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Audubon helps to Preserve Parker Ranch: A Victory for Conservation and Western Heritage

Conservation Easement protects critical portion of California coast to the Sierra Nevada wildlife corridor



Caliente, CA, 7 May 2008

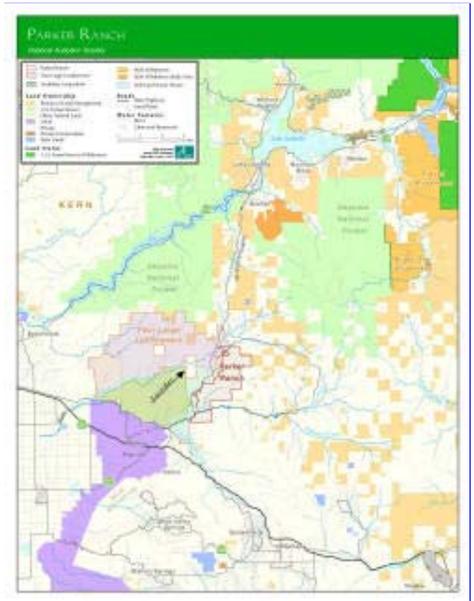
Audubon California is pleased to announce the acquisition of a conservation easement (CE) on the 9,576 acre Parker Ranch in the southern Sierra Nevada of Kern County. Partnering with The Nature Conservancy (who will manage the CE), the California Wildlife Conservation Board and Audubon California used grant money to purchase protection from housing development on this critical piece of wild ranchland.

"It was a pleasure to meet the Parker's and help to preserve their ranch. It didn't take long to see how deeply they are committed to the land and ultimately that commitment is why this ranch is protected," says Reed Tollefson, manager of Audubon California's Kern River Preserve.

A horseshoe of mountains encircles the southern San Joaquin Valley; these mountains are the critical link between the Coast Ranges, Transverse Ranges, Tehachapi Mountains and the Sierra Nevada. Parker Ranch is one of several private ranches at the southern end of the Sierra Nevada that protect the biological and genetic diversity of numerous mammals (black bear, gray fox, mule deer, bighorn sheep to name a few) that cross through this corridor.

The significance of the protection of Parker Ranch in preserving California's last wild spaces cannot be taken for granted in this land of little rain and burgeoning sprawl. Neighboring ranches and parcels of land are being subdivided and then sold to prospective developers effectively destroying native lands and fencing out wildlife.

Parker Ranch is home to sycamore canyons, gray pine forests, juniper/oak woodlands, annual grasslands, wet meadows, and spectacular displays of annual spring wildflowers. The area supports wildlife from desert, montane, and grassland environments and is a vital migration corridor for animals between these ecologically distinct regions. Parker Ranch also supports a small population



Golden Eagles forage on the ranch



Significant grasslands are preserved

of the federally endangered Bakersfield Cactus and rare species such as the Piute Mountains navarretia, golden eagle, coast horned lizard, Cooper's hawk and Tehachapi slender salamander.

Owned by the Parker family for five generations the ranch is an example of responsible stewardship of the land and will remain so for generations to come. Bill and Tom Parker's eyes sparkle when they speak of their love for the land and the ranching lifestyle. "We consider ourselves land stewards first and ranchers second," says Bill Parker, a family member and fourth generation rancher. "Knowing that this ranch will remain just as it is now, for our children, their children and the generations to come, is a dream come true."

This conservation outcome is a win-win situation that continues the Parker family legacy and leaves the land in open space in perpetuity for the benefit of the people of California and its wild heritage.



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Parker Ranch Conservation Easement May 2008

- The development rights on 9,576-acres of the Parker Ranch were acquired in early May 2008.
- Parker Ranch is a critical link for wildlife in the coast to the Sierra Nevada.



Bakersfield Cactus - federally endangered



Blue Oak Woodlands and annual grassland



Coast Horned Lizard

For over 100 years Audubon has been protecting birds and other wildlife and the habitat that supports them. Our national network of community-based nature centers and chapters, scientific and educational programs, and advocacy on behalf of areas sustaining important bird populations, engage millions of people of all ages and backgrounds in positive conservation experiences.

Map courtesy GreenInfo.org. Photos courtesy Alison Sheehey © NatureAlii.org

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