
STEWARDSHIP & OUTREACH REPORT

APRIL 2023

OVERVIEW

Spring outings to survey for the archipelago's flora and fauna are in full swing, and sightings of favorite mushrooms as well as the State bird of Washington¹ have delighted staff over the past few weeks (Photos 1-2). Doug and Eliza will join San Juan Preservation Trust (SJPT) staff members at the Pacific Rim Institute on Whidbey Island for a camas harvest and bake sponsored by the Coast Salish Youth Stewardship Corps. The annual meeting of the Terrestrial Managers Group brought together approximately 70 conservation practitioners, which was nearly twice as many as in previous years. The meeting provided updates on land management activities and initiatives and included a site visit to North Shore Preserve (Photos 3-4). Private landowners are making use of the Land Bank's weed wrenches and tackling scotch broom and spurge laurel on their properties, especially on Lopez. And summer, seasonal field assistants have been hired for Orcas and Lopez to assist with many tasks including the ongoing battle against weeds.

OUTREACH

Staff: Tanja Williamson

The [spring newsletter](#) went out first week of April. Tanja has been working on content and design for the annual report and continuing to plan outdoor events. The Spring Community Conversations series kicked-off this week. The first hybrid conversation gathered approximately 30 people online and in-person at the Orcas fire station for discussions on general Land Bank information as well as specific topics related to North Shore Preserve. So far, tours with Commissioners and staff have occurred on San Juan and Lopez, and another will soon be scheduled for Orcas (Photo 5).

¹ This month's quiz!

SALISH SEEDS NURSERY

Staff: Eliza Habegger, Margo Thorp

Margo's back on staff for 13 hours a week as Nursery Assistant, April through October. She and Eliza are busy getting started with the seeding of around 11,000 plugs and trying to keep up with the weeds. Nursery staff also assisted the San Juan Community Home Trust with the early stages of planning native landscaping for their new HolliWalk affordable housing neighborhood in Friday Harbor. Eliza gave a talk about seed saving (cultivated and native species) at a popular seed swap event at the San Juan Island Grange. SAFE San Juans purchased seeds produced by the Salish Seeds Project for their educational "Seeds of Hope" initiative and offered free packets of self-heal (*Prunella vulgaris*) at a variety of locations.

DISTRICT 1

Staff: Doug McCutchen, Charlie Behnke, Jacob Wagner, Shauna Barrows, Gabe Conway

Beaverton Marsh: Falcon Cultural Resources completed field work at Beaverton Marsh, conducting shovel probes in four probable locations. They will return with a Lummi tribal member to closely examine one site. The consultation period with Tribes concluded, and there was one positive note in support of the project. The final draft of an interlocal agreement with Island Rec and SJI School District has been approved and is under final review by the Prosecuting Attorney. Many thanks to Karen Vedder's work on this project! Rozewood Environmental conducted an informal site assessment of the Linde Park trail and did not have any findings of concern. Staff have initiated trail construction, and Thom Pence signed on as a volunteer steward. He's already started to assist with noxious weed control as well as trail construction. Doug and Jason Ontjes, with the SJC Noxious Weed Board, are working on a grant to support control of spurge laurel, which is widely dispersed across the Preserve.

Cady Mountain: Prominent regional biologists, Peter Dunwiddie and Peter Zika, joined Doug and Kathleen Lewis (SJPT) for a tour (Photo 6). The "Peters" remarked at the high-quality bald habitat found within the latest addition area. SJPT has launched a campaign to raise money for the purchase of their conservation easement (CE). On a separate outing, the "Peters" and Thor Hanson placed an infrared motion sensor camera to assess for flying squirrels. Questions regarding survey methodology were directed to flying squirrel researchers and may lead to more interest in the SJI population. Doug conducted a site visit with a planner from SJC Department of Community Development (DCD) to discuss permitting for trail development. The

initial concepts were well received, and it was a great opportunity to discuss the broader topic of the permit process for typical Land Bank activities.

Deadman Bay: A new sign will greet visitors on the bluff above the beach, with thanks to Gabe's woodworking skills!

False Bay Creek: Charlie led a site visit with the [State Voluntary Stewardship Program board](#) and SJI Conservation District staff (SJI CD). There was a lot of great discussion, and the board was impressed with the ongoing adaptive management of the Preserve (Photo 7).

Frazer Homestead: Charlie and Eliza are working with the SJI CD and other partners to plan and install another island marble butterfly habitat plot this season.

Kellett Bluff: Doug and Ben Hallowell with SJPT performed annual monitoring. Their site visit also helped to prepare for the upcoming Island Conservation Corps (ICC) three-day work party, which is scheduled for April 24-26. Primary goals for the work party are noxious weed control, installation of several deer exclosures, and continuing to remove conifers from within Garry oak habitat. Doug is working with staff from Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and local biologists and naturalists to develop a work plan that minimizes impacts to wildlife. Last month, potential flying squirrel activity was observed on the Preserve and a camera trap will be deployed here as well to help assess their presence.

Mount Grant: Andrew ferried over from Orcas to review the LSR site with SJI staff and discuss challenges and successes of the project. An additional tour with partner organizations is scheduled for April 19. Neighbors sent Land Bank staff and County administration, and County council a report of finding drugs in the parking area along with additional complaints. Doug reached out to the sheriff to inform him of the issue, provide information with regard to our management approach and request ongoing support with monitoring. A letter to the neighbors was already in the works to update them regarding the new trailhead project and to try to coordinate on changes this will precipitate.

Third Lagoon: Staff responded to a report of snarled, downed trees from recent windstorms.

Zylstra Lake: Volunteers, Lars Sjolholm and Tim Cowell, are constructing benches from materials that were donated by the Zylstra family, and they should be in place soon! The bald eagle nest located near the trail was partially dislodged by winter storms, and the eagles are now occupying an alternate nest a short distance to the west on private property.

DISTRICT 2

Staff: Peter Guillozet, Andrew Jansen

Coffelt Farm: Septic system maintenance is complete, and the Lum-Land Bank parking lot cleanup is scheduled for next week. Riparian plantings are leafing out. Andrew installed temporary deer fencing around newly planted areas, which are downstream from the existing enclosure. Lincoln and Aaron toured various Orcas preserves, including Coffelt (Photos 8-9).

Coho: [Skunk cabbage](#) plugs have taken to their new home (Photo 10).

Eastsound: The local review team for the Salmon Recovery Funding Board scheduled a site visit for the first week of May to assess the proposed project, which would remove a large concrete structure from the beach.

Judd Cove: Staff met with Kurt Licence, from WDFW, to review plans for shoreline and stream restoration, and admired some of the diving ducks -- Common goldeneyes, Common mergansers and buffleheads -- feeding out in the bay (Photo 11).

North Shore: Kurt Licence (WDFW) also reviewed activities proposed in the draft Interim Stewardship and Management Plan, and discussed with staff several potential projects that could benefit bats, pollinators and sharp-tailed snakes. The Land Bank granted permission to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to airlift materials from the Preserve to Point Doughty where they are building a restroom. DNR determined that an over water flight from Eastsound airport to Point Doughty, with a stop at North Shore was the safest and most cost-effective way to complete their project. It appears that the PSAR grant application led by the SJPT will receive full funding! This will go a long way towards covering the cost of their CE. SJC DCD also confirmed that buildings could be removed prior to finalizing the CE because re-development rights extend for several years after building removal. Thanks to Erin and Aaron, a contract with Friday Harbor labs to complete a shoreline assessment is now in place. Andrew and Jason Ontjes continue to whittle away at the heavy holly infestation.

Turtleback Mountain: In recognition of the start of the primary nesting season, Andrew wrapped up felling and burning within the LSR grant area (Photo 12). Forest health activities will

resume again in the fall. Peter and Andrew met with staff from the Washington Trails Association to review and refine trail improvement plans. Trail work is scheduled to begin in the fall. Staff requested bids for multiple culvert replacements and a pre-bid meeting will occur next week. The hope is to pursue this work during the summer. Orcas school kids spent a day learning about forests with Land Bank and SJPT staff and volunteer naturalists. This initiative to incorporate more outdoor learning within the public system will also provide students with opportunities to visit Coho and Crescent Beach preserves.

DISTRICT 3

Staff: Amanda Wedow and Sara DeRoy. Welcome back Sara!

Channel: Windthrow trees created a tangle across the trail. It's still passable, and Amanda will sleuth out another sawyer to help with the task of clearing. A stormy person dislocated signs from the posts at the entry and down at the beach. Replacement of the posts and signs is now at the top of the list for field assistant Sara's first week.

FB Spit: As typically noted in April, the arum is back and growing lush. Amanda continues to implement multiple control efforts including, digging up isolated patches along the forest edge, mowing the field and orchard areas to reduce seed production and arranging with the SJC Noxious Weed Board to spray select areas. The Institute of Applied Ecology will resume their field study this year. The outhouse building was freshened up with a "soft wash," a gentler alternative to pressure washing.

Hummel Lake: Amanda met with staff from Kwiaht, Kurt License (WDFW), and the Lopez High school science class to discuss ongoing stewardship of Hummel Lake. Kwiaht applied for grant funds to renew Friends of Hummel Lake, which would be a huge help with maintenance of the WDFW site. The bathroom facility here was also given a soft wash.

Lopez Hill: An ecological assessment of the addition area is underway by EcoStudies Institute, and their staff visited this past week to perform initial surveys. Erin and Amanda also toured the Preserve and discussed elements to consider in the revised Stewardship and Management Plan.

Richardson Marsh: A new fencing plan is in the works. The primary goal is to restrict grazing access to certain areas including the well site, which previously had been temporarily blocked with electric fencing. Old, dilapidated fencing in the marsh will be removed for safety.

Spencer Spit: Several staff from other districts gathered on Lopez, and along with a few State Parks staff, and initiated clearing the trail route now that the final SMP has been approved (Photos 13 -14). A second field day is scheduled for later in April. Three commissioners got a sneak peak of the Preserve during their island tour.

Watmough: The overgrown orchard is now the “cow parsnip” orchard, due to the dedicated work of the ICC (Photos 15-16). Blackberries were cut down, mulched and piled up to open up the space. Sweetbrier rose, identified by its hooked thorns, was also targeted and cut down on along the shoreline. The field and orchard were mowed. New commissioners and Council member, Jane Fuller, visited the site. Amanda has resumed guided walks.

Photos



Photo 1. Amanda poses with a fresh morel found on Lopez Island.



Photo 2. A male American Goldfinch, back for the breeding season, was spotted at North Shore.



Photo 3. A group photo of the TMG field outing to North Shore.



Photo 4. Erin holding court during a much-needed lunch break at the TMG meeting.



Photo 5. Commisioners, staff and Council tour the Watmough Addition.



Photo 6. Botanist Peter Dunwiddie and Kathleen Lewis inventorying plants on Cady Mtn Preserve



Photo 7. Charlie and Paul Andersson, SJCD Director, lead tour of False Bay Creek Preserve.



Photos 8-9. Lincoln and Aaron join Orcas staff to tour Turtleback Mountain, and Coffelt Farm with Amy Lum.



Photo 10. A two-year old skunk cabbage plug at Coho Preserve.



Photo 11. Peter and Kurt Licence (WDFW) review a project at Judd Cove.



Photo 12. The ICC takes lunch under a veteran Douglas-Fir on Turtleback Mountain.



Photo 13. Trail work at Spencer Spit Preserve, with Andrew, Shauna and Jacob.



Photo 14. [A calypso orchid or fairy-slipper in bloom on Lopez.](#)



Photo 15. The orchard at the Wamtough Addition prior to the ICC.



Photo 16. The orchard at Wamtough, following blackberry removal.