after grant," ESLT Executive Director/CEO Kay Ogden explained. "Only 17 were awarded nationally and we were told that our project ranked very high."

This also helps reduce our carbon footprint by alleviating the need for staff to drive to large properties. "It is going to make a world of difference," she added. "As the amount

of protected land grows, so do our monitoring responsibilities. The grant will free up time for our Stewardship Manager to do more on-the-ground work and helps us save money."



Where we've been. Where we're going.

Where we've been.

Where we're going.



Ullman Ranch

"This agricultural conservation easement allowed me to preserve the ranch forever."

- Corky Ullman, owner, Ullman Ranch

In March of 2021, ESLT celebrated its twentieth anniversary by reaching the goal of having preserved 20,000 acres of open space and working ranches from development through the use of permanent and voluntary conservation easements.



Visionary Ullman Ranch owner Corky Ullman agreed not to develop or subdivide his 1,424 acres along a historic

20 Years. Twenty thousand acres.

stagecoach route between Bridgeort and Devil's Gate. This seasonal cattle ranch north of Bridgeport at the foot of the Sweetwater Mountains has five miles of creeks and streams and bright green meadows. Cattle have grazed on the irrigated pastureland for more than 90 years. It also provides important habitat for other species, including the Bi-State sage grouse, who raise their chicks in the ranch's wet meadows, the American badger, eagles, songbirds, bees and butterfiles.

The easement also protects the critical migration route for mule deer. Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep, a federally-endangered species, live in the higher alpine areas nearby. The ranch is a buffer, protecting their habitat from detrimental mixing with domestic sheep in the valley below. Funding for the easement was from the federal National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), an agency that helps landowners

and land trusts protect the nation's most productive working ranches. "Mr. Ullman's generosity meant that ESLT was able to acquire the conservation easement at a reduced purchase price," Kay explained.

The easement ensures that the heart of Huntoon Valley will remain open and scenic forever. It is in line

with our vision to preserve a healthy balance of land uses that protect wildlife and to create both a strong local economy and maintain a healthy environment.

21 Years. Twenty-one thousand acres.

In April, ESLT finalized a conservation easement on the 1,741-acre Centennial Point Ranch located in Bridgeport Valley on the lower eastern slopes of the Sierra Nevada, just nine miles northeast of Yosemite National Park; this put us at over twenty-one thousand protected acres.

This accomplishment only happened because of the vision of so many committed Eastern Sierra landowners who share our mission to protect these spectacular open vistas. The families of ranchers John Lacey, Mark Lacey and David Wood are one such group. This is not their first easement. In 2003, these families pioneered conservation easements in Bridgeport Valley. This latest easement is contiguous with over 15,000 acres of conservation easements in Bridgeport Valley. This insures that species like the mule deer and the Bi-State sage grouse retain access to their historical habitats and migratory routes.

Most of the property is summer pasture grazed by cattle. Livestock grazing has been a strong part of the local economy for over a century. The ranch has been in agricultural production since the 1860s. It will now remain forever in its current state as a ranching, agricultural, scenic, and open-space resource. Five miles of tributaries of the East Walker River run through it, resulting in the creation

of extensive wetlands. It is excellent pastureland that also supports a number of species of special concern.

Raptors like Swainson's hawk, rough-legged hawk, Northern harrier, bald eagle and barn owl, plus bees and butterflies will benefit from the habitat protection the easement affords. It will remain a haven for the West Walker Mule Deer Herd and the Bi-State sage grouse who raise their chicks in the lush grass of the pasturelands.

The Centennial Point Ranch project was supported by California Strategic Growth Council's Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program (SALC) in collaboration with the Department of Conservation. Funding was also provided by the California Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB), and supported by a statewide initiative that reduces greenhouse gas emissions.

"The Lacey and Wood families are pleased to have once again worked with our trusted partners at the Eastern Sierra Land Trust ... The Point Ranch conservation easement not only preserves the grazing land, ranching operation, and the ranching heritage of Mono County but fulfills a promise (we) made ... that if we ever purchased the ranch it would never be developed. Promise kept!"

John Lacey, Centennial Point Ranch

Centennial Point Ranch

24 education

BLACK LAKE PRESERVE FENCING PROJECT



A dream realized . . .

Michelle Browner wanted the breathtaking open Eastern Sierra landscape that is now Black Lake Preserve to remain wild and untouched. The alkali wetlands, called "emerald islands," in the midst of the California desert and the expanses of high desert sage in Mono County's Adobe Valley are one of the rarest habitat types in all of California. They are home to many rare plants, pollinators, shore birds, waterfowl, song birds, raptors and amphibians.



She feared development would overtake this unique environment. "From the beginning," Michelle said, "I felt very deeply that this was a special place. When I first saw Adobe Valley, I already had the idea in my

mind that I wanted to do whatever I could to conserve it."

In 2014, she approached ESLT asking for help to do just that. As ESLT's Executive Director/CEO Kay Ogden explains, "She wanted to ensure the permanent protection of the property. We are incredibly grateful."

Browner donated her 526 acres to ESLT. Unlike with a conservation easement, where we watch over a property to ensure the easement terms are fulfilled, here we are the landowner of the property, and are responsible for fulfilling Michelle Browner's wishes.



A Great Basin spadefoot enjoys the warm sun.

a place to visit and enjoy . . .

At Black Lake Preserve, the goal was not only to protect the habitat of the diverse species that live here, but also to create a welcoming place where the public could observe, enjoy and soak in the peace nature provides. The problem was the existing barbed-wire fencing. It was in serious disrepair; the entrance gates were tight and it posed a tripping hazard for both wildlife and people.

Fixing the fence would be expensive but necessary. In 2020, ESLT sold a Wetlands Reserve Easement (WRE) on the property to the National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and negotiated the

fence project and invasive species removal as part of that WRE. "It was part of our longstanding partnership with NRCS," Ogden explained.

This spring will be the first time people can come and comfortably interact with this rare natural community. Visitors can birdwatch, walk along the lakeshore, wade in the alkali wetlands, enjoy an array of rare plants or observe the massive geologic features of Adobe Valley.

"We've insured that Michelle Browner's dream for the property will be fully realized," Odgen emphasized. "She

passed it on to ESLT, and this restoration completed that mission." Public access is available from Highway 120 during daytime hours, weather permitting. For information on how to plan your visit to Black Lake Preserve please visit www.eslt.org/success-stories.



World Migratory Bird Day took place on May 14th. It is an annual worldwide awareness event highlighting the need to conserve migratory birds and their habitats. Adobe Valley is designated as an important Bird Area by the National Audubon Society. Its alkali lake and wet meadows are critical to maintaining healthy bird habitats.



ESLT held birding activities and educational presentations at Black Lake Preserve. Evan Standifer,

Wildlife Biologist for the BLM in Bishop, and Phoebe Prather, a field biologist with extensive experience with birds, conducted a birdwatching tour.

Claire Marvet, ESLT's Education Coordinator, explains, "Black Lake Preserve is a 'hotspot' for migrating birds and is a beautiful rare desert wetland." For the many migratory species that

stop here, it is like a welcoming rest stop along a highway for weary human travelers. We want to ensure that this "rest stop" always remains open.

The day was a great opportunity for people to come out to the Preserve and share the experience with others who are knowledgeable about birding. ESLT Executive Director/CEO Kay



Ogden spoke about MIchelle Browning's gift of the Preserve. The event is a concrete way to show our continuing

commitment to honor her wishes. She wanted the land to remain in its natural state, but she also wanted others to come out and experience all the peace and natural wonder it has to offer.

Visitors are encouraged to come back often to Black Lake Preserve during daylight hours, weather permitting.





PROTECTING CALIFORNIA'S LAND AND WATERS

"Nature is not a place to visit, it is home."

-Gary Snyder, California Poet

What 30x30 is

30x30 is part of a global movement to use nature-based solutions to combat climate change and protect biodiversity by conserving 30% of the earth's lands and waters by 2030.

In October 2020, Governor Newsom signed the Nature Based Solutions Executive Order which committed California to achieving this goal in our state. By conserving large areas of California's land and waters, the goal is to stabilize our state's climate and protect both rural and urban areas from climate impacts, insuring a more resilient future.

The Sierra Nevada is a critical area to protect; ESLT is a strong supporter of the Initiative. Our Executive Director/CEO Kay Ogden has been actively working alongside a large network of environmental protectors including the California Council of Land Trusts and the Sierra Cascade Land Trust Council to gain statewide support for implementation of 30x30's strategies.

How 30x30 will work

Over the next eight years, efforts will be led by the California Natural Resources Agency through the 30x30 Partnership. Inclusive collaborative efforts and voluntary actions among communities, landowners, California's Native American tribes, non-profits like ESLT, scientists and government agencies must translate its goals into action. Key are the protection of California's unique biodiversity, expansion of equitable access to nature and its benefits to all and conservation of places that help California achieve carbon neutrality.

"Show us the money"

Dedicated funding is necessary to make 30x30 a reality. ESLT has been working toward its objectives since 2001. We know adequate funding is vital to land protection efforts. Our 21,000 acres of strategic conservation easements have protected the habitats of important species like the mule deer and the Bi-State sage grouse, preserved areas that are home to rare plants, kept streams and waterways flowing and provided access to open spaces for the public's enjoyment.

Regionally-led conservation is a 30x30 goal. "At this pivotal time in history, there is urgency to meet global conservation targets. Together, we can build upon state-wide and national policy advocacy and capacitybuilding programs to leverage increased funding for conservation so that our efforts to safeguard California's unique biodiversity and lands in the midst of emerging climate challenges are collaborative and compelling. To be able to work on conservation at such a large scale, is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that we need to grab ahold of," Kay Ogden, ESLT Executive Director/CEO, emphasizes.

not just another government program

A time of challenges and growth

I'm so proud to say that again last year we successfully continued our efforts

> to conserve the beautiful open spaces and wonderful creatures that surround us.

We are all so excited to be meeting together again and sharing our mutual love of the magnificent Eastern

In 2021, our dedicated staff organized twelve informative virtual events like the Pollinator Garden series where particpants learned to care for our native pollinator plants. We held

four in-person events and gained enthusiastic new members that share our vision.

In 2022, we've added new permanently protected land and are hosting in-person events like Garden Fest and World Migratory Bird Day. Throughout the summer, we'll gather safely for a series of events as part of our Twenty-First Anniversary Lands & Legacy celebration.

We have a lot to celebrate. I look forward to seeing you all there!

Chair, ESLT Board of Directors

A colleague & friend moves on

It is with sadness and great appreciation that we say goodbye to Susanna "Sus" Danner, ESLT's Land Conservation Program Director. Sus has taken a position with the Western Rivers Conservancy (WRC), a group dedicated to protecting the streams and rivers of the West, as their California Project Manager.



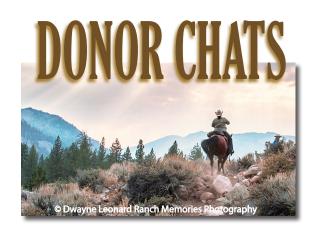
Susanna Danner

In her seven years with ESLT, Sus coordinated our program that protects natural areas and wildlife habitat using tools like conservation easements and cooperative projects with local, state and federal government.

"Sus has been amazing to work with," ESLT Executive Director/CEO Kay Ogden says.

"I'll miss working with her tremendously, and I know that everyone at ESLT wishes her only the best in her new position."

Sus leaves behind many great memories: "The fly fishing streams, sage-steppe, and green meadows of the Eastern Sierra will always be close to my heart ... I hope my work with ESLT has helped ensure a bright future for habitat and agriculture in the Bi-State."



OUR STRATEGIC VISION

Just like the cowboy, we need to plan out the path ahead of us and know exactly where we're going.

In a virtual Donor Chat meeting on June 29th at 12:30 pm, we'll share successes like Centennial Point Ranch and welcome ideas from you to provide direction for our next strategic planning session.

Check our website at www.eslt.org/events for more information



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2021 Financial Summary and Annual Report

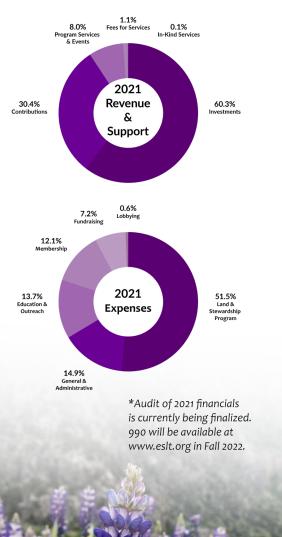
Your generosity is sowing the seeds of a thriving future for the Eastern Sierra.

2021 was a year of resilience. Despite the challenges felt by all, we found safe ways to gather virtually and on the land.

Nearly 400 people joined us online to view PAYA and learn about the Owens Valley Paiute's ongoing fight for water rights. We toured Black Lake Preserve for World Migratory Bird Day, hosted youth education events, and

certified new beautiful gardens through our Pollinator Garden Program.

Together, we celebrated the permanent protection of Ullman Ranch in the heart of Huntoon Valley. Your ongoing support made this conservation success possible, and it paved the way for future efforts to protect the wild and working lands of the Eastern Sierra.



Revenue And Support	*2021	2020
Investment Income, Net	\$899,622	\$1,283,124
Contributions	\$453,452	\$893,385
Program Services and Events	\$119,871	\$136,887
Government (PPP)		\$103,252
Fees for Services	\$16,402	
In-Kind Services	\$2,000	\$2,230
TOTAL REVENUE AND SUPPORT	\$1,491,347	\$2,418,878
Expenses		
Education & Outreach	\$100,662	\$123,809
Land & Stewardship Program	\$379,990	\$373,915
Membership	\$89,553	\$76,051
Total Program Expenses	\$570,205	\$573 , 775
Fundraising	\$52,797	\$51,116
General & Administrative	\$109 , 721	\$24,136
Lobbying	\$4,644	\$8,115
PPP Expenses (Salary & Rent)		\$103,206
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$737,367	\$ 760,348
NET ASSETS	2021	2020
Total Net Assets, end of year	\$15,211,697	\$14,457,717

The beat goes on ...

There's no doubt that 2021 was a very challenging year. There's also no doubt that ESLT rose to the challenge.

Despite obstacles and the need to change the way we connected with our members, our communities, landowners, and our Native American partners, we pushed forward with strong determination and enthusiasm.

Below are just some of our many accomplishments. We are very proud of these and look forward to adding to our success in protecting the lands and wildlife of the Eastern Sierra in 2022.



Children enjoying a lesson about native plants given by ESLT Education Coordinator Claire Marvet.

20,136



Acres Protected
Through conservation easements and fee land as of December 31, 2021

16,328



Acres Monitored
Through aerial surveillance and on foot

147



Pollinator Gardens
Twelve new gardens established in 2021

24



Community Events
In-person, virtual, and youth education

Where we've been. Where we're going.





P.O. Box 755 Bishop, California 93515

Return Service Requested

WWW.ESLT.ORG (760) 873-4554





21ST ANNIVERSARY LANDS & LEGACY CELEBRATION



Mark Your Calendars for the August 25th Paddle Raise!

With your support, we'll keep moving from WHERE WE'VE BEEN to WHERE WE'RE GOING