

Wrestling Purple Loosestrife and Observing Swallow Acrobatics

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Nanaimo, BC— Throughout the summer while other young people were relaxing, The Nature Trust of BC Vancouver Island Conservation Youth Crew was hard at work. “The position seemed to be a really good fit for what I was taking in school with the added convenience of being in my home town of Nanaimo,” says crew member Hilary Blackman.

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. “I have learned about how many volunteer groups The Nature Trust of BC partners with as well as the sheer size of land that is owned and dedicated to conservation. Together some really amazing work is done to keep land open for species at risk as well as other animals that use the land,” explains Hilary.

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. “My favourite activity is checking the Tree Swallow nest boxes at Dinsdale Farm in Cowichan. It’s so fun to see the eggs turn into little pink chicks and then into fledglings. The Tree Swallow acrobatics are awesome to see on a sunny day on the farm,” says Hilary.

“The most difficult thing I’ve had to do this summer is wrestle Purple Loosestrife out of Buttertubs Marsh. The air was hot and stagnant, the Purple Loosestrife did not want to come out of the ground, and I was slowly sinking into the marsh!” says Hilary.

The crews also contribute to the local community in a variety of ways. “At the beginning of the summer our crew added non-slip mesh to the boardwalk trails in Comox at the Lazo Conservation area. The trail is used by the community and everyone who saw us working was very friendly and thankful for our efforts, plus they let us pet their dogs, which were mostly on leash.”

When asked about future plans, she said, “I will graduate from VIU with a Bachelor in Natural Resource Protection this year. I’m hoping to take my degree, my dog, and myself to the interior and find a job working in the field of natural resources. Field days, mixed with some office days and a place to come home to that isn’t too close to my neighbours would be ideal!”

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, 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.