



HOLLISTER RANCH

A TRADITION, A COMMITMENT, A PROMISE FULFILLED

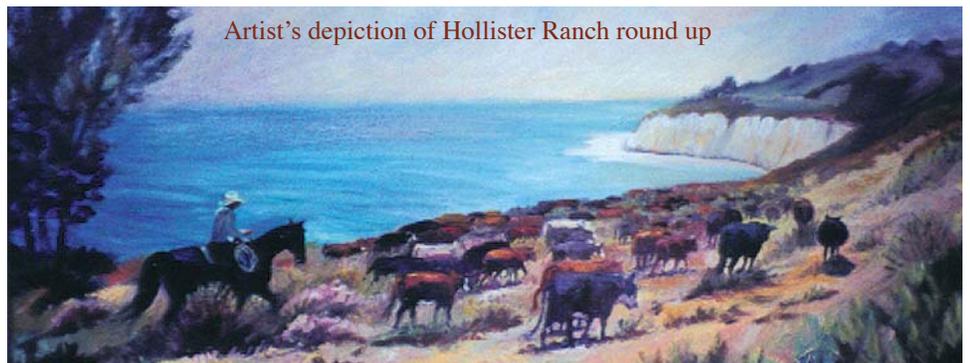


Imagine a land 60 million years in the making, located on the Southern California Coast with its cities and freeways, yet almost the same today as when the Chumash Indians inhabited it hundreds of years ago. Encompassing 8 1/2 miles of coastline, it extends west from Gaviota to just short of Point Conception, and north from the shoreline to the top of the first ridge of the Santa Ynez mountains. Its area covers the natural boundaries between Northern and Southern California.

A TRADITION

This land was considered sacred by the original Chumash Indian settlers, as part of the “Western Gate” to a life hereafter. Subsequent owners have continued to revere it and all its natural wonders. In the mid-1700’s Spanish explorers claimed this territory and gradually replaced the existing Chumash civilization. Then in 1791 Jose’ Francisco de Ortega was granted a grazing lease by the King of Spain as a retirement gift for his service in California. Ortega named the land “Rancho Nuestra Señora del Refugio”. Seventy-five years later it was still grazing land when Colonel W.W. Hollister acquired the property. He and his family continued livestock operations, maintained the ranching traditions and protected the pristine beauty of the land for the next 100

In 1970, ownership passed to a corporation which restructured the Ranch into its present configuration. That change could have spurred unchecked development along the bluffs, into the canyons and along the shorelines....disaster for the unique ecosystems that have thrived here for centuries. But it did not happen.



Artist's depiction of Hollister Ranch round up

The reason is, the Hollister Ranch owners acted on a common commitment, designed to preserve the historic tradition of *stewardship* for these lands, the native vegetation, the wildlife and the natural resources that sustain them.

THE COMMITMENT

For nearly 30 years, Hollister Ranch owners have lived up to this promise as stated in the Association's "Declaration of Conditions, Covenants and Restrictions":

"The purpose of this Declaration... is to perpetuate the rich variety of this rugged coastal and pastoral environment... by fostering a beneficial land use which retains the unique beauty of the land.... All who become owners... are motivated by the character of the natural environment... and accept the principle that the development and use of the property must preserve that character..."

As a result of this commitment, if Jose' de Ortega were to arrive today he would find this special place little changed, more than 200 years later. It now stands as one of the few last vestiges of Coastal California as it once was...before housing tracts, ocean front high rises and littered beaches. **This is a unique example of what a caring community can accomplish if it is committed deeply to the protection of its natural surroundings.**



Now, within this protected environment, study groups have identified more than 350 species of wildlife thriving in shore waters, estuaries, marshes, ponds, streams and on beaches, bluffs, grasslands and oak woodlands. Sightings of 267 species of birds have been recorded; 12 are listed by Federal or state agencies as endangered, threatened or as candidates for such listings. The Brown Pelican and Western Snowy Plover are examples. Another 25 bird species are considered by biologists to be regionally rare or declining, such as the Cooper's Hawk, Yellow Warbler and Southern California Rufous-Crowned Sparrow.



American Avocets

The Hollister Ranch Owners' Association utilizes various creative and extraordinary methods to reduce human impact upon the activities of these migratory and indigenous shorebirds.

Among the fish, amphibians, reptiles and mammals dwelling in or on the marine and terrestrial habitats of the Ranch, seven more species are identified similarly as endangered, threatened, rare or declining. These include the Tidewater Goby, the California Red Legged Frog, the Southwestern Pond Turtle and the Ringtail.

For botanists, the Hollister Ranch offers a treasure trove of native plants including some unexpected species created by the unusual and varied geologic, topographic and climatic features of the Ranch. Here the overlap of Northern and Southern California biogeographic zones generates a wide diversity of species, including the rare Lompoc Yerba Santa and the Mariposa Lily.

The primary inspiration for this record of guardianship has been the Hollister Ranch Conservancy. The fundamental purpose of the Hollister Ranch Conservancy is to preserve this environment for the benefit of future generations. The Conservancy helps protect these natural habitats... at no cost to the public... by limiting public traffic through this private property. The result strikes a unique and meaningful balance between two separate principles - environmental protection and public access.

THE HOLLISTER RANCH CONSERVANCY

Established in 1989, the Hollister Ranch Conservancy consists of Ranch owners who serve voluntarily. They accomplish their objectives by focusing on two basic functions:

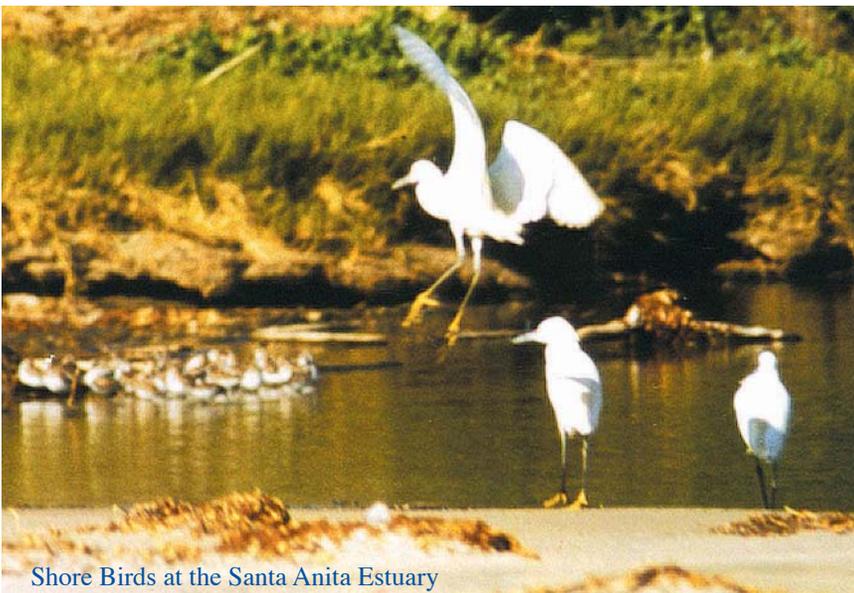
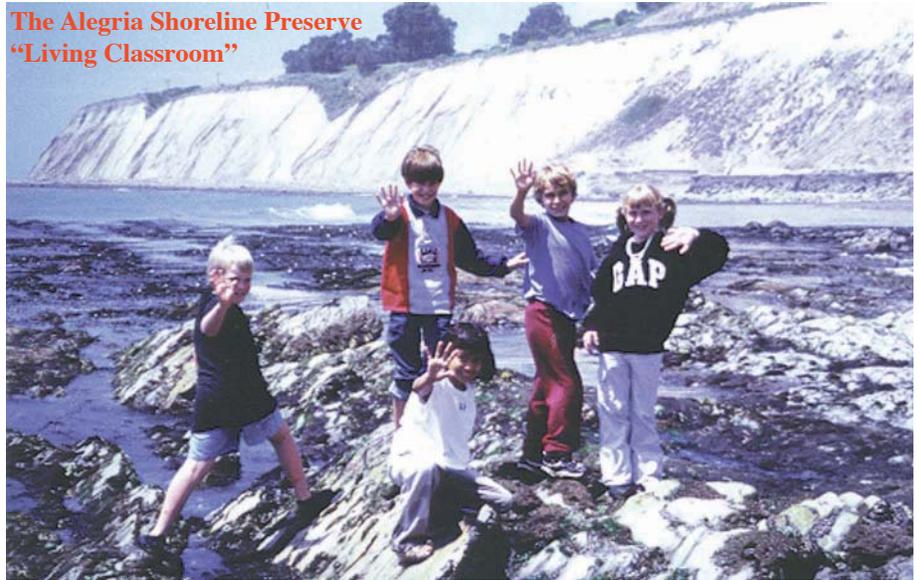
- 1) Establishing and maintaining the most appropriate conservation practices.
- 2) Managing a public access program which involves scientific research studies and educational opportunities, including biological, historical and cultural resources.

The Hollister Ranch Conservancy cooperates extensively with numerous organizations including teams of scientists from the University of California campuses at Santa Barbara, Berkeley, Santa Cruz and Riverside, and from the University of Florida and Occidental College.

They have set up marine habitat monitoring posts at the Ranch Shoreline Preserve. This is a 2+ mile zone of undisturbed and protected intertidal areas resplendent with abundant tide pools teeming with sea life. These academic research groups have conducted a series of marine and botanic studies here over the past several years.

Hundreds of grade school students from neighboring communities participate in tide pool explorations. They experience personally a rich variety of plant and animal life that otherwise is found only in museums.

**The Alegria Shoreline Preserve
"Living Classroom"**



Shore Birds at the Santa Anita Estuary

Geological scientists and students are attracted to rock outcrops in tidal areas that date back as far as 60 million years from the Miocene, Oligocene and Eocene periods, and even earlier to the Cretaceous Period from rock formations in higher lands.

The Conservancy encourages guided tours for public organizations which have special educational interests in particular features of the Ranch. The Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, the Santa Barbara Botanical Gardens and the Audubon Society are examples of such groups.

The Hollister Ranch Conservancy helps maintain this natural environment by protecting the native ecosystems, while opening them to a carefully managed program of public access. The number of visitors is limited by the Conservancy's commitment to protect the natural resources of the Ranch. Specific restrictions prevent foot traffic over the research areas, limit the collection of samples and reduce potential damage to natural habitats.

Marine research scientists from the University of California praise this guided program as "a model of how shoreline preserves should be managed". They note that data obtained from these studies "... were very important because they represented a site fairly unimpacted by human access..."

In addition to the managed access programs of the Hollister Ranch Conservancy, there are other major aspects of life on the Ranch that contribute significantly to the historical commitment of *stewardship*:

- 1) Cattle grazing is the primary agricultural use of the land, just as in the pastoral days of the Spanish rancheros and the Hollisters after them. Virtually the entire 14,400 acres is sensibly and cautiously managed by the Hollister Ranch Cooperative cattle operation, which works closely with the Hollister Ranch Conservancy to ensure that the natural environment is protected.
- 2) A combination of Ranch Association regulations, Santa Barbara County ordinances and an Agricultural Preserve Designation severely restricts the number of residences, prohibits further subdivision and limits commercial use of the land.
- 3) A Design Committee of Hollister Ranch owners and outside professionals oversees all development, assures high standards harmonious with the surrounding environment and preserves the character of the land. Through the diligent efforts of this committee, habitat fragmentation is reduced, the cattle ranch ambiance is maintained and the wide open spaces remain.

HAVE THE COMMITMENT AND THE PROMISE BEEN FULFILLED?

Clearly the answer is “**YES**”. Sweeping views across the Hollister Ranch provide ample affirmation:

- Preservation of significant native habitats
- Natural beauty of shorelines, estuaries, tidepools and other wetlands
- Rich diversity of native flora
- Canyons cloaked with intact, centuries-old oak woodlands
- Safe, sheltered havens for wildlife
- Minimal traffic and limited guest privileges



THE FUTURE

In fulfilling its commitment, the Hollister Ranch community believes it is also serving the the larger public interest. Ranch owners share the benefits of this special place with others, by managing the sensitive balance between protecting the environment and conducting visits to the property. The fundamental goal is to prevent any adverse effects to the ecosystems within the boundaries of the Hollister Ranch.

That goal - of preserving these resources without exploitation - has been carried forward hundreds of years since the days of the Chumash. Hollister Ranch, with its program of managed access, continues to keep the promise by combining an unparalleled window to the past with a pattern for public appreciation into the future.

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For more information about the Hollister Ranch Conservancy or the Stewardship program, please contact:

Hollister Ranch Owners' Association
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