

Orient Land Trust – May 2007 E-Newsletter

Hello, and welcome to our May 2007 Newsletter. The peak season of Orient Land Trust / Valley View Hot Springs is upon us, and this is our chance to keep everyone up-to-date on upcoming summer events. If you want to be sure to stay informed, please let us know if your e-mail or mailing address is changing. If you wish to be removed from our e-mail list, just reply to this message with [REMOVE](#) in the subject field.

Summer is here, please call for reservations!

During the summer months it is important to call ahead for reservations on weekends and holidays. This applies to **all overnight use** (including camping) on Friday or Saturday nights, and **day use** on Saturdays or Sundays. Holidays would include the night *before* a holiday day (e.g., Sunday, May 27th for Memorial Day) plus the day of the holiday itself (e.g., Monday, May 28th). If you don't have a reservation you may be turned away on summer weekends.

Board of Directors meeting on June 9th

The next Orient Land Trust Board of Directors meeting is scheduled for Saturday, June 9th at 9:00 am at OLT. All are welcome to attend and give input. Currently one seat on the Board is unfilled. If you are interested in serving on the board, or are curious about the current status and future direction of OLT, please join us.

The bats are coming, the bats are coming ~~~

Though we cannot predict the exact date of their return, our Orient Mine bat colony generally migrates back north to the San Luis Valley in mid-June. If you are interested in seeing the bats, be sure to give us a call in June to check on their status. Visitors may walk to the cave on their own, plus OLT will be conducting guided bat tours approximately 5 nights a week from late June through early September. The bat outflight occurs around sunset each night (give or take a half-hour), so the tour leaves about an hour and a half prior to sunset. It is a 1.7 mile walk from Valley View with a 700 foot elevation gain, so be sure to bring proper footwear, water, a flashlight for the return hike, and perhaps a jacket, sweater, or rain gear depending on the weather. Visitors who are coming only to see the bats and who are not using the hot springs should still register at the Welcome Center upon arrival. There is no charge to take the tour.

Seeking volunteers for weed-pulling on June 23-24

OLT needs volunteers to help out for a few hours on the first weekend of summer, Saturday and Sunday June 23rd and 24th. The Boulder-based [Wildlands Restoration Volunteers](#) is coordinating this effort to eliminate non-native Houndstongue and other invasive species. If you are interested in helping us restore the OLT ecosystem to be as "native" as possible, please call 719-256-5212 or e-mail info@olt.org.

In addition to weed-pulling, we also welcome volunteers interested in helping to pick up trash along County Road GG. We don't have a specific date set aside for this, but if you would like to put some time in on it please let us know.

July 4th Fireworks

Weather-permitting, our Independence Day fireworks extravaganza is scheduled for the evening of Wednesday, July 4th. The show generally starts when the sky is totally dark which is around 9:30 pm at that time of year. If you'd like to visit on the 4th, be sure to make reservations whether it is for day use or camping - this is one of the most popular nights of the year at OLT! See the Orient Land Trust [Member Benefits](#) page for information on making advance reservations.

Orient Land Trust is the "Charity of the Month" for July

[O'Dell Brewing Company](#) has selected Orient Land Trust and Legacy Land Trust as the featured organizations to benefit from their Charity of the Month program for July, 2007. Information about OLT will be spotlighted at the brewery's retail store in Ft. Collins. Throughout the month, customers who purchase taster trays in the retail shop can choose to have the \$3.00 purchase price donated to the designated nonprofits. Additionally, 10% of all sales in the retail shop on the third Thursday of the month, July 19th, will go to the featured organizations. Orient Land Trust greatly appreciates O'Dell Brewing for its support of non-profit organizations serving environmental, educational or humanitarian causes, and for their impressive commitment to "Green".

Get ready for Member Appreciation Weekend: July 27th-29th

Orient Land Trust's biggest party of the year is scheduled for the last weekend of July. If you'd like to attend, then be sure to become a *current* member of OLT if you aren't already. This is the only time of the year that OLT is open to current *Member Households Only* - any adult "guests" must also be members. This is also the only weekend of the year that we don't have a quota limiting the number of visitors, so Valley View will be much more crowded than a normal weekend... but it's all part of the fun! Even though all members are welcome, we still ask that you call for reservations so we know how many guests to plan for. Here is the tentative weekend schedule, exact times to be determined:

Friday Evening

Rock out in the Pavilion to the hot Blues and Soul music of [Tempa and the Tantrums](#)

Saturday

Morning: The annual Lost and Found Sale – bid on a treasure-trove of items left at Valley View during the last year

Late Afternoon: Pot Luck Dinner – bring an item to share and meet your fellow OLT members

Evening: More music and dancing into the night with [Tempa and the Tantrums](#)

Sunday

Morning: Wake up to free breakfast in the Pavilion (courtesy of Orient Land Trust) while enjoying the music of singer-songwriter, recording artist and OLT resident [Leigh Ann Phillips](#).

We're looking forward to the arrival of our summer Volunteer Hosts!

Again this summer, OLT's staff and visitors will benefit from the energy of a bunch of awesome folks. They provide assistance in many capacities:

Discovery Hosts – help at the Welcome Center to orient new visitors to all aspects of OLT

Camp Hosts – keep an eye on the campground, and can help you if you have a problem

Bat Tour Hosts – lead groups to the Orient Mine most evenings to watch the out flight of the bat colony; a guided tour really adds to the experience

Astronomy Hosts (new this year!) – guide you through the nighttime skies (weather and other factors permitting)

A big welcome to all these hosts! If you think you might be interested in being a volunteer host in 2008, please pick up an application at the Welcome Center or visit the [volunteer page](#) on our website.

Help... we need a new “guest” computer!

If you have a Windows desktop computer you no longer need, please consider donating it to Orient Land Trust. Our guest PC in the Welcome Center library is getting up in age and may not last much longer! We need a PC with at least a 1GHz processor. If you have one you can spare, please e-mail a complete description of the computer to info@olt.org and we will let you know if we can use it. As a thank-you gift, we will give 10 OLT raffle tickets each to donors of usable PCs (up to two computers). So get those unused desktop PCs out of your office and into ours... Thanks!

A short trip from Valley View with a bit of history...

A nice afternoon jaunt while staying at Orient Land Trust is to travel the back road to Crestone. This dirt road hugs the mountains south of Orient Land Trust, eventually ending at County Road T, the main paved road into Crestone. If you have followed this route along County Road 65, you may have noticed a small, old graveyard, marked by wooden crosses. The crosses are weathered and wind blown, no longer bearing any makings of names or dates. Maybe you have parked your car, squeezed through the barb wire fence, and, hearing the wind blow across the empty mesa, felt a sense of the lives once lived here.

This graveyard is all that remains of an old Spanish American settlement, Los Mines de Ferro, also known as Upper Cotton Creek, which dates back to 1875. In the glory days, this settlement was alive with music and Saturday night dances, weddings and special events, such as the Cream and Strawberry Festival of 1890. The town was well-known for a trio of musicians, Joe Valdez, a fiddler, and the guitar playing brothers, Eddie and Phillip Duran, who entertained Valley residents from Crestone to Villa Grove.

In 1914, the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company of Pueblo, also owners of the Orient Mine, subcontracted a pair of local brothers to build a mile long steel flume, diverting the waters of Old Cotton Creek. This diversion brought water to a new settlement, Lower Cotton Creek. There were several problems with this new flume, one being that the vertical drop of water caused pebbles to gain so much force that the steel piping was punctured. Large cement tanks were built to slow the flow. Fast forward to the present and water flowing downhill is the power source we use to generate all of the electricity for Valley View Hot Springs.

The Cotton Creek diversion also marked the end of the town of Los Mines de Ferro. The Spanish settlers had squatted on the land and having no recognized right to the water, could only watch as the original Cotton Creek stream bed dried up, along with their fields and gardens.

The graves remain, unnamed, some adorned with old plastic flowers. Small graves of young ones and large graves piled with rocks remind us of times now past. Years of sun, rain and the endless spring winds have nearly erased the last mark of these first settlers, but perhaps you will hear a vague melody, the lilt of a fiddle and the sound of laughter, still carried by the spring wind.

Material taken from "Postmarks and Places", by George Harlan

Thank you all for your continued support, and see you this summer!

The staff of Orient Land Trust

Orient Land Trust

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Reservations (719) 256-4315

Office Hours 9:00 am – 10:00 pm Every Day