

For Immediate Release:

Saving Trees, Bears and Salmon one property at a time

January 25, 2021 Vancouver, BC – One of the most beautiful rivers in the province is being protected one property at a time. The Nature Trust of British Columbia is pleased to announce the protection of a further 14 hectares (35 acres) on the western bank of the Salmon River, near Campbell River on Vancouver Island. This parcel will be added to the Salmon River Estuary complex and brings the total area conserved by The Nature Trust and partners along the river to 379 hectares (937 acres).

The new property consists of tidal sloughs and riparian areas following Hammond Creek as it winds its way to join the Salmon River estuary. This creek provides juvenile rearing habitat for Coho, Chinook and Chum salmon and ensures these fish a safe transition to salt water.

Conservation takes patience persistence and partnership. The Nature Trust of BC has been working to conserve the Salmon River since 1978. The Salmon River Estuary Conservation Complex provides vital habitat to some of BC's most iconic species. Roosevelt Elk, the largest subspecies of North American Elk roam on the property. Great Blue Heron *fannini* subsp. (SARA Schedule 1 Special Concern) wade and fish in the stream. The Western Screech Owl *kennicottii* subsp. (SARA Schedule 1 Threatened) and small Northern Pygmy Owl swoops between trees hunting its prey.

Recently Grizzly Bears have returned to the Salmon River to feast on the abundant vegetation in the estuary. It is believed that they swam across the channel from the mainland.

The Salmon River demonstrates the role biodiversity plays in ensuring a healthy environment through the interconnectedness of species. Bears feast on the spawning salmon and drag the carcasses far into the forest. The remains of the salmon contain vast quantities of nitrogen that fertilize the trees. The trees provide shade that keeps the salmon eggs cool and the tree roots stabilize the river banks and sustain the aquatic environment.

This project was made possible thanks in part to the Government of Canada through the Natural Heritage Conservation Program, part of Canada's Nature Fund.

The Nature Trust of BC wishes to thank all those who made this conservation achievement possible: the Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program, the Lightburn family, the Krogseth Foundation, the Campbell River Salmon Foundation and other supporters. Together we will leave a lasting legacy to nature.

QUOTES:

“The Salmon River supports a rich diversity of fish and wildlife along with spectacular natural beauty. This Vancouver Island conservation treasure is both a tribute to The Nature Trust’s proud history and a wonderful gift to future generations.”

– Jasper Lament, CEO of The Nature Trust of BC

“Building conservation areas relies on patience, tenacity and a strong commitment to building partnerships to realize successful conservation outcomes. For over 42 years the Nature Trust has worked with several partners including all levels of government, NGO’s, donors and the local community to build something truly remarkable in the Salmon River estuary, an area rich in fish and wildlife and cultural significance that is protected in perpetuity.”

– Tom Reid, West Coast Conservation Land Manager, The Nature Trust of BC

“By working with partners like the Nature Trust of British Columbia, we are protecting our iconic British Columbian landscapes and the important wildlife that call those places home, including species at risk. Through programs like the Canada Nature Fund’s Natural Heritage Conservation Program, we are making progress toward conserving a quarter of Canada’s land and a quarter of its oceans by 2025.”

– The Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson, Minister of Environment and Climate Change

FACTS: The Salmon River Estuary Complex

- Located within the western very dry maritime Coastal Western Hemlock (CWHxm2) biogeoclimatic zone.
- The conservation area supports all Pacific salmon species including sea-run Dolly Varden and cutthroat trout. It provides juvenile rearing habitat for Coho, Chinook and Chum salmon and ensures these fish a safe transition to salt water.
- The complex has numerous rare and endangered wildlife, including marbled murrelet and western screech owl (both SARA Schedule 1 Threatened) and western grebe, peregrine falcon, great blue heron, band tailed pigeon, and northern red-legged frog (all SARA Schedule 1 Special Concern).
- A number of provincially red or blue listed plants exist on the complex including: Henderson’s checker-mallow (BC Red list), and those found within the Blue-listed western redcedar / three-leaved foamflower Very Dry Maritime and western redcedar / sword fern Very Dry Maritime ecological communities.
- The Salmon River estuary is the only significant area of coastal wetland habitat on a relatively steep and rugged 250km stretch of coastline from Campbell River to the network of estuaries on the Quatsino lowlands of Vancouver Island, making it a critical stopping point for migrating birds and essential habitat for several mammals.

ABOUT:

The Government of Canada’s Natural Heritage Conservation Program (NHCP) is a unique public-private partnership to support new protected and conserved areas by securing private lands and private interests in lands. The program is managed by the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC). Federal funds invested in the program are matched with contributions raised by NCC and its partners, Ducks Unlimited Canada and the country’s land trust community.

The Nature Trust of British Columbia is a leading non-profit land conservation organization with a 50 year history of successfully protecting and caring for B.C.'s most critical habitats. Since 1971, The Nature Trust of BC and its partners have acquired more than 178,000 acres (72,000 hectares) of ecologically significant land to save vulnerable wildlife, fish and plants.

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VIDEO AND IMAGES:

<https://vimeo.com/465102698>

<https://www.naturetrust.bc.ca/news/saving-trees-bears-and-salmon-one-property-at-a-time>

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