
STEWARDSHIP & OUTREACH REPORT

JUNE 2025

Overview

The very first of the fledglings are out and about, but there are more eggs still in a nest and many more hatchlings begging for food while growing their feathers (Photo 1). Recent low tides also revealed several different species of elusive sea creatures. Longer days, warmer weather, and ample wildlife views are some of the signatures of spring.

The KEEN shoe crew posted a blog entry about their April volunteer trip with the Land Bank:

<https://www.keenfootwear.com/blogs/keen-blog/happier-trails-in-the-san-juan-islands>

Outreach

Staff: Tanja Williamson, Margo Thorp

Tanja and Margo had fun with Island Rec's "Cirque du Salish Sea" theme at their annual Children's Festival in May. The Land Bank booth was hosted by a jellyfish and a lemon nudibranch while kids enjoyed an interactive activity learning about the diversity of organisms living in eelgrass beds (Photos 2-3). The [2024 Annual Report](#) dropped and has received positive feedback -- people really like the eggs! The Spring Community Conversation took place on May 28. Margo visited Orcas Island's Salmonberry School to explore and discuss the importance of native plants and seed; students played a seed matching game and worked in small groups to clean seed (Photo 4). Upcoming events are Fourth Monday Preserve Walks with the Mullis Senior Center, Island Rec's Camp Eagle Rock, Lopez Island FRC Huckleberry Camp, planning for summer Art on the Preserves with Alchemy Art Center, the County Fair and formatting the Q2 Summer Newsletter.

Salish Seeds Nursery

Staff: Eliza Habegger, Margo Thorp

Plug seeding was nearly completed by mid-June. Seed harvest began in earnest and will remain steady through the summer. Voles took up residence in a bed of Menzies' larkspur (*Delphinium menziesii*) where they devoured nearly all the roots, demonstrating once again that native plants are good for wildlife (Photo 5). "Third Thursday" volunteer day turnout was strong. A group of SJPT members toured the nursery on May 16. With the rising temperatures, Jacob and Margo installed shade cloth over the nursery tables to reduce watering needs for plants, these will remain up for the season. Nursery staff paid a visit to the Ferry Boat Seeds farm to view sea blush and blue-wild-rye plantings. Ferry Boat Seeds has a small contract to produce seed of these species for the Land Bank, for use on multiple preserves (Photo 6).

District 1

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

Staff have set-up a revolving monthly coordination meeting with Noxious Weed Board technicians to improve communication and efficiency in monitoring and control efforts of noxious weeds across San Juan Island. Springtime means vegetation management and staff have been challenged to keep up with the vigorous growth this season. Doug and Margo have been exploring ideas for standardizing our

monitoring approach in a manner that will help track activities and generate lists of maintenance, repair, and related issues requiring attention.

Beaverton Marsh: Progress on the federal funding continues. The “Local Agency Agreement” and “Project Prospectus” went through several iterations before approval at the regional WSDOT office. We are awaiting approval from WSDOT headquarters before federal funds will be released. This will allow compensation for staff time and begin the process of hiring a design firm. We are exploring the best ways forward with project management as we have learned the WSDOT requirements for third party project management may be more restrictive than beneficial.

Ecologists from Washington Department of Natural Resources spent a day in the peatlands with Doug and Eliza. They confirmed some assumptions about the current conditions of the bog and that it is well worth some effort to better understand and develop strategies for restoration (Photo 7).

The Grange’s Overmarsh Farm Commons project is rolling. Many participants come through daily to build, plant, and tend garden beds. Water systems are being improved, a greenhouse and shed are being built, compost is being made, and fencing is underway.

Cady Mountain: Two members of the San Juan Islands Conservation Corps spent a day assisting with a vegetation monitoring study on Cady Mountain. The multi-year study was intended to track changes in plant species related to seeding and other habitat restoration activities. The rest of the ICC crew assisted with ongoing oak restoration including pile building, noxious weed control, maintenance of caging protecting young oak trees and other plants, and continuing thinning work through the use of girdles. The Washington Conservation Corps crew assisted with improving sections of the new trail to assist with drainage and reduce erosion. A nearby resident gave Shauna the compliment that the trail has “totally changed their life!”

This may feel like Groundhog Day as we have had many false assertions in the past, but we are happy to report the restroom permit was finally issued. We will be moving forward with seeking a certified septic contractor for the excavation and “drainfield” installation. Volunteers will assist with the construction of the facility.

A site visit with ecologists turned up another unusual plant with a great common name: Forest scurf-pea. The plant has been known from a private property near the Preserve and the new population was found a couple dozen feet from the Preserve on an adjacent SJPT preserve (Photo 8).

Deadman Bay: Low tides revealed sea cucumbers, urchins, chitons and starfish, and brought over 60 kids from the Friday Harbor Middle School Science Class out to the rocky shoreline (Photos 9-12).

Frazer Homestead: Together with staff from the Conservation District and WSU Extension, we monitored a “pasture/prairie” seeding trial which is evaluating different methods of incorporating native species into agricultural pasture. Island marble butterflies continue to utilize habitat created by the SJPT several years ago (“Frazer I”), and now this year are likewise using “Frazer II” which the Land Bank and Conservation District jointly manage (Photo 13). 15 island marble butterfly eggs were discovered in late May on Frazer II. Later in the season, we’ll check for caterpillars.

Limekiln: WA State Fish and Wildlife brought a team of specialists to look at the setting of the pond and explore potential means for addressing the introduced Northern Pike. The consensus of the group was the use of rotenone piscicide is the best tool available for the site and the critical nature of the

introduction. WDFW is planning a community meeting in Friday Harbor for August (likely on 8/13). Local non-profit conservation organization, Kwiaht, has expressed concerns about the implications of the rotenone treatment on bats which they have been tracking in the Limekiln area the last few years. WDFW and Kwiaht are engaged in a conversation about potential of rotenone to have negative impacts. As mentioned in a previous report, Kwiaht has installed a bat detector near the pond and provided the following summary:

We just downloaded and processed data for the first 20 nights that our ultrasound detectors has been operating at Westside Lake, and here is the breakdown by bat species:

- *Silver-Haired Bats* 1472
- *Hoary Bats* 67
- *Big Brown Bats* 196
- *California Myotis* 575
- *Yuma Myotis* 314
- *Little Brown Bat* 114
- *Other Myotis* 2

Mount Grant: Doug was joined by WDFW entomologist Julie Combs and EcoStudies Institute Ecologist Adam Martin on a foray on a neighboring property to document a population of “Ookow” (*Dichelostemma congestum*) (Photo 14). The plants had been seen 20 years earlier by an ecologist but were not documented. It was the only known population of the plant in the islands and the northernmost known occurrence of the species which is most common from northern California through southern Oregon. A neighbor accompanying us on the trip reported the plants on his property as well.

The Mount Grant Micro-Burns took place on June 10 and were a successful foray into broadcast burning. Six plots that averaged 1000 sq ft were prepped and burned across a 2-acre site. The goals for the burn included reduction of thatch and exposing soil for fall seeding, training for ICC and Land Bank staff, and the gentle return of a missing eco-cultural process. The timing was informed by ethnographic information as well as contacts at WSANEC, Lummi, and Tulalip with the timing mimicking very low intensity burns that would have happened after camas harvest with the intent of providing nutrient return to the site. The small scale of the burns was intentional in not biting off more than we could manage and being certain that initial steps were conducted in the safest manner possible to ensure protection of natural resources and nearby private properties. The trainer and burn boss, Sami Schinell, was an excellent instructor and it was a valuable exercise for all involved. Although there was a good amount of coordination with a variety of tribal members in planning for the burn, summer logistics were insurmountable and regrettably none were able to participate in the burn, though all expressed interest in continuing conversation and opportunities (Photos 15-16).

North Neck CE: Erin met with landowners and botanists on the ‘forever wild’ portion on this protected property and despite all their good intentions to focus downward on plants, the group was consistently interrupted by other species. No binoculars were needed to take in the sights of Pacific loons, California sea lions, Harbor porpoise, and Orca whales (Photo 18).

Westside: California sea lions were spotted hauled out on the rocks at the Preserve. They were vocalizing and could be heard from the lighthouse (Photo 19).

Zylstra Lake: Together with staff from the Conservation District and WSU Extension, staff monitored a “pasture/prairie” seeding trial which is evaluating different methods of incorporating native species into agricultural pasture.

Haying of the agricultural fields is fully underway while the sun is shining. Lessee Adam Greene leads the harvest with a crew of enthusiastic farm hands. Yields are less than last year, but possibly of higher quality. The bales are heading off to many local farms.

Staff are working with the Conservation District/ICC to focus riparian grant funding project proposals around Zylstra including maintenance of BDAs, lacustrine/riparian planting, and wildlife habitat enhancements.

District 2

Staff: Peter Guillozet, Tyler Goodman, Scot Devereaux

Coffelt Farm: Peter and Tyler weed whacked grass around trees in the fenced riparian zone to prevent damage by voles. The ICC came for a partial day to monitor plant growth in the riparian zone.

Coho: New Seasonal Field Assistant Scot Devereaux and Tyler cut encroaching vegetation along the trail corridor. Jenny DeGroot (Speckled Trout Consulting), Steve Boessow (WDFW) and Tyler completed the annual seining survey of Cascade Creek, finding an abundance of coho salmon fry (Photo 20). Erin is working with CLB and SJPT staff to finalize the grant application for the potential six-acre addition.

Crescent Beach: Multiple contractors submitted bids for the upcoming forest thinning project. Review and contractor selection will proceed shortly.

Diamond Hill: Tyler led a community wildflower walk and was supported by Erin and Tanja. (Photos 21-22)

“Dolphin Bay”: While the final name of this property remains undetermined, the fact that the acquisition is proceeding is exciting. Erin is supporting CLB staff with the details necessary for the RCO grant award and those needed for a ‘Waiver of Retroactivity,’ which will enable future grant applications.

Entrance Mountain: Scot and Tyler spent a day removing tansy ragwort and mullein from rocky balds.

Judd Cove: We received three construction bids and intend to award a contract to Bellingham contractor MadCon LLC. The resulting contract total will be well within the grant amount (Photo 23).

North Shore: Peter planted the last of the emergent wetland plants in the old pond footprint as the water level has drops gradually. Seedlings from fall and winter plantings are growing vigorously. Barn and violet-green swallows have been present and are using the nesting structure. Tyler mowed the field downslope of the old house for Preserve users to enjoy. Recent low tides revealed abundant sea stars, sea cucumbers, crabs, and even a mink searching for lunch (Photo 24).

Stonebridge-Terrill: Scot and Tyler removed tansy ragwort and non-native hawthorn from along the birding trail.

Turtleback Mountain: We received two bids for the parking lot rehabilitation project (Photo 25). The low bid, also from MadCon LLC, came in at a very reasonable \$30,300. Scot has had a thorough introduction to the invasive weeds of Turtleback, as he, Peter and Tyler spent time pulling scotch broom, mullein and tansy ragwort on balds. Wildflowers continue to cover the landscape, with larkspur, clarkia, yarrow, hyacinth brodiaea, harvest brodiaea and woolly sunflower being the most abundant this week (Photo 26). Scot and Tyler installed vehicle counters at each of the trailheads to capture usage data as well as pedestrian counters. Tyler mowed the South Turtleback field, and several CLB staff met with WDFW staff to traverse remote areas within the Preserve and discuss future opportunities for deer hunting (Photos 27-28).

District 3

Staff: Amanda Wedow and Claire Waterman

The Land Bank welcomed new Seasonal Field Assistant, Claire Waterman. Claire and Amanda have been spending a lot of time in the field getting acquainted with the Lopez preserves and completing routine maintenance such as mowing, weed whacking, removing noxious weeds, and tending planted areas. Rainshadow consulting is starting a Forest Health Assessment of 7 Lopez preserves. This contract is modeled after the Orcas Forest Assessment completed in 2022.

Channel: Amanda and Claire mowed the beach trail, brushed overhanging branches, and completed noxious weed removal. The Channel Preserve has very few noxious weeds, and staff continue to monitor and remove scotch broom and thistles in small amounts. A new boundary sign was installed on the shoreline, because ours washed away in a winter storm.

Volunteers have been collecting marine debris from the shoreline and often set it in a small pile at the base of the hill. The pile was getting quite big with some large items like plastic net and a culvert. Amanda and Claire hauled most of the pile up the hill.

The map sign in the parking area was damaged, and Amanda was able to repair the broken pieces.

Hummel Lake: Birders have enjoyed sightings of less commonly seen species such as osprey, Western tanager, black headed grosbeak, yellow warblers, common yellowthroat, and purple martins.

Claire tended the hedgerow plantings by removing grass around the base of trees and shrubs and weed whacking the fenced area. Andrew Munson with the noxious weed crew made a guest appearance to remove scotch broom. Thanks Andrew! Staff mowed the fields with the County Parks tractor. Someone moved a picnic table from the field trail out onto the dock, which was deemed by staff to be very unsafe. Amanda and Claire were able to carry the table back to its intended location (Photo 29).

Kwiaht will host a 2nd annual fishing derby on June 28th, which will primarily take place at the WDFW site but may also attract visitors to the Land Bank Preserve.

Lopez Hill: Staff have focused on trail brushing and removing noxious weeds including scotch broom, herb Robert, and thistles.

Richardson Marsh: Amanda and Claire mowed the trail and south east field. Claire removed bull thistle which was emerging from the Opalco line clearing last year. Cattle are grazing the wetland field which extends from neighboring fields.

Amanda will meet with Richardson Water Works next week to discuss the layout of the parking area and their future needs and plans for well site access and water lines.

The Spit at Fisherman Bay Preserves: Staff borrowed the tractor mower from County Parks and new field assistant, Claire, mowed the fields (Photo 30).

Weeks Wetland at Fisherman Bay Preserves: Routine preserve maintenance was conducted and the hayfield has been harvested.

Watmough: Erin is helping complete the last few requirements needed in order to receive full payment – of the \$1.5M award! -- from RCO for the 2022 addition.

Some participants in the Gathering of the Eagles canoe journey visited Watmough Bay and Watmough Head during their stay on Lopez. Visitation to Watmough Head is steady, and staff have been hearing plenty of compliments and excitement about access to the addition. Amanda and Claire installed standard “day use only” signs on the beach, primarily to inform water access visitors of Preserve rules. Amanda is drafting a more comprehensive Preserve sign, trying to balance the desire to inform about Preserve rules with keeping the sign short enough that people will read it. Also, Amanda and Claire are starting on a stacked rail fence along the property line.

Low tide at Watmough Head also revealed many interesting sea creatures and seaweeds including barnacles, sea stars, sea cucumbers and the remains of an octopus with tentacles around 3' long.

On a recent Watmough visit, Amanda observed that one of the buoys appeared to be missing. RR Mooring was scheduled for annual inspection of the buoys the following week. They were able to locate the missing buoy, which had a cut line, and will bring it in for repair. Amanda contacted USFWS about unauthorized access to Boulder Island, part of the SJI's National Wildlife Refuge that does not allow public access. Someone installed a cross on the top of the island (for the second time this year). The cross was removed or fell over a few weeks later. They requested documentation be taken if anyone is seen on the island. Amanda installed new stainless steel toilet paper bars in the outhouse. They were removed from the wall and damaged last year. The bollard to Watmough beach was also recently tampered with, Amanda and the BLM staff reset and locked the post. A commercial bicycle group was observed taking up most of the parking area with their van and trailer. The Bureau of Land Management will reach out to them about the need to get a permit for their activities.



Photo 1. Ground nest on Turtleback with White-crowned sparrow characteristics.

Photo 2. The rare sighting of a *Berghia tanjascens* at Island Rec's Children's Festival brought joy to many!



Photo 3. Margo as a jellyfish at Island Rec's Children's Festival.

Photo 4. Salmonberry school students explore native seed and plants with a matching game and seed cleaning.



Photo 5. Vole damage to a bed of Menzies' larkspur (*Delphinium menziesii*) at the Salish Seeds Project.

Photo 6. Ferry Boat Seeds staff showing off their planting of blue wild-rye planting, which will produce seed for Land Bank use.



Photo 7. WA DNR Natural Heritage Program staff were blown away by the depth of sphagnum peat at Beaverton. An auger reached 6' deep and a probe was maxed out at 15' deep without encountering a substrate change. Photo 8. Peter Dunwiddie, Peter Zika, and Adam Martin survey for rare plants on Cady Mountain.



Photo 9. A large number of students visit Deadman Bay Preserve for the low tide.



Photos 10-12. Gooseneck barnacles, Red and California cucumbers during low tide at Deadman Bay Preserve.



Photo 13. Island marble butterfly host plants, field mustard, at "Frazer II" plot.

Photo 14. A pale swallowtail butterfly nectars on a regionally rare Ookow flower near Mount Grant Preserve.



Photo 15. One of the Mount Grant Micro Burn plots underway.

Photo 16. Mount Grant Micro-Burn plot after the burn. Photos were taken roughly 10 minutes apart.



Photo 17. Michele with the noxious weed board stands next to a giant bull thistle at Mount Grant Preserve.

Photo 18. Headland plant surveys on the North Neck CE property were gleefully interrupted by the area's most iconic marine mammal.



Photo 19. Three California Sea Lions hauled out on the Westside! It's rare that we see them hauled out.
Photo 20. Coho salmon fry in Cascade Creek at Coho Preserve.



Photo 21. Participants follow Tyler to view wildflowers at Diamond Hill Preserve.
Photo 22. Hikers listen intently to Tyler's habitat highlights atop Diamond Hill Preserve.



Photo 23. A portion of the hardened shoreline at Judd Cove Preserve that will be restored this summer.
Photo 24. Sea stars observed during low tide at North Shore Preserve.



Photo 25. Peter explains details during the pre-bid contractor meeting for the South Turtleback parking lot.
Photo 26. Turtleback self-heal (*Prunella vulgaris*) patch abuzz with native bees.



Photo 27. Land Bank staff and WDFW staff tour the Turtleback Preserve.
Photo 28. Peter and Tyler in a remote, potential new hunting area and are dwarfed by legacy trees on Turtleback.



Photo 29. Amanda takes a break at Hummel Lake before relocating the picnic table back to its intended place.
Photo 30. Seasonal Field Assistant, Claire Waterman, mowing at the Spit.