

## Species Survey a Real "HOOT"



Western Screech Owls. Photo by Jared Hobbs.

### This past September

Julie Tyrrell, Nature Trust Field Operations Coordinator for the Kootenay Region, had the opportunity to conduct call-playback surveys for Western Screech owls throughout the Flathead and Elk River drainages with Becky Phillips from the BC Conservation Foundation.

The BC Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations (MFLNRO) initiated these formal surveys in response to a Western Screech owl detection made by MFLNRO biologist, Jared Hobbs, in the summer. His detection represented the first confirmation of the species in the BC portion of the Flathead Valley.

Western Screech owls (*Megascops kennicotti macfarlanei*) favour riparian areas dominated by deciduous hardwoods. Cavities in mature Black Cottonwoods

(*Populus trichocarpa*) are often used for nesting cavities, while both deciduous and coniferous trees are used for roosting. A combination of limited range, specialized habitat requirements and ecological threats has resulted in the federal designation of this subspecies as Endangered by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada; provincially the subspecies is restricted to Southern Interior BC and is red-listed by the BC Conservation Data Centre.

The owl's territorial call, or vocalization, is commonly described as the "bouncing ball" call which consists of several consecutive staccato hoots that speed up towards the end. Call-playback surveys involve broadcasting a pre-recorded "bouncing ball" call from a male Western Screech owl using an MP3 player and a megaphone. Generally,

this will elicit the response of any resident Screech owls in the area.

Throughout September, a total of 131 surveys were conducted within suitable screech owl habitat. The fall surveys resulted in one new Screech owl detection in the Flathead River drainage. An additional four detections occurred during informal follow-up surveys by MFLNRO staff. These Flathead detections represent a significant range expansion for the species in Canada. Increased spring surveys will be conducted to locate new individuals and confirm breeding through the detection of juvenile owls.

Funding for this project was provided by the Great Northern Landscape Conservation Cooperative. For more information about Screech owls, contact [info@naturetrust.bc.ca](mailto:info@naturetrust.bc.ca)



Turning the Tide  
of Species Loss



Scout Island  
Transforms Lives



## Burgoyne Bay and Twin Lakes Complete!

*Twin Lakes property*

We are delighted to announce the completion of two conservation projects—Burgoyne Bay and Twin Lakes.

The Burgoyne Bay property on Salt Spring Island is a 22 hectare (55-acre) acquisition to conserve rare Garry oak and Coastal Douglas-fir. Surrounded by Provincial Parks and an ecological reserve, this property is the last piece of the puzzle and completes protected areas of the entire Burgoyne Bay. We wish to thank the property owner, BC Ministry of Environment, individual donors and Government of Canada through the Natural Areas Conservation Program as facilitated by the Nature Conservancy of Canada who made this outstanding achievement possible.

Twin Lakes is a 810 hectare (2,000 acre) property located 30 miles south of Penticton and adjacent to The Nature Trust White Lake Biodiversity Ranch. It is important for grassland and riparian habitat and ranked as a top priority by the South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program. Thanks to BC Conservation Foundation, Ducks Unlimited Canada, Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation, Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, Okanagan Similkameen Parks Society, South Okanagan Naturalists' Club, many individual donors and Government of Canada through the Natural Areas Conservation Program as facilitated by the Nature Conservancy of Canada for making this acquisition possible.

### Celebrate at Twin Lakes!

On May 17th at 10:30 am The Nature Trust of BC invites you to join us to celebrate the securement of the Twin Lakes property near Penticton. We will organize a hike in the area so bring a bag lunch, water, and your hiking boots. Refreshments will be served. Register at [www.meadowlarkfestival.bc.ca](http://www.meadowlarkfestival.bc.ca)

Map: <http://g.co/maps/pmqpa>

For people who would like to attend from the Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island, we are organizing a trip to the South Okanagan May 16th and 17th for the Twin Lakes Celebration and more! For information, please contact John Keller at 604-969-3250 or e-mail [jkeller@naturetrust.bc.ca](mailto:jkeller@naturetrust.bc.ca)



*Doreen Olson and Jim Bryan present cheque to Nick Burdock and Carl MacNaughton*

### Naturalists' Donation

Carl MacNaughton and Nick Burdock of The Nature Trust of BC received a special holiday gift from the South Okanagan Naturalists' Club: a cheque for \$2,414 for the Twin Lakes property.

"We are very excited since this is by far the largest single donation our club and its members have made to a single organization," said Doreen Olson, the Naturalists' club representative.

The South Okanagan Naturalists' Club is celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2012. It was formed to help stem the loss of important habitats in the Valley. To learn more, visit their website at [southokanaganature.com](http://southokanaganature.com)



### Moorecroft Property

We are continuing to fundraise for Moorecroft, an outstanding piece of forested waterfront in Nanoose Bay on Vancouver Island. Special thanks to the Moorecrofters and friends for spreading the word and collecting donations.



# Turning the Tide of Species Loss in Georgia Basin Ecosystems

By Dr. Peter Arcese

**Early European explorers** to the Georgia Basin described a verdant and varied landscape of large, old fir forests, oak and arbutus woodland, and bracken and camas-filled meadows extending along the southeastern coast of Vancouver Island, throughout the Gulf Islands, and at low elevation on the adjacent mainland coast. Sheltered by the rain-shadow of the Olympic mountains and warmed by the temperate waters of the Pacific Ocean, this area's Mediterranean climate and abundant natural resources sheltered First Nations peoples for thousands of years, and more recently have become among the most desirable places to live in our small world. This is where The Nature Trust of BC comes in. Today, conservation biologists recognize the "Coastal Douglas Fir Zone" as among the most biologically unique and rich areas in western Canada, but also among its most imperilled ecosystems.



It is well-established that humans affect plant and animal populations directly via habitat conversion.

Not large to begin with (~2,561 km<sup>2</sup>), this seasonally dry forest and woodland ecosystem is now 49% converted to human use with less than 3% of its original "old growth" cover of 145+ yr-old forest, and less than 10% of historic oak woodlands remaining. As a consequence, the CDF zone now provides uncertain habitat for 117 "Species at Risk" and 29 red-listed plant communities. Surprisingly, however, the CDF has yet to see a sustained, coordinated effort by government, non-profits and private land owners to insure that relatively "intact" examples of our most treasured native landscapes are conserved for future generations. The Nature Trust of British Columbia, an early leader in land acquisition in the region, is now helping change that fact. We are re-focusing attention on the CDF and facilitating strategic planning

efforts aimed at conserving landscapes with high native species diversity, and restoring mature Douglas fir forests to old growth status over the coming decades. But we will need to do more than acquire land, because much evidence shows that "stewardship" will be just as important to achieving these objectives.

Why? It is well-established that humans affect plant and animal populations directly via habitat conversion. But it is now also clear that the "indirect effects" of humans arising via exotic species introductions or by facilitating "human commensal species" at the expense of vulnerable native species, can be just as detrimental. Familiar examples include the introduction of mosquitoes to Hawaii, resulting in the extinction of 28 bird species. Closer to home, many biologists now point to the rise of urban and rural populations of small-bodied predators, such as raccoons, as threats to the persistence of many vulnerable bird and reptile species. Small-bodied predators increase when humans eliminate large predators from landscapes, because wolves, cougars and other large predators can limit their population size. Our removal of once abundant cougar and wolf populations from the CDF has similarly resulted in the "release" of black-tailed deer populations, particularly those restricted to islands. As a consequence, biologists have identified high deer density as a threat to the persistence of many species, including iconic members of coastal Douglas fir and Garry oak woodlands. As examples, many plants once abundant in forest and woodland habitats, such as great camas, fawn and chocolate lilies, onions and brodea, are now becoming scarce, particularly in the Southern Gulf Islands where cougars and wolves are largely absent and hunting has become a lost art. Stewardship will therefore be needed to prevent indirect human effects from reducing further the natural values that have drawn so many humans to the region. The Nature Trust's focus on the Coastal Douglas Fir Zone is aimed at turning the tide of species and habitat loss in the region, and at building on our history of acquisition and stewardship in cooperation with you. We believe the problem of species loss in the CDF is reversible, and we're getting to work on proving that right now.



## Special Thanks

We would like to acknowledge the generosity of live auction donors who supported our Fall Gala. Langara Fishing Adventures donated a fishing trip to their lodge in Haida Gwaii, The Bay Family contributed a stay at their vacation home in Palm Springs, Burrowing Owl Estate Winery gave a double magnum and accommodation at their guest house, Harbour Air donated flights to Vancouver Island and Aviawest Resort Group provided accommodation.

*“Langara Fishing Adventures provides all-inclusive sport fishing and wildlife adventures in BC’s Haida Gwaii islands. In 28 years of operations, we have introduced countless travellers to the beauty and abundance of one of the world’s richest ecosystems. As a company that has always worked to ensure the resources we rely upon are healthy and sustainable for generations to come, we’re proud to support The Nature Trust of BC and its efforts to protect the natural environment of our beautiful corner of the world.”*

Mike Randall, Langara Fishing Adventures



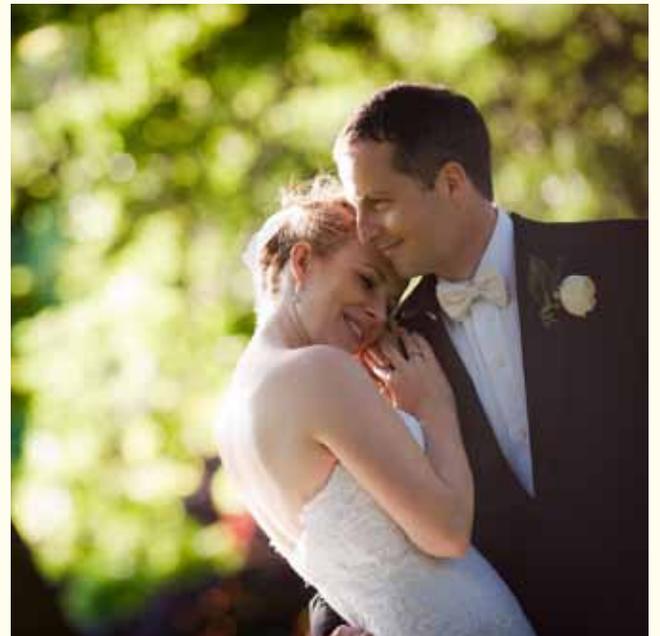
## Legacy Gift

*“In 1959 my husband Dr. Ed Argyle helped to choose the location for the Dominion Radio Astrophysical Observatory at White Lake in the South Okanagan and worked there until his retirement. It had to be in a sparsely settled area surrounded by mountains to keep out modern electrical signals, which block the very sensitive signals from outer space. The scientists even have their car engines modified so they can drive into the parking area without blurring their scientific observations.*

*There has been a constant battle between the scientists and the developers who want to create subdivisions in the region. So far, science has been winning, and they appreciate the work of The Nature Trust and others to preserve this precious area.*

*In summer my husband used to eat his lunch in a low, damp area near the telescopes and loved watching the hatching of dragonflies. He died in 2007 and I am using part of his legacy to help your organization in your good work.”*

June Argyle



## Wedding Gift

Randal Kurt Photography

Sarah Graham and Carsten Bandt celebrated their special day by including gifts to The Nature Trust of BC on their wedding registry. As Sarah explains, *“We are both animal and nature lovers, and enjoy spending time outdoors. I grew up in Vancouver and love the landscape and environment of BC very much, and hope that such a special and unique part of the world can be saved for future generations. Patrick Oswald was a dear friend of my late father and has been like an uncle to me, so it was only natural to want to support one of his causes.”*



Alan Story, Grand Prize Winner



Cormac Flynn, Wild View Category Winner



Terry Beaupre, Tree Category Winner

## My Favourite BC Photo Contest Winners

Thank you to all of the amateur photographers in BC who submitted photos to the My Favourite BC Photo Contest and all those who voted as well as photographer Graham Osborne for judging the contest. The grand prize winner was Alan Story for his shot taken in the Broughton Island Group with a Nikon E990, f7.9 11mm, 1/310 sec as he was cruising in his boat.

Cormac Flynn won in the Wild View category for his shot of Joffre Peak viewed from Mount Matier. Terry Beaupre won in the Trees category for her shot of

misty trees in Bridgman Park in North Vancouver during heavy fog. “The fog had just started to burn off which caused the effect of the blue and the slight lighting on the trees. The fog and the fact that it is a multiple exposure (2 shots) give the soft and charcoal look.” Eduardo Baena won in the Wildlife category for his shot of two wolf eels taken at a dive site near Nanaimo called Clark Rock, close to Snake Island.

Thanks to CustomColor Professional Imaging Lab for providing enlargements to the winners.



Eduardo Baena, Wildlife Category Winner

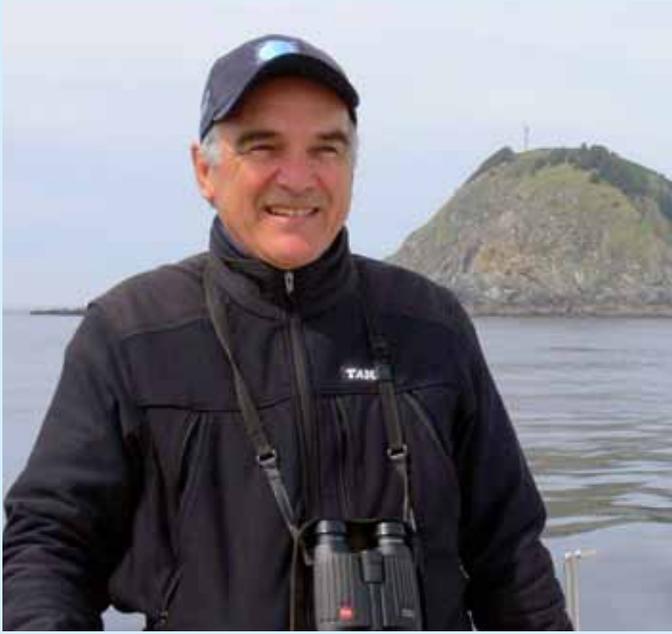


### Swan Lake

The Nature Trust is working with the Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary in Saanich on a new sign kiosk which will be unveiled March 26 at 3 p.m.

In 1976, The Nature Trust acquired 2.4 hectares (6 acres) at Swan Lake and leased this to The Corporation of the District of Saanich to help create the Swan Lake Christmas Hill Sanctuary—a nature oasis in the city. This acquisition is an excellent demonstration of conservation partners at work.

# Upcoming Events



## Life Among Birds

Nature Trust director Rob Butler will be presenting “Life Among Birds” at Royal BC Museum in Victoria on March 17 at noon, Wings Over the Rockies on the evening of May 7 and Central Okanagan Naturalists’ Club May 8 at 7 p.m. This illustrated talk explores some of the latest and coolest findings in bird research from clever crows and marathon migrations to gee-whiz moments—seen through the eyes of professional ornithologist Dr. Rob Butler. It is a story of diplomacy, humour, and adventure of international conservation. The presentation will wrap up with new results from the BC Breeding Bird atlas and the important role of The Nature Trust in saving special places for birds. For over four decades, Rob has been a scientist, professor, author and naturalist based in BC. His research career began along the beaches where he studied the social behaviour of crows. In the ensuing years, Rob traveled to Central and South America, and Asia to watch, research and conserve places for birds. [www.robbutler.ca](http://www.robbutler.ca)

## Brant Wildlife Festival

This year’s Brant Wildlife Festival celebrating the migration of Brant geese and other wonders of nature will run March 29 to April 9 in Parksville and Qualicum Beach on Vancouver Island. The festival kicks off with an Opening Night on March 29 featuring local chefs, live music, displays and a live auction. Other events include Big Day Birding, Brant in the Bay, Eagle Release, and Family Day on the Farm. Visit <http://brantfestival.bc.ca> for details, e-mail [rivers@naturetrust.bc.ca](mailto:rivers@naturetrust.bc.ca) or call toll free 1-866-288-7878. Thanks to the BC Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations, the City of Parksville, the Lohn Foundation and the Mid Island Co-op for sponsoring the festival.



## Earth Wind Fire 2012



***“The best chefs using the best local food paired with the Okanagan’s best wine.”***

- Stuart Klassen, Executive Chef,  
The Delta Grand Okanagan Resort

Mark your calendar so you don’t miss a night of fabulous food, sensational wine and fun dancing at the Delta Grand Okanagan Resort in Kelowna on Friday, June 1. Local jazz singer Anna Jacyszyn will add sparkle to the opening reception, while Wheelhouse will rock the night away. Enjoy a snappy live auction including The Great Wall of Okanagan Wine and other great items.

Tickets are \$150 and reserved tables for 8 are \$1,200. Sponsor tables are also available: Earth table \$10,000; Wind table \$5,000; Fire table \$2,500. Tables of 10 are available upon request. Net proceeds benefit our Conservation Youth Crew program. E-mail [tloewen@naturetrust.bc.ca](mailto:tloewen@naturetrust.bc.ca) or call toll free 1-866-288-7878 to reserve your spot.



## Scout Island Transforms Lives

**Scout Island Nature Centre** is a place for people of all ages to connect with nature. Right in the heart of Williams Lake, the centre provides a unique opportunity to get close and personal with plants, birds, mammals, insects and even reptiles. Purchased by The Nature Trust of BC in 1973, the City of Williams Lake leases the property and the Williams Lake Field Naturalists operate the environmental features of the park, including the Nature Centre. In celebration of The Nature Trust's 40th anniversary of conserving land across BC, the organization partnered with Scout Island on a writing contest this fall. The response to the contest brought smiles to the faces of the judges who read all of them. It's truly heart-warming to know how much this gem of nature in Williams Lake means to people.

Adult winner Maggie Ranger wrote "...my grandson Ryver says "Geese! Ducks!" and that is his way of asking to go to Scout Island. A few weeks ago, when we heard thunder there, Ryver rubs his fingers together and makes a kissing sound. He says "Rainbow, rainbow... kiss, kiss, kiss." Lo and behold, we turn to walk back to the car and there is the most vivid, spectacular rainbow I have ever seen... magic...yes, years of magic...thank you, Scout Island"

High school winner Sam Delacherois wrote:

*"Scout Island is a place to let go  
A place to say your final goodbye  
Watching the balloons float to the sky  
A note of desire and hope fastened on the string  
As it soars through the clouds  
That Sunday of every May."*

Intermediate winner Mia Leblanc wrote *"I think Scout Island is a good place to be because it's calm. So when you're upset or mad, you can go there and you will forget why you were even mad and upset."*

Primary winner Candice-Rose Mapson wrote a letter inviting a friend to visit Scout Island: *"Dear Keleey: I hope you get a chance to visit Scout Island. It is sooo cool with all its little paths and boardwalks. I just love it...Just watch out, it's animal friendly so don't hurt any of the animals there. But I'm telling you, you really should go because it rules sooo much."*

Thanks to all who entered our contest and shared their appreciation of Scout Island. Congratulations to all the winners!



Exploring creatures from the dock

*"Scout Island has touched my life at various points during my 21-year journey. It started as a toddler at the Spiders, Snakes and Frog summer program, and then the preschool. I have fond memories of playing in the sand pit at preschool, and was fortunate enough to have a love of nature and the outdoors instilled in me at this young age. During elementary and high school my class had field trips to the nature centre to learn from the staff and then play at the beach. I also spent a lot of time walking around Scout Island with friends as fun social activities can be challenging to find in Williams Lake. Finally, I was fortunate enough to have the incredible experience of running the Nature Fun kids program the summer after first year and second year of university."*

Monica McMahan



## Special Thanks

Special thanks to Marieke Nijenhuis, Coastal Cake Company, for creating a cake and cupcakes for visitors to enjoy as they viewed the exhibition of Lyndia Terre's art focused on Moorecroft as part of her Artist in Residence work. [www.coastalcakecompany.com](http://www.coastalcakecompany.com)



## Deep Bay

Thanks to the Deep Bay Marine Field Station staff for giving us the opportunity to host an event there in December to raise funds for conservation in Baynes Sound. We were delighted to have Vancouver Island University President and Vice-Chancellor Dr. Ralph Nilson and Comox Valley Naturalist Art Martell as guest speakers. Students from the culinary program created a wonderful buffet with food donated by Hollie Wood Oysters, Marine Harvest Canada, Natural Gift Seafoods and Stellar Bay Shellfish.



## Scholarship Winner

Martina Beck is the winner of the Dr. Ian & Joyce McTaggart-Cowan Scholarship in Environmental Studies at the University of Victoria. She studies non-native smallmouth bass in British Columbia lakes. At present very little is known about how non-native bass interact with native fish and wildlife in BC lakes. In order to properly manage and identify high-risk areas warranting control of non-native bass we must increase our understanding of how smallmouth bass are interacting with species assemblages in lakes throughout BC. The primary objective of this project is to address if and how non-native smallmouth bass impact BC's freshwater biodiversity, including stocked and native salmonid species. These data will provide the basis for future smallmouth bass management actions in addition to forming the basis of public education and outreach to the recreational fishing community.

Martina is a member of the Seafood Ecology Research Group in the School of Environmental Studies at the University of Victoria under the co-supervision of Dr. John Volpe and Dr. Matthias Herborg (BC Ministry of Environment). Martina completed her Bachelor's of Science Honors degree in the faculty of Biology with an honors thesis in the field of Oceanography. Martina's future academic goals are to continue working and conducting research in the fields of aquatic invasive species and fisheries policy and management.



*"What attracted us to The Nature Trust was the very professional manner they handled our Brooklyn Creek donation in Comox. They did a great job taking us through the process combining the ecological science and business sense which resulted in preserving a park of over 6 acres and 600 feet of waterfront in downtown Comox for generations to enjoy."*

The Bay Family



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of British Columbia

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