and coastal sun cup, all of which are native. Most of the field grass is exotic (not native) and consists primarily of ryes, oats and barleys. Wild radish grows profusely amid the grasses in the open fields. The little pink, yellow, or white flowers smell like radish!

Of particular interest is the native bunch grass growing on the steep slope to the left as you walk by lower lake. This is a rare and rewarding sight as it points out the hundreds of years ago, prior to European contact. We also enjoy a rich variety of trees and shrubs including five species of oak, bay laurel, buckeye, madrone, big leaf maple, Douglas fir, and coastal redwood. Magnificent red-barked manzanita shrubs are easily mistaken for trees among the madrones. Other shrubs include the coyote bush and mountain mahogany which has small pinnate (“featherlike”) leaves and plumey seeds. This extremely hard wood was favored by the Indians for arrow tips and digging tools. Nourishing vines include delicious goose- and plumey seeds. This extremely hard wood was taken for trees among the madrones. Other shrubs include the coyote bush and mountain mahogany which has small pinnate (“featherlike”) leaves and plumey seeds. This extremely hard wood was favored by the Indians for arrow tips and digging tools. Nourishing vines include delicious goose- and plumey seeds. This extremely hard wood was favored by the Indians for arrow tips and digging tools.

There are also some very rare wildflowers including golden fairy lantern, Mariposa lily or gold nuggets, Henderson’s shooting star, lupine, and plumey seeds. There are also wildflowers in the upper paths.

Benefits of Grazing parts of Ranch Lands

For millennia, many forces have shaped the landscape surrounding The Bishop’s Ranch. One of the most significant of these forces is fire. Since the 1850’s the area has been used for intensive agricultural pursuits, including grazing of large domestic animals such as cattle and sheep. Deforestation in some areas was just one of the results of these activities. The introduction of dozens of species of non-native plants, the removal of large trees and plant beds has changed the landscape tremendously.

For many, many years, wildfires have been seen as threatening to developed property and undesirable and so have been suppressed. As once deforested areas grow new forests, explosive fire conditions often result. The Bishop’s Ranch, as much of California, is in an area where future destructive wildfires are a given and thus are planned.

Low intensity fires bring many benefits, such as brush and insect control and prevention of more explosive, destructive fires. On The Bishop’s Ranch, these prescribed burns are not really a practical option at this time. Yet, vegetative fuels that lead to uncontrolled wildfires do build up rapidly, including in grassy areas that are now covered with non-native annual grasses that provide quick burning fuel. One way to manage the accumulation of fuels is through grazing.

Our Vital Russian River Watershed

Keep Creek and Turtle Creek drain into the Russian River, seen as the line of trees crossing the valley as you look eastward toward Mt. St. Helena from the lawn between the Chapel and the Ranch House. Our connection to the Russian River is a good way to approach the ecological concept of interdependence. All life, flora and fauna, in this watershed spanning from the headwaters above Ukiah to the ocean estuary at Jenner, is dependent upon the health of the river’s water and the integrity of the riparian (flood plain) zone wherein the river enlarges during the Wet season. A remarkable abundance of diverse and essential life forms live in riparian zones, which also provide cooling shade vital for salmonid and other aquatic life. Mountain lions use it as a highway between the dwindling habitats left for them.

Flora

The wildflowers are wonderful in spring to midsummer. We have noted more than thirty varieties of wildflowers including golden fairy lantern, Mariposa lily or gold nuggets, Henderson’s shooting star, lupine, and small pink, yellow, or white flowers smell like radish. Bug repellent is not normally required.