Earth Encounters
Summer Camps
This year’s all new line-up offers something for every young conservationist

A Special Day
BYLT is providing opportunities for underserved youth to access nature

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I never thought “connecting kids with nature” would be a thing.

Nature to the “child me” was like air. It was all around me. Even when my family lived in a suburban community I could always find a ditch to explore or a tree to climb. I guess this is why I have a hard time realizing that kids today need a program to get outside, to play, to explore, to be in nature.

But that’s where we are – even rural kids like in our community do not have free-range access to nature anymore. Private property boundaries are strictly enforced, for many practical reasons. We are much more conscious of safety for kids. That’s smart. Kids don’t have as much free time as they did, given the push toward academic achievement and managed extra-curricular activities – all good things. Somehow pastimes in nature has been “structured out” of kids’ lives.

This creates a problem. Big questions need to be answered by the next generation about how humans will regard our natural resources, biodiversity, wild places, and how we feed ourselves. Without quality direct experiences in nature to draw upon where will the next generation’s values be rooted?

Up to 39 percent of six to 12 year olds and 54 percent of 13 to 17 year olds lack interest in getting out into nature, according to a recent report by California Council of Land Trusts. Less than half of children aged six and up participate in outdoor recreation. If kids get any exposure to nature at all, it is more than likely through a screen – kids between ages eight and 18 spend an average of 6.5 hours per day with electronic media.

We already understand the impact this is having on health – by 2050 nearly half of Californians will be obese.

Spring is a wonderful time to get outdoors and the Land Trust outings have a great focus on youth activities in nature. Treks, EcoKids, a new Bio-Blitz series, restoration activities, Celebration of Trails -- all lead up to camp.

Our popular summer nature camps are held in June and July.

If you have kids or grandkids who haven’t attended camp at Burton Homestead now is your chance! It’s a blast. If you want to support the program and send a child to camp on a scholarship, please donate to our Youth Appeal.

Burton Homestead is a flourishing hub for youth in nature programs offered by the Land Trust and other community organizations. Instructors from Four Elements Earth Education teach young people earth skills; Sierra Harvest farmers show kids where their food comes from; and Sierra Streams Institute brings hands-on science curriculum to school kids. This spring, BYLT opened a new two-mile loop trail at the preserve. In coming months, BYLT will reveal how a 1925 homestead cottage will be turned into a nature center.

If this is important to you and you believe that young people need a place where they can learn about and experience nature, please support the cause! Learn more, register for camp or donate to BYLT’s youth appeal at: www.bylt.org.

Executive Director Marty Coleman-Hunt
Meet BYLT’s New Camp Director
Oscar Perez

Nature always called to Oscar Perez.

“As a little kid I was always drawn to it. I always begged my mom to take me out to the woods,” said Oscar, Bear Yuba Land Trust’s new Camp Director.

Growing up in El Paso, Texas, the Chihuahuan Desert was Oscar’s backyard. In the cool months, that’s where he could be found, running wild.

Early memories harken back to an obsession with wolves and public television wildlife shows. From the time he was very small, eating dinner in a high chair, he was enraptured by the animals that moved across the screen.

Around age 9, Oscar began following folk tales from around the globe. When he discovered his deceased grandmother was Apache, he devoured everything he could on the lore of his ancestors, becoming enchanted by Native American spirituality and land stewardship.

In high school he realized he wanted to get a job studying wildlife “out in the middle of nowhere.” He wound up in New Mexico, studying to be a wildlife biologist. Professor Raul Valdez, a world leader in jaguar studies, was his mentor. Oscar’s wildlife career led him to follow deer and burrowing owls.

Meanwhile, his life path was shifting and all his interests began to converge.

“I decided I wanted to start focusing on how stories shape people,” he said.

He traveled to Rio de Janeiro to practice Brazilian Martial Arts then returned to the states to get his PhD at Brown University. While on the East Coast, he was introduced to traditional and wilderness skills curriculum at the Roots School.

Everything started to come together in a way that made perfect sense – the physical, the spiritual and the natural world.

“My life has been this process of weaving all these strands together,” he said.

By this time, Oscar was teaching at Harvard, but his heart wasn’t into it anymore. Friends thought he was crazy when he decided to move from Providence, Rhode Island to the redwood coast of Santa Cruz, California. Last year, he moved to Grass Valley, and found a community waiting for him.

In 2016, BYLT hired Oscar to lead youth programming at Burton Homestead as Camp Director, an opportunity he says brings his life work together.

“It’s a chance to create something that can really get young people interested in and excited about cultural and natural history of this place. Connecting young people to the land is really big for me,” he said.

This summer, Oscar will lead four summer Earth Encounters camps at Burton Homestead: Indigenous Ways Camp; Young Naturalist Camp; Kinder Camp; and Animals, Arts, and Ancestors.

Oscar says the Indigenous Ways Camp is reflective of his lifelong fascination with native cultures and his own heritage; the young naturalist camp has roots in his days as a wildlife biologist and the deep wisdom found in the storytelling camp of Animals, Arts and Ancestors naturally links to his interest in folklore.

“What I can do is plant seeds in other people that will inspire them to grow.”

Learn more about summer camp at www.bylt.org.
Save the Date! Community comes together for

Celebration of Trails 2016

Once again, BYLT and area trail enthusiasts are coming together during the first weekend of June for Celebration of Trails Day - the biggest showcase of local community trails of the year.

Leading up to the event, Three Forks Bakery and Brewing Company will be our venue host for the fundraiser Ales for Trails on May 23. Proceeds from food and drink purchased that evening will support local trails!

On Saturday, June 4, come hear about everything you ever wanted to know about local trails when all your favorite trail and recreation groups come together for this fabulous Celebration of Trails.

We’ll start the day at 9 a.m. with a lineup of guided morning outings on local trails followed by a fun family-friendly trails day festival from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Tahoe National Forest headquarters in Nevada City. It will be a one-stop resource for gear, maps, flora and fauna, and more. See you there!

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BEAR YUBA LAND TRUST

2016 Earth Encounters Summer Camps

Session 1: Indigenous Ways Camp
This camp will highlight the cultural and historical relationship between indigenous peoples and the land in the Yuba River watershed. Kids will have the opportunity to learn more about the first peoples of this land. Guest speakers will teach about the history of the Burton Homestead including:

- Native plant use
- Native storytelling
- Land Stewardship
- Traditional Arts

When: June 20 - June 24
Half-day: 9 am to 12:30 pm  |  Full-day: 9 am to 5 pm
Cost: $125 half-day, $200 full-day
Age: 7 – 12

Session 2: Young Naturalist Camp
Kids will learn about ecology and nature at our Young Naturalist Camp with an emphasis on animals, plants, and aquatic life at the Burton Homestead. Children will learn about different habitats, human-animal interactions, conservation and restoration of native species as well as how human impact currently shapes the land. Students will get to:

- Explore different habitats
- Learn about native and non-native species
- Learn some basic tracking
- Games
- Nature Crafts
- Activities

When: June 27 to July 1
Half day: 9 am to 12:30 pm  |  Full-day: 9 am to 5 pm
Cost: $125 half-day, $200 full-day
Age: 7-12

Session 3: Kinder Camp
Kinder Camp gives younger children an opportunity to have an exciting, safe, and educational summer camp experience. Inspired by the natural environment of Burton Homestead, campers will:

- Sing songs
- Make arts and crafts
- Go on nature walks
- Play outdoor games

A great introduction to camp!

When: 9 am to noon July 25 – July 29
Half day only: 9 am to noon
Cost: $125
Age: 4-6

Session 4: Animals, Arts and Ancestors
Animals, Arts and Ancestors focuses on the native wildlife of the Bear River and Yuba River watersheds. Through the program, kids will learn of the ecological and cultural relationships between local wildlife and human residents. Kids will learn about the birds, mammals, and aquatic life that historically inhabited the Burton Homestead and how these animals impacted the first peoples that lived here. Kids will learn about their animal neighbors through hands-on activities like:

- Nature Observation
- Bird Language
- Animal Tracking
- Mask-making
- Storytelling
- Nature Stories

When: July 25 to July 29
Half-day only: 1 to 5 pm
Cost: $125
Age: 9-12

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For the fourth time, Bear Yuba Land Trust had the opportunity to partner with hard working young people from AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC).

For several weeks this spring, nine young adults age 19 – 26 from NCCC’s team “Silver One” camped out at Burton Homestead for their first environmental project.

Silver One is a team with members from around the globe including Texas, New Hampshire and even Lusaka, Zambia in Africa.

Emergency flooding in Louisiana called the team away unexpectedly, cutting short their time with the Land Trust.

“Although their time was cut short, their assistance with land restoration was immense. They battled Spanish broom, collected data at vegetation plots, herded cattle and burned brush piles at Garden Bar Preserve. They helped to maintain the Pollinator Garden and began the Heritage Tree Mapping Project at Adam Ryan Preserve,” said Stewardship Program Manager Erin Tarr.

In the past year, Silver One has been busy. They served at the Sacramento Food Bank where they helped collect and distribute over 1,100 turkeys for the annual Run to Feed the Hungry.

They prepared taxes for over 850 families in Great Falls, Montana, returning over $1,080,000 tax dollars to the community.

While at Burton Homestead, the team performed pond restoration, learned the proper way to build and maintain trails and were introduced to the local Native American culture.

“Silver One built stamina, new muscle and most of all, knowledge in their adventure with Bear Yuba Land Trust,” said team member Nikki Greer.

Local Youth Visit Burton Homestead

Henry, 14, a freshman at Nevada Union High School sat in the cool shade on the grass with a group of other high school students from the boys and girls basketball teams and Special Education Department.

He and a classmate examined the papery scales of a rattlesnake skin.

“They shed. I’ve seen a snake before,” said Henry.

His teacher Tina Phillips sat nearby. She says the field trip to Bear Yuba Land Trust’s Burton Homestead is important because it provides a chance to be in nature, an experience that many young people like Henry would not have otherwise.

“I think it’s wonderful because these kids don’t have an opportunity to get out here,” she said.

For many parents of “special needs” kids, the challenge of going outdoors to explore nature with their child can be an obstacle. Parents want to keep their kids safe. There are fears of behavior issues or tripping hazards and the great unknown. As a result, kids often spend lots of time indoors in environments far from the natural world.

Yet that warm day on April 6 at Burton Homestead, 41 curious adolescents were hiking hand-in-hand or being pushed in wheelchairs outside in the open air. They were learning, exploring and all smiles.

“I love to be outdoors,” said Chris, 17.

This is the third consecutive year that Nevada Union High School Special Education Department has teamed up with the 49er Rotary Club and Bear Yuba Land Trust’s Encounter Nature Program. It’s the first year N.U.’s students have visited BYLT’s Preserve and future nature center, Burton Homestead.

Earth Skills Educator Rick Berry from Four Elements Earth Education passed around preserved fox pelts, miscellaneous skulls and turtle shells.

Lawrence Laughing from the Tsi Akim Maidu tribe told stories around a camp fire inside the bark house located on Indian land known as Pata Panaka.

Farmers from Sierra Harvest passed around freshly pulled beets and carrots and talked about the inhabitants of healthy soil.

“I learned that worms have five hearts,” said Izaiah, 15. Proud of the red racer he caught, Izaiah shared a photo of the snake on his smart phone. His friend Natasha, 17, is new to the forest. She said her favorite part of the day was hanging out with friends and “checking out new things.”

BYLT is currently seeking grant funding to provide more outdoor enrichment experiences to underserved youth who do not have regular access to nature.

Learn more about how you can support BYLT’s Encounter Nature programming for youth and families at: www.bylt.org
American Academy of Pediatrics recommends children be physically active for at least 60 minutes a day and limit time with electronic media to 2 hours a day. After a walk, use apps such as iNaturalist with your child to identify plants and animals.

Children have lost 25% of playtime & 50% of unstructured outdoor activity in recent decades.

More than 1 in 3 U.S. children is overweight or obese.

Exposure to nature can reduce stress levels by as much as 28% in children.

Children who spend more time outdoors are 27-41% less likely to be overweight.

Nature is good for the whole family. Be an outdoor role model.

Kids spend more than 7 hours a day with electronic media.
Save the Date!
Fun Treks and Events

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For a full listing of BYLT’s amazing Trekking Calendar, visit: www.bylt.org