



# THE LIVESTOCK CONSERVANCY™

*Conserving rare breeds since 1977*  
*Autumn 2023 | Volume 40, Issue 4*

*Goats like Maria  
Castro's San Clemente  
Island goats may be  
the ideal livestock for  
climate change.*

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*The Livestock Conservancy News* (ISSN 1064-1599) is published quarterly by The Livestock Conservancy, a nonprofit tax-exempt corporation established to conserve endangered livestock and poultry breeds. The Livestock Conservancy is a membership organization researching, educating, and communicating this purpose.

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## SAVE THE DATE

### 2023 LIVESTOCK CONSERVANCY MEMBERS MEETING

Wednesday, December 6, 2023

7:30 - 8:30 pm EST

Zoom link will be emailed to all members

### SOLICITATION DISCLOSURES

*Colorado:* Residents may obtain copies of registration and financial documents from the office of the Secretary of State, 303-894-2860, [www.sos.state.co.us/](http://www.sos.state.co.us/) re: Reg No. 20133007164.

*Florida:* Registration #CH37293. A copy of the official registration and financial information may be obtained from the Division of Consumer Services by calling toll-free 1-800-435-7352 within the state. Registration does not imply endorsement, approval, or recommendation by the state.

*Maryland:* A copy of the current financial statement of The Livestock Conservancy is available by writing PO Box 477, Pittsboro, NC 27312. Documents and information submitted under the Maryland Solicitations Act are also available, for the cost of postage and copies, from the Maryland Secretary of State, State House, Annapolis, MD 21401, 410-974-5534.

*North Carolina:* Financial information about this organization and a copy of its license are available from the State Solicitation Licensing Branch at 1-888-830-4989. The license is not endorsed by the state.

*Virginia:* A financial statement is available from the State office of Consumer Affairs in the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services upon request.

*Washington:* For additional information regarding the organization's activities or financial information, The Livestock Conservancy is registered with the Washington State Charities Program as required by law and information may be obtained by calling 1-800-332-4483 or 360-725-0378.

# CLIMATE ADAPTATIONS OF CPL BREEDS



*David Holmgren's Texas Longhorn cattle in Nevada.*

According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), about 93 percent of livestock breeds on earth are at risk of extinction. That means future generations may inherit inadequate livestock genetic variation to meet tomorrow's production needs.

The collapse in biodiversity is complicated. Today's large-scale agricultural systems focus on a few highly specialized genetic lines. Three-quarters of the world's food supply relies on just twelve crops and five livestock species (FAO). Only a handful of breeds or varieties are found within these animal and plant gene pools.

A lack of biodiversity puts the world's food supply at risk. Should disease, adverse genetic change, or bioterrorism impact commercial breeds and varieties, the effect could be staggering. Securing genetic diversity enables healthy agricultural development, regardless of changes that cannot be anticipated.

Today, climate change is also straining farming systems around the world. Livestock needs to be increasingly better able to thrive in difficult environments. With generations of environmental adaptations found within their DNA, heritage breed livestock and poultry are more important for our future than ever before.

## CLIMATE-ADAPTED BREEDS

Rare and endangered breeds offer many traits useful in sustainable, forage-based production systems. Pineywoods cattle, Gulf Coast Native sheep, and Spanish goats of the Deep South have

developed long-term adaptations to thrive in challenging environments. These native breeds have spent centuries adapting to the heat, humidity, and parasites of hot, humid climates. Today, they require minimal human and chemical intervention to thrive.

Heritage cattle breeds and their crosses evaluated in recent grazing research studies displayed more adaptive grazing behaviors than conventional breeds (McIntosh et al., 2023). The authors concluded that natural selection enabled locally adapted heritage cattle to modify grazing behaviors to cope with variable climates and heterogeneous forage ability.

Many breeds on The Livestock Conservancy's Conservation Priority List (CPL) fit this description. The CPL is the perfect place to find excellent candidates for matching the right breed to the right environment while coping with variable and changing climates.



*Lee McKenzie's Marsh Tackys in South Carolina.*

## HEAT TOLERANCE

2023 is the hottest year on record and global temperatures are expected to continue rising at alarming rates. In the past two decades, higher temperatures have led to prolonged severe droughts and changing patterns of rainfall distribution. Summer temperatures across the U.S. this year were higher than in all of recorded history. And, just as important, nighttime summer temperatures were also hotter in most places, placing stress on animals and people.

Heat tolerance in livestock includes adaptations that act as radiators, shunting body heat. Examples include thin skin, large ears, and large horns. Lighter coat color (i.e. not black) also reflects heat. Gulf Coast Native and Florida Cracker sheep have little to no wool on their legs, faces, and bellies. Belgian Hares and Spanish goats have large ears. The famous long horns of Florida Cracker, Pineywoods, Ankole Watusi, and Texas Longhorn cattle are also effective radiators. A number of more heat-tolerant CPL breeds are listed in the sidebar on the next page.

Heat-tolerant livestock breeds can also moderate body temperature by modifying their activity and behavior to the environment. While these tactics are well understood by farmers, ranchers, and shepherds, little scientific research documents these coping mechanisms.

## ARID CLIMATES

Breeds that thrive with little to no rain adapt to both seasonal and year-to-year



## BREEDS FOR CHALLENGING ENVIRONMENTS

### Hot/Arid

Spanish goats  
San Clemente Island goats  
Navajo Churro sheep  
Santa Cruz Island sheep  
Texas Longhorn cattle  
Corriente cattle  
Miniature donkeys  
Colonial Spanish horse strains  
(Wilbur Cruce, Baca-Chica, Sulphur)  
Akhali-Teke horses  
Caspian horses  
Galiceno horses  
Belgian Hare  
Bronze turkeys (from adapted flocks)

### Hot/Humid

Myotonic (Tennessee Fainting) goats  
Spanish goats (SE strains only)  
Guinea Hogs  
Ossabaw Island pigs  
Red Wattle pigs  
Choctaw pigs  
Meishan pigs  
Florida Cracker sheep  
Gulf Coast Native sheep  
Tunis sheep  
St. Croix sheep  
Barbados Blackbelly sheep  
Ankole-Watusi cattle  
Florida Cracker cattle  
Pineywoods cattle  
Mammoth Jack donkeys  
Banker horses  
Florida Cracker horses  
Marsh Tacky horses  
Rocky Mountain/  
Mountain Pleasure horses  
Puerto Rican Paso Fino horses  
Checkered Giant rabbit  
Royal Palm turkeys  
Beltsville Small White turkeys  
White-Faced Black Spanish chickens  
Minorca chickens  
Cubalaya chicken  
Sumatra chickens  
Cotton Patch geese  
Indian Runner ducks

*Which breeds have done well for you in challenging environments?  
Send your story to [amartin@livestockconservancy.org](mailto:amartin@livestockconservancy.org).*

changes in forage type and availability. They also tolerate extreme daily and seasonal temperature swings. Some breeds become quite expert at seeking out water holes or digging to expose underground pockets of water, much as their wild cousins.

Navajo-Churro sheep also have an insulating double coat that reflects environmental heat outward while maintaining body heat during colder times. Their climate adaptation functions much like the robes of desert nomads.

Navajo-Churro sheep, Spanish goats, Corriente cattle, and some of the Colonial Spanish horse strains also forage a variety of feedstuffs. Some animals even teach their offspring to consume small amounts of forages that would be toxic in large quantities. See more about how Santa Cruz Island sheep are being used for fire mitigation in California in the article on page eight.



*Santa Cruz Island sheep in California.*

### PARASITE TOLERANCE

Internal and external parasite loads are higher in humid environments. Warm climates with short, mild winters impair fewer parasites than harsher winter climates that often break a parasitic life cycle. Fortunately, natural selection has shaped several heritage breeds native to these environments resulting in better parasite tolerance.

Southern and Caribbean sheep and goats are especially noted for their parasite resistance. St. Croix, Florida Cracker, and Gulf Coast Native sheep, Myotonic (Tennessee Fainting) goats, and Southeastern strains of Spanish goats stand out. Florida Cracker and Pineywoods cattle are also known for parasite tolerance. These characteristics contribute to both herd health and profitability with fewer inputs.



*Red Wattle pig at Heritage Farms Northwest in Oregon.*

### WATER AND MUD

While climate change brings hotter, drier conditions to some regions, others face rising sea levels, record rainfall, and flooding. Some heritage breeds, such as the Marsh Tacky horse, have even adapted their gait so as not to bog down in swampy land. If other gaits were studied, the same might prove true for Southeastern sheep, goats, or cattle.

Pigs don't have sweat glands. Abundant moisture in humid environments provides them with opportunities to wallow in the coolness of a mud bath. They simultaneously coat themselves in mud to ward off biting insects. Guinea Hogs have developed long-term adaptations such as these to remain productive in hot and humid regions.

### COASTAL ENVIRONMENTS

Thousands of acres along the Atlantic, Gulf, and Pacific seashores have experienced precipitous declines in agricultural activity throughout the past century, largely due to the value of those lands for tourism. Nevertheless, a handful of CPL livestock breeds retain adaptations to sandy soil, biting flies, and the high salt content of the forages. Ossabaw Island pigs, Hog Island and Soay sheep, and Banker horses display remarkable adaptations to challenging coastal conditions.

### MOUNTAIN WEST

Harsh winters and unique predator threats challenge livestock managers in the western U.S. Biting cold, reduced access to forages and water, high winds, and large predators such as wolves and cougars can significantly impact

herds and flocks. Yet, many of the CPL breeds that descend from more than two centuries of English and Northern European imports are well suited to meet at least some of these challenges.

Galloway cattle, American Yaks, and Shetland sheep have double coats that keep the animals warm and shed snow. Arapawa goats and Newfoundland ponies are quite cold-tolerant. Among the most adept breeds at defending themselves from predators are Ancient White Park cattle. The B-Bar-D Ranch has maintained a Montana herd for more than 30 years; their cattle have often been observed fending off gray wolves.

### POULTRY CLIMATE ADAPTATIONS

Poultry can adapt to a broad range of environments, but choosing the right variety for the right region can ensure your flock thrives in challenging conditions. Adaptations such as the comb size in chickens aid in their tolerance of heat or cold. Like large ears in rabbits or the horns of heritage cattle, blood circulation through combs and wattles radiates heat into the environment and away from the body. White-Faced Black Spanish and Minorca chickens have very large combs and wattles enabling them to better tolerate heat.

Poultry breeds originating in warm climates, such as the Cubalaya chicken, Runner duck, Cotton Patch goose, or Royal Palm turkey, often retain characteristics and behaviors that help them tolerate heat. One adaptive behavior is to seek shade and dig below the surface to find cooler soil. Birds will rest in these spots during the heat of the

day, re-emerging to feed as temperatures drop in the evening.

Chicken breeds with very small combs generally do well in cold weather because they radiate very little heat into the environment. An abundance of feathers can also help insulate chickens, including feathered feet and crests. Chantecler, Cochon, Faverolles, Russian Orloff, and Icelandic chickens are well respected for their ability to thrive in cold climates. Cold-tolerant waterfowl include Shetland geese and Dutch Hookbill, Aylesbury, and Rouen ducks.

Genetic adaptation is vital for the survival and productivity of many heritage breeds in challenging environments. Still, representatives of most breeds, especially poultry, can be found across a wide range of conditions. Several generations of selection in the target environment allow the poultry keeper to observe and breed the birds that perform best. Over time, the flock becomes better adapted to the local environment. When starting a new flock, purchase poultry from local breeders to take advantage of these adaptations.

### BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION

Livestock and poultry breeds on the Conservation Priority List possess many traits that enable them to thrive in diverse farm production systems and changing climates. You can find at least one breed suitable for nearly every environment or region of America.

Preserving this genetic diversity is essential for ensuring food and fiber animals continue adapting to changing environments. Biodiversity of livestock is of global and domestic concern, but not enough is being done.

The Livestock Conservancy is racing to preserve irreplaceable genetics before they are permanently lost. Farmers, ranchers, and shepherds are the keepers of agriculture's

## WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST LIFE MEMBERS

The Livestock Conservancy thanks the following individuals who recently chose to support conservation programs by becoming Life Members:



Marian & Dennis Bires  
Claremore, OK

Jeremy Boal  
New York, NY

Carolann Curry  
Blue Ridge, VA

Christie & Daniel Eckert  
Spokane, WA

Ekvn-Yefolecv Community  
Eco-village  
Weogufka, AL

To become a Life Member, contact  
Karena Elliott at 806-570-0874 or  
[kelliott@livestockconservancy.org](mailto:kelliott@livestockconservancy.org)



Lisa Richard's Icelandic chickens in Missouri.

biodiversity and our most important partners in this battle. Incorporating and conserving rare livestock and poultry breeds on farms across America ensures that today's heritage breeds have the opportunity to meet tomorrow's production challenges. ■

### References:

FAO: What is Happening to Agrobiodiversity. [www.fao.org/3/y5609e/y5609e02.htm](http://www.fao.org/3/y5609e/y5609e02.htm)

McIntosh M.M. et al., 2023. Matching beef cattle breeds to the environment for desired outcomes in a changing climate: A systematic review <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0140196322002002>

<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/here-are-the-stunning-heat-records-set-so-far-this-summer1/>



# GOATS: A GREAT CHOICE FOR CLIMATE ADAPTATION

Goats may be the ideal livestock for climate change.

Goats evolved with nomadic peoples who often lived in harsh environments. They are remarkably adaptable. Goats can cope with multiple stressors such as temperature extremes, forage and water scarcity, and low-quality feed. These characteristics make goats the go-to species for weather uncertainties brought on by climate change.

Goats are efficient producers of healthy meat and milk for very little purchased feed. That makes them great candidates for meeting a wide range of production goals across America.

Goats are browsers rather than grazers, so they're also useful for clearing overgrown land. Some farmers use their goats to maintain properties for a fee. Controlling vegetation along canals in Florida, grazing powerline rights-of-way in Montana, and thinning overgrowth in fire-prone regions of California are jobs goats are filling with the bonus of economic return to their farm. The market for goat meat and milk in the United States continues to grow for those seeking profit from their goats.

## SPANISH

Spanish goats flourished throughout the Americas for 400 years. They were

### Spanish goat - Watch



integral to subsistence farming, allowing cattle to be reserved for milk and draft power. Many regional types and strains of Spanish goats developed in the U.S. and they all differed from their cousins in Spain or Latin America. Today, Spanish goats are far more limited in range and

### San Clemente Island goat - Critical



number. Still, this heritage breed is hardy, parasite-resistant, and can be excellent mothers. Spanish goats are most often raised as meat goats or for clearing brush. Though not especially sociable, with training they can be milked; however, milk yields are significantly lower than dairy goat breeds.

## ARAPAWA

The ancestors of these goats arrived with explorers to Arapaoa Island, off the coast of New Zealand, in the 18th century. Thanks to their long isolation, the genetics of Arapawa goats are very different from other breeds. They are medium in size and easy to manage if handled from an early age. They are excellent mothers and often present twins. Arapawa goats make an excellent family goat for dairy and meat.

## SAN CLEMENTE ISLAND

San Clemente Island goats arrived on the arid coastal island 60 miles off the coast of Southern California with explorers or early settlers. Natural selection helped them survive with little input from people. San Clemente goats are relatively small and uncommonly fine-boned. They are quite agile and

### Myotonic or Tennessee Fainting goat - Recovering



sometimes will climb trees if the lower limbs are within reach. Their gentle temperaments and lack of a strong goat smell make them popular with youth and urban farms. San Clemente Island goats are good mothers and some farms have used them to produce rich milk for cheesemaking and yogurt. Some can

also produce cashmere and they are very good for clearing the land of brush.

#### MYOTONIC (TENNESSEE FAINTING)

The names refer to a breed characteristic known as myotonia congenita, a condition in which the muscle cells experience prolonged contraction when the

goat is startled. The transitory stiffness associated with these contractions can cause the goat to fall down. This is not a true faint, but a muscular phenomenon unrelated to the nervous system. The myotonia limits climbing and jumping, reducing stress on fencing and the landscape. However, it does not limit their ability to forage actively. The Myotonic goat has the highest meat-to-bone ratio of any goat breed in the U.S., making them a great meat goat for small farmers. Myotonic goats tend to be resistant to parasites and are heat tolerant. This versatile breed offers much to beginning farmers.

#### OBERHASLI

The one true dairy goat on the Conservation Priority List, Oberhasli goats originate in Switzerland and thrive in temperate environments. They are gentle and friendly, making the does easy to milk. A well-bred Oberhasli can produce more than 1600 lbs. of milk per year. The milk is used fresh and to produce cheese, yogurt, and ricotta. Wethers (castrated bucks) have found a niche as pack animals, thanks to their temperament and strength.

For more information about these and other goat breeds, please visit [livestockconservancy.org](http://livestockconservancy.org). ■



### Oberhasli goat - Recovering



The goats pictured on these pages, and the Silver rabbit above, are original illustrations by Livestock Conservancy member Carolyn Guske, a painter and illustrator based in Sequim, Washington. For more of Guske's fine paintings of heritage breeds, see *An Introduction to Heritage Breeds*, available for purchase in The Livestock Conservancy's online bookstore.



# THE LONG WAY UP THE MOUNTAIN

## SANTA CRUZ ISLAND SHEEP AND FIRE MITIGATION



Photo by Paige Green

Sandra and Rob Guidi planned to enjoy retirement in a small California beach home. They ended up as Santa Cruz Island shepherds battling the effects of climate change.

"Our journey of living on a mountain and shepherding a small flock of Santa Cruz Island sheep was not well thought out or planned," admits Sandra Guidi. "It's become a true adventure, and sometimes that is the best plan of all."

Following long careers in public service, the Guidis' plan was to move to a tiny house in Stinson Beach, California, relax, and exhale. But after renting a beach house for a year, the couple became intrigued by a nearby ranch. It began with seeing "exactly one photo on a For Sale flier." Conversations with the owner discovered shared values

over multiple visits, and a handshake transferred the mountain into their care.

"We arrived with no furniture, no prior knowledge of plants, trees, or livestock, and absolutely no knowledge of land management," says Sandra. "However, we did realize the remarkable nature of the mountain and have spent the ensuing years trying to understand how to honor, support, and respect our space."

A "blank slate" landscape surrounded their passive solar house, and Black Rock Ranch was born.

"We started with Italian varietals of olive trees representing peace, strong roots, and a fruit crop to harvest," she continues. Trunks that began pencil-thin, swaying in the coastal winds, are now strong with thick trunks and firm roots. Today, three separate olive groves thrive on the mountain.

"In hindsight, we admit to planting the trees before thinking about the water," says Sandra. They eventually developed a roof catchment system with storage tanks at the top of the property and gravity-fed irrigation. They also added apple, plum, cherry, citrus, and native trees like elder and hazel, as well as wax myrtle, ceanothus, and native flowers. These trees and flowers are

near the house on the lower slope of the mountain. The trees planted years earlier sequester significant amounts of carbon.

"Some of the trees, especially the olives, would like more heat," she says. "But with a changing climate, they may get it."

The Guidis welcomed chickens to Black Rock Ranch. But because the birds arrived before the plants or trees could provide coverage or hiding places, they lost a lot of birds learning hard lessons. The couple continued their research and took many classes, including a year-long course on organic gardening at the local junior college. "We kept learning."

Land at the top of the mountain property is part of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) under federal jurisdiction. Formerly considered grassland from a historic ranch, the area has transitioned to coastal scrub. The density of coastal scrub made it impossible to see the ground, which was tinder dry from the ongoing drought. The terrain also included moderate-sized rocks protruding from the mountain.

"We watched this area for three solid years, growing alarmed at the plant growth, and finally came up with a plan to address the increasing fire threat," describes Sandra.

The Guidis' local Fibershed community proved a tremendous resource. This non-profit develops regional textile networks throughout America while restoring ecosystems and communities. Fibershed embraces agriculture, manu-

Photo by Paige Green



Critically endangered Santa Cruz Island sheep at the Guidis' Black Rock Ranch.



facturing, consumer education, and climate challenges to reimagine the lifecycle of garments.

"Thanks to Fibershed and Teju Farrar [a Jamaican-American writer, geographer and poet whose work centers on climate and environmental justice, adaptive responses, ecological resilience and cultural equity] we learned the mountain and surrounding area was formerly inhabited for millennia by the indigenous Coastal Miwok tribe who tended this land, sustaining their community with fishing, hunting, and the harvest of edible plants and berries," explains Sandra. "The tribe also put fire to the ground, enhancing the continued health of certain trees and bushes. We integrate continuing education like this into our lives to better understand how our actions affect a changing world."

Fibershed also taught the Guidis that animals could be a stellar addition to land management. They settled on the perfect partners for Black Rock Ranch when they discovered Santa Cruz Island sheep, breeders Lynn and Jim Moody, and The Livestock Conservancy.

"We were looking for a small sheep breed for grazing the olive groves and coastal scrub," explains Sandra. "Southdown sheep were considered although the ample wool around their eyes meant foxtail trouble." A fellow Fibershed member pointed them toward the Moodys and Santa Cruz Island sheep.

"There are precious few Santa Cruz Island sheep living in the United States, and we were thrilled to learn of a flock in San Miguel, California, near the Channel Islands," she explains. "We brought our starter flock from the Moody's Blue Oak Canyon Ranch in November 2015."

"With the help of Fibershed, we began a managed rotational grazing program with electric fencing and have seen good results. We also began spending a LOT more time with the sheep in the top pasture," says Sandra. The Guidis reconstructed a fence line and cleared five feet beyond the fence to help thwart predators. They also began watching how long it took for plant growth to overtake the five-foot barrier. Coyote brush and *Helichrysum petiolare*, a woody plant that climbs into trees and provides a perfect fire ladder, were thriving.



Photo by Paige Green

"The Santa Cruz Island sheep are small, thrive on poor forage, and are drought tolerant, adaptations from long periods of isolation in an island habitat," notes Sandra. "They are both browsers and grazers, a dual efficiency that makes them formidable as a land management tool." Their small stature also means less erosion on the steep slopes. "The sheep's preferred forage is both coyote brush, which they defoliate and trim the stems, and *Helichrysum*, which they eat and trample."

In 2018, the Guidis began considering if their Santa Cruz flock could assist with fuel reduction in the impassable coastal scrub areas just above their ranch. Conversations and proposals included their local county fire department and the GGNRA, attempting to determine the sheep's ability to reduce the fuel load on the other side of the ranch's fence. Non-permanent fencing and a specialized mountain vegetation crew of firefighters were key. Fibershed also provided a Carbon Farm Grant, enabling the Santa Cruz flock to work further up the mountain in February 2021.

"One of the things we've learned in 46 years of saving heritage breeds from extinction is these livestock and poultry breeds must have jobs," explains The Livestock Conservancy's Program Director Alison Martin, Ph.D. "They have to be more than a charitable

endeavor, no matter how well-intentioned, to play a sustainable role on ranches like Black Rock. Santa Cruz Island sheep are uniquely qualified to be a vital tool in fire prevention while providing meat, fiber, and breeding stock income for their shepherds."

Reducing the fuel load above the ranch and strengthening ongoing partnerships is helping fight the effects of climate change and the constant threat of wildfire on the Guidi's California mountain near San Francisco. The resilient Santa Cruz Island sheep continue to play a vitally important role.

"Working on a mountain is a collaborative effort, and building relationships is one of the foundational aspects of this work," Sandra concludes. "We are beginning to understand our sheep's role in this

battle and recognize it cannot be done by us or the animals alone."

To learn more about Santa Cruz Island sheep, visit <https://bit.ly/3P0uQHi>, where you can also read an article by Lynn Moody about the history of Santa Cruz Island sheep. ■

*Sandra and Rob Guidi, members of The Livestock Conservancy, run Black Rock Ranch. Their vision is to create a space that unites restorative land practices with growing the most wholesome and nutrient rich olive trees and happy rare breed animals.*



Black Rock Ranch Santa Cruz Island yarn





## PAIR NATIVE TREES AND HERITAGE BREEDS

By Linwood Watson, MD

Full disclosure: I do not currently tend to any animals. However, I have been a long-term Livestock Conservancy member and have tended a mostly native fruit orchard for over ten years. I believe the ultimate model of resilience and sustainability will involve pairing Native trees and Heritage breeds. Consider these tips on how to increase your “sustilience,” the sustainability and resilience of your farm and animals.

From my plant work with many native North American fruit trees, and many animal conversations with Conservancy members, I want to light an inner spark. From urban chicken coops with room for one tree to 100-acre spreads that buttress national hatcheries, native trees can strengthen your farm, lower your feed costs and lessen supply chain disruptions, without your needing to pursue a degree in horticulture.

I’m suggesting two specific trees suited to nearly two-thirds of the continental U.S. However, I encourage all animal stewards, regardless of plant zone or climate, to take an open view of your region even in arid desert areas or ultra-cold Plant Zones 2 or 3. Discover what native trees the animals like, and then see what it takes to plant a few trees on your homestead.

For any native tree in your region that your animals favor for shade or food, consider the following:

1. Native trees tend to need less work from you. Unlike peaches or apples

that can be pest ridden, especially in humid areas, native trees have the immunity and wherewithal to thrive with minimal care. Doesn’t that remind you of Pineywood cattle immunity? A little planning and ample annual mulch can do wonders.

2. Native trees help the ecosystem around you. Native pollinators, from solitary ground bees to moths, to bats and even beetles all benefit from tree pollen as well as shade and breeding habitat. And don’t forget the butterflies that eat those tree leaves as caterpillars, and then feed your chickens, goslings, and ducks.
3. Many native trees, despite needing less care, still yield ample fruit across a variety of seasons to lessen your feed bill. Trust me, I have seen way too many content geese and goslings full to the point of mulberry purple poop lounging in the tree shade on hot early July days to not appreciate native fruit benefits to animals. By the way, that goose poop lessens your fertilizer bill and makes strong, pasture erosion-controlling tree roots.
4. Even if you lack a “green thumb,” you stand a high chance of tree success with

some planning. Critics say it will take three to five years to get any fruit. The fact is, time is going to pass regardless. The real question is, “Are you doing what you can, at reasonable intervals, to keep your farm strong?” As the old phrase goes, “The best time to plant a tree is 20 years ago, the next best is now!”

Consider two native fruit trees that can feed your animals. First is the American mulberry tree (*Morus rubra*, *M. alba*, or a hybrid) and second is the American persimmon tree (*Diospyros virginiana*).

In Piedmont, North Carolina, mulberry fruit runs from the third week of May to the second week of July, depending on rain. It is a plethora of fruit, a consistent mulberry barrage that your animals will beat a trail to, even as the birds and many other animals also feast. Have you ever



Red mulberry (*Morus rubra*)



raised a nut tree and been disappointed the squirrels beat you to all the crop? All your strawberries were consumed by rabbits? The mulberry has enough crop for all.

The American persimmon has a trademark astringency, or “lip pucker” until 100 percent ripe. But once ripe, it is a tasty dynamo full of nutrients. This richness led to American persimmons’ important livestock role of “fall fattening” for hogs. Depending on the variety and your location, this native tree fruit from the last of August to as late as New Year’s. Unlike the mulberry, the harvest lasts several weeks with a medium steadiness. Moderate amounts of ground drops will fall to your livestock over a two- to three-week period. Animals appreciate this dense nutritional delicacy before the winter cold.

If buying a persimmon tree from a nursery, ask for a northern variant of American persimmon. This sub-variety yields annual fruit much more dependably than the southern variant, which can skip years. Southern variants are often cheaply sold as “wildlife plantings,” which are great for shade and erosion control, but not for consistent annual fruiting.

Finally, consider these general guidelines for native fruiting trees to minimize your work while maximizing your fruit:

- Sunlight is fuel, and fuel yields fruit. Aim for a minimum of eight hours of sun per day.

- Call a nursery before you order and tell them your plant zone. Google “plant zone by zip code” if in doubt.
- Lean toward a nursery that has been in business for at least ten years to find varieties best for your locale.
- Most soil issues can be gradually resolved with mulch. Mulch also means less weeding, more soil nutrients, and less work for you. Apply a six- to ten-inch layer annually in a doughnut shape rather than a volcano.
- Trees are perennials and thrive in soil with fungal activity so look for wood chips, limb chips, or shredded wood, not sawdust.
- For your fruit trees, the number one enemy are deer, voracious herbivores. Use an anchored five- or six-foot-tall metal fence ring on top of your mulch doughnut until the tree limbs are all over SEVEN feet tall.
- Fall planting = less Spring work.

Harness the synergy of Native trees and Heritage breeds. And if you are lucky, there may be some fruit left for you! ■

*The ethos of this essay is from the 1929 classic, Tree Crops: A Permanent Agriculture, by J. Russell Smith. This book is still in print because the old ways still work. The book is also in The Livestock Conservancy's library.*



American persimmon (*Diospyros virginiana*)

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Gerald Donnelly's Shetland geese at Donnyweir Poultry Farm in Ontario, Canada.

Photo by Zane Sunday



# GUINEA HOGS HELP PRESERVE THE MASKOKE LANGUAGE



*Indigenous Maskoke children care for and talk to sokhv, or pigs, at Ekvñ-Yefelcv Eco-village.*

By Cathy R. Payne

In 1836, Indigenous Maskoke communities were forcibly removed from their homelands, now known as Alabama. Guinea Hogs, a small, sturdy lard hog, were also common in that area around the same time. American Guinea Hogs are listed as Threatened on The Livestock Conservancy's Conservation Priority List. Similarly, the Maskoke language is considered severely endangered.

Several Indigenous Maskoke people have now returned to their homelands to practice linguistic, cultural, and ecological sustainability. They've built an intentional community known as Ekvñ-Yefelcv (<https://www.ekvn-yefelcv.org/>). This name is a double entendre meaning both returning to the earth and returning to our homelands. A rather large herd of Guinea Hogs has also returned to areas where the breed was once pervasive. These independent, friendly, foraging hogs were once a common poor man's hog. As small farms became scarce, so did the breed.

In a twist of fate, the endangered language and the endangered hogs have crossed paths in a uniquely delightful way that benefits each of them as they solve problems for each other. In this eco-village setting, children and adults are immersed in the Maskoke language. No English is used in

instruction for the children. Because the Maskoke are traditionally agricultural people in tune with the natural world, their language can be practiced most appropriately in an agricultural and eco-friendly community.

The hogs are helping the Maskoke clear the land while reproducing themselves to add more eager workers, meat, and lard for soap and salves. In turn, the children have ample situations in which to talk to and about the hogs while developing their language skills. The eco-village also raises sturgeon and buffalo (bison), but the hogs are the only mammals that the children can experience up close. As part of their schoolwork, the young children are required to talk to the pigs daily, rub their bellies, and speak the Maskoke language. Some of those "conversations" involve scolding the hogs for "hogging" the food.

The children also collect desired tree branches outside the fenced area to supplement the hogs' feed. They distribute food to the animals equitably so each one gets a share. This task reinforces plant species identification, which is part of the children's botanical curriculum. Through careful observation, they determine which plants the hogs prefer and what species are rejected.

Ekvn-Yefelcv is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. Marcus Briggs-Cloud

and his partner, Tawna Little, are the co-founders and co-directors. There are twelve residents in the community, including adults, teenagers, and two young children. Most members of the community interact with the hogs by feeding and watering them and rotating their pastures.

The eco-village has a partnership with Sandee House and Holly Hamm, owners of Friday Farms in Gordo, Alabama. House and Hamm have provided livestock and assisted the community in registering hogs with the American Guinea Hog Association. House also arranged for chef Meredith Leigh to teach a two-day workshop on how to produce shelf-stable meat. The community plans to build a smokehouse for this purpose.

Marcus and his aunt are fluent speakers of Maskoke along with Marcus and Tawna's children, who are proficient. Marcus has never spoken English to them. The other adults and teenagers are working toward fluency. Marcus acknowledges the difficulty adults have learning an endangered language. There are no television or radio shows in Maskoke, and no fully functioning society of Maskoke speakers. He predicts that by 2040 the eco-village could be the only place where one can go to hear the Maskoke language spoken fluently in a community setting.



The residents of Ekvñ-Yefolecv have a remarkable story. They are descendants of survivors of a People forcefully relocated to other areas between 1828 and 1836. Most of those survivors were removed to what is “colonially known as Oklahoma.” Others went southward “to what they call Florida.” Marcus explained that he prefers the term Indigenous over Native American when referring to his community.

“Those of us here in the eco-village do not consider ourselves to be American,” he stated. “America is a settler-colonial construct. By avoiding that term, we are actually resisting assimilation. Other Indigenous People may have other opinions on this. We’re all in different places ideologically,” he asserted. “But for us, it’s an important position to maintain for the health of our linguistic, cosmological, and political autonomy.”

When Marcus was a teenager on the Big Cypress Reservation in south Florida, a linguist approached him and commented that while most young people did not speak the Maskoke language, he was often observed hanging out with the elders. The linguist asked if he would like to go to college and offered to take him to a linguistic conference. Eventually, Marcus was admitted to the University of Oklahoma so he could learn how to teach Maskoke to others.

“As I started to dissect the language, to engage this type of critical analysis of the grammar, I gained an ability to extrapolate a traditional epistemological worldview that was fully intact in the grammar of the language,” Marcus explained. “So I got this whole glimpse of the way that our ancestors perceived the world around them ecologically, ethically, etc.” That insight inspired him to think about the traditional ways, and what they must have been like in antiquity compared to how they’ve evolved. He wanted to contribute to his community by teaching the language in some kind of immersion experience.

“If our contemporary lifeways are not fixated on regenerative agriculture, our language really stands no chance of surviving. Our language’s verb base is derived from, and is thus inherently tied to, both our ceremonial cycle and agriculture – which inextricably correspond to one another.”

***“If our contemporary lifeways are not fixated on regenerative agriculture, our language really stands no chance of surviving. Our language’s verb base is derived from, and is thus inherently tied to, both our ceremonial cycle and agriculture – which inextricably correspond to one another.”***

Marcus continued, “UNESCO estimates 50 to 90 percent of the world’s languages will be extinct by the end of the 21st century. In the U.S. context, there are about 153 indigenous languages that are still spoken, but only twenty will survive by the year 2050. That means 130 languages will fall silent in the next 30 years. The Maskoke language is no exception. East of the Mississippi, we have only twenty-three speakers left. In Oklahoma, we may have somewhere around 300. We lost about 30 percent of our speaker population due to Covid-19.

“One of the biggest threats to the survival of our language is poor health, because language bearers are dying prematurely in their 60s. This is due to chronic illness, namely diabetes and hypertension. The elders are taking the language with them. When that happens, we lose 20 or more years of

opportunities to learn from them about how to revitalize our language. Part of our strategy to decolonize our diets for the collective wellness of the community is to eat in a way more familiar to our ancestors. This includes eating nutrient-rich meat from forest and pasture-raised Guinea Hogs and buffalo and preparing foods with lard that provide omega-3 fatty acids.”

Marcus determined the Maskoke language developed in a society inherently premised on an intimate relationship with the natural world. He had the idea that instead of molding the language into a modern lifestyle, he and others could change their lifestyle in order for the language to live. This epiphany occurred in 2003, when Marcus was just 18 years old. He started assembling a group of like-minded people.

In 2012, they began searching for land in Oklahoma and Florida. “But the ancestors were revealing we need to come back to our homelands,” Marcus stated. Eventually, they found an ancestral village site in Coosa County, Alabama.

“Our eco-village encompasses 1,206 acres, and some of it is the traditional hunting grounds of our People,” he stated. It also held “significant areas that our ancestors stewarded for specific ecological benefits. Our traditional territory covered over 54 million acres of land between what is commonly known today as Alabama and Georgia.”



*Guinea Hog, Threatened*

Now only 39 years old, Marcus sees the eco-village taking shape. When asked what he most liked about working with the Guinea Hogs, he replied, "It's hard to pin down one thing about them I like the most. Perhaps I enjoy the hands-on experience. I can have my children in the fences with forty gentle mammals. We can all be rubbing the bellies of hogs that rolled over for the occasion while simultaneously speaking our Maskoke language to them, without any threat either living being will harm the other. I love that their behaviors provide a vibrant, humorous, and grammatically diverse discourse for us during nightly Maskoke-language-only gatherings. We all enjoy recounting episodes of the many things the hogs do."

The first time Marcus saw a Guinea Hog was at Pat Whitaker's house in North Carolina. Whitaker is a well-respected breeder of Australorp chickens, and the communities' stock came from her. "I've known about Guinea Hogs all my life, but had never seen them," Marcus said. She had two feeder hogs penned up on their first visit. "I remember them being so docile. I thought, 'Gosh, this is so different from other hogs that I've seen.'"

Hogs were traditionally an important part of Maskoke culture.

Marcus' great grandfather maintained a small rural store, built onto the front of their family home, where he also raised Guinea Hogs. Marcus' father, born in 1955, also helped raise the Guinea Hogs and said "They were good for lard. Some people would cross them with other pigs, but we did not. We sold some and we ate some." Marcus' great uncle, now 82 years old, also recalled them in the 1940's. He said they were black and sometimes had white spots on their feet.

Although animals are not permitted indoors, per Maskoke cultural tradition, Marcus grew up hearing about a particular Guinea Hog, the runt of one litter who was considered special, that would enter the small store through an open doorway and roll over to have her belly scratched by customers.

As soon as the Guinea Hogs arrived at Ekvn-Yefelcv, Marcus noticed how engaged his children became with them. "I realized," he explained, "how they were so key to our linguistic revitalization work. We need these hogs here to aid us in getting the kids talking about all their



*Guinea Hogs at Ekvn-Yefelcv community.*

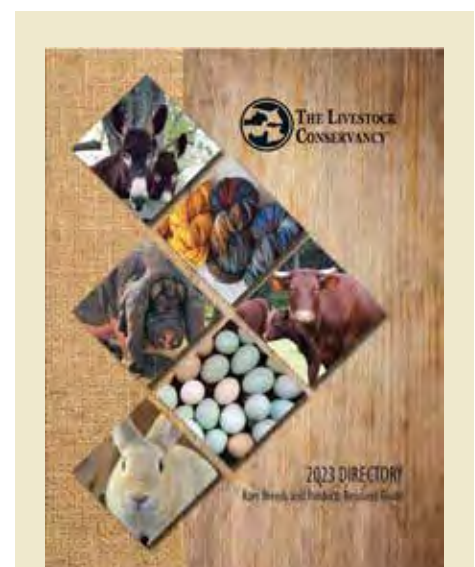
behaviors. They can literally be up close to the hogs, talking about them and talking to them in our language. They can't do that with the Yorkshires – they're too aggressive."

Using heritage breeds in the eco-village is a priority. They recently acquired some San Clemente Island goats, and in the future, the eco-village hopes to acquire critically endangered Gulf Coast Native sheep for the community. They are a hardy, independent breed that is well adapted to hot, humid, and wet environments. Sheep are good browsers and provide both meat and fiber that would be useful in the community.

Marcus values traditional Indigenous knowledge systems. However, he has also obtained a western education. He earned a bachelor's degree in Indigenous Studies from the University of Oklahoma and a Master of Theological Studies from Harvard and is currently a Ph.D. candidate in Ecology at the University of Florida.

"We know what it feels like to be on the brink of extinction as a People; thus, it is our responsibility to speak up for the living beings with whom we seek to live in 'right relationship.' This is not only to avoid extinction, but so they may thrive. In a spirit of reciprocity, we will ensure the Guinea Hogs are well taken care of in our/their shared homelands, just as they take care of us and will continue to do so for our grandchildren's grandchildren's grandchildren." ■

*Author Cathy R. Payne is the former farmer at Broad River Pastures, where she raised heritage rabbits, Gulf Coast Sheep, ducks, and American Guinea Hogs. She is the author of Saving the Guinea Hogs: The Recovery of an American Breed, available in The Livestock Conservancy webstore.*



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# THE DREAM OF SHEPHERDING

By Jeri Robinson-Lawrence

“As a passionate fiber artist and rare breed advocate, I long dreamed of raising wool sheep,” explains Jeri Robinson-Lawrence. “Not wanting to be thwarted by lack of farm ownership, I sought other opportunities.”

Robinson-Lawrence is a Professor of Art and Design at Millersville University in Millersville, Pennsylvania. She has been a loyal member of The Livestock Conservancy since 2007 and served as a judge for the Conservancy’s Microgrants program. She is also a fiber artist and fiber provider in the Shave ‘Em to Save ‘Em (SE2SE) fiber initiative.

“My dear friend allowed me to keep my first sheep at her farm. In exchange, I paid the cost of feed, hay, and veterinary bills.” Eventually, Robinson-Lawrence realized she wanted to see her sheep daily and the farm was too far away.

“On a whim, I called an acquaintance and asked if I could move my sheep to her farm. When she agreed, I took over all feed, veterinary, and shearing bills for her sheep, as well as my own.” She began growing her flock. But all good things must come to an end. The friend sold her farm, leaving the fiber fanatic with one month to find a new home for her Wensleydale and Cotswold flock.

“Checking news lists, horse boarding facilities, social media, and even driving up to farms and knocking on doors ensued,” she admitted. “I was in panic mode when I found Daniel, the owner of a farm and horse boarding facility.” The farmer said yes without hesitation because he no longer wanted to mow five acres.

Robinson-Lawrence paid *pasture board*, a small monthly fee. She’s since learned the practice is commonplace around the world.

In 2019, at the age of 57, Robinson-Lawrence fulfilled her dream of owning a farm. Her sheep are right outside her window. White Rose Acres is nestled in the valley of the Susquehanna River. Flying Fibers Wool Shop, which focuses on breed-specific British and American fibers and yarns, is also located at the farm. It’s open to wool lovers, sheep admirers, crafters, and local gift shoppers.



Brands range from exclusive yarn lines to breed-specific yarn companies like Brooklyn Tweed. She also carries a large range of natural wool tops for spinners and felters. You’ll find her exhibiting at the Maryland Sheep and Wool Festival each May, the Shenandoah Valley Fiber Festival in September, and the New York State Sheep and Wool Festival each October.



Jeri Robinson-Lawrence with Leicester Longwool and North American Wensleydale sheep at White Rose Acres.

“It is possible to work with family, run a business, and save heritage breeds all at the same time!” offers Anastasia Williams of the Local Wool Podcast.

Robinson-Lawrence operates Flying Fibers with Irina Lawrence Mathias, her daughter. “We had a business plan, of course, but first and foremost was our mission and vision, which is education and instilling a love of fiber arts for future generations,” she says. Interviews, podcasts, and articles from Woolful, Agri-Culture, *The Knitter* magazine, Pennsylvania Made, and more can also be found on their [flyingfibers.com](http://flyingfibers.com) website.

Both women are passionate about providing beautiful fiber products to crafters of any skill, as well as promoting the preservation of rare breed sheep. Their heritage breed Leicester Longwool and Shetland sheep are joined by North American Wensleydales. Flock yarns are always available at their York County, Pennsylvania, shop, or by visiting online. Don’t forget to request a sticker for your SE2SE Passport when you purchase a wool product from a breed on the Conservation Priority List.

“Today, I am confident I will never be without my sheep. They provide tremendous joy to my family life,” comments Jeri. ■



## STRONGER TOGETHER: CULTIVATING LEADERSHIP 2023-2024 BREED ORGANIZATION WEBINARS

**October, 2023: Civil Communications** (navigating difficult topics, divergent priorities and disparate personalities)

**January, 2024: Conservation Planning** (developing a breed conservation program, long term goals, and cryopreservation)

**April, 2024: Strategic Planning** (charting your course to success)

**July, 2024: Friend Raising** (volunteers, committees, regional clubs, and directors)

**October, 2024: Fundraising** (membership, registration fees, shows, donors, and grants)

See <https://bit.ly/47NoGTG> for dates and details.

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## MARYLAND SHEEP AND WOOL FESTIVAL 2023

Livestock Conservancy staff promoted Shave 'Em to Save 'Em (SE2SE) at this festival, one of the largest fiber festivals in the nation. This year's festival featured Jacob-American sheep, a heritage breed listed as Threatened on the CPL.

Youth Conservation Program (YCP) winners like Penny Kemp (pictured) received a sheep and connection with a mentor for one year while they learn husbandry, fleece management, breed promotion, and how to create products from their wool. Kemp's donor was Dr. Marie Minnich, a Romeldale/CVM shepherdess from Marushka Farms in Danville, PA. Dr. Minnich also serves on The Livestock Conservancy's Board of Directors. Romeldale/CVMs are a Threatened breed on the CPL.

The 14 YCP winners received sheep supplies such as a halter and hoof trimmer, one year of membership in The Livestock Conservancy, and a copy of *An Introduction to Heritage Breeds*, thanks to Dr. Brian Larson of Marshall, NC. Dr. Larson is a Master Breeder of Lincoln sheep and former chair of the Conservancy's Board of Directors.

Many of this year's wool competition winners also came from heritage breeds. SE2SE fiber artist Ikumi Kayama of Riverdale Park, MD, earned a First Prize ribbon for her Shropshire socks. Shropshires are a Watch-listed breed on the CPL.

Festivals are a great way to connect with and gather feedback from current participants in the SE2SE program, learn the impact of SE2SE on their sales, and promote SE2SE to new participants.



Romeldale/CVM sheep, Threatened.



Blue ribbon Shropshire wool socks.



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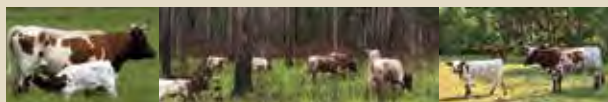
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## A 40-YEAR LOVE AFFAIR

The first two Clydesdales arrived at Starlane Farms in Lansing, New York, on a warm summer evening in 1971. Betty and Big Queen came from Bill Brass in Ontario that day and were the beginning of Mary Quick Flinn's forty-year love affair with Clydesdales.

Mary Quick grew up in Katonah, New York, and attended Cornell University where she earned her Bachelor's degree in Animal Husbandry and met her future husband, David Flinn. Together with their two sons, Dale and Glenn, they purchased and moved to Starlane Farms in 1966.

From those first two mares, Mary built a wonderful collection of horses over the next four decades. She combined purchases from America and abroad with her breeding program, resulting in up to 30 horses on the farm at one time.

Along the way, Mary added a wonderful pair of Percheron geldings named Bill and Jerry to satisfy her love of dapple gray. A beautiful Cleveland Bay stallion, Peter, also made his home at Starlane Farms.

For Mary, though, it wasn't just about breeding and showing. She had a passion for the breeds and always championed the best standards for them.

She was an active member of the New York State Draft Horse Club and served on the board. Mary was also a passionate member of the Cleveland Bay Society, active with the breed association for many years. Cleveland Bays were developed in Yorkshire, England for long-distance transport, farm work, and riding



*Mary Flinn grooming one of her horses at the New York State Fair.*

over rough terrain. They are Critically endangered.

Mary served in the Clydesdale Breeder's Association of the United States and was the first woman elected president. She was a regular fixture at the annual Clyde Breeder's sale in Springfield, Illinois. In 2009, she was inducted into the Clydesdale Breeders' Association Heritage Hall of Fame, something she was both very proud and very humble to have achieved. Along the way, there were hundreds of shows, fairs, and sales as well as regular trips to Scotland and England where she had many friends in the Clydesdale world.

The Clydesdale breed originated in Lanarkshire, Scotland, and the name is derived from the River Clyde. Their history dates back to the mid-1700s when native horses

were mated with larger Flemish horses. The offspring were then selected for use in agriculture and all types of heavy hauling, including transport through the streets of Glasgow. Today the docile breed is ranked as Threatened on the CPL.

Mary and her family were regular visitors to the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair in Toronto, Ontario for nearly 50 years. Because of her exceptionally high standards, only rarely did Mary feel she had a horse good enough to enter the Royal. This trailblazer was the first woman to show a stallion at the Royal.

Her son Dale summarizes, "One hopes her efforts to support the breeds and organizations like The Livestock Conservancy made a real difference over the course of her life." Indeed they have. The Livestock Conservancy gratefully recognizes Mary Flinn's active career in breeding and raising Clydesdales, as well as her support of other breeds and breed associations throughout the equine industry. ■



*Princess was one of Mary's most successful horses.*