
STEWARDSHIP & OUTREACH REPORT

JUNE 2024

OVERVIEW

Conservation Land Bank (Land Bank) staff have kept busy this past month building and upgrading trails and removing noxious weeds. These tasks were often performed in the good company of volunteers, the Island Conservation Corps (ICC), and staff from the County's Noxious Weed Board. Feedback so far is that the trails are in great shape (Photos 1-4). Staff have also been busy behind the screen -- submitting grants for a potential acquisition on Orcas, developing long-term management plans, and refining a county-wide guide to growing wildflowers—but many joined together after a staff meeting to hike on the new trail at Cady Mountain Preserve (Photo 5). Volunteers with the Future Forest Acorn Project reconvened and discussed logistics for assessing the acorns that were planted last fall, and fabricated cages to install around seedlings (Photo 6). The Stewardship Network hosted Dr. Tara Martin; her presentation on engaging Tribes and First Nations in stewardship of natural resources [can be accessed at this link](#) (passcode Efe1Ki\$h). The County's Department of Environmental Stewardship released a survey to inform their Climate Action Plan, which can be accessed [HERE](#). Wildflower and wildlife sightings this past month were also abundant, and some notable species observed include Golden eagles and Western fence lizards on the Land Bank's largest conservation area: Turtleback Mountain Preserve (Photos 7-8).

OUTREACH

Staff: Tanja Williamson

In between planning events and sending off the annual report, Tanja had the opportunity to get out from behind her computer and spend some facetime with the community. She hosted a booth at the San Juan Island Children's Festival and tabled with Amanda at the Lopez Island Farmer's Market. She is looking forward to the opening of Cady Mountain Preserve on San Juan Island (6/15) and has coordinated transportation and events for the celebration (Photo 9). Tanja is supporting plans for the County Fair, and also finalizing details for several upcoming series that

include collaborations with [Alchemy Art Center](#), Island Rec's Camp Eagle Rock, and San Juan Island health care professionals (Photos 10-11).

SALISH SEEDS NURSERY

Staff: Eliza Habegger, Margo Thorp

Weeks of cool, rainy weather have alleviated the need for watering, and provided more time for staff to accomplish seeding tens of thousands of plugs. Seeding is nearly complete (!) and seed harvest of the early bloomers has already begun. We're still troubleshooting some problems with the electrical and water lines on the south side of the work shed. A first draft of a wildflower growing guide for San Juan County is complete, and staff are working with graphic designers, at Partners in Design, to complete have the final version ready in time for the County Fair.

DISTRICT 1

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

Beaverton Marsh: Members of the ICC helped to remove spurge laurel and scotch broom. Thom Pence, [volunteer extraordinaire](#), has also been assisting with weed control. Doug is coordinating with contractors to finish the trail linkage to Linde Park. Scheduling conflicts have delayed a field visit from various resource professionals to explore restoration of bog areas. Charlie is fencing the agricultural area with assistance from Conservation Corps and members of the Grange.

Cady Mountain: ICC members helped girdle conifers and conduct weed control on the upper slopes. Neighbor, Jessica Clark, has also been assisting with noxious weed control. Staff and volunteers have put in a tremendous amount of trail work to prepare for the Preserve's grand opening on 6/15. Charlie's expertise with equipment helped to construct the trailhead, and staff had opportunity to explore the new trail following this month's staff meeting (Photos 1 and 5).

Frazer Homestead: Preservation Trust staff documented an Island Marble butterfly within a restoration plot for the third year in a row.

Kellett Bluff: The mooring buoy permit process, which was initiated in 2017, has gained some momentum. The buoy is likely to be permitted and installed in 2025.

Limekiln: Members of the Westside Volunteer Naturalists reported unusually high stream flow from the pond into Deadman Bay; Doug responded and discovered irregularities with the dam's mechanisms. Flow was determined to be similar to typical winter "storm" events, and monitoring and repairs were coordinated with downstream neighbors. WDFW staff returned for another round of eDNA surveys to assess Northern pike. So far, no other detections have been found in the County, and the Land Bank supported the WDFW survey by providing a small skiff.

Mount Grant: Sami Schinnell, The Nature Conservancy's Washington Cooperative Fire Director, met with members of the ICC and CLB staff to discuss fire ecology and the potential of prescribed "micro" fires on the LSR site (Photo 13).

Westside: Doug responded to a report of a brushfire, which proved to be a neighbor's small burn pile. The occasion created opportunity to reconnect with neighbors and discuss cooperative stewardship efforts. SJC Noxious Weed Board assisted with ongoing control of toxic Egg-leaf spurge (*euphorbia oblongata*). The native prickly pear catci are in bloom (Photo 14), and Jacob had an unfortunate experience of removing a bucket of human feces and two rusty cans of unknown paint/stain like substances. – He sweated it off on Saturday during the San Juan Island triathlon!)

Zylstra Lake: The ICC and SJC Noxious Weed Board have helped to control weeds, and hay harvest has begun. A butterfly was admired (Photo 15).

DISTRICT 2

Staff: Peter Guillozet, Tyler Goodman, Mary Gropp

Coho: Tyler and Commissioner Wiese participated in a tabling event associated with the Gathering of the Eagles canoe journey, which landed at Olga. Preserve neighbor, Sandy Taylor, provided camping. Tyler led approximately 30 tribal and community members on a guided walk of the Preserve and talked about the significance of the salmon run in the creek. He also led the ICC crew in the first phase of a trail project that will replace rotting stair treads and generally improve the ¾-mile loop trail. Improvements were made to narrow segments, retaining walls at switchbacks, and addressed tread and drainage issues (Photos 2,16-17).

Crescent Beach: Thanks to a successful grant request, the Department of Natural Resources will provide funds to support forest thinning beginning in early 2025. This project was outlined in the Land Bank's 2022 *Action Plan for Forest Health and Climate Change Resiliency* prepared by Rainshadow Consulting and in the 2024 Stewardship and Management Plan, which was released for public comment last month. Four comments were received, and a summary is provided in the June CLBC meeting materials. In anticipation of public interest, and the need for temporary trail closures, staff will host a two-part meeting on 6/28 and 6/29 to share project details and solicit community input. Staff also filled potholes with a load of gravel at the western parking lot.

Eastsound: A recent beach clean-up effort was led by the Orcas Exchange (Photos 18-19). The Friends of the San Juans will host a similar event for Orca Action Month on 6/15.

Judd Cove: Staff and the ICC crew spread gravel in the parking lot and rebuilt a steep, narrow trail segment that had been on the 'to do' list for quite some time. Several steps were added in a steep section to make the grade more consistent. Columbines were captured in bloom (Photo 20).

North Shore: A Request for Bids was issued for work related to public access infrastructure and restoration. Although we anticipate receiving regulatory permits in time, due to continuing uncertainty, the project is presented in two parts: Phase I includes demolition and disposal of a concrete house foundation and slab, construction of parking areas, changes to gravel roads, and site cleanup. Phase II will encompass wetland restoration around the pond and house foundation, and pending receipt of permits, be completed in September 2024 or 2025. Restoration plantings are off to a good start (Photo 21).

Peter provided a North Shore project overview and status update at the Orcas fire station (6/12) and took the opportunity to solicit input on the Land Bank's proposal to close Glenwood Inn Road to parking. Limiting parking to Land Bank property would help 1) maintain access for emergency vehicles and traffic, 2) protect the wetlands and large trees that border much of road shoulder, 3) support sustainable use levels, 4) promote walking, cycling, and carpooling and 5) preserve quality of life for residents in the surrounding neighborhood. Strong support among those in attendance echoed that of residents along Glenwood Inn Road.

Turtleback Mountain: Tyler led the ICC and completed upgrades to the lower half of the Morning Ridge Trail. The following week, he led a returning volunteer trail crew in maintenance

of the Lost Oak Trail. Erin and Peter joined Christian Oldam, with Kwiaht, in a successful search for Western fence lizards, and discussed pursuing an effort to assess the size and genetic diversity of this apparently isolated population. Christian continues to monitor coverboards and has documented more sharp-tailed snake specimens. Peter met with Sam Martin, with Ecostudies Institute, to discuss implementation of a small prairie restoration grant. This grant requires baseline monitoring, and a Golden eagle was observed during the survey (Photos 6, 7, and 22).

DISTRICT 3

Staff: Amanda Wedow, Cedar Charnley

Channel: Staff performed general maintenance and monitoring. There are arrangements underway to grade and gravel Meadow Lane.

FB Spit: Habitat plots for Island marble butterfly were monitored by staff. Butterflies were not anticipated to be found, and no butterflies were observed.

Hummel Lake: Kwiaht and Beth St. George hosted a Mindful Birding walk between the Preserve and the WDFW day-use site. An unhoused man has been staying in his broken-down vehicle in the parking lot. Staff have spoken with him and the deputy. The situation is being monitored but there is no immediate action being taken.

Lopez Hill: Staff performed trail maintenance and cleared fallen trees and brush. Cedar replaced the frame and re-installed the entrance sign.

Richardson Marsh: The upper field and trail were mowed. Electric fence was installed along the upland edge by the farmer, and cows were moved into the shared area of the field.

Spencer Spit: Amanda attended the Gathering of the Eagles Canoe landing at Spencer Spit State Park and assisted in setting up the potluck at the community center. At the Farmer's market, she also received positive reviews of the trail on the Preserve.

Tombolo: Cedar framed signage of the Preserve map and re-installed it. Noxious weeds such as meadow knapweed, thistles, and blackberries, were pulled.

Upright Head: Staff pulled tansy and thistle and reached out to the Noxious Weed Board about organizing a work party on the adjacent parcel. The neighboring parcel is owned by Washington State Department of Transportation is has abundant amounts of tansy.

Watmough: Many outreach events are on the calendar! The include a guided tour (6/13), an American Hiking Society trail-building event with BLM (6/14), a Go Take a Hike excursion (6/23), a Lopez Hamlet Resident Tour (6/26), and a volunteer work party (7/3). Staff have had several meetings to advance the long-term Stewardship and Management Plan. Erin and Amanda met with BLM to discuss collaborative maintenance of the parking area and are working to create an up-to-date agreement (MOU) to formalize shared use and responsibilities. They also met with Lummi Nation and Stillaguamish Tribe of Indians to discuss cultural resource protection and tribal access. Nickel Brothers performed a site visit and made rough determinations about the feasibility and the cost of barging the former residence offsite. A draft of the SMP is expected to be released for internal review in the coming weeks. Site work has included mowing, removing poison hemlock, and deconstructing two dilapidated sheds. Salvageable boards from the sheds will be used to make doors for the pumphouse and barn. Douglas maples on site are developing their winged-seeds, and there is discussion about collecting a few for future restoration projects (Photo 23).

Photos



Photo 1. Trail work isn't always HARD. Trail building volunteers, Tad, Ross, Mauricio, and Chris, break for lunch, Cady Mountain Preserve.



Photo 2: ICC members work on widening switchbacks and re-building retaining walls, Coho Preserve.



Photo 3: American Hiking Society volunteers, Watmough Preserve.



Photo 4. Feedback from an avid trail user is that things are looking good, Turtleback Mountain Preserve.



Photo 5. Land Bank staff hike together following the monthly meeting, Cady Mountain Preserve.



Photo 6. Future Forest volunteers, Jane Wentworth and Patrick Kirby, fabricate cages for oak seedlings to protect them from deer browse.



Photo 7. A Golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) soars above Turtleback Mountain Preserve.



Photo 8: A Western fence lizard (*Sceloporus occidentalis*) basks in the sun, Turtleback Mountain Preserve.



Photo 9. Lincoln speaks at the opening celebration of Cady Mountain Preserve



Photo 10. Tanja fulfills her dream to become a wildflower at the SJI Children's Festival. The Land Bank booth featured this panel with a bloom and a bee, and another panel with a woodpecker and a tree.



Photo 11. Amanda helped to host a booth at the Lopez Farmer's Market.



Photo 12. Doug attended the Coast Salish Youth Coalition’s 5th Annual Camas Harvest and Bake at the Pacific Rim Institute. Pictured are youth from Tulalip, Swinomish, and San Juan Island learning about the history of camas from Linzie Crofoot, NW Indian College (Colville and Tlingit).



Photo 13. [Sami Schinell, Cooperative Fire Director for The Nature Conservancy](#) leads a discussion with the ICC, Land Bank staff, and staff from Whidbey Island Conservation District at Mount Grant Preserve.



Photo 14. A prickly pear cactus in bloom, Westside Preserve.



Photo 15. Milbert's Tortoiseshell, Zylstra Lake Preserve



Photo 16: ICC members work on repositioning a pre-existing bridge to flow better with trail movement, Coho Preserve.



Photo 17. The creek on its own is a place to pause and let wonder to flow, Coho Preserve.



Photos 18-19. Orcas Exchange hosted a plastic pick-up event, Eastsound Waterfront Park.





Photo 20: Western columbine (*Aquilegia formosa*) in bloom aside the old kiln, Judd Cove Preserve.



Photo 21: Restoration plantings to enhance habitat and reduce mowing are off to a good start, North Shore Preserve.



Photo 22: Yellow-faced bumble (*Bombus vosnesenskii*) on manroot flower (*Marah macrocarpa*), Turtleback Mountain Preserve.



Photo 23. The smooth bark of a Douglas maple (*Acer glabrum* var. *douglasii*), Watmough Preserve.