

# The Rancho Ventura Conservation Trust

# Wildlife corridor connects to Los Padres National Forest

BY LISA CAREY

Rancho Ventura Conservation Trust is organized as a public benefit not-for-profit corporation 501(c)(3) dedicated to permanently conserving and enhancing of the Ventura Foothills above the City of Ventura.

Development pressure in the Ventura Foothills is intense due to critical housing shortages in the area. The current 860 acres of Trust land, 752 acres of land under purchase agreement, and neighboring properties are some of the last remaining undeveloped, coastal view land of its size in coastal Ventura County for open space, critical habitat, endangered species protection and rangeland preservation.

Connecting our youth to the wonder of nature is a primary goal of Rancho Ventura. Recently 84 children from the Oxnard Migrant Science Academy came up the road in big yellow school buses for a field trip. The students ranged in ages from pre-school to eighth grade. While their ages and knowledge of science varied, what they held in common was anticipation and excitement about the ranch they came to visit.

"The most common questions we receive from our youth is about animals. Where and what kind of animals are there on the land they ask. This is exactly what we want to hear!" says Bonnie Atmore, Rancho Ventura President. For the Rancho Ventura Trustees, staff, interns and volunteers there is a tremendous sense of joy in being ambassadors on behalf of the wildlife that call these Ventura hillsides home. Students and teachers alike are delighted to learn about the abundant wildlife at Rancho Ventura.



Rancho Ventura is committed to upholding the legacy between the land and the land steward.

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While the land is now entrusted to Rancho Ventura, what continues on is the practice of holistic land management. Like his predecessors for decades, Richard Atmore, rancher and environmentalist and now co-founder of Rancho Ventura, has measured the health of the land by the health of the wildlife carrying capacity. Richard goes on to say, "healthy land carries healthy wildlife populations."

Every canyon on the ranch has its own ecosystem. All together these ecosystems provide an important wildlife corridor that provides connectivity for wildlife

movement up to the Los Padre National Forest. The Department of Fish & Wildlife has recognized the importance of Rancho Ventura's habitat, and the land was included into a conceptual area protection plan in partnership with the Wildlife Conservation Board which evaluates the biological values of property. Wildlife thrives in Rancho Ventura's diverse habitat consisting of grasslands, coastal sage scrub, chaparrals, oak woodlands and riparian corridors that together make for a mosaic of habitat diversity for various mammals, birds and insects.

Rancho Ventura is committed to continuing best land management practices so that the carrying capacity of the land's wildlife will remain prolific. Holistically managed land supports essential wildlife populations. Muddy seeps are identified as places to create a watering spot. Springs are developed into cattle troughs providing a fresh source of water. The cattle are rotated through sixteen pastures for a few months of the year. The wildlife has access to clean water year-round which provides a tremendous benefit in their ability to thrive. Holistic management through sound stewardship increases the number of game animals present on the conservation trust. That way the Apex predators have plenty of their natural prey and leave the domestic animals alone.

Permanent preservation of the Ventura hillsides is a first crucial step towards providing a theatre to protect habitat. The goals of the Rancho Ventura are to improve the overall ecological habitat value in the Ventura hillsides, improve wildlife carrying capacity, native plant diversity, control or eradicate invasive plants, protect oak woodlands and riparian corridors.

As a refuge for visitors, threatened and endangered plant and animal species, Rancho Ventura is a haven where nature and nurture unite as home.



## Did you know?

**Baby mountain lions** are called "cubs" or "kittens." Young mountain lions have spots, but adults do not.

Mountain lions can leap as far as high as **15 feet** and as far as **40 feet**.

There are an estimated **30,000** mountain lions in the western U.S.

**RANCHO**  
**VENTURA**  
CONSERVATION TRUST

The mission of the Rancho Ventura Conservation Land Trust is to protect the natural diversity, scenic open space and agricultural vitality of our Ventura County ranch and coastal areas.

**Join us in conserving these hillsides forever.**

Go to [venturaconservation.com](http://venturaconservation.com) or call 805-644-6851  
[www.facebook.com/RanchoVenturaConservationTrust](https://www.facebook.com/RanchoVenturaConservationTrust)