

Awesome Summer Conserving the Kootenays

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Cranbrook, BC— Throughout the summer while other young people were relaxing, The Nature Trust of BC Kootenay Conservation Youth Crew was hard at work. “I am an outdoor enthusiast from skiing the slopes in the winter to hiking and bike riding the mountains in the summer. When I first heard of a crew position, all I could think of was how awesome it would be to be outside for the whole summer, walking and hiking and experiencing new skills that could contribute to my future career,” says crew member Kaylin Salanski.

The Nature Trust of British Columbia hires young people each summer to tackle a wide variety of conservation activities on properties across the province and learn valuable skills for future employment. Training includes First Aid and Bear Aware as well as the safe handling of power tools. “The Nature Trust of BC is an organization that looks out for everyone and everything from small habitats of rodents and badgers to ungulates, bears and humans,” explains Kaylin.

The crews perform on-the-ground work as well as attending workshops from specialists in the field on topics such as bird counts, and forest and wetland ecology. “One of my favorite activities was delineating a possible site for a wetland restoration project. We met up with a wetland specialist and scoped out a property that used to be filled with wetlands and then was used for agricultural purposes. We figured out where the wetlands may have been located and where the fluvial stream ran through, then if it was possible to restore some wetlands depending on the soil and vegetation. The delineation was successful! This was a great and fun experience and I learned a lot,” says Kaylin.

“The most difficult thing I’ve had to do this summer was taking down multiple fences, including one on a steep bank, goat pens, tackling invasive burdock bushes, spreading native seed mix, doing lots of chain sawing and slashing of forests to space out more area for future habitats, and lifting heavy objects and removing them from a new property. Although this job was challenging, it was rewarding to see how much we conquered in a short period of time!” says Kaylin.

The crews also contribute to the local community in a variety of ways. “One major contribution was meeting up with the East Kootenay Invasive Species Council and with other volunteers to do collaborative weed pulls. This consisted of pulling Knapweed around the East Kootenay and Purple Loosestrife while in canoes on Bummers Flats. We also got to contribute by improving turtle habitats by pulling weeds in the sand pits at Elizabeth Lake where the turtles lay their eggs.”

When asked about future plans, she said, “I will be returning to the University of Lethbridge for my final year in the Environmental Degree program.”

In 2017, Conservation Youth Crews are operating on Vancouver Island, Lower Mainland, South Okanagan, and East Kootenay. The Nature Trust is pleased to have the support of BC Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development, Canada Summer Jobs (Service Canada), Caritate Foundation, Ducks Unlimited Canada, Fish & Wildlife Compensation Program, Great-West Life, the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation, and The Tony Cartledge Fund to help fund the crews.

The Nature Trust of British Columbia is dedicated to protecting BC’s natural diversity of plants and animals through the acquisition and management of critical habitats. Since 1971 The Nature Trust along with our partners has

invested more than \$95 million to secure over 71,000 hectares (175,000 acres) across the province.