



NATURE TRUST OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
NEWSLETTER

ISSUE #58 SPRING/SUMMER 2023



**A
BIG
YEAR!**

The Nature Trust came out of 2022 feeling on top of the world!

10

New
conservation areas

2,067

Acres protected
for future generations

1,000,000

Thank you's
for your support



The Importance of Wetland Protection in BC

Wetlands in BC are complex ecosystems - providing a unique refuge for a wealth of plants and animals. These special environments also help sustain life in surrounding habitats and human communities as well.

There are many kinds of wetlands including marshes, fens, peatlands, swamps and others. Wetlands can be natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, and can include water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish, or salt - including areas of marine water. The common characteristic of all types of wetlands is that each is land saturated by water. Permanently to intermittently, wetlands need water saturation for a long enough time to allow low oxygen levels that create conditions for the growth of aquatic plants and other biological activity to occur.

The incredible value of wetlands is disproportionately large compared to their relatively small area in the greater BC landscape. They contain some of the richest biodiversity in the country and are also considered to be one of the most productive ecosystems in the world. The importance of protecting and managing these habitats cannot be overstated given their benefits to humans and wildlife alike. For example, wetlands have been shown to clean water supplies, provide flood protection and mitigate the impacts of climate change. It is also estimated that more than 50% of wildlife species in North America rely on access to wetland habitats for at least part of their life cycles, and almost 35% of all rare, threatened, and endangered species

depend on these specialized ecosystems.

Wetlands in Canada remain under constant threat of loss and degradation due to industrial development, expansion of ports, construction of hydroelectric reservoirs and facilities, urban expansion, and agriculture. The loss of wetlands has in BC has been drastic, specifically on eastern Vancouver Island, the Lower Mainland, and the Okanagan. For over a century, wetlands in BC have been diked or drained - often for agricultural use. The fertile land lying below wetlands provided a perfect flat area for farmers to easily convert into crops.

Wetland losses in BC include 70% of the original wetlands in the Fraser River Delta, 70% of the wetlands in the Victoria region and 85% of natural wetlands in the south Okanagan.

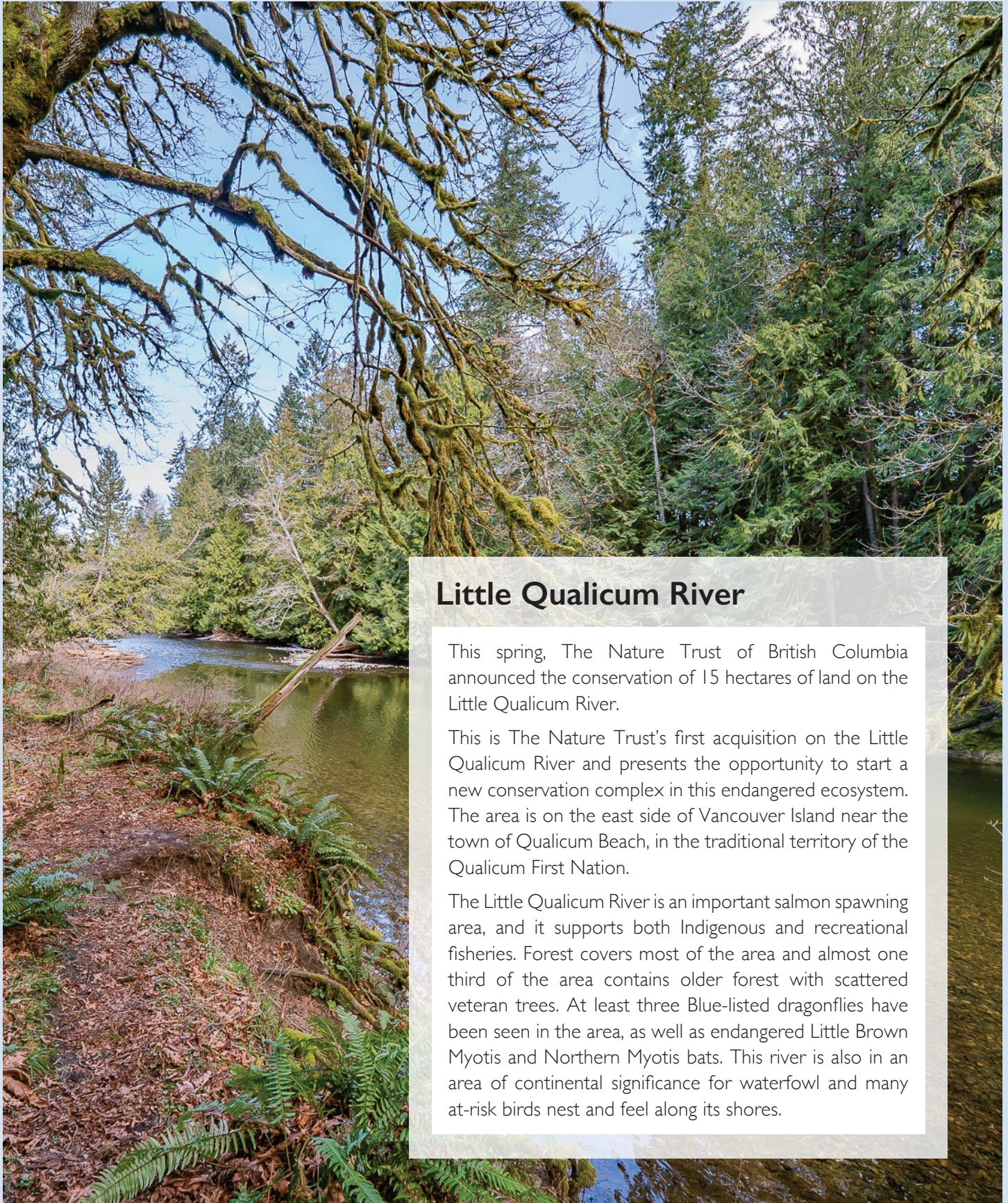
Instead of having to remove forests and other vegetation from a plot of land, draining wetlands was much simpler and less time consuming. The sad truth is that many farms were once biodiverse wetlands, particularly in the province's

agricultural hotspots. To this day, you can often spot low points, like rivulets in farms where water was drained.

Unfortunately, restoring lost wetlands is a challenging and expensive venture. It is important that we protect the precious wetland habitats that remain – for the sake of our wildlife and for ourselves. Thankfully, with your help, The Nature Trust of BC has been working to purchase and conserve land where wetlands can thrive for generations to come. Recently purchased conservation areas include the 66.9 hectares in the Columbia Lake North - Wetlands, 18.8 hectares at Nicomen Slough, and 235 hectares at Meteor Lake Wetland - Bog.

Building a Conservation Legacy

The Nature Trust announced four new conservation areas in Spring 2023.



Little Qualicum River

This spring, The Nature Trust of British Columbia announced the conservation of 15 hectares of land on the Little Qualicum River.

This is The Nature Trust's first acquisition on the Little Qualicum River and presents the opportunity to start a new conservation complex in this endangered ecosystem. The area is on the east side of Vancouver Island near the town of Qualicum Beach, in the traditional territory of the Qualicum First Nation.

The Little Qualicum River is an important salmon spawning area, and it supports both Indigenous and recreational fisheries. Forest covers most of the area and almost one third of the area contains older forest with scattered veteran trees. At least three Blue-listed dragonflies have been seen in the area, as well as endangered Little Brown Myotis and Northern Myotis bats. This river is also in an area of continental significance for waterfowl and many at-risk birds nest and feed along its shores.



Columbia Lake North – Wetlands

The Nature Trust of British Columbia also announced the conservation of 66.9 hectares of land in the Columbia River Valley this spring.

This area, now called Columbia Lake North – Wetlands, is located at the north end of Columbia Lake, within the unincorporated community of Fairmont Hot Springs and on the traditional territory of the Ktunaxa Nation and the Secwépemc (Shuswap Band). The majority of the area is a riparian wetland complex that includes open water, marsh and swamp wetlands mixed with willow-dominated riparian communities and pockets of dry forest. It is located in the very dry cool Interior Douglas-fir (IDF_{ck}) biogeoclimatic zone – a zone of conservation concern.

The land is home to a variety of species of concern, including the Blue-listed Great Blue Heron and Red-listed American Badger (SARA Schedule I Endangered). The Barn Swallow, Bank Swallow, and Common Nighthawk (all SARA Threatened) have been observed near this property, as has the Western Painted Turtle (SARA Special Concern). The area is excellent habitat for a variety of animals, including bears, wolverines, ungulates, and waterfowl.



Saturna Island – Mount Fisher Bluffs

The Nature Trust of British Columbia purchased 32 hectares of land on Saturna Island, to be known as the Saturna Island – Mount Fisher Bluffs.

This property is adjacent to the Southern Gulf Islands National Park Reserve of Canada. This area consists primarily of herbaceous bluffs, mixed coniferous forest, including priority Garry oak ecosystems, and grassland ecosystems. The property contains six sensitive ecosystems in a relatively natural state. This land is located near The Nature Trust's newly purchased Saturna Island – Money Creek conservation area, and is located on the traditional territory of the Quw'utsun First Nation.

The Mount Fisher Bluffs contain various at-risk plants, animals, and ecological communities. The Red-listed White Meconella and Lindley's Microseris (both SARA Schedule I Endangered), as well as the Slender Popcornflower (SARA Schedule I Threatened) occur on the property. As do the Blue-listed Barn Swallow (SARA Schedule I Threatened), Great Blue Heron fannini subspecies, and Peregrine Falcon anatum subspecies (both SARA Schedule I Special Concern).



Meteor Lake Wetland – Bog

The Nature Trust of BC recently purchased the Meteor Lake Wetland – Bog. This 235-hectare wetland property is located about 70 km northeast of Prince George and connects to one of the largest wetlands in the Upper Fraser River Valley.

The conservation area is located on the traditional territory of the Lheidli T'enneh First Nation. This land contains an abundance of rare wetland environments, including peatland ecosystems among its bogs and fens. Peatlands serve an important role in climate resilience, absorbing greenhouse gases and housing rare species and ecosystems. The Nature Trust of BC believes in combatting climate change through nature-based solutions, and this new conservation area exemplifies this goal.

Peatlands often provide unique food, cover, shelter and breeding spaces for numerous animal species, including amphibians, birds and mammals. The area includes habitat for Grizzly Bear and Moose as well as many species of special concern. Northern Goshawk (SARA Schedule I – Threatened) have been observed within the Meteor Lake Wetland conservation complex and White Sturgeon (SARA Schedule I - Endangered) have historically been identified in the area.



Working the Waterfront with Wolves

By Sonja Panozzo, R.B.Tech. - Restoration and Monitoring Technician
Bella Coola Journal – October 12-14, 2022

Waking up from my airplane nap, I look out the small window and realize we must be nearing the Bella Coola Valley. Below us, a glacier spills over multiple mountain valleys and the rugged peaks of the Coast Mountains fill the horizon. This week Steve Henstra, the West Coast Conservation Land Management Program's Restoration Biologist, and I will be working in the Bella Coola Estuary, located in the Nuxalk First Nation's traditional territory.

Our work for the day starts in the evening to hit the low tide window. We meet with Genevieve of the Central Coast Indigenous Resource Alliance and take advantage of the dropping tide to access a couple of our data-loggers. The trek through tidal channels and mudflats is hard work in the dark, but we soon pick our way back to the trucks. We then continue to the docks to check our marine turbidity logger. This device must be submerged in the brackish estuary water, so we weave our skiff through the water amid a serenade of grumpy Harbour Seals. Despite the obstacles, we download the data and replace the logger without a hitch.

The next morning, we join the Nuxalk Guardian Watchmen and head out to the north side of the estuary and up into its waters. As we navigate our skiff towards the huge Bella Coola River, we see a dark, loping shape along the banks. A wolf!

Before long, a pack of up to six wolves (including two pups) casually strolls along the shoreline. They mostly pay us no mind, but one does stop to stare for a few seconds before

leaving us to our work. We don't see the wolves again, but their presence – along with the elusive Grizzly Bear – remind us that estuaries are living ecosystems serving a vibrant array of plants and animals.

On our final morning, Steve and I wake up early to collect data from our rod surface elevation tables (rSETS) on the south side of the estuary. These devices show how the elevation of the marsh changes over the years, so we return each year to attach a reader arm and collect data. We have a bit more trouble finding one of the rSETS than usual this year. They are dwarfed by sedges and other vegetation at the best of times, but river debris has settled on top of the device. This debris will eventually clear, so we measure what we can and document the situation before moving on.

We meet up with the Nuxalk Guardians once again, take some water quality measurements in the estuary, and then join the Guardians in town to share a meal. It's so nice to catch up with everyone after a year away! After lunch, we continue water sampling. This data will tell us how sediment and salinity is distributed across the entire estuary.

As I pack my bag later that evening, I am looking forward to going home but part of me secretly hopes for some clouds that could delay our flight. My wish isn't granted though, and we are once again granted clear weather and amazing views as our plane climbs up out of the valley and flies south out of Nuxalk territory.



A Focus on Land Management

From Classroom to Conservation

For the past year, the Okanagan community has come together to empower the next generation of outdoor stewards and work to restore Antelope-brush ecosystems. As one of BC's rarest and most endangered ecosystems with a mere 7,500 hectares left intact in the South Okanagan, it is crucial to inspire youth to understand the significance of the ecosystem and take action to protect it.

Through a pilot project organized by Allison Dietrich, the Okanagan Similkameen School District, and the Okanagan Skaha School District, upwards of 200 students got their hands dirty with immersive, land-based conservation and stewardship experiences. The project is a collaboration with several organizations, including the Nature Trust of BC, the Osoyoos Desert Society, the Okanagan and Similkameen Invasive Species Society (OASISS), and the South Okanagan Conservation Fund.



For endangered ecosystems like Antelope-brush, an intergenerational approach is essential to its conservation. The Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Alliance reports that a staggering 68% of Southern Okanagan Antelope-brush habitat has been destroyed since 1938. Upwards of 20 provincially and federally protected species rely on the Antelope-brush ecosystem for their survival, such as the Red-listed Behr's Hairstreak butterfly and Pallid bat. The destruction is primarily due to urban and agricultural development in the region, making increased education important to protecting the remaining habitat.

The impact of students getting outside and having a tangible impact is unparalleled, according to teachers like Dee Simpson, a grade 7 teacher at Tuc El Nuit Elementary.

"My classroom looks like any other classroom in the world. We can teach about the ecosystem, talk about it, and they can research it, but it's nowhere near as valuable as when they're going out there themselves and learning about the land on the land. For them, it makes it all the more real."

Not only has Simpson's class participated in outreach initiatives during the spring, but they have worked year-round to support Antelope-brush conservation and education. Her class successfully germinated Antelope-brush seeds that were collected by The Nature Trust's Okanagan Field Crew from our conservation areas to be planted on-site. Plus, they created an Antelope-brush ecosystem diorama as a class, which is on display to educate the entire school about the importance of the local ecosystem.

"My hope as a teacher is that I'm empowering my students and showing them ways they can help," said Simpson, "There's a lot of climate anxiety, but I choose to focus on ways to be part of the solution. I hope the students leave feeling hopeful and positive, and know that together we can have an impact as a result of our efforts."



As a land conservation organization with several conservation areas that encompass the Antelope-brush ecosystem, The Nature Trust was proud to support this initiative by leading hands-on stewardship days for youth this past year. Students learned about Antelope-brush from our Okanagan Field Crew, and gained stewardship experience through planting, invasive species treatment, collecting seeds, and more.

"Through this project, we are empowering future generations to care about species at risk, climate change, and the ecosystems that surround them," said Alex Thomson, Okanagan Conservation Field Operations Technician with The Nature Trust, "Kids are learning at a young age how to care for their local ecosystems and why it's important. Importantly, we are seeing students who may struggle in a traditional indoor classroom setting come out of their shell and be excited about learning on the land."



2023 New Projects

The Nature Trust has been conserving rare ecosystems in the Okanagan region since 1974. Our latest conservation project in the Okanagan contains habitat for 17 at-risk species.



Nighthawk Hill Grasslands

The Nature Trust of BC has the opportunity to purchase and protect 11 hectares (27 acres) of wild, native grasslands in the South Okanagan. The area, known as Nighthawk Hill Grasslands, is a hotspot for biodiversity and will allow unimpeded access for wildlife to access the Similkameen River from the South Okanagan Grasslands Provincial Protected Area.

Temperate grasslands are considered to be one of the most altered terrestrial ecosystems on the planet and are endangered on most continents. Low elevation grasslands are the rarest land cover in British Columbia, the very hot dry Bunchgrass ecosystems in the South Okanagan are in particular danger of being lost as only 6.9% have been protected in either parks or conservation areas.

These ecosystems make the South Okanagan a hot spot for biodiversity. The location of Nighthawk Hill Grasslands is in an area where 19 species have the majority of their global range. Within one kilometer of the property 17 species have been identified as at-risk or endangered. Protecting this area is one of the ways we can help ensure these species are not lost to extinction.

Nighthawk Hill Grassland is of particular importance to conservation as it includes over 100 meters of river corridor. This allows animals to access the river from the adjacent provincial conservation area.

A Hotspot for Biodiversity

At-risk species under the federal *Species at Risk Act* (SARA) within 1 kilometer of the parcel:

Four Mammals:

Pallid Bat, American Badger, Western Harvest Mouse, and Nuttall's Cottontail.

Eight Birds:

Sage Thrasher, Lewis's Woodpecker, Bank Swallow, Barn Swallow, Common Nighthawk, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Yellow-breasted Chat, and Bobolink.

Five Amphibians and Reptiles:

Western Yellow-bellied Racer, Western Tiger Salamander, Great Basin Spadefoot, Great Basin Gophersnake and Western Rattlesnake.



The total cost of this project is over over \$2M - We have until the end of the year to raise the remaining \$425,000 need to protect this land for generations to come.

Nighthawk Photo Credit: Andy Reago & Chrissy McClarren



An Approach to Legacy Giving: Values and Research

Jackie Weiler is passionate about animals and nature, so when it came time to update her estate plan, she knew she wanted to include nature and animals in her bequests. Thanks to a 34-year career in administration with the United Way on a joint program with the Canadian Labour Congress, Jackie experienced the impact of philanthropy first-hand. She believes in community service as a three-term member of the City of Vancouver's Seniors Advisory Committee, a member of the board of the Jewish Seniors Alliance, a former ESL teacher, a homestay host for international students and a Vancouver tour guide.

Jackie recently sat down with The Nature Trust of BC to share her approach to legacy giving, her love of all animals, especially dogs, her fondness for bears, how she became an "ambassador" for Canada when she emigrated from Johannesburg, South Africa in 1979 and why she is leaving a legacy gift to The Nature Trust of British Columbia in her will.

How did you decide who would receive a legacy gift in your will?

I decided to do some research to expand my knowledge of agencies and organizations that help nature and animals. Throughout the summer I met with many groups. Some I spent a whole day with, some I got a lot of information from, some I already knew a bit about.

I had a very good conversation with The Nature Trust during which I wondered if it might be possible to visit a conservation property at some point. When I got a call asking if I'd like to join Carl MacNaughton, Interior and Coastal Mainland Conservation Land Manager, for a property visit, I jumped at the chance.

We drove to Addington Point Marsh, north of Port Coquitlam. This Nature Trust property supports hundreds of types of birds and many animal species. I was so pleased to be able to learn so much and to see how committed The Nature Trust is to the work of land conservation. It makes such a difference when the people who work for an organization feel that way. And then something amazing happened: As we walked towards a lookout to eat our lunch, a black bear started to follow us. We watched it lumber along until it turned one way to towards the blueberry fields and we turned the other way towards the lookout. It was clearly not interested in us,

but it was thrilling for me to see a bear. It was the highlight of a wonderful day.

I was also able to attend The Nature Trust's annual fundraising Gala and it was great to see the level of support from philanthropists, corporations and people from all walks of life.

As a result of this research, The Nature Trust landed in the very top of my percentile of contributions when I sat down with my lawyer.

You took a very considered approach to your legacy giving. Would you recommend this level of research to others when planning their estates?

It was important for me to do the research and to have a connection to a non-profit, whether for animals or the community.

This was the right approach for me. I am widowed and I don't have children. I'm not a wealthy person but I want to leave a legacy to animals and nature with my final resources. My husband loved nature and animals too and I know it's something he would want me to do. My work for more than 30 years was for a non-profit and I am committed to giving back to the community.

Since moving from South Africa you mentioned that you've become an "ambassador" for Canada. With this legacy gift it seems you've also become an ambassador for nature and animals.

I'm basically a city person but I have a deep connection to BC. I've travelled all over the province including Haida Gwaii. My next trip will be flying to the Khutzeymateen Grizzly Sanctuary north of Prince Rupert. I'm very excited to be in a place where there is nothing but nature and bears in their natural habitat.

I would encourage people, if they can, to support nature and animals. I've travelled all over the world and seen many amazing places. But there is simply no place like BC. The diversity of nature is spectacular. We need to do more to protect it.

If you would like to learn about how you can leave a legacy gift to The Nature Trust of BC, please contact Emma Liffen at eliffen@naturetrust.bc.ca.



The Nature Trust Partnerships



Sports Junkies

The Nature Trust partnered with Sports Junkies, Vancouver's home for used sports equipment. Through this partnership, 50% of the proceeds from certain pieces of donated sports gear will be donated to NTBC. You can donate your gently-used equipment into this program to support NTBC.



The Wood Brothers

The Nature Trust also partnered with US roots band The Wood Brothers, who donated one dollar from each ticket sold to BC conservation. These donations were matched by American Friends of Canadian Conservation (AFCC) and the *North American Wetland Conservation Act (NAWCA)*.



Barbara Bell Fine Arts

Okanagan artist Barb Bell, the maker of a series of beautiful nature-based necklaces, generously decided to donate \$5 from each piece of jewelry to The Nature Trust. Her products can be found at several places, including the Penticton and Armstrong Art Galleries and Kelowna International Airport.



Nature's Way Canada

Nature's Way Canada is taking a big step into BC conservation! Since 2002, the natural health company has donated 1% of its net sales from NutraSea and NutraVege products to organizations that protect our planet. This year, they've committed to conserving British Columbia by choosing the Nature Trust of BC as one of their 1% for the Planet recipients.



New Staff

It has been an amazing year of growth at The Nature Trust of BC.

We are thrilled to introduce the new staff members who have joined our team in the last year.

**Emma Liffen**

Director of Development,
Marketing and Communications

Emma is taking the lead on fundraising and communications. Her favourite BC bird is the Common Loon.

**Taylor Koel**

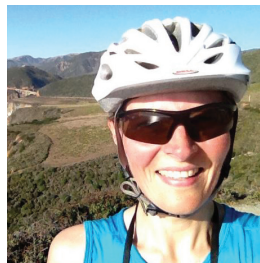
West Coast Field
Operations Technician

Taylor is new to our West Coast Conservation Field Crew. Her favourite BC bird is the Northern Flicker.

**Dominique Bowden**

Digital Engagement
Coordinator

Dominique is heading up our social media. Her favourite BC bird is the Great Blue Heron.

**Trish Lange**

Finance Coordinator

Trish is a new key member of our finance team. Her favourite BC bird is the Black-capped Chickadee.

**Josephine Little**

Fund Development
Coordinator

Josephine is supporting our fundraising efforts. Her favourite BC bird is a tie between the Rufous Hummingbird and the Sandpiper.

**Kate Tung**

Administrative Coordinator

Kate keeps everything on track at our Vancouver office. Her favourite BC bird is the Red-winged Blackbird.

**Claire Ethier**

South Coast Field
Operations Technician

Claire is leading our South Coast Conservation Field Crew. Her favourite BC bird is the Belted Kingfisher.

**Hannah Stoakes**

West Coast Conservation
Land Management Program

Hannah is supporting the Enhancing Estuary Resilience project. Her favourite BC bird is the Purple Martin.

Enough about us, what about you?

As a non-profit, we could not do the important work of protecting endangered habitats and ecosystems without our supporters – without you.

We want to make sure that we are sharing the stories and information you need to make informed decisions about supporting our projects and our organizations.

As we move forward, we'd like to hear from you. We invite you to complete a short survey about our work. Simply scan the QR code to bring up the survey on your phone. It will only take about five minutes and your feedback will help us make The Nature Trust the best it can be.





You Can Help

Leveraging donations through NAWCA

The Nature Trust of BC is part of a powerful matching program through the *North American Wetlands Conservation Act* (NAWCA). This program provides a 3:1 match to donations in US funds to protect wetland habitats for migratory birds that cross international borders.

Through NAWCA, a gift of \$100 USD from an individual, foundation or corporation will be matched to a total of \$400 USD for a wetland or estuary project in BC.

Here's how it works:

1. You donate \$100 USD to our partner organization American Friends of Canadian Conservation with a grant recommendation to The Nature Trust of BC
2. The Nature Trust of BC matches your gift with \$100 USD from Canadian sources
3. The US Fish and Wildlife Service matches the combined gift with \$200 USD

This is the most powerful match out there to make the most of your gift to The Nature Trust.

You can find out more about the program on our website www.naturetrust.bc.ca/giving. Or, contact Emma Liffen, Director of Development, Marketing and Communications. eliffen@naturetrust.bc.ca 604 290 3582

Bequests are a powerful way to leave a lasting legacy to nature. If you would like more information on how you can leave a gift in your will to The Nature Trust and become one of our visionaries. Please contact Emma Liffen at 604 290 3582, or eliffen@naturetrust.bc.ca



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NATURE TRUST
BRITISH COLUMBIA

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