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## STEWARDSHIP & OUTREACH REPORT

MAY 2022

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### OVERVIEW

Wildflowers. They're abundant this year in the islands. Buttercups and sea blush, camas, chickweed, chocolate lilies (Photo 1). With less herbivory by deer, there's more flowers showing in the fields, forests and on rocky bluffs; and the prolonged cool, moist weather has fostered longer-lasting blooms. It's been a cheery topic in online forums and outside tours, and a welcome reminder that one reason we invest so much time in treating noxious weeds is to regain ground for these same species.

There's has been *a lot* of weeding this past month, across every district. Wet, soft soils have made pulling somewhat easy this season as has the comradery of the Island Conservation Corps (ICC), the County's Noxious Beed Board, and the Conservation Land Bank's two new temporary employees (Photo 2). Sara De Roy started this month as the part-time, seasonal field assistant on Lopez, and longtime volunteer Mary Gropp is now pulling broom on Orcas in an official capacity. The full-time Orcas field assistant position was advertised last week; and resumes are rolling in. Planning for this year's Youth Conservation Corps has also begun.

Virtual presentations are still common in occurrence and field trips are now on the uptick. The "Island Marble Butterfly Habitat Tour" drew 20 participants and included representatives from no less than 7 agencies and organizations, all of which are working to aid this critically endangered pollinator (5/20). A new cohort of Master Gardener graduates gathered at the nursery to see and hear about how the Salish Seeds Project is advancing habitat restoration in the islands (4/14); and participants in the "Reimagining Gardening with Natives" Workshop learned how to create native habitats at home (4/24). Eliza is presenting about the project for "Botany Washington," an event sponsored by the Washington Native Plant Society (5/13); and at the San Juan Preservation Trust's annual meeting (5/19). Doug presented in a webinar about Garry Oak habitat in collaboration with the Conservation District. Peter gave his 3rd presentation and virtual tour of Coho Preserve for the Whale Museum's Naturalist Training Program, and started his 3rd season on the RCO Habitat Restoration Advisory Committee. Several staff also joined the Salmon Recovery Funding Board's site visits to Glenwood Inn and the Watmough Addition.

The Conservation Land Bank was also gifted three bee hotels. SJI high-school students, Satchel and Lucy built the bee houses, which are designed for solitary bees, as part of their community project. They hung their first one in Driggs Park, and the others will go to the Salish Seeds Project and King Sisters Preserve (Photos 3-4).

## **OUTREACH**

Staff: Tanja Williamson

The spring session of Community Conversations has wrapped up. Attendance was relatively light, yet the forums still sparked good discussions on topics that ranged from forest health to off-leash dogs.

As mentioned above, tours of flora and fauna have been very popular and garnered enthusiasm for native plants and pollinators. Tanja attended several of these events as well as the Great Islands Clean Up on SJI. Christa joined Tanja, and helped break in the brand-new tent, at Lopez's "Ride the Rock" event (4/30). This was the first year for the community bike ride, and Tanja thinks it will be a great addition to the annual outreach calendar.

Aside from attending many of these events, and posting about these events, Tanja's also been looking into analytics for the website to see what pages the public interacts with. She's also been creating and editing content for the next newsletter as well as the annual report; and her article, "Beauties and Beasties: Five Fave Flora and Fauna Native to the San Juan Islands," will appear in the local Springtide magazine in June. Also, have you seen the new FAQ?

*What is the Conservation Land Bank doing to advance climate change mitigation and adaptation?* Click [here](#) to find out.

## **SALISH SEEDS PROJECT**

Staff: Eliza Habegger, Margo Thorp

Weeding, weeding, and more weeding. This is also a spring theme at the nursery, as well as seeding. In April and early May, nursery staff concentrated on seeding over 10,000 plugs (small containers), and these are destined for habitat restoration projects across the islands this fall.

The Salish Seeds Project has been a hub for outreach activities this spring, and nearly everyone that has visited, from tour groups to volunteers, has remarked on the healthy rows of wonderful blooms (Photo 5). Two interns from the ICC are lending a hand at the nursery from April- June, and various community members are participating in the "Third Thursdays," volunteer days, which are up and running after a two-year hiatus. Jacob and Shauna came over and contributed some of their time to redo a section of fence, and Eliza drafted a piece for the newsletter on the shed's living roof.

## **DISTRICT 1**

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

**American Camp Trail:** Shauna maintained the trail corridor and trimmed the hedges.

**Beaverton Marsh:** The first phase of trail has been roughed in utilizing the new Kubota tractor and its flail mower attachment—what a time and back-saver! Staff combined forces with the ICC and the SJC Weed Board and together they attacked the Preserve’s abundance of noxious weeds. They targeted English holly, Spurge laurel, English hawthorn and Scot’s broom; and all said and told, approximately 260 human hours (and countless calories) were dedicated to eradicating weeds and regaining ground for native species (Photos 6-7).

**Cady Mountain:** Clean-up of the cabin area continues. Old deer fencing was removed.

**King Sisters:** Laura, yet another amazing volunteer, has been mowing and maintaining the trail corridor. Thank you!

**Limekiln:** A brand-new kiosk, which includes a wayfinding map to help orient visitors, has been erected at the main entrance. The kiosk was constructed with hand-split cedar shakes that were reclaimed from the derelict cabin at Cady Mountain Preserve, and the entire project was completed with incredible volunteer support.

**Middlewood:** Monitoring of the Island Marble Butterfly habitat plots was performed.

**Mount Grant:** Concrete parking blocks are being installed at the summit. The Preserve neighbors also installed parking blocks within the service area easement at the entrance.

**Mosquito Pass (CE):** The Land Bank has a conservation easement on this SJPT Henry Island preserve. On Earth Day, Erin joined the annual work party and became so consumed with beach clean-up (and the engaging group of volunteers) that she neglected to monitor the easement! Alas, she’ll gladly return. (Photos 8-9).

**Third Lagoon:** Monitoring for invasive green crabs was performed in the lagoon, and the many blooms of Calypso orchids were admired in the surrounding forest (Photo 10).

**Westside:** Spring growth was recently trimmed from the trails.

**Zylstra Lake:** With all the perfect grass growing weather, mowing of both dams, roads, and trails occupied a lot of time. The pair of Bald Eagles appear to be utilizing their nest, and there hasn’t been any reports of conflicts. Monitoring for the Island Marble Butterfly habitat plots also occurred here!

## **DISTRICT 2**

Staff: Peter Guillozet and Mary Gropp

**Coffelt Farm:** SJI Conservation District and WSU Extension will host an informal field walk on 5/23 to discuss ongoing research into the impact of organic fertilizer and no-till seeding on forage productivity, quality, and species composition. The contract with Pickett Spring Electric is under review and extensive electrical upgrades are expected to begin this summer. Through an informal agreement both the Island Conservation Corps (ICC) and the Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) are now storing hand tools and other supplies at the Land Bank's compound. A quote from Orcas-based Perennial Consulting, LLC was received, and Peter plans to proceed with a contract to support both trail planning and to establish vegetation monitoring plots in the wetlands.

**Coho:** Recent attendees of a naturalist walk (on Turtleback) eagerly volunteered to help weed the Preserve's riparian restoration area here, because they reside near Olga.

**Judd Cove:** The quote from Perennial Consulting, LLC also covered wetland delineation and related services to support future aquatic habitat restoration.

**Turtleback Mountain:** Staff posted the draft Turtleback Stewardship and Management Plan (SMP) for public comment, and planned three walks to highlight birds, the unusually strong wildflower bloom, and to provide participants with an overview of activities proposed in the SMP. A public tour of the forest management demonstration project areas is planned for 6/3. Peter will join members of the Washington Native Plant Society on a botany walk on 5/15. For staff and volunteers, pulling broom along southern and eastern boundary areas has been a major focus this month. An intern from UW, a student named Hannah is working to create a visually appealing map of all the streams the originate on the Preserve. (Photos 12-14).

## **DISTRICT 3**

Staff: Amanda Wedow, Sara De Roy

**Channel:** Staff repaired a signpost that had been damaged in the winter.

**FB Spit:** Sara and Amanda removed broom and poison hemlock, and management of Italian arum has also resumed. The [Institute for Applied Ecology](#) selected this preserve as a location for a trial, three-year study that will compare different methods of treatment. Staff from the Institute came out this month to establish long-term monitoring plots (Photo 15). As part of their protocol,

they counted and measured *every* arum leaf in every plot, and they commented afterward that the Spit had more plants than any of their other research sites! The Island Marble Butterfly habitat plot monitoring occurred here as well. Unfortunately, rabbits destroyed most of the butterfly's host plants (mustard) onsite. The trail was mowed.

**Hummel Lake:** Sara mowed the trails with the recently repaired (thanks Jacob!) electric hedge trimmer, and fencing was installed in preparation for a new habitat area. Future plantings will expand the roadside buffer, reduce the area that needs to be mowed, and provide more habitat and forage for birds and other wildlife. Broom and poison hemlock were also tackled here. (Photo 16).

**Lopez Hill:** Scouted new trail alignment but still a work in progress.

**Richardson Marsh:** A seasonal grazing agreement with the Buffum Bros has been prepared.

**Weeks Wetland:** The Great Islands Cleanup visited this site and removed debris in celebration of Earth Day.

**Watmough:** An ecological assessment is underway for the addition. It includes the beach, the nearshore and the forested upland areas. Kwiaht will monitor the site routinely throughout the year and conduct beach seines at the addition in unison with their one at the Bay. Their recent sample of the northern pocket beach yielded sub-yearlings of Pink and Chum salmon, as well as early post-larval Pacific Cod. Kwiaht will also install a bioacoustics recorder, and record sound bites for birds, bats, and other wildlife, to better detect species presence. Erin submitted a grant application to the Salmon Recovery Funding Board, and the selection committee toured the property (Photo 17). In preparation for the possibility of a caretaker, Amanda has been trying to get assessments on the condition of the house and estimates for basic work and/or upgrades. With numerous issues stacking up, staff have ultimately decided against providing the house as a dwelling.

Photos



Photo 1. A wild crop of Calypso orchids, Third Lagoon Preserve (left). Remember the [Nature Note](#) about this spring beauty?



Photo 2: The ICC and Michelle (SJC Weed Board) in front of their big, dead pile of broom



Photos 3-4. Lucy and Satchel hang one of their solitary bee hotels in Driggs Park.



Photo 5. Seed production rows of Golden paintbrush (*Castilleja levisecta*) and great camas (*Camassia leichtlinii*) at the Salish Seeds nursery.



Photos 6-7: Broom BEFORE the Island Corps (left) and after (right)!



Photos 8-9. Henry Island volunteer work party with the SJPT. A successful beach clean-up.



Photo 10. Tanja records data for the Crab Team at Third Lagoon.





Photo 11. The toughest of plants, this English hawthorn still succumbs to the wrench, Crescent Beach Preserve

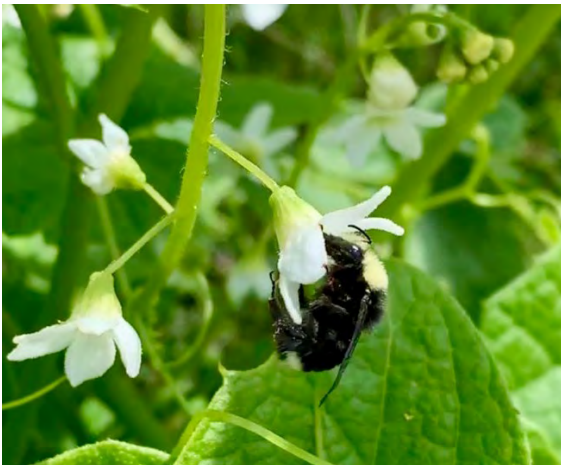


Photo 12. A Yellow-faced bumblebee (*Bombus vosnesenskii*) enjoys manroot flowers, Turtleback Mountain Preserve. Refresh your memory about this spring vine with a [Nature Note!](#)



Photo 13. Mary and Shauna wrap up a successful broom pull on eastern Turtleback



Photo 14. Peter leads a tour on Turtleback and describes the various fruit-bearing shrubs that he's been planting in forest understory.



Photo 15. The Institute of Applied Ecology staff establish Italian arum plots, Fisherman Bay Spit Preserve.



Photo 16. Sara maintains the trails, Hummel Lake Preserve



Photo 17. On blustery day, Erin leads a tour for the Salmon Recovery Funding Board and points out connectivity to other protected lands, Watmough Bay Addition.