



NEWS & VIEWS

Fall 2025

WHAT'S INSIDE

A Note From the Executive Director	2
Championing Outdoor Education	3
1,168 Acres Permanently Conserved in Doolan Canyon	4
In Conversation With Winery Owner and Farmer Julio Covarrubias	6
City Nature Challenge	8
Tiny Seeds, Big Impact: Partnering for Pollinator Health	9
Celebrating the Winners of Our Annual Photo Contest	10



A HISTORIC WIN FOR LOCAL CONSERVATION!

THIS SEASON, WE ARE EXCITED to share stories of cultivation, connection, and conservation across the Tri-Valley. This year marked a major milestone: **TVC's largest conservation easement in our organization's history, protecting 1,168 acres in Doolan Canyon between Dublin and Livermore!** We are proud to be significantly expanding critical wildlife habitat, permanently safeguarding scenic open space, and ensuring that this landscape is protected for future generations to enjoy.

Read on for a conversation with Julio Covarrubias, who shares lessons from his journey from a farmworker at Wente Vineyards to proud owner of 20 acres of vineyards in his winegrowing operation, Casa de Viñas. This year also marked Livermore's first year participating in the global City Nature Challenge. Finally, see the showcase of the winning images from our popular 2025 "Views in the Valley" Photo Competition.





BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Scott Akin, *Chair*
Jennifer Yeamans *Vice-Chair*
Gina Bonanno, *Secretary*
James Folta, *Treasurer*
Lou Astbury
David Best
Charles Marker
Tamara Reus
Cynthia Ross
Mark Triska
Harrison Wood

STAFF

Tyler Gargiulo
Stewardship Associate Manager
Diana Roberts
Conservation Manager
Haley Rose
Operations Assistant
Rebecca Spector
Executive Director
Victoria Tichy
*Communications and
Development Manager*

Dear Friends,

AS THE LEAVES BEGIN TO TURN COLOR and the hills take on their golden fall glow, I find myself reflecting on my first year as Executive Director of Tri-Valley Conservancy. It's been an inspiring and productive year!

In my new role, I've had the joy of exploring our region more deeply. This has included visiting Sycamore Grove Park and walking over the bridge that TVC "built," tagging along on stewardship visits on some of our 6,100 acres of lands protected under conservation easement (one which included a dramatic baby barn owl rescue by TVC stewardship staff), meeting with local leaders, and wine-tasting at nearby vineyards. Each outing has solidified the immense value of our work to preserve open space, protect wildlife habitat, and support the agricultural heritage of this very special region.

This last year included some incredible milestones for TVC. I'm particularly proud of the acquisition of our largest conservation easement to date, permanently protecting 1,168 acres in biologically diverse Doolan Canyon! This corridor between Livermore and Dublin provides habitat for threatened and endangered species, and supports seasonal wetlands, riparian corridors, and Cottonwood Creek. Doolan Canyon has long been a priority for permanent protection by both TVC and the community, and this easement, in addition to our previously protected adjacent conservation easement, ensures the area remains as open space, provides habitat for a variety of species, and is visually beautiful for residents and visitors to enjoy.

Through our Youth in Nature outdoor education program, over the past year we engaged with over a thousand fourth-grade students across Livermore and Pleasanton. This program bridges a growing gap in youth access to nature and environmental education, providing all students with opportunities to connect with the natural world, build resilience, and foster a lifelong appreciation for conservation.

I'm excited about several new conservation easements we have in the works, owl boxes being built and installed by our dedicated stewardship staff, and new opportunities to continue to support viticulture in the region.

Thank you for supporting and guiding our important work! Your belief in conservation, the preservation of viticulture, and the future of the Tri-Valley is what makes this work possible.

Onwards together,

Rebecca (Becki) Spector
Executive Director





“The Holdener Park field trip was one of my favorite field trips throughout the school years and I really liked hanging out under the buckeye tree. The birds and the flowers and the hike and the trees are all so beautiful. Thank you Mrs. Brown (and the Tri-Valley Conservancy)!”

—Kira, 4th Grade Student at Mohr Elementary School

CHAMPIONING OUTDOOR EDUCATION

TVC’S DISCOVERY: YOUTH IN NATURE (YIN) is designed for 4th-grade classes to inspire children to become stewards of the land and foster an appreciation for the natural space in our community. Students take part in three days of activities and adventure with an educator from Tri-Valley Conservancy, including a field trip to Holdener Park. With funding from TVC and our partners, the entire program is provided free of charge to students and schools to make the program accessible.

Many of the 4th-grade students we serve through our Youth in Nature program, particularly those from low-income and underserved communities, have limited opportunities to access green spaces. For some, the program’s field trip is their first experience exploring nature.

The program emphasizes the interconnectedness of human health and environmental health, teaching students about topics such as watersheds, biodiversity, and land stewardship. Through hands-on activities and guided exploration, students learn how the health of our environment directly impacts their well-being. This education and experience empowers students to take actions within their communities, contributing to broader environmental sustainability and public health outcomes.

IN THE PAST 10 YEARS WE HAVE REACHED:

6615
STUDENTS

212
CLASSROOMS

12
SCHOOLS

Thank you to the donors and sponsors that make this program possible!



To support Youth in Nature or other programs, make a donation today!





1,168 ACRES PERMANENTLY CONSERVED

TRI-VALLEY CONSERVANCY is thrilled to announce the largest conservation easement in our organization's history! In July 2025, 1,168 acres in Doolan Canyon—biologically rich land between Livermore and Dublin—were placed under permanent protection through a conservation easement established within a conservation bank. This is a huge milestone for TVC and a significant conservation win for the entire Tri-Valley region!

Doolan Canyon has long been recognized for its ecological, scenic, and agricultural value. The new easement is adjacent to the 178-acre Doolan Canyon property protected by TVC in 2018, creating a continuous conservation area totaling 1,341 acres. The area is also an essential part of the greenbelt separating the cities of Livermore and Dublin.

The landscape includes vernal pools, seasonal and perennial

wetlands, stock ponds, and oak-lined creek beds. Cottonwood Creek flows through the site, providing a natural corridor for wildlife movement and hydrological function. Doolan Canyon is home to the California red-legged frog, California tiger salamander, golden eagle, western burrowing owl, and contains habitat suitable for the San Joaquin kit fox.

Maintaining the health and diversity of this ecosystem benefits not only the species that live there, but also the broader landscape through climate regulation, water filtration, and fire resilience. Doolan Canyon has long been a priority for permanent protection by both TVC and the community, and this conservation bank, in addition to our previous conservation easement, ensures the area remains as open space, provides habitat for a variety of species, and is visually beautiful for residents and visitors to enjoy.

Carefully managed livestock grazing keeps grasslands healthy, controls invasive species, and supports resilient habitat for native plants and animals. Photo by Alessa Kim.





Hoppy Habitat for California Red-Legged Frogs

BY NATASHA ATKINS
TVC FIELD STUDIES INTERN

CALIFORNIA red-legged frogs (CRLF) are a threatened species native to the Tri-Valley and found locally in Livermore. As California's largest native frog, they once ranged across the state but now exist in less than 10% of their former habitat.

These amphibians require both aquatic and terrestrial habitats, preferring to live near ponds, wetlands, streams, lakes, and agricultural stock ponds. If there is no nearby water during dry months, mature frogs can be found in mammal burrows, under rocks or debris, and in cracks at the bottom of dried-out ponds. CRLFs face risks from urban development, water diversion, damming, agriculture, and non-native predators. Urban growth also reduces habitat connectivity, preventing frogs from migrating and finding mates, while also decreasing water availability and increasing pollution.

Protecting CRLF habitat is critical for this species' survival. TVC has been a part of conservation efforts by preserving areas with wetlands and stock ponds, including Doolan Canyon. The newly protected 1,100+ acres allow landscape connectivity, buffering the effects of urbanization. With extinction on the rise globally, conserving large habitats bolsters thriving, bio-diverse ecosystems. TVC is proud to protect land for species like the CRLF, so they're around for generations to come!

The easement also holds cultural and historical importance. Much of Doolan Canyon's landscape has been shaped and maintained by grazing, a practice that will continue under this conservation agreement. Grazing supports native grassland and vernal pool ecosystems by reducing thatch, controlling invasive species, and promoting the growth of native plants. Historically, these systems were maintained by native grazers like deer and occasional wildfires, and cattle will continue to be used to manage the land.

The conservation bank was made possible through a partnership between Natural Resources Group, the bank sponsor; Doolan Canyon Mitigation Associates, Inc., the grantor; and Tri-Valley Conservancy, which serves as the conservation easement holder. As part of this role, TVC will conduct annual monitoring and ensure long-term ecological compliance of the easement lands.



*Top: Old weathered wooden barns are commonplace along Collier Canyon Rd. in Doolan Canyon.
Photo: Thomas America*

*Bottom: Doolan Canyon contains aquatic environments and other important features that the threatened California red-legged frogs need.
Photo: Jorge H. Valdez*



IN CONVERSATION WITH WINERY OWNER AND FARMER JULIO COVARRUBIAS

BY VICTORIA TICHY, TVC COMMUNICATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT MANAGER



“Livermore is not just a region. It's a family, all of the wineries, all of the friends, we are just one family, and everybody helps everybody.”

FOR OVER 53 YEARS, Julio has dedicated his life to winegrowing, including 49 years at the renowned Wente Vineyards. Today, he proudly owns and manages Casa De Viñas, his own 20-acre vineyard, where his passion for wine-making continues to thrive. Julio's journey from Zacatecas, Mexico to Livermore's vineyards is a testament to hard work, perseverance, and love for the craft. Julio also currently sits on Tri-Valley Conservancy's advisory committee, where he weighs in on topics such as farmworker housing and agricultural conservation.

VT: How did you first come to be involved with TVC?

JC: It was through talking to my neighbors, like Mark Triska. I

developed a desire to do something or help in the community, to give something back. Part of my vineyard is under a conservation easement. And thanks to TVC, we are going to have land for generations to come. It's a blessing to be able to save some land for the grandkids.

VT: How did you go from being an agricultural worker to owning your own land and growing operation in Livermore?

JC: I started working in the vineyards at Wente with my father and brothers when I was 17 (Back in 1974). Even after my family left, I stayed for the wine and the beauty of the vineyard. My father had told me, “You're the only one who has great passion; you should

stay here”. And so I stayed working for the Wente family for 49 years and five generations! But I eventually got to a place in my life where I was ready for change.

Right after 9/11 (September 11, 2001), the Wente family decided to sell a small property. I approached them and asked them if I could buy it. It was a lot of money, but I owned 10 properties in Tracy and sold all of them to buy this land. I believe in my love of the land and the love of Livermore. Now here I am, still living and working on the property over 20 years later.

VT: What are your thoughts on the current struggles of the wine industry?

JC: I know we are going through crazy times right now in the industry, but I believe that things are going to get better. I believe so

much that I replanted my five acres of vineyards! I'm not afraid to work harder because I believe in Livermore. I wish more of the neighbors had more positive attitudes during these hard times. It's hard to think about starting all over, and that you might have to work more hours, more days. But when you have a passion, there is a satisfaction at the end of a long day when you get to drink a glass of wine you made and think, "Yeah, I'm doing the right thing."

VT: How have you seen Livermore change in your over 50 years of being here?

JC: Everything has been changing. When I started working here, it was like a new world that was getting bigger and bigger. We got to the point where there were like 4,000 acres of vineyards in the valley. Now we have maybe 2,000 or fewer.

VT: Do you have a vision for the future of Livermore? Or what could help reverse that trend?

JC: I want people to come to Livermore and enjoy the wine and the hospitality. My vision is to be known as a destination. Livermore has the weather and soil to develop some of the best varietals. Not only Cabernet or Chardonnay, Carbernet Franc or Sauvignon Blanc, but others grow great here. Livermore is not just a region. It is a family of all the wineries, and all of our friends. We are just one family, and everybody helps everybody. I believe that when people drink wine from Livermore, they're part of making the world a better place.

VT: What do you love most about growing wine grapes?

JC: I love working in the vineyards and walking the vineyards. Being by yourself is a big part of it,



Photo: Ron Essex Photography

because you can think, you can plan, you can drink. You also have a chance to touch what you believe in and see your dreams come to fruition.

It also makes me so happy to see people walking on trails around the vineyards early in the morning. They're out even when it's still dark! It makes me feel so good that people are enjoying what we have in Livermore.

VT: What are your thoughts on sustainability in winemaking?

JC: We all need to work together to take care of the native plants and animals, the neighbors, the employees, and the vineyards. We should be sustainable while still looking for ways to be financially viable, because that's the only way we're going to be able to continue. Sustainable farming, I believe, is a lot stronger than being strictly organic. We should all be able to walk around the vineyards and trails with safety, guaranteed that there will be nothing in the air, water, or soil that is going to hurt your health.

VT: Is there any advice you'd give to other landowners who are thinking about putting their land under easement?

JC: Life changes and people change, but once you put land in a conservation easement, it's a guarantee that it's going to stay for future generations. I remember when I was a teenager, I used to go to San Jose, and there were a lot of orchards, like cherries, all kinds. Now there are just homes and buildings and stores, shopping centers, and I have seen that. A lot of the beautiful land is gone. Having conservation easements is a guarantee that our future generations will be able to enjoy (the land).

VT: Are there any last things you'd like to have people take away from your story?

JC: When I visit tasting rooms, I often hear people saying that they didn't know about Livermore, they didn't know about this winery or that winery. The more we support the vineyards and wineries, the more returns there will be. Our winegrowers make a lot of effort and sacrifice. I look forward to when we get to see more friends and neighbors coming to Livermore to drink wine. Thank you for your time. I know that's your job, and it's a beautiful job, trying to get more people to come and enjoy the blessings that we have.



Flame Skimmer Dragonfly.
Photo: Glenn Stewart

CITY NATURE CHALLENGE

LED BY TRI-VALLEY CONSERVANCY, last spring the City Nature Challenge (CNC) came to Livermore for the first time. We joined more than 600 cities around the world in one of the largest community science events on the planet!

From April 25-28th, 131 community members made 2,168 observations of over 600 different species. Participants spotted everything from native wildflowers to shy wildlife, recording their findings at places like Sycamore Grove Park, Holdener Park, Del Valle Regional Park, Granada Native Garden, Arroyo Mocho, Hagemann Ranch, and even their own backyards.

One particularly special outing was hosted at Springtown Preserve, a biodiversity hotspot protected by a TVC conservation easement, thanks to our partners at the Alameda County Resource Conservation District, the City of Livermore, and Swaim Biological Inc.

TVC Youth Educator Ann Brown, who championed our involvement

in the challenge, shared how meaningful the experience was, and not just for nature lovers! “The City Nature Challenge gets people out into the landscape and truly looking at it. Especially kids. As they observe, they begin to recognize the unique habitats we have here and how important it is to protect them.”



TVC Youth Educator Ann Brown

This kind of hands-on exploration helps build the foundation for long-term conservation. “When people care about the plants and animals around them, they’re more likely to support efforts to preserve open spaces and farmland,” Ann explained. “And when you bring folks together to share wildlife stories, it creates a really special sense of connection. It’s something that crosses barriers.

Several families who participated in TVC’s Youth in Nature program

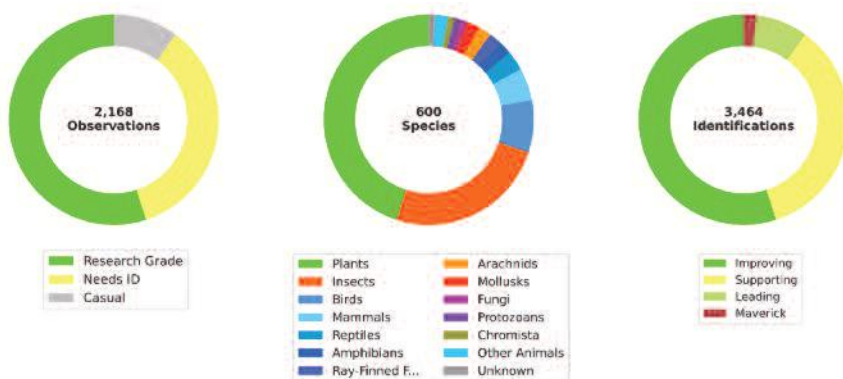
also participated in the CNC. Along the trails of Arroyo Mocho, kids eagerly searched through brush and creek beds, finding feathers, insects, and even signs of nighttime visitors.

One of Ann’s favorite observation outings was on a private ranch along Mines Road, “We started up in the hills and worked our way down to a section of Arroyo Mocho that still had flowing water. We documented so many species in just one outing. The landowner is very wildlife-aware and farms with conservation in mind. It reminded me how much value private lands bring to local biodiversity.”

Looking ahead, Ann hopes to encourage more landowners with conservation easements to host observation walks next year. “It’s a great way to showcase the impact of stewardship and build a community that supports conservation.”

We’re incredibly proud of our community’s participation in this global effort! Every person who recorded an observation, helped identify species, or invited someone new made a difference. Your contributions now live on in a worldwide database that helps scientists, conservationists, and policymakers make informed decisions to protect nature.

Infographic from: *Naturalist’s Livermore City Nature Challenge Page*



MARK YOUR CALENDARS!
The next City Nature Challenge will take place from April 24 to May 3, 2026. We can't wait to see what you'll discover next.

TINY SEEDS, BIG IMPACT! PARTNERING FOR POLLINATOR HEALTH

WHAT DO YARROW, aster, mule's ear, and blue-eyed grass have in common? They are all native California plants, and this summer, were the core of a new partnership between Tri-Valley Conservancy and Pollinator Partnership, a national organization dedicated to protecting the species that keep our ecosystems humming . . . literally!

On a sunny day in June, TVC's Stewardship Associate Manager, Tyler Garguilo, and our summer intern, Natasha Atkins, joined ecologists from Pollinator Partnership to collect seeds from one of TVC's protected easement properties. Guided by their expert colleagues James and Maddie, the team carefully gathered native seeds from four plant species: common yarrow, California aster, narrowleaf mule's ear, and blue-eyed grass.

The seeds have since been dried and sorted and will eventually be grown by Pollinator Partnership as part of their ongoing habitat restoration efforts. Once cultivated, these plants will help restore pollinator-friendly landscapes throughout California, providing critical food and shelter for the bees, butterflies, beetles, hummingbirds,

TVC summer intern Natasha collecting seeds.



California Aster flower and seeds.

“Pollinator Partnership is thrilled to collaborate with Tri-Valley Conservancy on “Project Wingspan: Golden State.” Together, we are advancing the restoration of monarch butterfly and other pollinator habitat by collecting seeds from regionally native plants—an essential step in safeguarding the biodiversity and ecological resilience of California’s landscapes.”

—Maddie Dong, Pollinator Partnership

and other pollinator species. Pollinators do much more than bring beauty and movement to our landscapes. They play a vital role in sustaining ecosystems, supporting biodiversity, helping plants, crops, and trees for food reproduce. Without them, natural habitats, agricultural economies, and our food supply would suffer. In fact, one out of every three bites of food we eat is dependent on pollinators!

Since 1997, Pollinator Partnership has worked to promote the health of pollinators through conserva-

tion, education, and research. From birds and bees to bats and butterflies, pollinators are responsible for supporting healthy ecosystems and abundant food supplies. The organization's efforts have included funding more than 30 research grants to support honey bee health, training nearly 100 data collectors across 20 counties, and launching the now-annual Pollinator Week, which has been celebrated for over 16 years. Their impact reaches across the country, but their work in California is helping transform local landscapes with thriving pollinator habitats.

By partnering with organizations like Pollinator Partnership, TVC helps ensure that protected lands in the Tri-Valley are not just preserved, but actively contributing to a healthier, more resilient environment and food system.

Next time you see a bee buzzing past or a butterfly landing on a flower, know that behind the scenes, work is being done, one seed at a time, to ensure they will always have a place to thrive!

CELEBRATING THE WINNERS OF OUR ANNUAL PHOTO

This year's Views in the Valley Photo Competition brought in over 164 stunning submissions, each capturing the unique beauty of the Tri-Valley. After careful review by our expert panel of judges, and more than 350 votes cast for the Barry Zupan People's Choice Award, we are thrilled to announce this year's winners!



ADULT 1st PLACE: *Spring Barn*, by James McCabe



ADULT 2nd PLACE: *Comet A3*, by Ramon Arellano II (Barrio Boy)



ADULT 3rd PLACE: *Vineyard*, by Jay Huang

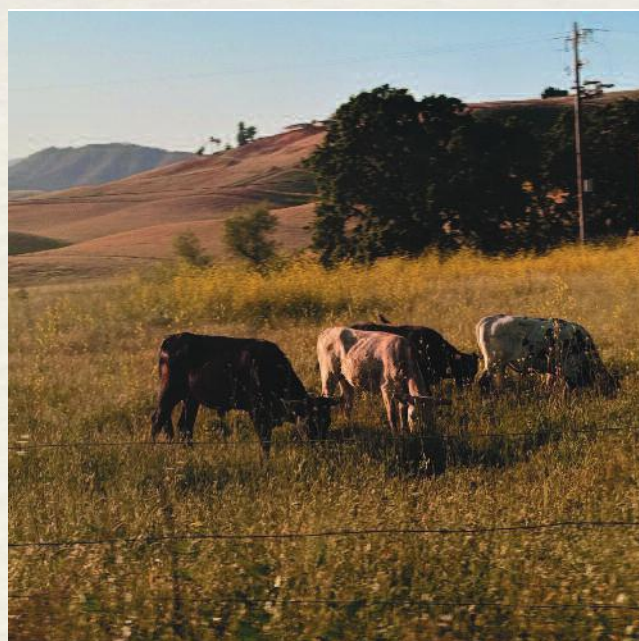
CONTEST!

Thank you to everyone who participated, voted, and helped make this year's Views in the Valley such a success.

BARRY ZUPAN
PEOPLE'S CHOICE AWARD:
Past and Present,
by Glenn Stewart



YOUTH 1st PLACE: *Greens and Blues,* by Nidhi Kota



YOUTH 2nd PLACE:
Glad Grazing Cows, by Svanika Doddavarapu



YOUTH 3rd PLACE:
Whispering Woods,
by Samantha Damonte

SAVE THE DATE!
The competition will return in Spring 2026, and we can't wait to see what your camera captures next.

Tri-Valley Conservancy

P.O. Box 987
Livermore, CA 94551



Tri-Valley Conservancy is an accredited land trust and tax-exempt nonprofit 501(c)3 organization working to preserve and advocate for agricultural and open space lands.

Our mission is to promote economically sustainable vineyards and orchards, and increase permanently protected, biologically diverse open spaces.

Call: 925.449.8706 | Email: Info@trivalleyconservancy.org | Visit: TriValleyConservancy.org