

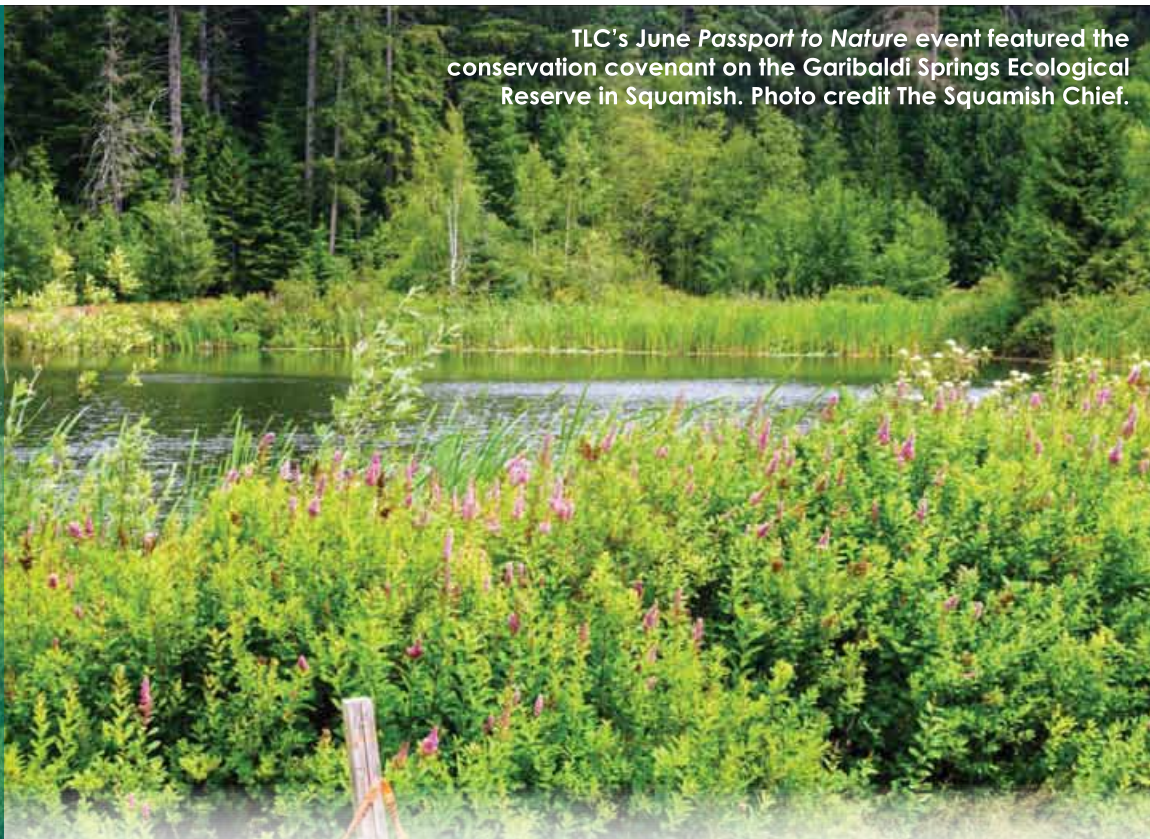
Fall 2023

LANDmark



TLC
The Land Conservancy
of British Columbia

TLC's June *Passport to Nature* event featured the conservation covenant on the Garibaldi Springs Ecological Reserve in Squamish. Photo credit The Squamish Chief.



This summer TLC's Board of Directors shared news of Executive Director Cathy Armstrong's retirement and my subsequent appointment to the position. Having worked for TLC for more than 15 years, I was honoured to be named as the non-profit's next leader; I am passionate about B.C.'s natural beauty and working with land trust supporters to protect critical biodiversity. If you've been supporting our conservation efforts in recent years, you have likely read communications I've prepared. From the Clearwater River Valley to the Millstream Creek Watershed, I have had the privilege of working on campaigns to protect some of TLC's most incredible habitats and ecosystems.

Today, I'm pleased to share news of our latest project: the Sandy Beach Nature Reserve. A new conservation area on Keats Island, Sandy Beach is now protected by a conservation covenant co-held by TLC and the Sunshine Coast Conservation Association. This 3.55-hectare (8.77-acre) area on the island's northwest coast – the traditional territory of the Skwxwú7mesh Nation – protects and expands critical habitat for a variety of species-at-risk including great blue heron (*Ardea herodias*

fannini) and double-crested cormorant (*Phalacrocorax auritus*). Our partners in conserving this waterfront forest are the title holders, Islands Trust Conservancy. You can read all about Sandy Beach Nature Reserve on Page 4 of this newsletter.

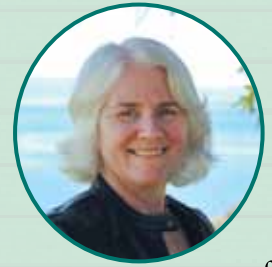
In this edition of the LANDmark you will also read articles from our team featuring the 264 species documented at TLC's Millstream Creek Watershed property, two recent *Deertrails Naturalist Program* sessions, 2023 *Passport to Nature* events, a farewell from Cathy Armstrong, and more.

This fall and winter TLC's board, staff, and volunteers will be drafting a Strategic Plan to guide the organization over the next five years. We plan to bring a framework to TLC supporters in early 2023 and would appreciate your feedback. I look forward to seeing what our conservation community will accomplish together in this next chapter.



Dianna Stenberg
Dianna Stenberg
Executive Director

A Fond Farewell from Cathy Armstrong



I joined TLC in May 2014, walking into an atmosphere of upheaval and uncertainty. It took until 2017 to finalize the *Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act* (CCAA) restructuring process and eliminate \$8 million in debt. Land trusts across Canada were watching, and a poor outcome would have had a huge impact on donor confidence. I am grateful to the many supporters and partners who stepped up, and the relationships built during this difficult time allowed TLC to emerge stronger than ever.

I am thankful for our hard working Board, and a staff team that go above and beyond every single day. Highlights include:

- Completing an acquisition process that protects two wildlife corridors and a wetland in the Clearwater Valley;
- Establishing the *Deertrails Naturalist Program*;
- Protecting 27 acres of Coastal Douglas-fir forest in the Millstream Creek watershed;
- Registering eight new conservation covenants protecting 113 hectares;
- Establishing the *Passport to Nature Program*;
- Acquiring SISÇENEM (Halibut Island) in the Salish Sea to transfer to the WSÁNEĆ peoples as an act of Reconciliation;
- Establishing the Abkhazi Advisory Board at Abkhazi Garden;
- Gratefully receiving bequests that total more than \$11 million;
- Establishing new financial policies and procedures, and creating an

operating reserve fund; Modernizing our database management and accounting software for improved security and efficiency; and Partnering with the Salt Spring Island Conservancy to protect 24 acres of rare coastal temperate rainforest at Creekside Rainforest.

Climate change, Reconciliation, and legacy planning have been dominant themes throughout my tenure with TLC. As temperatures rise, flora and fauna have to adapt and move. Fear of the future impacts our daily lives; as land ownership becomes unattainable for so many, the protection of greenspace for public access and animal habitats becomes increasingly important.

Heightened awareness of Indigenous rights has brought a focus on inequities, and the need to increase access to natural areas for Indigenous education, ceremony, and harvesting factors into our conservation efforts.

Currently, the boomer generation holds much of the private land wealth, and conservation through legacy planning is a large part of the weekly conversations in our office. Assisting landowners to protect their lands for future generations has been an honour and privilege.

It has been immensely gratifying to work with conservation minded individuals to address these issues. Though my time as Executive Director is coming to a close, I look forward to contributing to TLC's critical work as a supporter. I have made many great friends and I hope our trails meet again! ■



Deertrails participant and Cortes local, Kai, reflects on growing up alongside the Children's Forest.



Participant Maya observing from afar at the 2023 Deertrails Naturalist Program session in the Clearwater valley.



Deertrails participants Nadya and Mackenzie in front of a 3m wide fir tree during TLC's Cortes Island session.



TLC's retiring Executive Director Cathy Armstrong canoeing at the Clearwater Wetlands during Deertrails.



First offered in Clearwater in 2019, the Deertrails Naturalist Program is a hands-on, five-day educational workshop that has reached young adults and seniors alike from diverse communities across B.C. Thanks to gracious hosts at Linnaea Farm and exquisite curriculum curation by biologist and instructor Sabina Leader-Mense, 2023 marks an exciting, new expansion of the program to Cortes Island. This was my first time attending Deertrails, and while my memories exceed the confines of this page, I hope to share a few highlights that reflect what make this program so special.

Birding in Clearwater: Huddled together in silence, we hold our breath, straining to hear signs of life above the brittle birch boughs in the frosty, dawn air. "Up there!" points Nancy Flood, Deertrails instructor and avid ornithologist. Binoculars spy a brown ball, crouching on a mid-canopy twig. He chitters, and flashes his vibrant, red crest. With a straight face, Nancy translates: "That ruby-crowned Kinglet is shouting 'I'm a STUD! Mate with me!'" The sacred silence of birdwatching is broken by an eruption of laughter from all of us.

Amphibian Rescue: The time of the great migration has arrived. Long-toed salamanders and Western toads line the

edge of Clearwater Valley Road, anxious to cross to the promised (wet)land that is our classroom. Stiff, flattened travellers tragically mark the peril of this journey under the new moon. With instructors Maleea Acker and Briony Penn in the lead, we squint for stranded individuals by flashlight. Rescuers grin ear-to-ear as we rush to save every amphibian. Our joy resonates well into the following morning: It's all anyone can talk about.

Children's Forest on Cortes Island: Deertrails participant and Cortes local, Kai, reflects on the power and privilege of growing up alongside the Children's Forest. It is a forest that islanders have fought to protect for years; an effort that Kai has now joined as an adult. Among the towering Sitka spruce, her memories spark a greater conversation: how can we engage more people in land protection when they are becoming increasingly disconnected from nature? The topic elicits a flurry of emotions: grief from parents whose children no longer have access to greenspace, frustration from young adults who desire to participate in conservation initiatives but can't afford basic living expenses, and hope from witnesses of grassroots activism. The moss-covered forest sponges our exchange in thoughtful tranquillity.

Goodbyes: My memories of the week perform a scattered dance, much like the sunrays rippling off water in the Whaletown terminal. We have bathed in Cortes' forests, lakes, and ocean; ID'd countless local species; crafted nature-inspired artwork; and shared meals, debates, struggles, and aspirations. I can't believe we were all strangers before this week. I think to myself how so much of our conservation work lies invisible – unfunded and unacknowledged – because it involves creating community. We NEED gathering opportunities like Deertrails. The ferry horn blasts, announcing our imminent departure. I feel the lingering warmth of gratitude for our shared experiences clinging to the salty air as our conservation-minded cohort is released to the world.

You can help grow our conservation community by contributing to the Briony Penn Endowment Fund to support bursaries for Deertrails participants in need of financial aid. For details visit www.conservancy.bc.ca/endowment. ■

Author Emily Francis, TLC's Communication Coordinator, has a background in environmental science. Photo above: Sabina Leader-Mense shares springboard scars at the Children's Forest.

Sandy Beach Nature Reserve, TLC's latest conservation covenant on Keats Island, is protected in partnership with Sunshine Coast Conservation Association and Islands Trust Conservancy. Photo credit Joshua Berson and Wayne Kaulbach.



By Torrey Archer Anderson
Biologist & Land Manager

Walking through the serene forest on an old trail, you suddenly burst out of the dimly lit verdant landscape into a bright ocean scene. Clambering over layers of driftwood piled up at the beach edge, you make your way to the sandy surf and smile knowing this small but important piece of nature is protected in perpetuity. TLC joyfully presents our newest covenant: Sandy Beach Nature Reserve (SBNR).

Although registered just this year, discussions began in 2015 between TLC, Sunshine Coast Conservation Association (SCCA), and Islands Trust Conservancy (ITC) who own the land, to covenant the 3.55 ha (8.77 ac) property located on Keats Island. The protected area includes about 0.4 ha of

coastal bluff, 3.1 ha of closed-canopy conifer forest, and has approximately 353m of waterfront.

Keats Island is within the lands and waters of the Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation) and is the homeland and gathering place of many Coast Salish Peoples. Keats Island is a place of cultural importance, with significant village sites and archeological areas.

Previously owned by the Convention of Baptist Churches of B.C., and known as Keats Camps, the Church donated a portion of their lands to ITC as a Nature Reserve. This project has been in the works for an extremely long time; the Sandy Beach transfer was included in a 1978 land use contract. The lands had been identified to be protected as part of a rezoning process with ITC and the donation was intended to secure

protection of the ecosystems of the shoreline and the uplands for future generations of Keats Islanders and others who visit the Island every year.

SBNR is found in the Eastern Very Dry Maritime Coastal Western Hemlock Biogeoclimatic subzone (CWHxm1) and contains several red- and blue-listed ecological communities, as well as providing habitat for species at risk. Found adjacent to the CDFmm subzone, the CWHxm1 subzone has been similarly rapidly developed. As reported by the Coastal Douglas-fir Conservation Partnership, 32% of the CWHxm1 is occupied by human-dominated land cover. This makes it more important than ever to conserve these sensitive lands.

Four provincially at-risk ecological communities and several Sensitive Ecosystems occur in SBNR, a

high diversity given its size. This community diversity also provides a high biodiversity of plant species, from those restricted to dry, nutrient poor soils of the coastal bluffs with their high ecological sensitivity, to ones requiring rich, moist soils on the eastern slopes of the lush mature second growth forest dominated by Douglas-fir, Western redcedar and Western hemlock with a few bigleaf maples scattered in for good measure. Salmonberry and red huckleberry provide shrub habitat while sword fern, salal, thimbleberry and dull Oregon grape fill in the rest.

SBNR also has a significant number of old growth trees that pre-date Euro-Canadian colonization and escaped the ensuing lumber resource extraction of the early 1900's. There is suitable habitat for numerous wildlife species-at-risk and two were observed

during baseline studies: great blue heron, fannini subspecies (*Ardea herodias fannini*) and double-crested cormorant (*Phalacrocorax auritus*). ITC has also mapped suitable forage fish spawning habitat along the beach for surf smelt (*Hypomesus pretiosus*) and Pacific sand lance (*Ammodytes hexapterus*), and identified patches of offshore eelgrass.

Coastal black-tailed deer, Douglas' squirrel, raccoons and river otters have all been seen using the forest and foreshore habitats. Undisturbed land that protects the interface between terrestrial and marine habitats is extremely important ecologically. The natural cover of the terrestrial portion promotes the health of the intertidal and deeper marine zones offshore. TLC is grateful to be one of the partners protecting this small but important place. ■

New Covenant Protects Sandy Beach Nature Reserve



Boundary Layer

November 4
10 am to noon

Andy MacKinnon and Kem Luther will lead a foray at TLC's Second Lake property in the

District of Highlands to observe and discuss the "boundary layer" as coined by Kem himself. This includes mushrooms, moss and lichen: important organisms that exist in the realm between the forest floor and the surrounding elements.

Visit www.conservancy.bc.ca to register. Please dress for the weather including appropriate footwear. Don't forget your water bottle!



I'm Remembering Both

Keep the love going for what matters. Support TLC and the ones you love in your Will.

Find out how at www.conservancy.bc.ca/willpower

Covenant Monitoring Around the Province

By Dianna Stenberg
Executive Director

This summer our team has been on the move – and in the heat – as we work to monitor our conservation covenants around the province. Highlights have included catching up with partners and title holders in the Okanagan: TLC holds 12 conservation covenants in the region protecting more than 878 acres of dragonfly-loving wetlands, beautiful bunchgrass, towering cliffs, and ponderosa pine and Interior Douglas-fir forests. In Armstrong, Enderby, Penticton, Okanagan Falls, Oliver, and Vernon, these diverse areas are home to at-risk species including the COSEWIC-listed Western screech owl.

While our covenant co-holders – often other conservation organizations like the North Okanagan Parks & Natural Areas Trust – are our partners in protecting these

incredible areas, the current title holder plays just as significant a role in keeping the habitat healthy. As conservation covenants remain with the title of the property, regardless of who may purchase it, this mechanism is a strong tool for protecting sensitive ecosystems. However, those living on the land have access and opportunity to monitor daily changes that can inform stewardship decision making. Thankfully, our Okanagan partners are committed to seeing the areas they care for thrive!

You can learn more about TLC's conservation covenant program including our application and registration process, annual monitoring, public accessibility, and stewardship resources by visiting our website at www.conservancy.bc.ca/covenant. ■



While monitoring the O'Reilly covenant in Oliver, Frankie Iwachow ID's hip-high poison ivy (*Toxicodendron rydbergii*).



TLC's Emily Francis monitoring our Gardom Lake conservation covenant in Enderby this summer.



By Emily Francis
Communication
Coordinator

Andy MacKinnon cries “CANDYSTICK!”. Bioblitzers embody owls: heads swivel, wide eyes gaze upon the forest floor where the vibrant red-and-white striped mycoheterotrophic plants shoot 30cm out of a mossy tuft. If you didn't look twice, you'd swear someone forgot their yuletide décor in the woods. Andy transfixes the bioblitzers with a story of how the Candystick (*Allotropia virgata*), sometime during its evolutionary path, decided to ditch photosynthesis and instead team up with the mycorrhizal fungi of tree roots to get its sugar fix. We haven't even left the parking lot and we only have 2.5 hours to explore TLC's 27-acre Millstream Creek Watershed property. This is going to be an interesting Bioblitz!

Since 1996, “Bioblitz” events have been a worldwide citizen science phenomenon participated in by Homo sapiens of diverse backgrounds. The goal of a Bioblitz is to identify and record as many species as possible within a specific time and place. In this sense, Bioblitzes are the ultimate nature-based scavenger hunt.

While Bioblitzes have contributed to astonishing finds in Western science, I would like to draw attention to the magic they hold. An unexpected finding always seems to occur during a Bioblitz that sparks a childlike sense of wonder.

“Any idea what this is?” asks a bioblitzer while thumbing a leaf embedded in a carpet of mosses and lichens. Juliet Pendray descends to all fours and pulls out her necklace-tethered hand lens that is never far from reach. To the layman's eye, the leaf Juliet holds is indistinguishable from other greens in the spongy shag, even when magnified ten times. “It could be a Diamond Pelt or a Freckled Pelt lichen.”


She responds, “How can you tell?”

Juliet grins mysteriously while pulling out her water bottle. “Want to see a magic trick?” Droplets splash revealing speckles studding the leaf. “Aha! Freckled Pelt it is!” she exclaims and explains that the darkened spots are microscopic containers for cyanobacteria living inside the lichen in a mutualistic symbiosis. Moments later, participants can be witnessed playfully dribbling water to reveal the deeper secrets of Mother Earth's rug.



2023 Bioblitz participants at TLC's Millstream Creek Watershed property. Background: Red-and-white striped Candystick. Credit James Holkro.

In May, 23 volunteer participants joined TLC staff and BC-famous naturalists, Kem Luther (naturalist and author), Juliet Pendray (lichenologist), Hans Roemer (plant ecologist), and Andy MacKinnon (forest ecologist) at TLC's Millstream Creek Watershed property in the Highlands District on Vancouver Island within WSÁNEĆ territory for a *Passport to Nature* Bioblitz event. Together, they made a jaw-dropping 649 observations, recorded 264 different species (including 115 vascular plant species and 50 fungi species), and found endangered species like the blue-listed Northern red-legged frog (*Rana aurora*). The data collected during the Bioblitz will contribute to the property's baseline ecological assessment and consecutive sustainable land management plan that serve to protect species on the property forever. ■



Sod and Sea

Video available
October 19

TLC Board member and University of Waterloo PhD Candidate Sara Wickham will share about the confluence of sod and sea - the crucial role of dead, washed ashore seaweed on Pacific Northwest food webs. Her presentation will include the nutrient transfer between marine and terrestrial habitats, seaweed ID, uses of seaweeds, and harvesting tips you can use!

Register online for this virtual event to ensure you receive the direct video link!

Restoration in the Blenkinsop Valley

October 14 and 29
from 9:45 a.m. to 1 p.m.



Join TLC and the Greater Victoria Green Team for invasive species removal at TLC's Alston-Stewart properties in the Blenkinsop Valley. Snacks, tools & gloves provided.

Visit www.conservancy.bc.ca/greenteam to sign up for a restoration event today!

TLC is honoured to be the recipient of donations in the memory of:
Colleen Coppin, Mary Hobbs, Dr. Roy Hyndman, Edwina Kurta, Joanne Manley, Roy Swanson, and Helen Williams
To remember your loved one with a special gift call 1-877-485-2422



This spring I hosted a pollinator meadow open house as part of TLC's *Passport to Nature* series. The event was attended by a great group of folks wanting to see a living example of a meadow while learning how to support native plants and pollinators in their own backyards. We spent a couple of happy hours chatting, viewing the meadow, identifying native plants, and watching busy pollinators buzzing through a buffet of their preferred food sources.

In this inaugural year, the first flowers to bloom were Western buttercup (*Ranunculus occidentalis*), sea blush (*Plectritis congesta*), and blue-eyed Mary (*Collinsia parviflora*) and the meadow has been a constantly changing sea of yellows, whites, blues, and pinks ever since. It's been visited by orchard Mason bees (*Osmia lignaria*), bumble bees (*Bombus spp.*), and sweat bees (*Halictidae spp.*) as well as a host of butterflies including mourning cloak (*Nymphalis antiopa*), Lorquin's admiral (*Limenitis lorquini*), and Western tiger swallowtail (*Papilio rutulus*).

One of my biggest takeaways from this project is there is no such thing as an instant meadow or a one-and-done restoration day. After decades of

agriculture and weedy lawn growth, invasive species removal has been an ongoing task, necessary to give the native plants a chance to fully establish. When we are working to restore an area, we need to think long-term and give nature a continuing helping hand.

As we shift toward fall, the meadow has transitioned yet again. It has grown tall and rangy in the late summer heat - dominated by yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), California aster (*Symphyotrichum chilense*), and Canada goldenrod (*Solidago lepida*) with many plants standing more than 1m high. I'm already busy planning ways to create winter cover for key pollinator species such as leaving the hollow stalks of the yarrow standing to provide overwintering homes for tunnel nesting bees, and leaving leaf litter in the surrounding yard to provide an insulated refuge under which butterfly adults, eggs, and larvae can survive the winter freeze.

I've discovered that creating a native plant meadow is all about planning now for the benefit of generations to come. I'm excited to think of the bees, butterflies, and other pollinators that will be born, live, feed, and procreate in and around this meadow.



Bumblebee on yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*) in Lisa's pollinator meadow. Photo Credit Lisa Cross.

Much like leaving standing yarrow stalks and leaf litter, we too can plan for the benefit of future generations. This year TLC is part of the national Will Power campaign and I invite you to take advantage of their free resources to help you envision how you can change the world - while still taking care of your loved ones. The pollinator meadow is a good example of how a passion for conservation has been combined with a bit of planning to create

vital habitat for future generations to enjoy! ■



Lisa Cross is TLC's Donor Relations Manager & Grants Coordinator.

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