

# TRUCKEE DONNER LAND TRUST

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*The Truckee Donner Land Trust preserves and protects scenic, historic and recreational lands with high natural resource values in the greater Truckee Donner region.*



Spring/Summer Newsletter  
Volume 41 ❖ June 2012

*Royal Gorge update, page four*

*Webber Lake/Lacey Meadows update, page six*

*Another acquisition in the Martis Valley, page seven*

*Thank you to our donors, page eight*

# A MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

*Dear Friends,*

I have been on the Board of the Truckee Donner Land Trust since 2000. During my tenure, I have seen the organization evolve from one that could barely make the next month's payroll into a professionally managed and highly successful conservation organization. I am continually amazed by our success, resulting from a lot of hard work with a touch of luck.

In addition, the Land Trust is applying to the Land Trust Alliance for accreditation, certifying that it meets a rigorous set of standards for land acquisition, stewardship, finances, and ethics.

Today, the Land Trust – your land trust – is poised to close in 2012 on one of its most important acquisitions among a long list of conservation victories: Webber Lake and Lacey Meadows. This acquisition totals more than 3,000 acres, of which over 1,500 acres include Lacey Meadows, one of the finest sub-alpine meadows in the Northern Sierra.

To gain a perspective on how big this news is, consider that Webber Lake has been in the Johnson Family for nearly a 100 years and never for sale. This is a once in a generation, if not a century, opportunity.

Thanks to a number of key conservation partners: the Wildlife Conservation Board, the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, the Northern Sierra Partnership, and many



*Van Norden Meadow from The Pacific Crest Trail. Its protection has been a priority for the Land Trust for 20 years. Photo: Sam Okamoto from Drunken Monkey.*

supporters like you, we are close to lining up the needed funding to complete the protection of Webber Lake. That Webber Lake and Royal Gorge (see pg. 4) are happening concurrently makes me dizzy, not to mention the frantic pace our staff is working at.

With Royal Gorge, we are embarking on a campaign to raise more than \$10 million in the next six months. To my knowledge, nothing like this has ever been done in terms of fundraising for the greater Truckee Donner Summit region. But we have never seen such an enthusiastic response by supporters to empty their pockets to fulfill their convictions. I hope you will consider joining thousands of other donors and me to once and for all protect this magnificent landscape.

The Truckee Donner Land Trust has never failed to close a deal for lack of funding. With such a generous and diverse group of partners, we are confident we never will.

*Warm regards,*

*Bill Thauvette*

*Bill Thauvette  
Board President*



*Lacey Norris and Frances Hamilton on a biological inventory of Lacey Meadows. A field of alpine buttercups is behind.*

# TRAILS UPDATE

The lengthy delay of the beginning of the 2011-2012 winter season left the regional trails open for hiking, mountain biking, and equestrian use well into the New Year. When the trails were too icy for use, Mother Nature sent some warm days our way, melting the ice and providing downright balmy temperatures. Winter finally did arrive and staff began planning trail construction and maintenance for 2012.

Although most trail use occurs when snow has melted, many of the trail networks on Land Trust properties are great for year-round recreation including cross-country skiing and snowshoeing. One of the most recent Land Trust acquisitions, Donner Summit Canyon, has a network of trails that are excellent for winter recreation. Thanks to a partnership with the Town of Truckee, the parking lot will be paved and plowed year round.

The Land Trust has a full slate of maintenance, trail design and planning, trail head improvements, and new signage to be completed. Staff is excited to partner with the Tahoe Donner Association to complete the design and permitting on the remainder of the Donner Lake Rim Trail north of Interstate 80. Although no dirt will be turned in the construction of the trail this year, completing the paperwork necessary is a large step (or pedal stroke) forward. The Land Trust is also partnering with the Truckee River Watershed Council to mitigate erosion

in Negro Canyon while re-routing the steep portion of the Wendin Way access trail to the Rim Trail. This too will be in the permitting stage for 2012, but there is some likelihood construction - and decommissioning the old trail - will begin in fall.

In anticipation of completing the Webber Lake acquisition in the fall of 2012, the Land Trust will ready the property for public use by creating two new trailheads for access to Lacey Meadows.

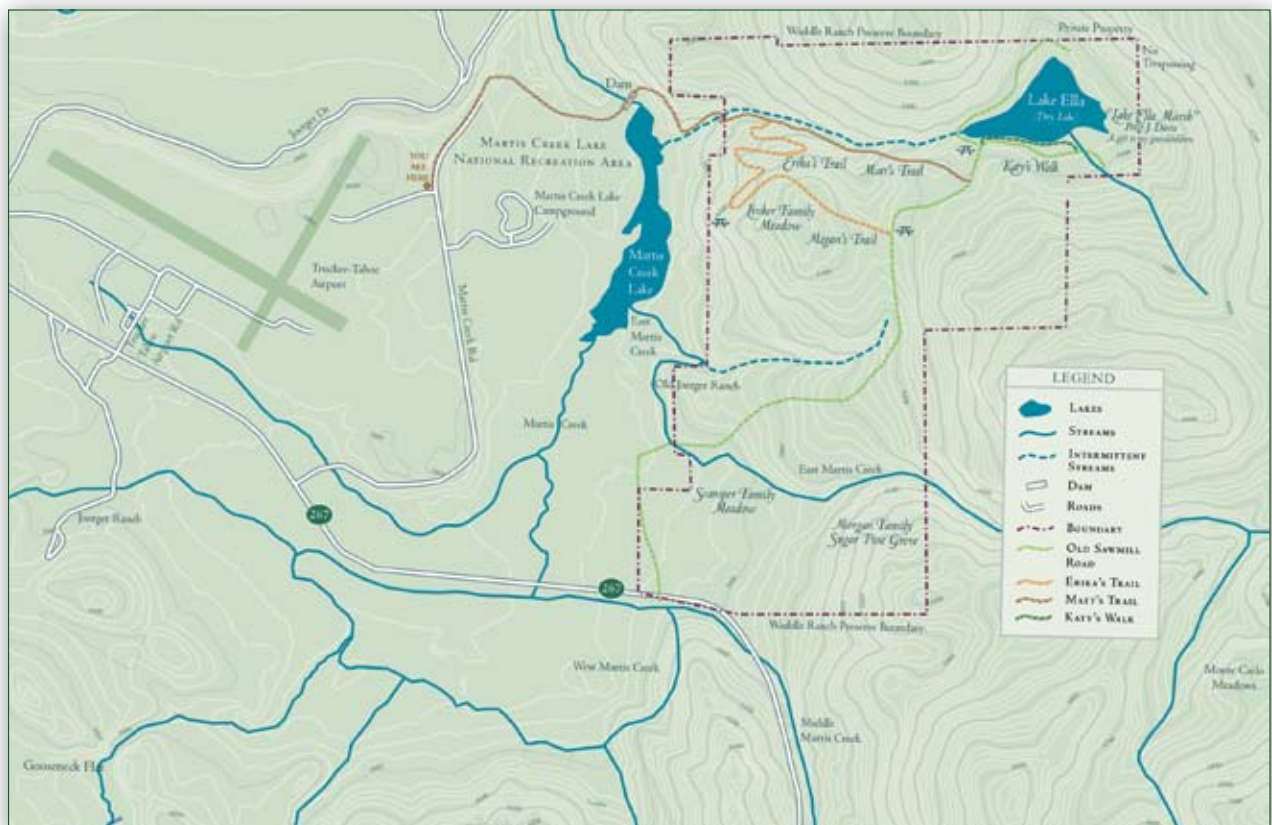
The Land Trust will also continue Gooddirtyfun, the volunteer trail maintenance partnership with the Truckee Trails Foundation to complete maintenance on area trails, including the trails at Waddle Ranch, the Rim Trail, and the Pacific Crest Trail. Volunteer trail maintenance days



Volunteers breaking new trail at Waddle Ranch Preserve using high-tech tools, a McLeod and a pick Mattock.

will be Wednesday evenings from June 15th through October 5th and select Saturdays. If you would like to participate in Gooddirtyfun trail maintenance, please contact Land Trust Stewardship Director John Svahn, at [john@tdlandtrust.org](mailto:john@tdlandtrust.org), 530-582-4711.

**Please visit the Land Trust website, [www.tdlandtrust.org](http://www.tdlandtrust.org), for trail maps, route descriptions, and directions to trailheads. We hope to see you on the trail!**



An updated trail map of Waddle Ranch Preserve, thanks to the hundreds of volunteers that made the new trails possible.

# AN OPPORTUNITY ON

## The Royal Gorge Acquisition

The historic and scenic 3,000-acre Royal Gorge property is located in a beautiful valley just west of Donner Pass. It contains tall peaks, old-growth forests, lakes, streams and meadows, and is steeped in history containing portions of Native American trade routes, the Overland Emigrant Trail and the transcontinental railroad.

As of this writing, the Land Trust, in partnership with The Trust for Public Land, has not signed a purchase and sale agreement. We are confident, however, that if we are not the only buyer, we are the strongest and most logical buyer. We will prevail.

In 2005, two developers purchased the property, later proposing a 950-unit subdivision

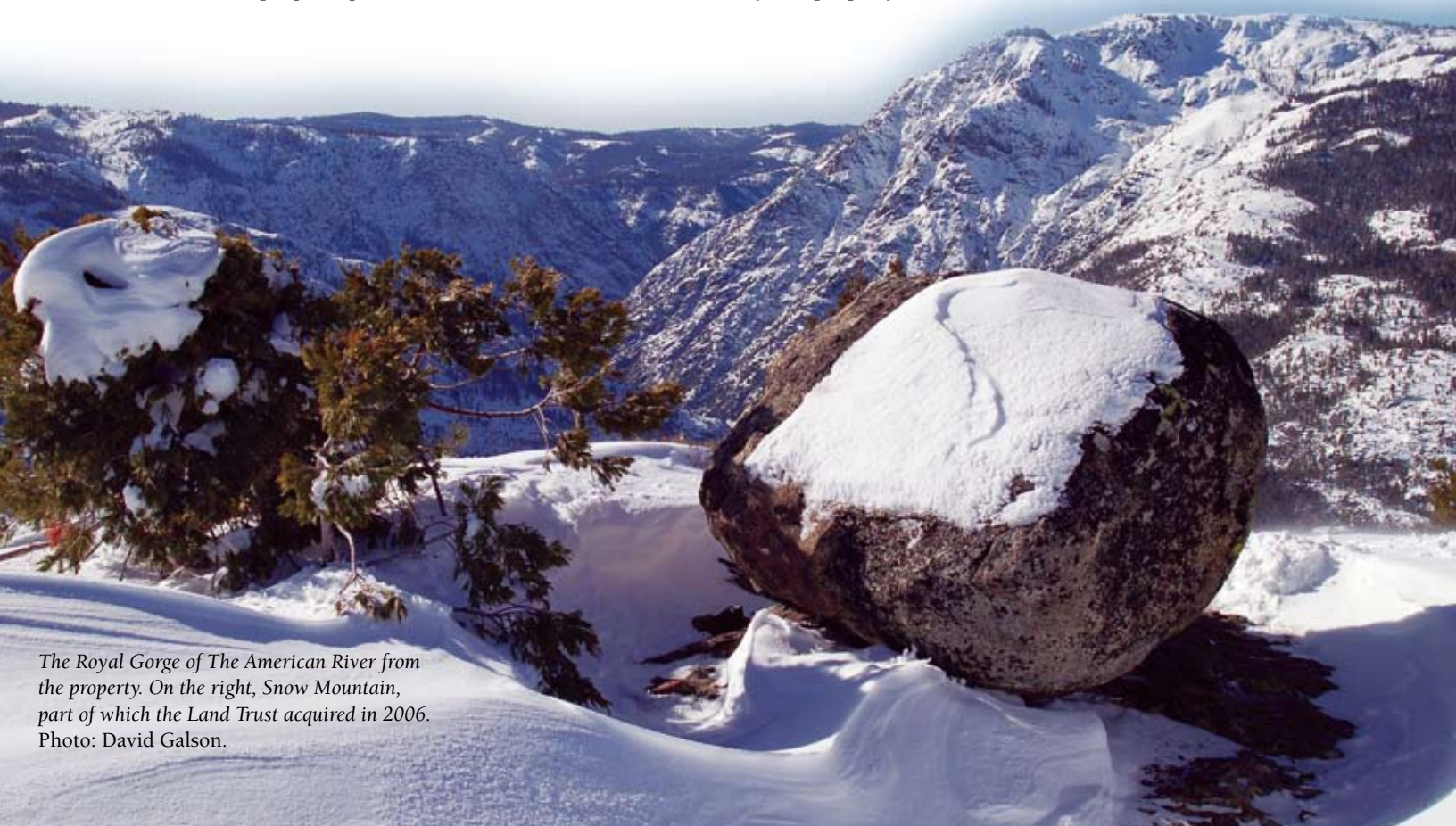
that met strong opposition from local residents and environmental groups. Nearly seven years later, without a subdivision application ever having been submitted, the bank initiated foreclosure proceedings and the developers threw in the towel.

The Land Trust and multiple stakeholders are now underway with an unprecedented campaign to forever protect this property. The task is daunting, but we are confident that, with a truly engaged community and your help, we will succeed.

Van Norden Meadow, located on the property, deserves special mention. Van Norden Meadow is one of the largest sub-alpine meadows north of Yosemite's Tuolumne Meadows. Additionally, the property

contains the headwaters for two major rivers: the North Fork American and South Yuba Rivers, which are critical watersheds for California's water supply. Royal Gorge ski area, the largest Nordic ski area in North America and an important contributor to the local economy, is located on the hills and meadows of its namesake property.

The property provides an extremely large, complex, and high quality Sierran habitat identified as a priority for biodiversity conservation in the Sierra Nevada.



*The Royal Gorge of The American River from the property. On the right, Snow Mountain, part of which the Land Trust acquired in 2006. Photo: David Galson.*

# DONNER SUMMIT CONTINUES

## The region that encompasses Royal Gorge contains:

- ✦ 115 species of butterflies
- ✦ 16 species of amphibians including potential habitat for the endangered mountain yellow-legged frog
- ✦ 20 species of mammals including mule deer, black bear, bobcat, mountain lion, and fur-bearing mammals such as marten
- ✦ At least 100 species of birds including numerous species of waterfowl, white pelicans, yellow warbler, and potentially willow flycatcher
- ✦ Trees that sprouted in the 13th century
- ✦ More than 500 species of vascular plants, representing more than one third of all plant families in California, including 25 species of rare or sensitive plants
- ✦ Water critical to native steelhead trout and Chinook salmon populations downstream

At the close of escrow, the Truckee Donner Land Trust will own the property in fee. Future stewardship of the property is something the Land Trust will approach with the highest degree of seriousness and a full understanding of the responsibility involved. This is truly a substantial undertaking. Restoring the ski area to its former prominence as the premier Nordic area in North America is a top priority. Ski area operations will likely be run by Sugar Bowl, who plans extensive remodeling of the facilities, investments in improved grooming, expanding the system of trails, and improving the user experience through its legendary customer service.

In addition, much-needed forest fuels management, both for fire safety and for meadow restoration, will need to be completed.

When the ski area is closed for the season, the entire property will open to the public for non-motorized recreation.

The Land Trust and its partners are committed to a public planning process to create a network of sustainably designed trails and provide new recreation opportunities. Fundraising to cover the cost of caring for the property and managing it for public recreation is a critical component of the funding plan.

In the next year, we have the opportunity to protect one of the iconic unprotected properties in the Northern Sierra, if not the entire Sierra Nevada. By protecting Royal Gorge and Donner Summit, we not only will protect critical wildlife, recreational and scenic resources on the property, but also will significantly advance the decades-long effort to ensure a healthy and sustainable forest and mountain ecosystem along the Sierra Crest, from Lake Tahoe north to the Sierra Buttes. We will not be able to accomplish this without your help.



Land Trust member Rick Reynolds skating "Sierra Crust." Devil's Peak is in the distance. Photo: Mark Nadell Macbeth Graphics.

# Webber Lake & Lacey Meadows Update



Woolly mules ear, Lacey Meadows and Webber Lake in the distance. Photo: Geoff Griffin.

Thanks to a grant from the Wildlife Conservation Board, the Truckee Donner Land Trust, in partnership with The Trust for Public Land, is poised to close on the Webber Lake/Lacey Meadows acquisition this fall.

This remarkable 3,000-acre property marks the headwaters of the Little Truckee River.

Lacey Meadows and Upper Lacey Meadows are considered one of the highest functioning and pristine sub-alpine meadow systems in the entire Northern Sierra. In terms of natural resource values, Webber Lake and Lacey Meadows might be the most important acquisition the Land Trust has pursued.

The property has been in the Johnson Family for nearly a century. Long time sheep

ranchers from east of Sacramento, William Henry Johnson and later his son, the late Clifton Johnson, used to drive sheep from what today is Granite Bay to Lacey Meadows for summer pasture. "It would take 15 days on the way up, and 10 on the way down," Clif recalled.

"Getting to know the Johnson's and hearing their

stories was one of the most gratifying parts of the deal," Perry Norris, the Land Trust's Executive Director said. "It is nothing short of an honor to have the Johnson's entrust their property to the Land Trust."

While receiving more lucrative offers, the Johnson's elected to sell their property to the Land Trust. "It took nearly a year drinking coffee at their kitchen table, but we came to see that our visions for the property were perfectly aligned," Norris said. The Johnson's also agreed to a "bargain sale," selling the property for well below its appraised value.

Once the Land Trust closes on the property, new trailheads will be constructed off of the historic Henness Pass Road and the Meadow Lake Road, providing non-motorized access to Lacey Meadows and Upper Lacey Meadows. Per the Johnson's wishes, the Land Trust will continue for four years to lease the campground to Ken and Joan Bretthauer. After four years, the campground will be open to the public.

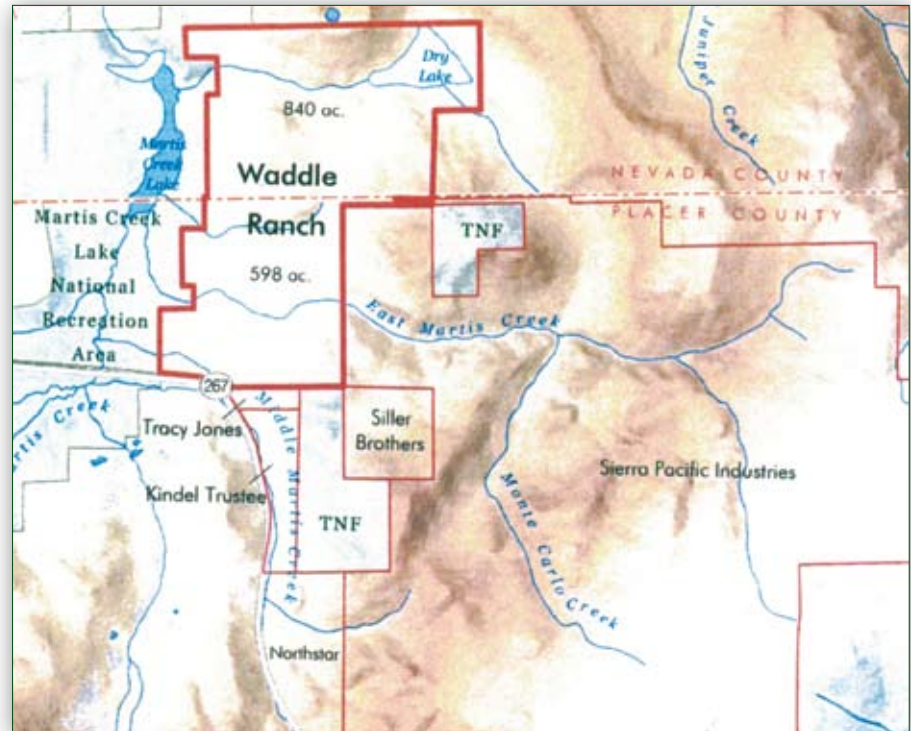


Sheep have been grazing in Lacey Meadows for well over a century. Grazing is not allowed until the grasses have gone to seed, ensuring a vibrant and functioning meadow returns every spring. Photo: Sam Okamoto from Drunken Monkey.

# Another Acquisition in the Martis Valley

In the wake of the Truckee Donner Land Trust's acquisition of much larger properties with enormous natural resources and recreation values, we're pleased to bring news of the acquisition of a much smaller, but very conspicuous property in the Martis Valley. Sandwiched between Waddle Ranch Preserve and Martis Creek Estates is our newest acquisition, acquired by the Land Trust and the Truckee Tahoe Airport District this spring. Although it is only slightly more than 30 acres in size, the property contains significant resource values and is important for the construction of future regional trails. It is also a critical part of the Land Trust's strategic goal to eliminate the threat of residential development on the Waddle side of SR 267 and ensure contiguous natural lands from Martis Creek Reservoir to Mt. Rose Wilderness Area and Toiyabe National Forest.

The property contains meadow, riparian, and upland habitat similar to the habitat found on Waddle Ranch Preserve and Martis Creek Estates. There are numerous springs that provide clean, clear, and cold water to Martis Creek, which is critical to downstream riparian habitat. The meadows, visible from SR 267, burst with camas



The new acquisition is labeled as Tracy Jones. Kindell Trustee is Martis Creek Estates, acquired by the Land Trust in 2011. Waddle Ranch was acquired in 2007. Discussions are underway with multiple stakeholders to protect the Sierra Pacific Industries acreage.

lilies each spring and then again with mid-summer blooms later in the year. The property is also a foraging area for the Loyalton-Truckee mule deer herd and home to several species of meadow-loving birds, including warblers and western tanagers. Lastly, it is a central point in the eastern viewshed of Martis Valley.



Martis Valley is critical range for the Loyalton-Truckee deer herd. Photo: Janet Zipser Zipkin.

The Land Trust and its partners have big plans for this small property. Over the next few years, the Land Trust will complete needed fuels management on the property with funding from the Truckee Tahoe Airport District and The Martis Fund. Additionally, the Land Trust will begin planning a new trail connecting Martis Creek Estates with Waddle Ranch Preserve and the Martis Peak network of roads and trails. Numerous partners and stakeholders, led by the Truckee River Watershed Council, are working to complete large-scale watercourse restorations in the Martis Basin. One of the projects under consideration is to restore Middle Martis Creek by diverting the creek into its historic drainage. This will re-water meadows on the property and Waddle Ranch Preserve, and mitigate spring flooding that spills onto the highway.

The property is open to the public.

# THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS

Your generous and continued support preserves the scenic, recreational and historic lands that we all cherish.

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*Arnica (Asteracae)*



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Lorrie Poch  
The Pour House  
Puma Springs Vineyards  
The Richardson House  
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TIP Printing & Graphics, Inc.  
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Cathy & Tom Van Berkem  
Scott Wall Forestry  
WeKnow80.com  
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Dennis E. Zirbel, Architect

# 2012 MEMBER HIKES

The Land Trust staff and Board are pleased to offer another round of great hikes for our members. These hikes explore lands the Land Trust has protected. Hurry and sign up by contacting K.V. at (530) 582-4711 or kv@tlandtrust.org. Sorry, no dogs.



## Cut-out Calendar of 2012 Hikes, Events & Trail Building

- July 7 Northern Sierra Partnership BBQ at Independence Lake Preserve
- July 14 Historic Summit Canyon Hike
- July 28 Mt. Lola Hike
- August 18 Bird Watching at Perazzo Meadows
- August 26 Sugar Bowl's Lake Mary Cabin Benefit Dinner
- Sept 8-9 Trails and Vistas at Donner Ski Ranch

### Trailbuilding

Every Wednesday night starting June 15th through October 5th, from 4 p.m. to dark. Sign up at: [www.gooddirtyfun.org](http://www.gooddirtyfun.org).

For groups of four or more who want to work on a weekend day, contact John Svahn at 530-582-4711, [john@tlandtrust.org](mailto:john@tlandtrust.org).

### Historic Donner Summit Canyon

Saturday, July 14th

Nevada County Supervisor, Ted Owens, and Land Trust Board member Janet Zipser Zipkin will take hikers on one of our newest acquisitions that was previously closed to public use. Enjoy spectacular views of Donner Lake, Donner Peak, and Schallenberger Ridge. While hiking, learn the history of Donner Summit, which is often referred to as the most historically significant square mile in the State of California. Some of the historical features seen along the hike include Native American petroglyphs, China Wall, the world's first automobile underpass, and the Lincoln Highway. **Distance and difficulty: 3-4 hours; moderate to strenuous. Limit: 15 people.**

### Mt. Lola - the Highest Peak in Nevada County

Saturday, July 28th

Mt. Lola is named after the famed dancer, actress and courtesan, Lola Montez, who lived for a time in nearby Grass Valley in 1853. For nearly 3 miles, the Mt Lola trail passes through land acquired by the Land Trust and its partners, including beautiful Cold Stream Meadow. From the summit of Mt Lola, hikers will enjoy panoramic views of the Sierra Crest from Freel Peak to Mt Lassen, as well as Independence Lake, also acquired by the Land Trust and its partners. Land Trust Board member Geoff Griffin leads this inspiring hike where you can sign the summit register at 9,143 feet. **Distance and difficulty: 11 miles roundtrip; strenuous. Limit: 20 people.**

### Bird Watching at Perazzo Meadows

Saturday, August 18th

Ted Beedy of the Bear Yuba Land Trust lends his birding expertise for this special outing to observe the numerous birds of beautiful Perazzo Meadows. Distance and difficulty: 2 miles; easy. Limit: 10 people.

We look forward to seeing you on one of our amazing hikes!



On the Mt. Lola trail. Photo: Janet Zipser Zipkin.



# THANK YOU TO OUR BUSINESS PARTNERS

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**For more information about  
 our Business Partner program,  
 call us at 530-582-4711.**

## Save the Date

### Northern Sierra Partnership BBQ at Independence Lake - July 7

Join the partners of the Northern Sierra Partnership - Feather River Land Trust, The Nature Conservancy, Sierra Business Council, Truckee Donner Land Trust, and The Trust for Public Land - as we celebrate our conservation successes with a special event at Independence Lake Preserve.

If you are interested in attending, call Kellie Wright at 530-582-4711, [kellie@tdlandtrust.org](mailto:kellie@tdlandtrust.org).

### Dine at Sugar Bowl's Lake Mary Cabin and Help the Land Trust - August 26

Sugar Bowl Resort is hosting benefit dinners at their lovely Lake Mary Cabin. On August 26th, a percentage of their gross earnings will go to the Land Trust. Enjoy French inspired California cuisine and spacious, patio-style dining with views of Lake Mary, the Palisades and Mt. Disney. 5:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. Sugar Bowl's Lake Mary Cabin. Reservations: 530-426-7002.

### Trails and Vistas - September 8-9

Mark your calendar for the region's most unique event. Experience live performances and installation art along a gentle, guided hike during the region's only art-hike. More than 30 talented artists collaborate to present Trails and Vistas signature art hikes. This year's theme is "The Dreaming Tree", and the event will be hosted at Donner Ski Ranch, September 8th and 9th. Learn more and sign up at [www.trailsandvistas.org](http://www.trailsandvistas.org).



Land Trust executive director Perry Norris and wife Seana Doherty enjoy spectacular views and food at Sugar Bowl's Lake Mary Cabin. Photo courtesy of Sugar Bowl.

## A Special Thanks

The Truckee Donner Land Trust thanks David Brown and Jeff Hamilton for their outstanding service on the Truckee Donner Land Trust's Board of Directors. Brown and Hamilton were elected to the Board in 2006 and have served on the Lands Committee, providing valuable leadership and best management practices for land acquisitions. Hamilton also presided as Board Secretary. Though no longer serving on the Board of Directors, they will continue to assist the Land Trust as members of the Lands Committee. Both live in Truckee.

# BUSINESS PARTNER PROFILE

Dan & Sonja Martin

Tahoe Oral Surgery & Implant Center

Northern California natives, Dan and Sonja Martin, met through their mutual love of river running during a rafting trip through the Grand Canyon. Married in 2005, their first child Donovan was quickly followed by his sister Grayson.

After years of vacationing in the area, the family moved to Truckee in 2009, for its warm, small town community, the beauty of the surrounding area, and immediate access to trails and rivers.

Tahoe Oral Surgery and Implant Center opened in March 2010. In inheriting the previous owner's office space plans were quickly made to build a state-of-the-art oral surgery office. This past March, they opened the new office space, designed for the best patient care, comfort, and the latest technology in x-rays and 3D imaging. They are proud members of 1% for the Planet, whereby 1% of their revenue is donated to non-profit organizations who are doing work in environmental conservation, preservation, education, and stewardship.

The Martins joined the Land Trust to preserve the beauty of the area for their children and their children's children. Says Sonja, "We are so blessed to live in an area as environmentally rich as the Tahoe Basin. We think it is vital to take steps to protect special areas from development."

The Martins feel that the Land Trust helps ensure a future for their children. Says Dan, "We support the Truckee Donner Land Trust because the work they do ensures that our most precious natural areas will continue to be special, pristine places for generations to come."



*The Martin's, Sonja, Donovan, Grayson and Dan, love spending time together outdoors.*



*The Sierra Pacific Industries Henness Pass Conservation Easement, totaling over 7,200 acres, is the first ever to be recorded with the largest private landowner in California. The Sierra Buttes are in the background. Photo: 2010RichReidPhotography.com.*

# A LETTER FROM A VISITOR TO SUMMIT CANYON

**Well, ah shucks...**

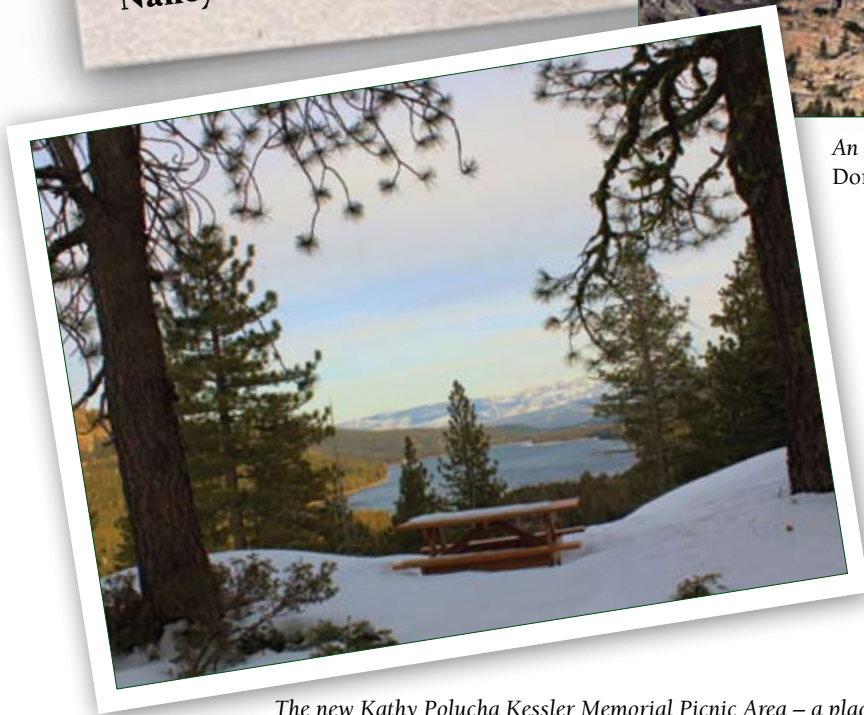
Words cannot express my gratitude for the gift you have given... to us, and to future generations. My family has "cabined" at Donner Lake since 1985. I enjoyed one season of hiking and exploring Summit Canyon (our backyard) before it was closed to the public by the previous owner. Twenty-five years later, I am in profound awe at the work you have done. What an incredible experience to be able to walk, explore theorize what must have been here, there, over-there, and the hows, the whys, the "look at this!" (carvings on the aspens, signs on the rocks, stumps, pieces of road, bridge,) it is all amazing. My family and I have traipsed the trails together, explored around rocks, trees, and roads, hypothesized and solved questions, and basked in the beauty of the pines with the soft bed of pine needles underneath our curious feet. The soft amber glow of that canyon just prior to sunset is heaven sent.

You have opened a door in my mind, my heart, and my soul. I look forward to helping you in the future, and again – my deepest gratitude.

Sincerely,  
Nancy Woods



An historic photo looking up Summit Canyon. Photo courtesy of Donner Summit Historical Society.



The new Kathy Polucha Kessler Memorial Picnic Area – a place to rest and enjoy the view. At the trailhead, a map is available providing directions to the property's many landmarks.

## Sunset Magazine awards Truckee Donner Land Trust its Environmental Award!

Sunset magazine has named The Truckee Donner Land Trust as one of their winners of Sunset's 2012 Environmental Awards, which were featured in the March 2012 issue of Sunset. Independence Lake won in the category of best lake or lakeshore preservation. As an award winner, we join the ranks of the most creative and effective environmental organizations in the West.

*The Truckee Donner Land Trust was founded in 1990 to preserve and protect scenic, historic and recreational lands with high natural resource values in the greater Truckee Donner region.*

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www.tdlandtrust.org

The Truckee Donner Land Trust is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization. All donations to the Land Trust may be tax-deductible under the Internal Revenue Service Code.

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#### COVER PHOTO:

*Lake Van Norden and Mt Judah.*  
Photo: David Galson.



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*Webber Lake at sunset; a spectacle enjoyed by generations.* Photo: Sam Okamoto from Drunken Monkey.



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