

TLC LANDmark

TLC spearheads new partnerships on the West Coast

by Eileen Palmer

As The Land Conservancy of BC (TLC) enters its fourth year of critical land conservation work in British Columbia, its activities on the West Coast continue to grow rapidly. This exciting increase in activity includes acquisition projects, conservation covenants, stronger partnerships with all levels of government and help from local land trusts and the efforts of many volunteers.

Two of the most ambitious fundraising projects on the coast are the Sooke Hills Campaign (see page 8) and the protection of Wildwood, a 70 acre ecoforestry site near Nanaimo. Merve Wilkinson has been logging this property using sustain-

Not only does Wildwood boast high biodiversity values and excellent wildlife habitat, it also provides a valuable educational opportunity.

able forestry practices since 1938, making it the oldest ecoforestry site on the West Coast of North America. Not only does Wildwood boast high biodiversity values and excellent wildlife habitat, it also provides a valuable educational opportunity. In December 2000, TLC successfully purchased the property, which will be managed by Wilkinson and the Ecoforestry Institute as an educational centre. Over

\$600,000 must still be raised to cover mortgage payments and contribute to an endowment fund for the site.

Other new projects include Abkhazi Garden in Victoria, TLC's first historical garden purchase, continues to receive many visitors and in February 2001, will again receive visitors from around the world (see page 2). Not far from the garden, volun-

teers and staff have been busy restoring the exterior and interior of the Ross Bay Villa. TLC volunteers made, primed and oiled eaves troughs; repaired all the windows; and began work on the fence. TLC is carefully documenting all aspects of the historical interior. During interior restoration, workers discovered original wallpaper typ-

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The wild forests of the Sooke Hills are an important habitat and wildlife corridor for plants and animals including Roosevelt elk, black bears, cougars, and wolves.

Waterfall in the Sooke Hills

DEVOTED TO THE GARDEN THAT LOVE BUILT

by Cyril Hume

Late in 1999, The Land Conservancy of BC (TLC) took another brave step in fulfilling its visionary conservation mandate that is broad enough to embrace the best of our natural and cultural heritage. TLC, along with many partners, stepped forward to secure the protection of the Abkhazi garden.

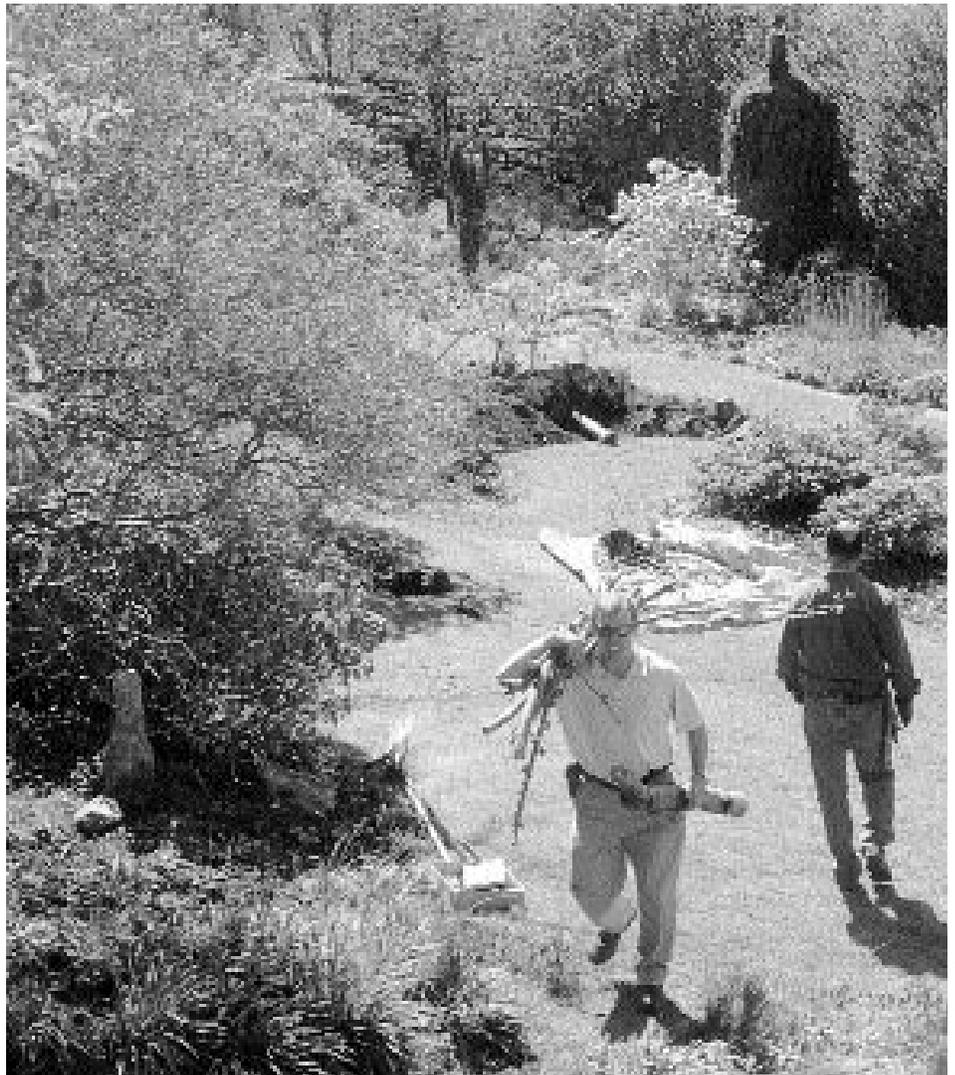
In Victoria, Canada's "garden capital," this garden of just over one acre was poised to become yet another in-fill housing development. This time, however, another kind of change was in the air. The development-generated dilemma of choosing between houses or townhouses and the inevitability of blasted rock and bulldozed garden was challenged. A third option was

TLC ensured that the name and memory of the Abkhazis will continue to be honoured for their lifetime creation of remarkable garden art.

made possible – conservation. Indeed, neighbours, friends and supporters agreed that here was a garden, an urban green-space, deserving of permanent protection for the benefit of all.

In so doing, TLC ensured that the name and memory of the Abkhazis will continue to be honoured, not on a sign for a townhouse site, but for the lifetime creation of remarkable garden art.

Nicholas and Peggy Abkhazi, the proud parents of this garden, settled in Victoria in 1946. Their love story began in 1920's Paris where Peggy met and fell in love with



Volunteers working at Abkhazi Garden

exiled Georgian Prince Nicholas Abkhazi. Their romance was put on hold by WWII during which Nicholas was a prisoner in a German POW camp while Peggy was also a prisoner in a Japanese internment camp near Shanghai. After many adventures, they were finally reunited and married in Victoria in 1946. They saw the poetry inherent in

the glaciated rocks and Garry oaks of this little piece of Victoria landscape, and over the next four decades they composed the garden paradise that is considered by many to be one of Canada's foremost creations of twentieth century garden art. They generously shared this garden with an ever increasing number of visitors. Eventually writers and photographers came to the garden to listen to the remarkable story of its creation, and to capture in words and images the special significance of this place. This in turn enabled thousands more people to vicariously share the experience via films, books, and magazines. In the 1980s ▶

BEQUESTS

When making out your Will, please consider leaving a Conservancy Bequest of land or money. In addition to leaving a legacy, there may also be certain tax benefits. Please contact Bill Turner, Executive Director of TLC at (250) 479-8053 for more information.

the Abkhazi garden was featured in a documentary film along with the much larger gardens of Vita Sackville West, Harold Nicholson's Sissinghurst garden in England and Andre Le Notre's Vaux le Vicomte garden that would later inspire Versailles.

Once the campaign was launched,



GERALDINE PEET, PHOTO

A volunteer fixing the garden steps

roughly \$400,000 was raised in two months by a community that was unaccustomed to giving to save a garden. A further \$1 million in financing was creatively secured in a green mortgage by supporters of the garden, and the deal was closed.

The campaign generated nation-wide recognition for both the Abkhazi garden and for The Land Conservancy. Supporters came forward from as far away as the US, Scotland, England, New Zealand, and Tbilisi, Georgia! One of the lasting benefits of this exposure eventually took the form of a CBC documentary film, "The Concubine, the Pig and The Garden." The Abkhazi garden joins the Winnipeg Flood and the Quebec Ice Storm in apparently being one of only three occasions when such a video



TLC FILES, PHOTO

Looking beyond the Abkhazi garden over Victoria

has been produced – the garden campaign, however, was no disaster!

The Garden Conservancy (based in New York) also agreed to get involved and offered invaluable technical and planning support. Abkhazi garden is the first project outside the US to receive The Garden Conservancy's endorsement. The Garden Con-

From this endeavor, TLC had to respond to a myriad of challenges and opportunities alike.

servancy also featured the Abkhazi garden on the cover of their special 10th anniversary newsletter and has identified it as a possible case study on mounting a successful campaign.

Debts of gratitude and of money must be repaid. Since acquiring title on February 17, 2000, TLC was aware of the need to show the community the very garden they had so generously supported. Two special open houses were held inviting all donors to come and see the garden even in its

rough condition. One surprise was that a majority of these donors were seeing the garden for the first time – their support had been based on faith in TLC and the worthiness of the garden. Almost 2,000 people came to one of these events. A further 2,000 people visited the garden over the limited open hours from May through September 2000. The overall response was clear: the Abkhazi garden was worth the trouble and TLC was doing the right thing.

From this endeavour, TLC has had to respond to a myriad of challenges and opportunities alike. New members and volunteers have come forward, swelling TLC's ranks. Over 100 volunteers have been greeting garden visitors, serving tea and treats in the sitting room, creating and selling garden-inspired items in the developing gift shop, producing training and interpretive materials, directing traffic, cleaning and polishing...and gardening. The faithful band of Abkhazi garden volunteers has steadily moved through the garden cleaning, weeding, re-discovering and polishing the jewel. Mapping, photographing and taking inventory are also underway as part

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HOME ON THE RANGE

WORKING IN THE CARIBOO-CHILCOTIN

By Nichola Walkden

The Cariboo-Chilcotin has been described as a huge and lonely country, but its rich diversity of landscapes and people make it a place of beauty and splendor, leaving little time for loneliness to creep in. It is located in the high plateau country of BC's central interior from Lillooet in the south to Quesnel, and from the Cariboo Range to Williams Lake. From the depths of the Fraser and Chilcotin Rivers, there are deep cut canyons, eroded bench-

Ranches in the Cariboo can be thousands of acres in size, supporting critical wildlife populations.

lands and the dry hot grasslands of ranching country. The area also encompasses the moister areas of wetlands, lakes, tributaries and forests which run high up into the alpine zone.

This is wilderness country in the Chilcotins, with over 28,000 km² of land,



NICHOLA WALKDEN, PHOTO

French Bar creek running through Reynolds Ranch on its way to the Fraser River.

there are fewer than 2,500 people. Homestead buildings, old mining equipment and cattle can be found throughout much of the landscape, evidence of the industries that attracted people here. Towns are small, people are friendly, and you can still find post-cards from the 1960's in the general stores.

The Cariboo is one of the first areas where TLC began its work and remains one of our areas of primary interest. TLC's involvement stemmed from studies done across the province which showed tremendously low figures for grassland conservation. We have spent our time meeting with ranchers and getting to know the pressures on grassland resources and those faced by ranchers in preserving their properties. Unlike other areas in the province where population pressures are creating smaller ranches and smaller ranchettes, ranches in

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Recently completed is the Canadian edition of *Preserving Working Ranches in the Canadian West*. This book demonstrates how estate planning and conservation arrangements help to ensure that ranches can be transferred as ranches, and ways that producers can help stave off the financial pressures to break properties into smaller parcels. Also, the past couple of years have been spent investigating the feasibility of marketing 'conservation friendly' or 'bluebird friendly' beef in BC. This is an opportunity to help raise awareness of the cattle industry's contribution to wildlife habitat while helping to

increase their financial return.

Two notable TLC acquisitions have been the purchase of the Black Creek Ranch and the Reynolds Ranch. The Black Creek Ranch is part of the famous Horsefly River, and home to up to 250,000 spawning

Working holiday volunteers also assisted with establishing a base camp, clearing debris, management planning and weed removal.

salmon. The Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks now manages this property. They are re-creating off channel habitats and planting hundreds of trees to maintain the river bank. TLC recently completed the Reynolds Ranch purchase thanks to the generous support of our dedicated members and the Habitat Conservation Trust Fund. Reynolds property has been purchased as a ranch, and will remain as such thanks to the dedication and hard work of the manager, Ron Cable, and his family. This is an enormous property that adjoins the Churn Creek Protected Area to the north. We were excited to have Botany BC visit as part of their annual field tour in 2000. Their work contributed to the ranch's ecological inventory, along with working holiday volunteers who also assisted with establishing a base camp, clearing debris, management planning and weed removal.

There will be several volunteer working holidays in 2001 at Reynolds Ranch. This is an excellent opportunity to visit this wild open space, free of electricity, phones and noise, and help TLC maintain this fantastic example of a viable ranching operation, and the array of ecosystems and species it shares.

For more information, call (250) 479-8053.

THE EAST KOOTENAYS – NORTH AMERICA'S OWN SERENGETI

By Nichola Walkden



LAURA SHILLINGTON PHOTO

Group learning the values of the East Kootenay grasslands

Spacious grasslands, mystical rainforests, serene wetlands, spectacular mountain peaks and expansive forests make up the East Kootenays. Considered to be an ecological treasure of international significance, this area is bounded by the

ongoing projects



Rockies to the east and the Purcells to the west. The Upper Columbia and Kootenay Rivers run between the ranges. At low elevations to the north are the magnificent Columbia Wetlands, the longest pristine wetlands in North America. The valley bottom grasslands are filled with wildflowers in the spring, hunting grounds for birds in the summer and fall, burrowing grounds for badgers, and feeding areas for ungulates in the winter months.

2001 will mark the third year of our office in the Kootenays. Following our work in the Cariboo we have introduced the East Kootenay Grassland Stewardship Program. Through this landowner contact program we have been able to meet many of the valley's wonderful residents. These people have involved us in working closer with the landscape and its wild inhabitants. It has

been a fantastic program, with many thanks to Kathryn Martell who has led the project, and all of the summer staff. They have made the visits, spotted the weeds, led interpretive walks and talks, and taken the extra time to help people with planning for habitat enhancements, building bat boxes and participating in community action.

One of our most exciting ventures in this area is the negotiation to buy surplus land holdings from Cominco Mines. These holdings include nearly 2,000 acres of grassland adjacent to a provincial Fish and Wildlife property, bordered by St. Mary's River and

TLC is one of the many partners helping with the East Kootenays section of the Yellowstone to Yukon initiative.

Highway 3, and running from Kimberley down toward Wycliffe. It is a key wildlife corridor in the neighbourhood of a number of the properties we have been working with through our stewardship project. We will begin the acquisition of this property in April 2001.

We are also working on a number of conservation agreements. As our office has become more established our geography has spread. Our work has given us the opportunity to be involved in the protection of the East Kootenays wetlands, forests and ranches. It is this diverse range of ecosystems and wildlife populations that have led some to call this area the Serengeti of North America.

Finally, TLC is excited to be one of the partners of the Yellowstone to Yukon initiative (Y2Y). These groups are working to establish a connected network of protected areas and wildlife corridors from the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem in the south to the Yukon's Mackenzie Mountains. The Y2Y project is an effective initiative that is raising awareness about the need for protecting and connecting land corridors. It brings attention to development, roads, resource extraction and their impacts on wildlife movements, feeding, breeding and travel.

WORKING HOLIDAYS

The Land Conservancy of BC has several working holiday options available for all types of nature enthusiasts. Spend some time on South Winchelsea Island helping to remove the invasive plant species or join us in the spectacular grasslands of the South Chilcotin helping at Reynolds Ranch.

2001 Working Holiday Dates & Info:

- South Winchelsea Island: March 16–22, June 22–24, July 27–29 & September 14–16
- Reynolds Ranch: July 7–13, July 14–20 & August 18–24.
- Working holidays include all meals, accommodation, and local transportation to camp site. Prices range from \$30–\$70 per person.
- Call (250) 479-8053 for an information package to be sent to you or to find out about Working Holidays and other volunteer opportunities.

INVADERS!

By Clint Abbott

Since the founding of The Land Conservancy of BC (TLC), the issue of weed management has been very important and at times controversial. The acquisition of land and granting of “protected” status is really only the beginning of a perpetual management process. TLC takes an individual approach to each project, and bases all habitat management decisions on independent research and consultation with other agencies. We use the example of the restoration of South Winchelsea Island to demonstrate this process.

The term weed management describes the efforts and decisions encompassing the removal of invasive vegetation and the restoration of an area with native plants. Invasive plants are classified as species that are not native to a region. Many of the plants we focus on removing are not native to North America and include Scotch broom, Evergreen blackberry, Himalayan blackberry, and English ivy. These and other species of invasive plants can pose a tremendous threat to native vegetation and

Invasive plants can pose a tremendous threat...and often without any human intervention, can completely eliminate some native species.

often, without any human intervention, can completely eliminate some native species.

Although South Winchelsea Island was relatively pristine while the cabin was being constructed, areas were cleared to facilitate the transport of materials. This development exposed the soil and removed the native groundcover and canopy layers. South Winchelsea Island is only three nautical miles from the shore of Vancouver Island and the transport of blackberry and broom seeds occurred relatively quickly. The ex-



Working holiday volunteers on South Winchelsea Island, hauling away blackberry bushes

E. PALMER, PHOTO

posed soil offered excellent conditions for the seeds to germinate.

After extensive research, TLC decided to not use any chemicals or herbicides in our efforts to remove invasive vegetation from the island. We opted for mechanical removal due to the tremendous help we have been able to receive from volunteers. While mechanical removal is strenuous and labour intensive, we believe, and have proved so far, that it is feasible and avoids the risk of introducing unknown components into the soil.

Certain areas of South Winchelsea Island had Himalayan blackberry patches five feet wide, 10 feet high, and over 30 feet long. The first stage involved removing all the live and dead stalks with the aid of brush cutters, loppers, and many cuts and scrapes. Since the plants still contained berries, they were transported via tarps to a safe area to be destroyed by fire. Subsequent growth has been removed and the roots excavated with the least amount of damage to the surrounding soil. Scotch broom has been cut at the stem and removed intact for destruction by fire. Since broom seeds remain viable in the soil for

many years, volunteers have been busy for two consecutive years pulling every visible seedling. The English ivy was conquered relatively quickly as only one area had been affected. As English ivy can re-establish from even one piece broken off from the original plant, great care was taken to contain and remove the plants.

Spring and summer 2000 was our third year of weed management on South Winchelsea Island and the results are very encouraging. Although the process of mechanical removal will keep our dedicated volunteers busy for many years to come, we believe that our management plan will lead to the complete restoration of much of the island. Last summer we discovered chocolate lilies, camas and other native plants in areas previously and exclusively infested with blackberry.

We are currently looking for fit and able volunteers to help with continuing invasive plant removal and restoration efforts on South Winchelsea Island. Many different dates will be scheduled for spring and summer 2001. Please call (250) 479-8053 to put your name on our list, or check our web site postings at www.conservancy.bc.ca.

A PROMISE TO PROTECT – USING CONSERVATION COVENANTS

By Paula Ramsay

There are several methods of protecting land besides straight acquisition. These include stewardship agreements, leasing arrangements and conservation covenants. Every landowner interested in conservation has a particular situation and unique needs. Fortunately, there is a diversity of tools available for each situation. For instance, a landowner may want to ensure protection of a particular feature of their land without giving up ownership. In these and other cases, the conservation covenant is one of the most effective land preservation tools available to landowners. It was not until 1994, however, that non-governmental agencies in B.C., such as land trusts, were allowed to hold conservation covenants.

A covenant is actually a very simple concept. It is a voluntary, written and binding agreement between a landowner and (usually) a conservation agency. The agreement outlines how the landowner promises to protect the land in specific ways. The

The conservation covenant is one of the most effective preservation tools available to landowners.

promises the landowner makes will be attached on title to the land forever, regardless of who owns the land.

What does this mean in practice? Suppose you own a small lakeside vacation property. It comes to your attention that the small marsh in your backyard provides habitat for several endangered species, including your favourite, the painted turtle. You begin to be haunted by nightmares of condominiums rising out of the marsh and thin, shell-shocked turtles hobbling away. Since you cannot afford to donate your land for conservation purposes and you do not want to sell, you feel powerless to the



Hikers in Whistler's newly designated Emerald Forest Park. TLC co-holds the conservation covenant with the Resort Municipality of Whistler.

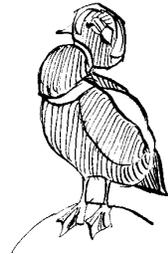
whims of future landowners. Thanks to conservation covenants, however, you are in control.

Once you decide to use a conservation covenant, you need to find the appropriate agency, probably a land trust. With their help the drafting of your agreement may begin. In the simplest case, you would likely agree to forbid development in the marsh area. Covenants are very adaptable – if you so desired you could also agree to maintain the marsh by removing any non-native, weedy plants. Any terms, which you and the land trust agree upon, can be included in the covenant. The decisive factor is that all of the promises you make apply not only to you, but also to every future landowner.

Once you have created your covenant and all parties have signed it, the land trust would file it with the land title office and it would become a permanent part of the property. The land trust is responsible for annual monitoring of your property. This means that once a year a representative will visit the landowner and walk around the marsh, making sure that none of the promises in the covenant have been broken.

Suppose you sell the land to a sweet old man, who later sells the land to Ms. Townhouse. The next year when the land trust arrives, they find that she has begun to fill in the marsh. What powers of enforcement does the land trust have? Initially, the trust will approach Ms. Townhouse and inform her of the violation, and if necessary, proceed with formal arbitration. If this is unproductive, the land trust does have the authority to take her to court.

Land trusts are very enthusiastic about conservation covenants and TLC holds over 40, with many more in negotiation. Clearly, the above information is a very simple overview of covenants and should not be used as a guide for actual protection. Each landowner's situation is unique and their conservation needs will vary depending on many different factors. If you would like to place a covenant on your land or learn more about other stewardship options, please contact TLC in Vancouver at (604) 733-2313 or in Victoria at (250) 479-8053.



PUT SOME STOCK IN TLC

The new federal budget has reduced the amount of taxable capital gains on publicly traded stock to 25% when that stock is donated to charities like TLC. This makes the donation of stock even more attractive to donors.

If you would like more information about this type of donation, please contact Bill Turner at (250) 479-8053.

THE SEA TO SEA GREENBELT

...MAKING THE RIGHT CONNECTIONS

by Alison Spriggs

When parks are small and disconnected, populations of species become isolated and cannot survive. Those that can, go elsewhere... if there is anywhere left to go. For the species that cannot, these parks become islands of extinction. Linking parklands provides a viable sanctuary for native wildlife species and this is the purpose of the Sea to Sea Greenbelt.

On July 6, 2000, TLC announced that it had negotiated an option to purchase a spectacular 3,400 acre Sooke Hills property for \$5.3 million, the largest remaining tract of unprotected land needed to secure the southern end of the Sea to Sea Greenbelt.

The Sea to Sea Greenbelt is a southern Vancouver Island conservation initiative aimed at linking existing parklands and marine areas from southwest Saltspring Island to Sooke Basin. Once linked, the



Proposed Sea to Sea Greenbelt Protected Area.

TLC FILES, PHOTO

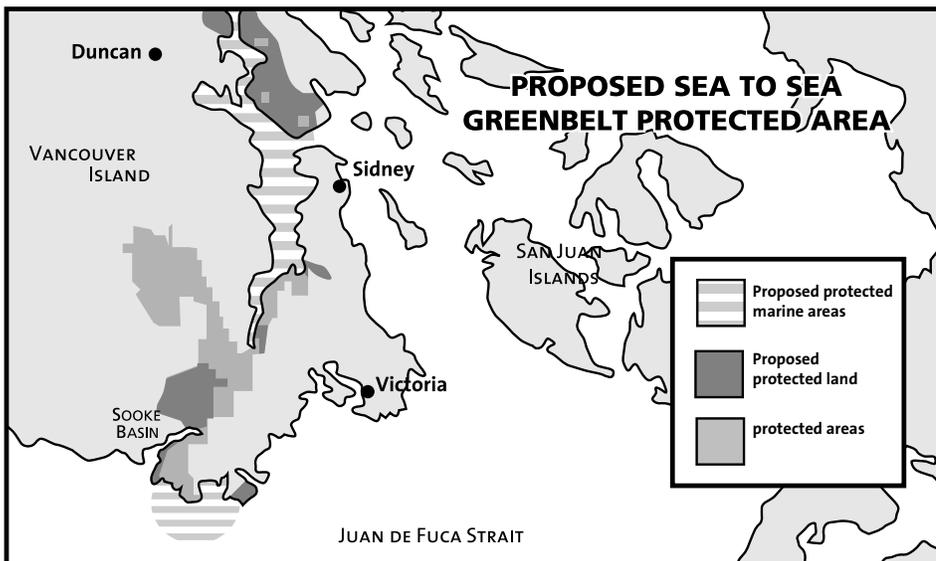
greenbelt will protect the region's beautiful backdrop and provide a continuous corridor of protected wildland as a sanctuary for the remaining native plants, birds, and animals of southeastern Vancouver Island.

To accomplish this vision, The Land Conservancy of British Columbia (TLC) is currently raising funds to purchase key properties in the Sooke Hills. On July 6, 2000, TLC announced that it had negotiated an option to purchase a spectacular

3,400 acre Sooke Hills property, the largest remaining tract of unprotected land needed to secure the southern end of the Sea to Sea Greenbelt. TLC's successful purchase of this land will help to complete a critical link between Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park and Ayum Regional Park in the Sooke Basin. These parcels of land are critical components of the Sea to Sea Green Belt vision. Without them, the continuous corridor of wild forestland from Saanich Inlet to the Sooke Basin will be lost.

During the past seven years local conservation groups and all levels of government have contributed to making the Sea to Sea vision a reality. Over 115 square kms (11,500 hectares) have already been permanently preserved as part of the Greenbelt; more than 50 square kms of which include wild forestland in the Sooke Hills. Thanks to tireless efforts and public support, the Sea to Sea Greenbelt vision is now over 75% complete.

The Sooke Hills property contains two biogeoclimatic zones that have been devastated by human activity in the last 150 years, the Coastal Douglas-fir zone and the Coastal Western hemlock zone. More ▶



TLC EXPANDS CHRISTMAS HILL NATURE SANCTUARY

by Victor Derman

The Land Conservancy of BC has undertaken an important acquisition and addition to the Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary in Saanich, on the southern tip of Vancouver Island. This acquisition involves four large lots, each about half an acre, on the north side of the hill. The

new projects



lots, which have many rare Garry oak trees, are part of a parcel known as Rogers Farm. In a ground-breaking arrangement, the municipality of Saanich has agreed to advance TLC a three year interest free loan of almost \$400,000 to acquire the property. In return, TLC has agreed to make the lots part of the adjacent Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary.

Christmas Hill and surrounding lands constitute one of the largest remaining open space areas within the urban core of

the Capital Regional District. The hill itself is adjacent to one of the busiest intersections in the region and is a widely recognized landmark and signature greenscape. Along with the lands around it, the hill is an important part of a potential greenway that would connect with the major Lochside and Galloping Goose trail network. Most importantly, however, the nature sanctuary at the top of the hill has been recognized as an ecologically significant Garry oak meadow, one of the most rare and threatened native plant communities in Canada. Unfortunately, most of the lands surrounding the sanctuary are in private hands and are currently being developed or are under extreme pressure for development.

The acquisition of the four lots will expand the size of the sanctuary, create a larger contiguous area, and provide as much "buffer" area as possible. The larger the area protected, the greater the likelihood that the sanctuary and

the rare habitat it contains will remain viable in the long term. Although acquisition of the four lots is a major step forward, and

Christmas Hill has been recognized as an ecologically significant Garry Oak Meadow.

helps accomplish the original 1975 vision for the sanctuary, more remains to be done and time is of the essence. All contributions to this important project are most welcome.



Chocolate lilies often grace Garry oak meadows

TLC FILES, PHOTO

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than 99% of the old growth coastal Douglas-fir forest, Garry oak meadows, and open woodlands originally found in this area have been lost to logging and development. The forests in the Sooke Hills represent some of the last remnants of original Douglas-fir forest and open woodland ecosystem left in the entire region.

These wild forests are critical habitat and wildlife corridors for animals like Roosevelt elk, black bear, cougar and wolves. The land is home to intact meadow areas with rich wildflower communities including many rare and threatened plants.

Several bird and animal species deemed as rare or at risk by the B.C. Con-

servation Data Centre rely on the Sooke Hills for habitat, including the western screech-owl, northern pygmy owl, northern goshawk, marbled murrelet, and the Pacific water shrew. Populations of wild coho and chum salmon spawn and rear in the creeks and rivers.

Besides providing a home for Vancouver Island's native plants, animals, fish, and birds, the area also contributes to the Island's high quality of life. This is a critical feature for attracting new, non-industrial, high-tech and eco-tourism businesses to the area. The Sooke Hills also provides a natural urban containment boundary that will help curb random urban sprawl. Such

a boundary may prove crucial to maintaining southern Vancouver Island's beautiful landscapes as more and more people move to the area.

For more information on this project and to learn how you can help, please contact TLC at (250) 479-8053.

On January 17, 2001 CRD directors voted unanimously to contribute \$3 million in partnership funding to help TLC save the Sooke Hills. The remaining \$2 million is being provided by the federal government, a decision made on February 16, 2001. These two funding commitments have made the Sea to Sea Greenbelt a reality.

ical of the 1860s featuring roses, shamrocks and fleur de lis, and found that the original ceiling colours were intact.

The campaign to protect a significant portion of Saltspring Island began in 2000 with over \$800,000 in pledges and donations raised by the end of the year. TLC has been working with the Saltspring Island Appeal Committee, a group dedicated to raising funds to purchase and protect lands currently owned by Texada Logging Corporation. These lands support a diverse natural environment with rocky arbutus bluffs, cedar wetlands, Garry oak meadows and 18 kilometres of undeveloped coastline. Over 5,000 acres (approximately 10% of Saltspring Island) are threatened with development, including parts of Mount Tuam, Mount Maxwell, Fulford Valley and both shores of Burgoyne Bay. Ninety per cent of these lands contain rare or endan-

Much of TLC's work to protect wildlife habitat and places of historical or cultural importance involves partnerships.

gered ecosystems. However, we are continuing to work hard to find a way to save these lands. In January 2001, a 32-hectare parcel of Garry oak woodland, next to the Mt. Maxwell reserve, was protected with a purchase by Forest Renewal BC. TLC continues to work hard to find a way to save additional Saltspring Island lands.

Much of TLC's work to protect wildlife



TLC FILES PHOTO

TLC Executive Director (Volunteer), Bill Turner, touring the protected forest of the Nanaimo River

habitat and places of historical or cultural importance involves partnerships. The past year has seen TLC form many new partnerships with various levels of government. As a charitable organization, our role in these partnerships is vital because we are able to respond quickly to purchase sensitive or threatened habitats. TLC also works in partnership with land trusts through technical assistance for acquisitions and ensuring protection of land in perpetuity.

At the local government level, TLC is working with the city of Victoria to protect lands along the Gorge waterway and with the municipality of Saanich to purchase lands on Christmas Hill (see page 9). TLC continues to assist the city of Esquimalt and the district of Highlands with land acquisitions and conservation covenants in their respective jurisdictions.

At the regional level, TLC's work in 1999 to purchase Matthews Point on Galiano Island resulted in the creation of Galiano's first CRD Park. As well, properties purchased by TLC along the Galloping Goose trail in Victoria and adjacent to Ayum Creek in Sooke have resulted in more parkland for the CRD. TLC now holds conservation covenants on these properties, thus ensuring their protection for future generations. Also on Vancouver Island, the Regional District of Nanaimo contributed significantly to a TLC acquisition along the Nanaimo River. Through the District's signing of a 99-year lease, a 140-acre parcel has now become a regional park.

At the provincial level, TLC has partnered with various ministries, including the Ministry of Environment Lands and Parks and the Ministry of Small Business, Tourism and Culture. TLC provided technical and financial assistance to BC Parks to help them acquire lands along the Cowichan River, south of Duncan. In another ministry partnership, the Ministry of Small Business, Tourism and Culture made a generous contribution to the purchase of the Ross Bay Villa.

MEMORIAL GIFTS

To remember a loved one, please suggest that friends and relatives make a contribution to The Land Conservancy of BC. Their support will help to create a lasting legacy through the protection of endangered places in British Columbia.

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In the spring of 2000, the Federal Minister of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), Herb Dhaliwal, visited our Nanaimo River properties. Along with much-needed public and regional support, DFO contributed the \$375,000 required to finalize this million-dollar acquisition. The protection of this land along the Nanaimo River ensures the conservation of sensitive fish habitat for the many species of salmon and trout that depend on it for survival.

The demand continues to grow for conservation covenants within the Vancouver Island and Lower Mainland regions (see page 7). To date, TLC monitors over 45 conservation covenants within the coastal region. Through this work, the Conservancy has developed positive rela-

The enthusiasm of many volunteers has helped enormously.

tionships with landowners, increased environmental education and worked closely with other land trusts. Conservation covenants allow TLC not only to protect land for preservation, but also to protect and promote sustainable resource use. For example, TLC holds a covenant with the Quadra Island Conservancy on Linnaea Farm on Cortes Island, an organic farm and education site. TLC has also signed covenants on Galiano, Lasqueti and Salt-spring Island, as well as in Whistler and Abbotsford. Several new covenants protecting riparian areas and Garry oak ecosystems will also be signed in 2001.

As a province-wide organization, TLC relies heavily on local community groups and conservation organizations to achieve protection of biodiversity. Their knowledge and support has been invaluable in helping TLC achieve the protection of all the pro-



TLC volunteers working in the Abkhazi Garden

GERALDINE PEET, PHOTO

jects listed in this article, and dozens of others, including those happening in BC's Interior (see pages 4, 5, and 13). Finally, we cannot overstate the important role that volunteers have played in our organization. The enthusiasm of volunteers has helped enormously in many different tasks, from

fundraising for Wildwood to removing the blackberry bushes of South Winchelsea Island to serving tea at the Abkhazi Garden. The many partnerships forged since TLC's inception will allow our land protection goals to continue to be met well into the next century and beyond. ☺

PRIVATE ISLAND GETAWAY

Enjoy beautiful sunsets and abundant wildlife when staying at TLC's rental cabin on South Winchelsea Island, near Nanaimo. The island was purchased by TLC in 1998 and is now being managed as an excellent example of the rare Garry oak ecosystem. To help maintain the island and make mortgage payments, TLC is renting the cabin. You are welcome to bring up to six people. There is wood stove heating, solar powered lights, pressurized hot water and a full kitchen. Transportation is included. Please visit our website for details and current rates (www.conservancy.bc.ca) or phone Clint Abbott at (250) 812-0645.



By Karen Ageson and Tamsin Baker

of the long-term planning process. One of the most precious developments, however, has been the growth of generosity. We as stewards can take real pride in knowing that we are making a tangible difference in conserving some of the best of our past and present for those in the future.

Fundraising continues – it must, lest all be lost. A large financial debt remains to be repaid and we must have continued, new and growing financial support. That remains one of the great long-term challenges.

When visitors stand on the stone terrace overlooking the Abkhazi garden, their gaze takes in the garden journey they have just experienced. As they look beyond the landscape they also see the urban forest of Garry oak that shelters Victoria's older neighbourhoods. Beyond that they see the long blue undulating line of the Sooke Hills that provides not only life-giving water for the city, but also a protective greenbelt of inestimable value for the very quality of life for all who live and visit here. It is heartening that TLC is here to conserve and guide, but it falls to all of us to enable the stewardship and conservation of this heritage to become a permanent part of our future. 🌱

CONDOS FOR NATURE?

It's true – even a donation of a condominium in Vancouver could help preserve biodiversity in B.C. The Land Conservancy uses donations of land, residences, and even timeshares as 'trade lands.' These properties function as an investment, and TLC sells them at key moments to help fund our protection projects.

When The Land Conservancy of BC (TLC) decided to help with a creek rehabilitation project in North Surrey, the first objective was to re-establish access to traditional coho and cutthroat habitat. Subsequently, the second objective was to demonstrate how landowners, land trusts, businesses and government can work together to enhance fish and wildlife habitat.

These two objectives are well on their way to being met. TLC is working closely with two landowners, one of which is a business, to help oversee the rehabilitation of Centre Creek. Once funding and final DFO approval is obtained, the construction of a channel will provide the coho of Centre Creek with crucial spawning and over-wintering habitat. TLC will then become the owner of a 12-acre urban park. Protection will be ensured by a conservation covenant.

Stewardship is the act of taking responsibility for the well-being of the environment and acting to restore or protect that well-being.

Upon further inspection of the surrounding neighbourhood, TLC realized that there were no local community groups that could help look after the creek and surrounding forest. Because of the many benefits that such a group could have in terms of habitat protection and education, another objective became to create a community-based stewardship group.

Stewardship is the act of taking responsibility for the well-being of the environment and acting to restore or protect that well-being. The need for community-based stewardship groups is very strong. Government organizations are limited in what they can accomplish, but small groups can be more adaptive, innovative and can voice exactly what the environ-

mental needs of their community are. These groups not only help to stop loss of habitat and biodiversity, but also promote community spirit, cooperation, and sustainability issues. Some sample activities include partnerships in community planning, labeling of drains that lead to streams, mapping creeks, bird counts, surveillance of polluting activities, and tree planting. Community members expressing concerns with one united voice are much more likely to have their concerns heard and addressed.

The need for such a group in North Surrey immediately became apparent with the first few enthusiastic community meetings. North Surrey is in the unique situation of having an outside organization provide staff to precipitate the initial beginnings of a stewardship group, as opposed to depending strictly on eager local volunteers. This group, now named the Fraser Heights Stewardship Society, will be run by locals who will be a voice not only for Centre Creek, but for the entire neighbourhood.

If you are interested in starting up a community-level stewardship group in your neighbourhood, here are some tips to get you started.

Step 1: Find interested individuals. Postering, word of mouth, contacting existing groups in the area; these are all ways to let people know about your first meeting. The goal is to involve people who have a deep-seated commitment to the area.

Step 2: Define your issues. People come to community stewardship meetings for different reasons, which fortunately brings much variety to the discussion. This helps to inform people about what is going on in their own community and to bring to light those issues that may mobilize the most unlikely participants. The outcome is to find several people impassioned about the same issue at which point you can form a group with a common goal.

Step 3: Determine group dynamics. ▶

PROTECTING CANADA'S NATIONAL TREASURE

By Nichola Walkden

BC's South Okanagan is an area that is unique to Canada, strikingly beautiful, precious for its species diversity, revered for its fragility and a desirable place to call home. This region emerged from the last ice age filled with fertile soils and remnant lakes. The valley is a natural wildlife corridor for species since it connects BC's dry grasslands to the west-ern American deserts.

This is one of the fastest growing areas in BC – and by far the most endangered. It is more than one ecosystem, one area or one species that is of concern. There seems to be pressure on every facet – the desert,

BC's South Okanagan is one of the fastest growing areas in BC – and by far the most endangered.

the grasslands, the riparian areas, areas of anthropological interest, and species of plants, insects, birds, amphibians and mammals who are only found in this one small region.

TLC is now chairing the Stewardship arm of the South Okanagan Similkameen

Conservation Partnership (SOSCP), which has brought a surge of energy to our work. In the next year we will be working on GIS mapping of conservation and stewardship properties, forming steering committees to guide work in landowner contact, habitat protection, restoration and enhancements, and continue to work on conservation agreements with landowners.

We have initiated a landowner contact program created to work specifically with agriculturists. It was created as an offshoot of the Biodiversity Friendly Beef program, and quickly grew into an important project in and of itself. We have started meeting with Organic Growers Associations and farm groups to help define a concept and label that would allow us to recognize the enormous contributions of agriculturists to conservation and stewardship in BC. The South Okanagan is one of the largest organic production areas in North America. These landowners who produce much of our organic food, are also often deeply tied to the land and inti-



A Mariposa lily blooms in the South Okanagan

KATHRYN MARTELL PHOTO

mately understand the importance of protecting species and spaces.

Special recognition should be given to the people and partnerships that have supported and advanced our efforts. Many of our current projects have been referred to us through South Okanagan Similkameen (SOS) Stewardship and the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks. In the past year, we have signed on to SOSCP along with 23 other interest groups and agencies in a united effort for conservation and stewardship. For more information about TLC's South Okanagan activities call the Penticton office at (250) 492-0173. 🌱

Continued from previous page

Once a group with a common goal has been established, determining the way a group is going to function is an important step. The Fraser Heights Stewardship Society is at this stage. At their second meeting the group christened itself with its all-purpose name, Fraser Heights being the name of their residential community, and a goal was identified: to ensure that future development in the area will not negatively impact fish and wildlife habitat. They hope to participate in Streamkeepers training and to advocate stream restoration and conservation. In future meetings a course of action will be chosen and tasks delegated, Steps 4 and 5 respectively.

The formation of a community-based

stewardship group will ensure that the work started by TLC will be sustained in the future. Empowering communities to take ownership of their own backyard is an effective means of ensuring the health and preservation of BC's ecosystems.

For more information, consult *Community Stewardship: a Guide to Establishing Your Own Group*, part of the "Stewardship Series." Contact the Fraser Management Program or TLC's Vancouver office at (604) 733-2313. 🌱

ECOLOGICAL GIFTS

You can receive tax credit for donating ecologically sensitive private land and covenants to TLC. As recently as October 2000, the federal government has made improvements to the tax rules that surround donations of ecologically significant land. You may now use your donation receipt to exempt up to 100% of your income from income tax (previously up to 20%). Your capital gains tax has been reduced from 75% to 25% of the gain. For more information please contact TLC.

TLC'S MARINE WORKHORSE

By Clint Abbott

In February 2000, The Land Conservancy of BC (TLC) decided it was time to purchase a marine vessel. TLC is involved with several marine projects, of which South Winchelsea Island is the best example. The Island is regularly maintained by volunteer work crews and staff and is only accessible by private or chartered boat.

In early March 2000, we found a vessel that suited our requirements – the MV 'Hamish I.' The Hamish I was locally constructed out of welded aluminum and worked as a commercial crabbing boat in its previous life. Upon the completion of the purchase, we dry-docked the Hamish I and spent the next three weeks cleaning, re-wiring, fabricating, painting, and installing new equipment in order to convert it to a water-taxi and cargo boat. We would like to thank volunteer Keith Abbott for the many hours spent fabricating and welding aluminum, creating interior seats and generally helping during the rainy month of March.

Before the end of March 2000, the Hamish I was back in the water and on its first trip to Vancouver as TLC's "Warden Vessel". The trip turned out to be a true test of the boat's sea-worthiness as a gale devel-

oped in the Strait of Georgia. Hamish I proved to be very capable and safe, although its captain was a little wet! In the past eleven months, Hamish I has made over 90 return trips to South Winchelsea Island and three trips to Vancouver.

All boats require continuous maintenance, repairs, and money. By comparing

By comparing the amount of use in the past nine months to the charter rates we used to pay, we have already saved over \$9,000.

the amount of use in the past eleven months to the charter rates we used to pay, we have already saved over \$9000. Although we have performed many upgrades and improvements on the vessel, we still have more work to do. In the spring of 2001, we hope to be able to use the boat for fundraising tours of our projects, as well as for our regular monitoring and property maintenance. We have plans for exterior seating and mechanical upgrades, but this will not be possible without your support. We would greatly appreciate donations towards the Hamish I. All donations are tax-deductible.

A final note: The name 'Hamish I' was given to the vessel by its original owners. Marine folklore alludes that it is bad luck to change the name of a boat. Since TLC wants all the luck possible, we opted to keep the name. 🍀



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The Hamish I docks at South Winchelsea Island

THANK YOU

Thank you from everyone at TLC to the following, for the contribution you have made toward protecting endangered spaces.



SUPPORTING THE LAND CONSERVANCY OF B.C.

YES, I WANT TO PROTECT ENDANGERED SPACES

I'd like to become a member of TLC – The Land Conservancy of B.C.

Name: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ Prov: _____

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Please make cheques out to TLC—The Land Conservancy of B.C. TLC is a registered charity, #88902 8338 RR0001.

ALL DONATIONS ARE TAX-DEDUCTIBLE.

Thank you very much for your support!

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VISA Mastercard Number: _____ Expiry Date: _____

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Signature: _____

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Green Gift Catalogue

Give B.C. a little TLC. Call our Victoria office or visit our website to view our latest catalogue of TLC gifts. Exciting offers include sponsor certificates and adopt-an-acre certificates, where your donation goes directly towards protecting or maintaining the project of your choice. Buy organic chocolate bars, quality TLC clothing, beautiful Abkhazi garden greeting cards and more! Check it out at www.conservancy.bc.ca.



SARAH WEBER, PHOTO



Exploring Wildwood, a world-famous ecoforestry site near Nanaimo that the Ecoforestry Institute and TLC are working to protect.



The mission of TLC is to protect plants, animals and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on Earth, by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive. TLC also protects areas of scientific, historical, cultural, scenic or compatible recreational value.

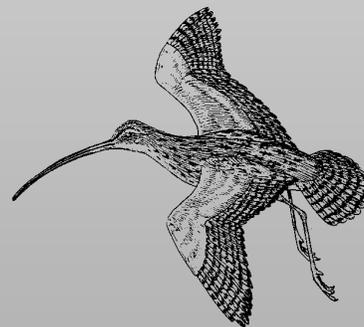
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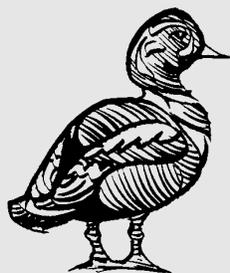
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THE HARLEQUIN DUCK



The Harlequin Duck is the symbol of the Land Conservancy of British Columbia.

The Harlequin ranges throughout BC, from rocky coastal shores and islets to turbulent inland mountain creeks and calm lakes. A vulnerable species, the Harlequin population is endangered due to habitat loss and degradation.

When challenged by boulders and swift spillways the Harlequin will clamber over them, tuck into eddies, dive deep and swim through the current. The plucky Harlequin is an inspiration for us to persevere in overcoming our obstacles.

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