

Habitat Restoration at Monkeyflower Ranch

EROSION CONTROL

Pasture grasses give the land a year-round protective cover, holding the highly erodible soil in place. The restoration plantings along the edges of the individual pastures lend reinforcement with their root systems. Prior to this operation, the land had been cultivated for half a century and lost a significant amount of topsoil to erosion.



OWL BOXES AND RAPTOR PERCHES

Owl pellets containing rodent bones lie at the base of owl boxes—evidence that these birds are helping to keep the gophers in check. Raptors are often seen hunting ground squirrels from perches. As the oak trees develop along the edges of the pasture, they too will serve as hunting and nesting sites for these winged predators.



SHADE FOR LIVESTOCK

Native trees in the individual pastures provide shade for the sheep which reduces heat stress. Under the trees, the evapotranspiration is slowed and condensation from the fog on trees keeps the grasses greener and more lush for the livestock. The trees add diversity to the landscape and can serve as stopping points for migratory birds, and as nesting and roosting sites for rodent-eating predators.



CLIMATE CHANGE

Enhancing habitat provides “insurance” against unpredictable weather caused by global warming. The planting of trees, shrubs, flowers and grasses makes the pasture and ranch more resilient to extremes of drought and heavy rain. By restoring the ecosystem services, planting habitat also provides space for wildlife on the move from other places.



POLLINATOR AND BIRD HABITAT

Bees, butterflies and other pollinators help to pollinate a third of our food supply and the native food plants that wildlife eat. Bats and birds such as the black phoebe and tree swallows hunt on the wing, eating insects. What they all need is habitat, much of which is provided by the native plants. Many types of bumblebees in particular also need undisturbed soil for their nest sites and these are abundant on the ranch.



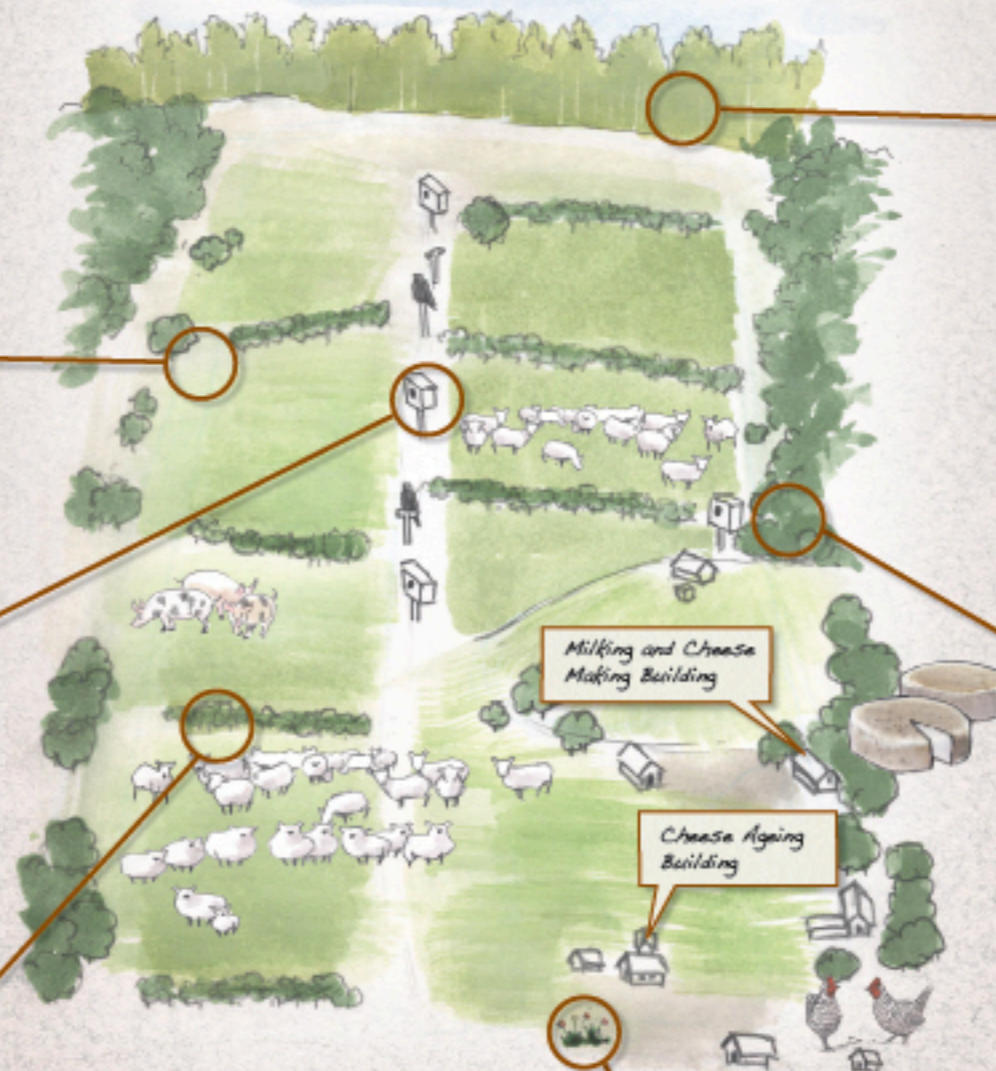
INVASIVE SPECIES REMOVAL

Eucalyptus removal promoted growth of natives by creating open space and bringing in sunlight. Shrubs such as monkeyflower, black sage, toyon, and coffeeberry have rebounded in the openings. In the oak woodlands on the property, the ranch's pigs ate and rooted up the invasive thistle and nettles, and goats and sheep ate the invasive Scotch broom.



OAK WOODLANDS

Conserving oak woodlands on the edges of the ranch and planting oaks throughout the property ensures habitat for more than 330 birds and other animals and thousands of insects that depend on them. Supporting this wide variety of wildlife in addition to an understory of plants make oak woodlands a functioning ecological system.



Thanks to Teen Conservation Leaders from the Monterey Bay Aquarium and Watsonville Wetlands Watch Green Careers Class in helping to install and mulch the plants.