

STEWARDSHIP & OUTREACH REPORT

MARCH 2022

OVERVIEW

This month is marked by arrivals and departures. Rufous hummingbirds have returned to the islands. Satin flowers are again in bloom (Photo 1). Woodpeckers are drumming during the day and chorus frogs are getting louder every night. All these signals of spring are easy causes for celebration, and we carry their positive verve forward as we also say adieu to Kayla Seaforth, our Orcas Island field assistant.

Kayla recently accepted a position with the Skagit Land Trust, and it's easy to be excited for her though also hard to have her leave. Over the past four years, Kayla has applied her intelligence, creativity, and tireless energy to the benefit of Land Bank preserves county-wide (Photo 2). In every interaction with partners, preserve users and volunteers, she conveyed clarity and grace. We know she'll thrive. She'll be closer to her favorite mountain climbs and her mushroom hunting grounds. She'll be extending her ecological restoration skills to preserves with heron rookeries, beaver, coyotes, and salmon. And fortunately for us, she'll still be close by.

Kayla's been a wonderful colleague and we hope she'll stay in touch.

The Land Bank was once again a sponsor of the SJC Agriculture Summit. Several staff attended the event, and Charlie presented on a panel that focused on land access models. Peter accepted an invitation to speak to an Orcas men's club about Land Bank stewardship, and he enjoyed a lively discussion with the group. Otherwise, staff have kept busy with behind-the-scenes planning, and all that critical groundwork that assures everything from sound preserve management to fun and educational volunteer events.

OUTREACH

STAFF: TANJA WILLIAMSON

Prior to departing for a trip, Tanja was a whirl of productivity. She hosted a booth at the SJI Volunteer Fair and had success in meeting several new recruits (Photo 3). She met with staff to discuss social media and also posted a [field note](#). She met with the program coordinator for the SJI library to discuss potential events and facilitated the monthly meeting of the Communications subcommittee. The latter led to her scheduling (and posting news about) this spring's [Community Conversations](#). Can Commissioners make their respective evening Zoom event? The schedule is as follows: San Juan Island on April 6, Lopez Island on April 20, and Orcas Island on April 27th.

Tanja also drafted and edited content, formatted, and published this year's first quarterly newsletter. It featured: a director's note, a noxious weed quiz (which she developed with the County's Noxious Weed Board), a column on stewardship, and an introduction to our newest commissioner. More postings are scheduled to be released while she's away. Now, how's that for planning?!

SALISH SEEDS PROJECT

STAFF: ELIZA HABEGGER, MARGO THORP

We are fortunate to welcome back Margo Thorp as our part-time, seasonal Nursery Assistant. She will begin the last week of March. There's been an increased interest in volunteering, and nursery staff will be starting up a program, "Third Thursdays," that will host volunteers in the morning. We'll also be taking on three interns through the Island Conservation Corps (ICC). They will work at the nursery several days throughout the season and receive training in how to operate a conservation-focused plant nursery.

On March 19, over 400 four-inch pots of nursery-grown native wildflowers will be picked up on Orcas, Shaw, Lopez, and San Juan, as part of the Master Gardener's spring native plant sale. The Land Bank can sell plants to the general public with prices set to reimburse the cost of production.

DISTRICT 1

STAFF: DOUG MCCUTCHEN, CHARLIE BEHNKE, JACOB WAGNER, SHAUNA BARROWS

Beaverton Marsh: Karen Vedder continues to assist in the development of an MOU with [Island Rec](#). Doug recently attended their board meeting and answered questions. They are excited about the project and opportunity to partner, and they've requested that the new linking trail at Linde Park be paved to minimize maintenance and match existing infrastructure. On-the-ground and behind-the-computer planning efforts also continue. Spring Street Int'l School also visited the Preserve. They observed wildlife and evaluated restoration sites which former classes had helped install (Photo 4).

Cady Mountain: Eliza and Doug toured Garry oak restoration sites to evaluate past work and to establish priorities for the next year.

Driggs Park: Volunteers came to prune the roses! Recognize our own Master Gardner in the photo? (Photo 5).

Frazer Homestead: Annual monitoring is complete for both Frazer and Anderson. Everything looked great. In collaboration with the SJPT, preparation of the plots designed for the Island Marble Butterfly recovery began. Tilled areas will be planted with mustard and native prairie species (Photo 6).

Limekiln: Construction of a new kiosk commenced, with the aid of a hearty volunteer crew (Photo 7). The kiosk is located at the main gate, across from the lake.

Zylstra Lake: Doug met with October Farm neighbors to generally check-in with regards to public access, restoration, water management, road maintenance, and other shared interests. The neighbors expressed interest in collaborative management to improve water quality entering the reservoir. Doug installed fence posts to help dissuade visitors from entering the fields in the vicinity of the bald eagle nest. Access into the field may have contributed to interactions between visitors and the breeding eagles last year.

DISTRICT 2

Staff: Peter Guillozet, Kayla Seaforth

Coffelt Farm: Staff released the long-term lease RFP to the public. It was posted locally and regionally. Peter sent a Request for Quotes to five electrical contractors on the MRSC Small Works Roster. He hopes to complete the necessary electrical system improvements in 2022. Smokestack Services LLC recently serviced multiple chimneys on the property and identified several needed repairs to come. Routine maintenance revealed that the spring well water pump system requires repairs, and that work is also being scheduled. Staff and the ICC crew completed another round of riparian planting (Photo 8). Peter recently sought permission from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife to collect willow from Killebrew Lake, and with permit in hand, Kayla collected hundreds of pole cuttings that will be added to the Preserve's riparian area.

Coho: Staff joined forces with the ICC crew to plant roughly 800 trees and shrubs along the creek (Photo 9). Most of the plants were Sitka spruce and hemlock, which will enrich the conifer component of the riparian canopy and provide large wood for the channel 100+ years from now. (How's that for planning?!) Peter also met with the Salmon Recovery TAG to answer question about his pre-proposal for lower Cascade Creek habitat enhancement.

Turtleback Mountain: Work on the forest management demo project continues. Staff and the ICC planted over 800 trees and shrubs in the Landscape Scale Restoration grant area. All of the new plants are fruit-bearing species such as serviceberry, thimbleberry and bitter cherry. Such species are lacking on the mountain likely as a result of decades of excessive deer browse. Importantly, they support both pollinators and birds. Commissioners and staff met to review a potential trail in the 2020 addition area, aligned on their ideas, and soon the SMP will be all ready for release to the public (Photo 10).

DISTRICT 3

Staff: Amanda Wedow

General: The announcement for a Lopez seasonal field assistant is out!

FB Spit: Amanda has hosted several events at the Spit including, two beach cleanups and a bird walk. She also dug 15 gallons of Italian arum bulbs from the 'eradication zone.' These are areas of the Preserve where arum is currently sparse. A lot of progress has been made over the last few years, and Amanda will be meeting with a group that plans to initiate an Italian arum treatment study.

Hummel Lake: A tree fell across the trail to the dock, and Joe Ingman with County Parks assisted with cleanup.

Spencer Spit: Eliza completed a Habitat Assessment for the Preserve. She documented signs of wildlife and vegetated species, from the feeder bluffs to the upland forest. The bluffs rise 100 feet from the shoreline and have considerable slumping, and the condition of the upland forest varies based on past activities. (Photos 12 -13).

Watmough: Amanda has been hosting numerous people at the addition (Photo 14). Both the septic system and the well have now been inspected, and both the well and the pump house will need some work. Erin met with the Salmon Recovery TAG to answer questions about her pre-proposal for funds to (partially) reimburse for acquisition expenses.

Photos



Photo 1: A simple pleasure of spring's arrival. Local naturalist Susan Vernon took this photo of the first satin flower in bloom at Westside Preserve. Thank you for sharing, Susan!



Photo 2. Kayla never shied away from hard work. Here, she bucks up a tree in order to repair the fence that protects her beloved restoration plantings.



Photo 3. Tanja hosts a booth at the volunteer fair, and meets several new community members.



Photo 4. Spring Street students revisited Beaverton Marsh and monitored restoration plantings that were installed by students 10 years earlier.



Photo 5. Shannon and Judy came to prune the roses at Driggs Park. Thank you!



Photo 6. Charlie prepares Island Marble butterfly plots at Frazer Preserve for spring plantings.



Photo 7. Volunteers begin to install a sign kiosk at Lime Kiln.



Photo 8. Kayla and the ICC plant willows (that she harvested) in the wetlands at Coffelt.



Photo 9. The ICC also planted along the steep banks of Coho Preserve.



Photo 10. Staff and Commissioners walk and talk on a portion of the Turtleback addition.



Photo 11. Stewardship staff toured Richardson Marsh. Aaron Rock joined to learn the lay of the land... and Peter got very excited about the idea of restoring a salt marsh...



Photo 12. The forest on the western parcel at Spencer Spit is mature and in good condition. Note the pileated woodpecker holes in the trunk to the right. The eastern parcel is more degraded due to past logging.



Photo 13. Eliza's sleuthing discovered a hole in the feeder bluff. It could potentially be from a kingfisher or a northern rough-winged swallow...?



Photo 14. Stewardship staff gathered at the Watmough addition to review the site and discuss stabilization.