

STEWARDSHIP & OUTREACH REPORT

JANUARY 2022

OVERVIEW

Snowfall provided opportunity for kick-and-glide recreation as well as a layer of protection to all the vulnerable potted plants in the nursery (Photo 1). The deep freeze in late December generated concern for the thousands of plant plugs, most of which head to Turtleback Mountain next month, but luckily snowflakes accumulated and insulated the plants prior to the severe temperature drop; and survival looks to be high. Cold and blustery weather led to numerous trees falling across trails, which kept staff busy, as did the winterizing equipment, such as mowers and trimmers, for their winter nap. A sheet of ice and snow postponed driveway work at Fisherman Bay Spit, but it is rescheduled for later this month. (Fingers crossed for fair weather.). It's also approximately one year since Jacob, Shauna and Aaron joined the team and all of us agree: it's a delight to have them on staff. Even as he scrambled around San Juan and navigated the various elements of freeze and thaw, Jacob continued to smile (Photo 2). At the end of January, the entire staff will convene to discuss priorities and planning for the year ahead.

OUTREACH

Staff: Tanja Williamson

Tanja picked out some important happenings and produced the [2021 Highlights](#) (with a bit of help from Erin, although neither want to take credit for any misplaced commas). Tanja collaborated with Peter to develop a new first for the LB: signs with a QR code. For this, she developed the '[splash page](#)' in order to share info about the forest stewardship efforts on Turtleback Mountain and she assisted staff (Erin and Peter) and the Demo project partnership (SJI Conservation District and Rain Shadow Consulting) with their recent [virtual presentation](#).

Tanja has also started to assemble a 2022 outreach calendar. In her effort to develop numerous, diverse opportunities, she's been reaching out to stewardship staff as well as to other partnership organizations and resource professionals. She's excited to return to in person educational events, along with supporting stewards and volunteer work parties. Stay tuned for a peek at the calendar.

SALISH SEEDS NURSERY

Staff: Eliza Habegger

As mentioned, survival of the nursery plants appears to be high. The Salish Seeds Project has also decided to partner with the Master Gardener Foundation for the spring plant sale. This means that instead of running a separate spring plant sale like last year, nursery plants will be included in the Master Gardener's sale, and a duplication of effort is avoided. Online orders will begin in January, and plant pick-up on the three big islands is scheduled for March.

Jacob added shelves, hooks, and other handy details to the interior of the new nursery shed. The construction of this shed was funded by the SJPT and fundraising for this still continues. If we're fortunate, there will also eventually be funds for a greenhouse which would make it easier to reliably overwinter container plants.

DISTRICT 1

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

Staff received their long-awaited Kubota Stand-On Track Loader and they're eager to put it to use on so many of their planned projects including fencing, trail building, road improvements and mowing (Photo 3).

Beaverton Marsh: Karen Vedder has now joined the planning team and will assist by serving as a liaison to secure public access from Linde Field. Also, a local plein-air artist has been observed multiple times painting the marsh from their truck-bed, despite the inclement weather.

Cady Mountain: A small encroachment, within the construction of a driveway, was discovered and a resolution is in the works. The Islands Conservation Corps (ICC) decommissioned a trail on the northern flanks of the mountain and completed some restoration work in oak habitat.

Kellett Bluff: The Suquamish Tribe made a formal objection to the application to install a mooring buoy. In response, Doug reached out to the Tribe and has had promising conversations about having the objection withdrawn or modified.

Mount Grant: Staff received queries and comments regarding level of service on San Juan Island preserves, with an emphasis on Mount Grant. Specifically, questions were raised about

enforcement, signage, garbage facilities, and snow removal. An informal survey of other natural area managers (National, State and County Parks, DNR, and Island Rec) indicate that LB levels of service meet and/or exceed other agencies. The ICC endured the rain, learned about sustainable trail building guidelines from Doug, and broke ground on a new connector trail (Photo 4). Driving access to the summit has been closed for nearly three weeks due to the snow!

Zylstra Lake: While snowfall provided for cross-country skiing opportunities on the Preserve, an ice-free area at the outlet of the upper reservoir led to congregations of waterfowl. Geese, gulls and at one point an estimated 38 trumpeter swans, congregated within the area (Photo 5). Lately, there's been a flurry of planning related to the ecological resources and the resolution of water rights remains a critical step for both determining on-site and watershed-wide activities.

DISTRICT 2

Staff: Peter Guillozet, Kayla Seaforth

Orcas staff are eager to commence their favorite stewardship activity: planting! But that doesn't start until next month. In the meantime, Kayla completed annual monitoring using the new Landscape software and Peter has been counting culverts. He is working with a consultant to assemble a package (that includes permits and bids) to replace many of the 26 in total.

Coffelt Farm: The long-term lease committee prepared draft RFP documents for the Commission's review. Peter also prepared a quote request for electrical upgrades, and he hopes to find a qualified contractor to begin work as soon as possible.

Coho: Recent flooding led lower Cascade Creek to make some dramatic changes. A WDFW biologist, a wetland specialist, and others joined Peter in the field to review. Adult salmon were observed within the Preserve last fall, and although a female can lay thousands of eggs, everyone concurs that it's highly unlikely that any eggs were able to say put when the riffles transformed into such a scouring flow. However, hope remains afloat that Coho will return again this fall.

Judd Cove: The biologist from WDFW also provided consultation about the main culvert that directs flow into this preserve. He supported staff's assessment that the stream could not support fish above the culvert. This clears the way for planning and permitting to replace the undersized and poorly aligned culvert with one that can accommodate more volume within the historic flow path of the stream. Permitting is expected take a year or more. Sadly, it must be noted that it's

much easier to secure a permit to build within a floodplain than it is to receive a permit to perform river restoration. This, of course, confirms what many of us already know: ecological protection and restoration takes patience and persistence, and it'll most likely make you gray.

Turtleback Mountain: The Turtleback Demo project has launched, and the new Stewardship and Management Plan has been distributed to key partners and Commission. Staff encountered minor encroachment issues at a property along the eastern boundary and they are working toward resolution with the landowner. Wild Rose Lane has reopened with a new culvert in place and repairs to the south entrance trail are in the works (Photos 6-7).

DISTRICT 3

Staff: Amanda Wedow

Channel: Volunteers planted a few hundred native plants around the parking area and shoreline and posed, despite the cold, to be captured on camera. (Photo 8).

FB Spit: December storms sent a sailboat aground. It landed near the old reef net boats. Amanda observed the owner trying to extricate it, without progress, and for several weeks the boat stayed put. However, last week's high tides succeeded in returning the hull back to the sea (Photo 9).

Hummel Lake: Continued algae growth on the dock created slick conditions, and Jacob readily traveled over to attempt remedy. He brought a rented pressure washer, a water pump, and numerous hoses and fittings. After some trouble shooting, he tackled the problem by pressure washing the entire dock. A fallen alder blocked the boardwalk near Port Stanley. But trusty volunteer Tim Clark helped to clean it up.

Spencer Spit: Staff has initiated discussions with the area manager for State Parks and will be developing a MOU with the agency for the site. A Stewardship and Management plan for the Preserve is also underway, with care and consideration being given to the ecological values such as the feeder bluffs, eagle roost and numerous yews.

Upright Head: The entry to the property was planted with some fresh greens from the nursery.

Photos



Photo 1. Skiing at Zylstra was a popular activity in the beautiful snow!



Photo 2. Jacob Wagner is one of the three joyful and hard-working staff that joined the LB one year ago!



Photo 3. The newest power tool to join the SJI family.



Photo 4. Doug shares his passion for sustainable trail building with the ICC



Photo 5. A congregation of swans is called a “wedge” in the air. Yet, on the ground they’re referred to as a “bank” or a “bevy.” Regardless, they’re one of the most charismatic species around here in the winter.



Photo 6. The ICC crew works within an area of the Turtleback Demo project



Photo 7. Culvert replacement at Turtleback Mountain Preserve.



Photo 8. Volunteers help to improve the ecology at the Channel Preserve, and despite the cold weather still pause for picture.



Photo 8. A sailboat was beached on the Spit until high tides lifted it back to the sea.



Photo 9. One curious Commissioner discovers a coral root fungus.