

Wildlife Corridor Protected

On behalf of TLC's Board and staff, I am pleased to announce the permanent protection of the Clearwater Ancient Swamp and Wildlife Corridor in the Clearwater River Valley. The 28 acre wildlife corridor provides a safe migratory route for countless deer, moose, cougar, bobcat, grizzly (federally listed as Special Concern under Canada's *Species at Risk Act*), black bear, wolves, coyotes, and their offspring.

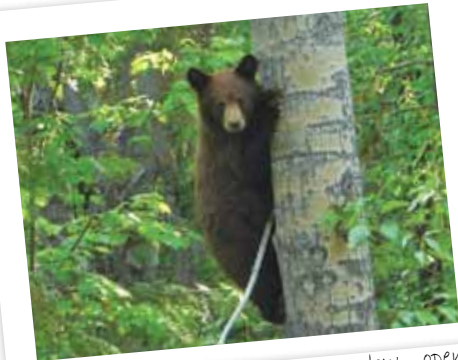
Launched in April 2019, the acquisition campaign raised more than \$99,000 to protect the Ancient Swamp and Wildlife Corridor. This acquisition was made possible by individual TLC members, donors, and a federal grant from the Natural Heritage Conservation Program, part of Canada's Nature Fund. Additionally, an endowment fund of \$16,000 has been established with the Victoria Foundation for the long-term stewardship of the lands.

Contiguous to the south of TLC's existing 113 acres of wetlands and wildlife corridor in the area, the Clearwater Ancient Swamp and Wildlife Corridor will remain a site for wildlife refuge and naturalist education.

In this edition of the LANDmark, you will read about how your support is making restoration, long-term protection, and conservation education possible. In addition, TLC's 2020 Passport to Nature is available for more ways you can get involved and visit the breathtaking sites you are helping to protect every day. You can register for all of our events online at www.conservancy.bc.ca or by calling TLC.

In February TLC's Board of Directors approved a Strategic Plan to guide the organization for the next three fiscal years. You can view the document in its entirety on our website or reach out for a physical copy. I look forward to accomplishing our collective conservation goals together.

Cathy Armstrong
Executive Director



TLC's contiguous marsh, meadow, open water, and forest ecosystems provide safe migratory routes for species including black and grizzly bears. Photo Jason Hollinger



TLC's Karen Iwachow at the newly protected ancient swamp. In total, TLC protects 142 acres of wetlands and wildlife corridors in the Clearwater River Valley. Photo Cathy Armstrong

Restoration Work at Fort Shepherd Conservancy Area

Nestled in the Lower Columbia Basin valley, hugging the Columbia River to the east and a mountain ridge to the west, sits TLC's Fort Shepherd Conservancy Area. A 2,200 acre wildlife refuge for 29 rare and endangered species, Fort Shepherd is home to the last free-flowing stretch of the Columbia River; the largest intact area of very dry, warm interior Cedar Hemlock ecosystem; and features dynamic grasslands, dry forests, rocky slopes, creeks, and caves.

My first visit to Fort Shepherd was last summer on a spectacularly hot day in the valley. Each step I took on the sandy service road exploded with dust. I was careful where I walked since the road was littered with animal tracks; everything from

coyote, elk, deer, bear, chipmunk, otter, and turkey prints were scattered about. As we brushed past the air was filled with the spicy cinnamon scent of ceanothus, a shrub with tiny white clusters of flowers. The sky so piercingly blue that I truly felt like I had entered a sanctuary.

We met with Trail Wildlife Association (TWA) volunteers Al Mallette and Rob Frew, both of whom have an immense amount of knowledge of Fort Shepherd Conservancy Area and have been stewarding the land for decades. Al and Rob showed me the remnant tire marks in the sandy shores of the Columbia River which now have more bird prints than tire. We walked the trail to the cairn which marks the Hudson's Bay Company's

historic Fort Shepherd site, smelling the sweet vanilla scent of ponderosa pines and passing under woodpecker nesting boxes hung high in the trees. We climbed the benches and looked over the valley like turkey vultures. We learned about the long history of Fort Shepherd, the connections with the Sinixt peoples, the European colonists, and the influences of the smelter upstream; I developed an appreciation for how unique and special Fort Shepherd is. I could not have expected a better introduction to a place than the natural history that Al and Rob shared; they possess a deep-rooted compassion and care for the land.

Fort Shepherd is on the mend from previous destructive off-road vehicle

use. As land owners, TLC is shifting our focus to stewarding the land in the face of climate uncertainty so that both plants and animal species can thrive. Considering the uniqueness of Fort Shepherd Conservancy Area, it provides significant opportunities for research and education. This direction will be led by a refresh of the Fort Shepherd Management Plan to help focus our efforts on the most critical work.

In 2019, Fort Shepherd saw a flurry of work to encourage the rehabilitation of the beautiful habitats found on the lower benches. Local partners TWA, Okanagan Nation Alliance, Indigenous Guardians, and B.C.'s Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations & Rural Development Contracts (FLNRORD),

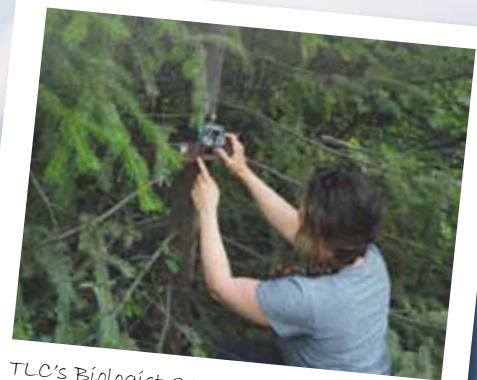
with funding provided by the Columbia Basin Trust and the Environmental Damages Fund, spent the summer and fall creating forty additional wildlife trees and a dozen nesting boxes to attract wood ducks, mergansers, and Lewis's woodpeckers. Seeds collected by hand by Valerie Huff with the Kootenay Native Plant Society, including milkweed for the endangered western monarch butterfly, were sewn to help create opportunities for pollinators.

Fort Shepherd has been closed to the public since 2016. In the few short years since, we have observed the site's slow recovery from the damages left behind from off-road vehicle use. To aide the recovery of these sensitive habitats, Fort Shepherd will remain closed to motor

vehicle access, however, hiking, equestrian, and fishing opportunities are anticipated to begin June 1. Join TLC Saturday, May 9, for Critter Day at Beaver Creek Provincial Park to learn more. ■

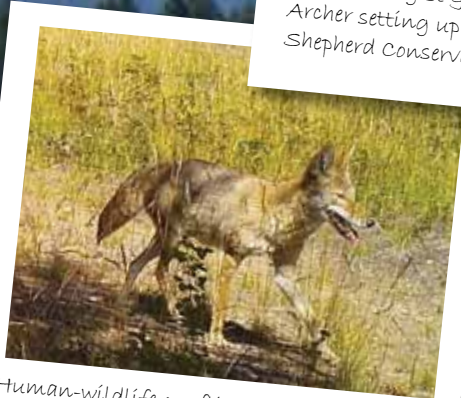


Karen Iwachow, TLC's Environmental Technician & Land Manager, has worked for TLC since 2017.



TLC's Biologist & Land Manager Torrey Archer setting up a wildlife camera at Fort Shepherd Conservancy Area last summer.

Photo Karen Iwachow



Human-wildlife conflicts are reduced when wildlife is given refuge. Fort Shepherd provides 2,200 acres of refuge away from Trail's urban center.

Photo from TLC's wildlife camera



Black bear, including mothers with cubs, have been spotted in the Conservancy Area. The varied habitat makes it ideal for species like black bear.

Photo from TLC's wildlife camera

TLC's wildlife camera at Fort Shepherd Conservancy Area has documented many wild visitors including black bear, chipmunk, coyote, deer, elk, and turkey. Learn more about these creatures at Critter Day on Saturday, May 9. Landscape photo credit Karen Iwachow.

Deertrails Naturalist Program to include Cortes Island in 2020

With the success of the 2019 inaugural session of TLC's Deertrails Naturalist Program in Clearwater, we have expanded our programming to include two sessions in 2020 and will explore the beauty and brilliance of Cortes Island and the Clearwater River Valley.

From April 27 to May 3, 2020, participants will explore Cortes Island – the meeting place of tidal waters, biogeoclimatic zones, and cultural territories – through a series of naturalist-led walks and talks. Students will walk island shorelines, swim in bracingly cold waters, explore a tapestry of sensitive ecosystems, and search for northern goshawk plucking posts. Students will learn about and deepen their connection to the natural world with seasoned naturalists and artists Briony Penn, Ann Mortifee, Rex Weyler, and Sabina Leader Mense.

Linnaea Farm, a 314 acre organic farm covenanted and protected by TLC and Quadra Island Conservancy and Stewardship Society, will be the centrepiece for our programming as accommodations and meals will be provided by the farm. As the farm is used for research, development, and teaching of land stewardship, in addition to food production, students will have access to Linnaea Farm's ECOLab and the Cortes Wild! Natural History Centre.

TLC's second Deertrails Naturalist Program session will take place August 30



Linnaea Farm provides a diversity of landscapes for participants to explore as well as access to a network of covenants TLC protects across Cortes Island. Photo Linnaea Farm

to September 6 and will once again feature TLC's Clearwater Wetlands and Wildlife corridors. Expert naturalists will include Maleea Acker, Lyn Baldwin, Trevor Goward, and Nancy Turner.

Thanks to endowment funds with the Victoria Foundation, bursaries are available to ensure all applicants have the opportunity to learn from world-renowned experts. For more details please visit TLC's website www.conservancy.bc.ca.



Dianna Stenberg is TLC's Deputy Executive Director. Get in touch with Dianna about the Deertrails Naturalist Program at (250) 479-8053 or dstenberg@conservancy.bc.ca.

TLC is honoured to be the recipient of donations in memory of:

Greg Adams, Gordon Alexander, Audrey (Shortill) Baines, Robert Clayton, Robin W. Edwards, David I. Kreller, John Kurta, Alan Littler, Fred Shambrook & Bill Spriggs
To remember your loved one with a special gift call 1-877-485-2422

Board of Directors

Mel Lehan ■ Lori Roter ■ Fran Sloan Sainas ■ Marika Smith
 Andrew Stewart ■ Jeff Ward ■ Tom Watson ■ Sara Wickham



The Passport to Nature was created with you in mind – those who want to explore the wild outdoors, experience new things & meet like-minded people. To make the most of your Passport, here are five steps to plan your next adventure & get involved in the work of TLC.

- 1 **PLAN** your next adventure. Read the Passport to Nature booklet - available online and in print - for event information. 
- 2 **REGISTER** online asap. Directions are found in your email confirmation. 
- 3 **ATTEND!** Don't forget a water bottle and good shoes. 
- 4 **SHARE** your experience with friends and include the hashtag #PassportToNature in your social media updates. 
- 5 **SIGN UP** as a Member to get more involved with The Land Conservancy of British Columbia.