

NEWSLETTER

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What makes this Gulf Island so special?





RESTORING THE COWICHAN ESTUARY:

A game-changing project for birds, fish and people

Photo: Tom Reid

Along the eastern coastline of Vancouver Island in British Columbia, Canada—a place known for its lush forests and incredible wildlife, is the Cowichan Estuary. The site where the Cowichan and Koksilah rivers merge is home to incredible biodiversity, including thousands of bird species, salmon, and killer whales.

The estuary is also one of many places across Vancouver Island that holds historical and cultural significance for First Nations peoples. For generations, the Quw'utsun Mustimuhw (Cowichan People) relied on this estuary—which provided sustainable food sources including shellfish, seaweed, herring roe, and salmon—for their livelihood.

During the 20th century, the estuary and surrounding lands were dominated by industry. Practices associated with logging, agriculture,

and mining damaged the health and structural integrity of the estuary. These practices led to significant degradation to the tidal flats and estuarine ecosystem.

RESTORING BACK TO HEALTH

Restoration efforts began in 1985 when partners at The Nature Trust of British Columbia, Ducks Unlimited Canada, and the Pacific Estuary Conservation Program worked together to purchase land and begin getting protections for much of the estuary.

Now, a new restoration project led by The Nature Trust of British Columbia, partners in the West Coast Conservation Land Management Program, and Cowichan Tribes is working to restore 70 hectares of estuarine habitat, increasing resilience against rising

The Cowichan Estuary Restoration Project is the largest estuary restoration projects ever to be completed on Vancouver Island.

sea-levels and rejuvenating critical habitat for the survival of wildlife, including Pacific Salmon, 230 species of migratory and breeding birds, and species-at-risk. The project also places significant emphasis on incorporating Indigenous Food Systems so that these lands continue to be farmed, providing culturally significant foods to the community while contributing to the overall food security and sovereignty of the region.

In August 2023, the team began work to restore salt marsh habitat, re-establish estuarine processes, and reconnect freshwater and tidal areas. Future work planned includes: raising access roads to maintain flood



Our detailed monitoring and assessment work has revealed the Cowichan Estuary will not be resilient to sea level rise and climate change and is at risk of losing 60% of the marsh habitat by 2100. The restoration project is focused on building the adaptive capacity of the area by restoring 70 hectares of estuarine habitat previously alienated by dikes and industrial development so that the estuary can continue to provide habitat for fish and wildlife; support the local and coastal economy; and continue to provide the natural environmental services to the Cowichan community.”

—TOM REID, Program Manager of the West Coast Conservation Land Management Program at The Nature Trust of British Columbia



PROJECT TIMELINE



2023

- Preparations for Dinsdale Farm dike alterations
- Construction of distributary channels
- Preliminary work on flood fringe forest
- Removal of remnant agricultural dike at Koksilah Marsh



2024

- Removal of Dinsdale Farm dike
- Restoration of flood fringe forest along Cowichan Bay Road
- Implementation of the food revitalization plan

“*The Quw'utsun Mustimuhw (Cowichan People) have long been stewards of the lands and waters. We have witnessed the changes in our estuary over time, which have had a dramatic impact on our resources. Cowichan Tribes aim to contribute to the management of our traditional territory through habitat restoration and monitoring of this important ecosystem. We look forward to seeing this important work continue, and to keep our territory thriving for future generations.*”

—LARRY GEORGE (SMAALTHUN),
Director Lulumexun—Lands and Self Governance Department, Cowichan Tribes



Photo: Tom Reid


protections, creating areas for native vegetation to grow, removing remnant agricultural dikes to help re-establish natural tidal and freshwater flows, and supporting natural salt marsh development.

WHY HEALTHY ESTUARIES MATTER?

As freshwaters flow from the Cowichan and Koksilah rivers, they merge with salt water from the bay, creating brackish waters throughout the estuary that support eelgrass beds and Pacific salmonids and other juvenile fishes. These marshlands provide vital habitat for up to 230 bird species, including waterfowl, shorebirds, raptors, and other migratory species.

Healthy estuaries are particularly important, as they provide stopover and refueling habitats for migratory and overwintering species, like the Western Sandpiper, Hooded Merganser, Great Blue Heron, and Willow Flycatcher.

Outside of the many benefits for birds, this project reflects a new era of conservation that brings together government, nonprofit, and Indigenous partners to accomplish our goals and address shared and differing priorities. It reflects an ecosystem-wide approach to conservation, centered on improving the health of the entire habitat in order to provide benefits to people and wildlife.

Thriving estuaries help reduce flood impacts for humans, increase shellfish productivity, and filter contaminants from freshwaters as they flow from land to sea, meaning our oceans and the species that live within can remain healthier. From the role of this restoration project in supporting migratory birds and waterfowl to the ways it will enhance the stability of this incredibly rare ecosystem, we are proud to support this work. 

Find out more at [estuaryresilience.ca](https://www.estuaryresilience.ca)



Photo: Tom Reid

BUILDING A CONSERVATION LEGACY

We prioritize areas where at-risk species live, roam and breed, and where significant levels of carbon in nature is stored. It's not just about setting aside any area. We have to protect the right places. Areas that are vital, resilient habitats, with intact and connected landscapes.

We have an ambitious goal to protect 1,100 acres of the right areas, in the next three months. Here are five of our current projects.



NORTHERN REGION

As the climate changes, conservation areas will provide a vital refuge for wildlife adapting to the new environment. Our focus in the north has been identifying and protecting areas that are home to rare and endangered species and are also connect to larger protected areas—helping to conserve biodiversity at a landscape level.

We are fundraising to protect 605 acres of land in Northern B.C.

- 1 Ferguson Lake—Wetlands**
320 acres of wetlands and mature forest in Prince George. Protecting wetlands is a powerful way to fight climate change.
- 2 Crescent Spur**
190 acres of forest, including ancient inland rainforest and riparian ecosystems. This place is home to endangered Woodland caribou, Grizzly bear, Wolverine and several species of rare birds.
- 3 Cranberry Marsh—West**
95 acres of wetland habitat that supports nesting, breeding, and feeding of birds as they migrate on the Pacific Flyway.



Ferguson Lake—Wetlands



Crescent Spur



Cranberry Marsh—West



Nighthawk Hill — Grasslands

THE OKANAGAN

The Okanagan is the most biodiverse region in the province. The combination of geography and climate produced some of British Columbia's rarest and most varied plants, animals, and ecosystems. In the Okanagan, we focus on conserving the region's remaining native grasslands, which are home to an incredible number of endangered species.

4 Nighthawk Hill — Grasslands

CONSERVATION SUCCESS!

Thanks to you, we have reached our fundraising goal to protect Nighthawk Hill — Grasslands. This 27-acre conservation area is a hotspot for biodiversity, with over 17 at-risk or endangered species identified in the area.

**Because of you, it will be forever protected.
Thank you.**

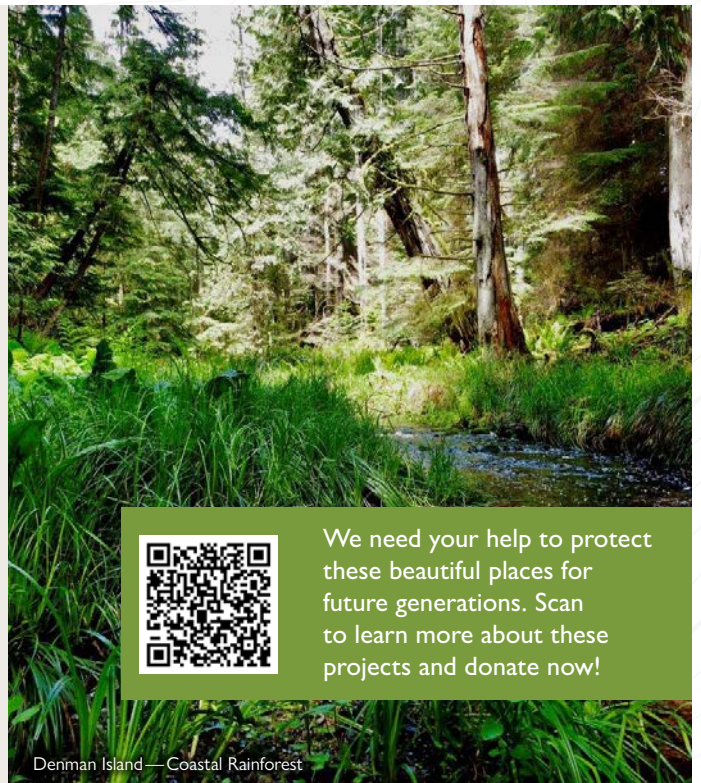
VANCOUVER ISLAND AND THE SALISH SEA

With lush old-growth forests, rivers teeming with all five species of Pacific Salmon, and picturesque coastal scenery, Vancouver Island's natural beauty is not to be missed. Our focus in this region has been protecting and restoring the highly at-risk Coastal Douglas-fir ecosystems.

We are fundraising to protect 96 acres on Denman Island.

5 Denman Island — Coastal Rainforest

This coastal rainforest includes mature forests and habitat for salmon and endangered butterflies.



Denman Island — Coastal Rainforest



We need your help to protect these beautiful places for future generations. Scan to learn more about these projects and donate now!



Photo: Chris Bosman

WILDFIRE RECOVERY AT CHERRY CREEK CONSERVATION AREA

July 17th, 2023, was a windy and hot summer day when a wildfire ignited on lands within the Ktunaxa First Nation community of ʔaq'am, just a few kilometres northeast of Cranbrook. It would become known as the St. Mary's River fire, a wildfire "of note" in a season that is said to be B.C.'s most destructive on record. The wildfire would rage out of control for nearly two weeks and burn more than 46 square kilometres before it was officially declared fully extinguished on October 1st.

BC Wildfire Service (BCWS) statistics report wildfires burned more than 28,000 square kilometres of land this year. The St. Mary's River fire destroyed seven homes at ʔaq'am and large swaths of dry, open forests surrounding the community. It burned nearly everything in its path until the heroic efforts of the BC Wildfire Service, with more than 230 personnel, structural protection crews,

heavy equipment and a fleet of aircraft finally brought it under control.

The fire touched down on The Nature Trust of British Columbia's Cherry Creek (Madison) Conservation Area as it moved north, burning approximately 90 hectares. Wildlife fled. Fences burned. The land was scorched.

Outbuildings on Cherry Creek that provide bat habitat were in danger of being lost before BCWS crews were able to suppress the flames only metres away.

Chris Bosman, The Nature Trust's Kootenay Conservation Land Manager knew months of restoration work lay ahead for the Kootenay's expert land management team.



Photo: Chris Bosman



Photo: Chris Bosman

TRACKING A WILDFIRE IN REAL TIME

Chris started charting a detailed, hour by hour account of the fire as it spread in real time, gathering pertinent data and anticipating the restoration efforts that would be required. The moment it was safe to return to the Cherry Creek Conservation property, Chris and his team would begin ground-level assessments. Danger trees would need to be felled, fire guards rehabilitated, and kilometres of fencing replaced, an effort that will take not months but years.




Photo: Chris Bosman

The future health of the Cherry Creek Conservation area is at stake. Complex restoration efforts will include re-seeding with the best mix of native and agronomic grasses for rehabilitation. And decisions will need to be made about how much to let natural processes take over recovery.

Concerns surrounding restoration efforts don't stop there. If there is a significant rain event before vegetation can be re-established it could wash soil and rocks into the wetlands from the heavily burnt areas above. And every step in the rehabilitation and recovery plan comes with a cost. There is an urgent need to raise funds.

WILDFIRE RECOVERY A FOREVER COMMITMENT

Today, the Nature Trust's Land Management team is busy replacing fences along the property boundary and access road. Danger trees have been felled and roadside edges have been hand seeded to prevent the spread of invasive plants. And it is critical to start aerial seeding of the fireguards before winter sets in. It's an all-hands-on-deck effort involving provincial government partners and neighbours in co-rehabilitation efforts.

Conserving, protecting and managing B.C.'s ecologically significant lands in perpetuity is The Nature Trust's mandate. The devastating impact of climate change now makes wildfire recovery part of this forever commitment. You can donate to our wildfire recovery efforts at naturetrust.bc.ca 



FRANCE PERRAS:

Why Monthly Giving Works

A French-Canadian actress that has lived in Vancouver for nearly 27 years, France Perras is not just the emcee extraordinaire at The Nature Trust's annual gala. She's also an Arbutus Circle monthly donor! Learn more about what inspires France to give monthly:

What inspires you to give to The Nature Trust monthly?

"I was so inspired by all the people involved when I hosted the virtual gala for the 50th anniversary.. I have been touched by all the people who care so much about the land in B.C., and continue to work so hard to conserve and protect the land so that our ecosystems can thrive."

Why is conservation important to you?

"As I understand it, conservation is something tangible that is being done to help climate change. That feels important to me."

What is your hope for the future of fish, wildlife & habitat in B.C.?

"That we all jump on board with helping in any which way we can to preserve and conserve. I believe being a monthly donor helps. It's just a small amount, but it does add up—and it feels like it's consistent."


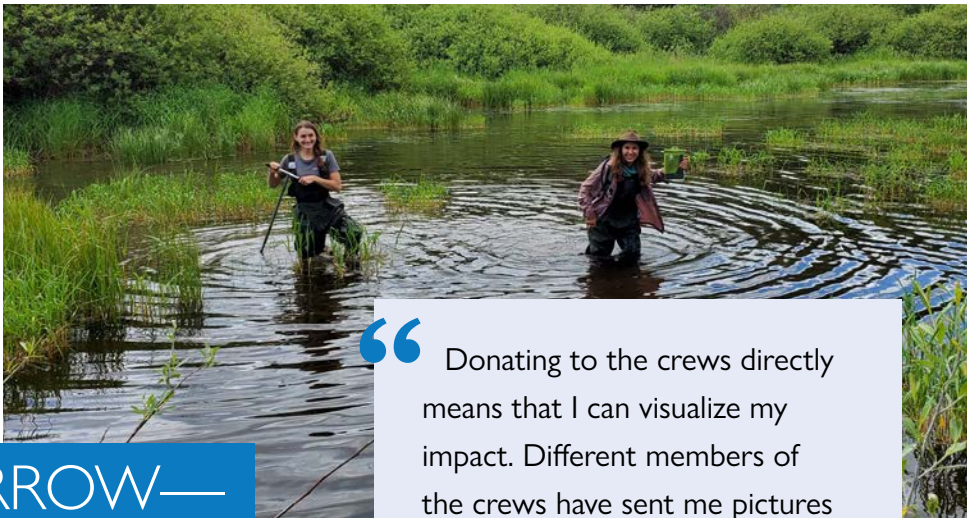
Thank you, France for your monthly contributions to B.C. conservation! By becoming a monthly donor, you can spread your generosity out across the year, and provide steady and sustained funding for conservation in B.C. 

Photo: Rattan Prakash Singh





TOOLS FOR TOMORROW—

Bob Morgan's Instrumental Gifts to Conservation

A dedicated conservationist and Nature Trust supporter, Bob Morgan has been instrumental in supporting our on-the-ground field crews by gifting them with critical monitoring, maintenance and restoration equipment. Thanks to Bob's generosity, our crews across the province are able to level up their conservation efforts, making a big impact on B.C.'s wildlife and habitat.

Originally born in British Columbia, Bob has spent much of his life outside the province. However, he views himself as a true British Columbian at heart, which coupled with his passion for the environment motivates him to give to The Nature Trust of BC.

"Habitat acquisition is one of the most effective ways you can protect nature. Restoration is also vitally important, as once the land is acquired, it needs to be restored as close as possible to a fully functioning example of the type of ecosystem it represents," said Bob.

Rather than donating to The Nature Trust of British Columbia traditionally, Bob chooses to fulfill specific needs within our conservation field crews. Carl MacNaughton, our Interior and Coastal Mainland Land Manager explains, "Bob Morgan is a real friend to conservation land management. He knows the importance of appropriately caring for the lands we acquire, and generously donates to on-the-ground management. His contributions have helped us to acquire the tools that our field crews need to do their jobs, from shovels and saws to sophisticated monitoring technology." Since becoming involved with The


Photos: Nature Trust Conservation Field Crews

“ Donating to the crews directly means that I can visualize my impact. Different members of the crews have sent me pictures showing their equipment in use.”

Nature Trust in 2020, Bob has donated over 40 different gifts to our crews.

"Donating to the crews directly means that I can visualize my impact. Different members of the crews have sent me pictures showing their equipment in use," Bob explains. "As an example, I can see the drone I donated positioned over a wetland and taking pictures of an area that's hard to reach. Donating in this way gives me a better sense of connection."

The Okanagan, Kootenay and South Coast conservation field crews have each received drones to aid in their monitoring efforts. For example, in the Okanagan, these drones have been critical in monitoring wildfire recovery. Each of Bob's gifts has a tangible impact not only on our crews, but on the habitat they help manage.

Thank you, Bob, for all you do to support our work here at The Nature Trust! 

RESTORING NATURE ON OUR DOORSTEP

Protecting Denman Island —Coastal Rainforest

WHAT MAKES DENMAN ISLAND SO SPECIAL?

The forested Gulf Islands of the Salish Sea are a special place, for people and nature.

One of the most northern of these islands, Denman Island is close to the town of Comox on Vancouver Island and within the K'ómoks First Nation traditional territory.

Denman Island—Coastal Rainforest includes young and mature forests interspersed with wetlands. Beadnell Creek, Denman Island's largest Class A salmon spawning stream runs through the area and supports commercial and recreational fishing. The salmon life cycle provides vital nutrients to the forest floor and trees.



Coastal rainforests support life, for people and wildlife that in turn support resilient food systems for humans.

With your help, The Nature Trust of BC will protect this extraordinary environment on Denman Island, increasing connectivity for wildlife and utilizing the most effective tool we have to fight climate change: nature.



GOAL

To raise \$1 Million by March 2024 to protect 96 acres of rare Douglas-fir Coastal Rainforest on Denman Island, to be conserved forever—in partnership with local communities, conservation partners, funders and donors—for the benefit of wildlife, people and planet.

EVERY DOLLAR COUNTS

To make a donation visit naturetrust.bc.ca or to find out how you or your organization can make now the time for nature contact Emma Liffen at 604.969.3254 or eliffen@naturetrust.bc.ca



NATURE TRUST
BRITISH COLUMBIA

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ABOUT US

The Nature Trust of British Columbia is dedicated to conserving B.C.'s biodiversity through securement, restoration, and management of ecologically significant lands.

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JOIN THE CONVERSATION



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10808 9863 RR0001

NATURE TRUST IN THE WILD



1



2



3



4



5

- 1 Sixth grade students from Mount Cheam Christian School joined forces with the South Coast Conservation Field Crew to plant over 200 native species in the conservation area.
- 2 Graduate student Calen Wong joined the Okanagan Conservation Field Crew for research on endangered snakes.
- 3 Congratulations to Peggy Schwendener, who won the Federation of Canadian Artists and Nature Trust of BC Artist of the Year 2023 for her painting "Lighthouse Park No.2."
- 4 The Nature Trust team pose for a photo at our annual Fall Gala fundraiser in Vancouver.
- 5 On a rainy day in October, the Van Queer Birders visited our Boundary Bay Conservation Area to observe the Pacific Flyway.



Photo: Samantha Penner

YES! I'M MAKING NOW THE TIME FOR NATURE.

I would like to make a one-time donation of:

\$100 \$250 \$500 Other \$ _____

I have enclosed my cheque payable to: The Nature Trust of BC

I prefer to charge my donation to:

Visa Mastercard Amex

Card # _____

Name on Card _____ Expiry Date _____ Security Code _____

Signature _____ Phone # _____

Yes, I would like to receive Nature Trust information by email _____

Yes, I would like a free will and estate planning kit

I have already left a gift for The Nature Trust in my will

I want to make now, and every day, the time for nature!

Yes, I will join the Arbutus Circle monthly giving program to make an impact year-round.

I would like to give a monthly gift of:

\$25 \$50 \$100 My Choice \$ _____

Beginning on the 1st or 15th of month _____

From my credit card Visa Mastercard Amex

I understand that: I can change or cancel my monthly contribution at any time by contacting The Nature Trust at 1-866-288-7878

You can donate securely online at naturetrust.bc.ca or call toll-free: 1-866-288-7878

For any questions, please contact jlittle@naturetrust.bc.ca

Thank you for making now the time for nature!

PROPOSED TAX CHANGES MAY IMPACT YOUR CHARITABLE DONATIONS IN 2024

2023 may be the last year that the current alternative minimum tax (AMT) rules apply. The federal Liberal government has proposed updates to the AMT that may negatively impact generous charitable donations from individuals and trusts. If you are considering a charitable donation, it may be beneficial to donate by 31st December for a 2023 tax receipt, before these changes come into effect. Speak to your financial planner for more information.





Please donate today!
naturetrust.bc.ca/giving

Cover Photo: Markus Thompson

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