

Spring 2024

LANDmark



TLC
The Land Conservancy
of British Columbia

TLC staff (left to right) Michelle Thompson, Frankie Mawss, Maya Irwin, and Emily Francis planning restoration work at the Ayum Creek Regional Park Reserve.



As April approaches, we are witnessing the budding signs of spring throughout the province. Elk calves are spotted on the benchlands next to the Columbia River at TLC's Fort Shepherd Conservancy Area; osoberry (*Oemleria cerasiformis*) - also known as June plum - is in bloom in our southern Vancouver Island Coastal Douglas-fir ecosystems; and migrating moose are beginning to traverse our protective corridors in the Upper Clearwater Valley.

Spring also brings blossoming opportunities for the year ahead as staff and volunteers sketch out our restoration planning and stewardship activities for the year. In this edition of the LANDmark, you will read articles from our team featuring recent restoration and stewardship events, as well as upcoming opportunities for you to get involved. You'll also hear from two new members of our team: Michelle Thompson and Maya Irwin.

In addition to monitoring and enforcement of the 250 conservation covenants in our portfolio, staff are currently developing five new covenants on lands throughout the province. On Page 4 of this LANDmark, you'll read a bit more about the covenant

creation and registration process at TLC.

Thank you to those who participated in our West Coast Seeds fundraising initiative in February to support our many conservation initiatives. If you were able to participate, I hope that your windowsills are thriving with new seedlings!

TLC's board and staff have been developing a draft Strategic Plan to guide the organization over the next five years. We look forward to sharing a draft in the next few months and hearing your feedback before bringing a final draft to the AGM in September for adoption.

In the meantime, I encourage you to join us at one of our many upcoming events; between our *Passport to Nature*, *Deertrails Naturalist Program*, and the many volunteer opportunities we have available around the province, there's an opportunity for everyone to get involved with TLC.



Dianna Stenberg

Dianna Stenberg
Executive Director



By Michelle Thompson
Property and Covenant Manager

Last November it was a crisp fall day when TLC held the Boundary Layer *Passport to Nature* event at Second Lake. Fungi experts Andy Mackinnon and Kem Luther walked with participants along the lake and identified 40 fungi species. They discussed the shape, size, colour, texture, as well as the distinct scents of each of the fungi participants found. Scents were described as soapy, nutty, buttery, and fruity.

Highlights from the event included finding the cannonball fungus (*Sphaerobolus stellatus*), western amethyst (*Laccaria amethystina-occidentalis*), and false chanterelle (*Hygrophoropsis aurantiaca*). A crowd favourite was the delightful scent of chocolate with a hint of smokiness given off by the shingled hedgehog (*Sarcodon imbricatus*).

This event gave the public the unique opportunity to see TLC's Second Lake property which isn't open to the public. Second Lake is 73 hectares (183 acres) of protected land located in the District of

Highlands. The property is predominately forested with riparian forest and a lake in the center of the property. Second Lake is in the Coastal Douglas-fir Biogeoclimatic Zone which has been identified as a Provincial priority for conservation due to its high biodiversity and high pressure from development.

Currently the biggest threat to this property is introduced species, specifically Scotch broom (*Cytisus scoparius*). This is not unusual as Scotch broom is spreading at a very fast rate across the region. Scotch broom can degrade habitat, threaten biodiversity, and increase the intensity of wildfires. It's best to tackle this invasive species when it is in bloom as it will have put a significant amount of energy into blooming and will have a harder time recovering from being cut.

This year, TLC and volunteers with the Friends of Second Lake Society will be hosting a **Second Lake Broom Bash Passport to Nature event on May 25**. This is another great opportunity for the public

to come and explore the Second Lake property and learn the best management practices for removing Scotch broom. You can sign up for this or TLC's other 2024 *Passport to Nature* events online at www.conservancy.bc.ca/passport. ■



Michelle joined TLC in October 2023. She has a Bachelor of Environmental Sciences from the University of Waterloo with a diploma in Ecological Restoration as well as a Masters of Forestry from the University of Alberta. Michelle has worked on various projects ranging in subject from ecological footprinting, carbon sequestration, quantifying ecosystem services, ecological restoration, and fire ecology. As TLC's Property and Covenant Manager, Michelle is part of the organization's covenant team and facilitates the ongoing monitoring and stewardship of TLC's 250 conservation covenants and ten protected properties.

Register for 2024 Events

Be sure to register for TLC's Passport to Nature events to ensure you receive directions and event details! Visit www.conservancy.bc.ca or call 1-877-485-2422 for a copy of the full listing of events.



Cannonball fungus (*Sphaerobolus stellatus*). Photo credit South Vancouver Island Mycological Society (SVIMS).



Western amethyst (*Laccaria amethystina-occidentalis*). Photo credit SVIMS.



Scarlet bonnet (*Atheniella adonis*). Photo credit SVIMS.



Midnight Entoloma (*Entoloma medianox*). Photo credit SVIMS.

Birds, Bees, and Seeds



By Lisa Cross
Donor Relations Manager & Grants Coordinator

My pollinator meadow project is heading into its second spring and I'm excited to see early bloomers like sea blush (*Plectritis congesta*) and spring gold (*Lomatium utriculatum*) coming into flower. Over the fall, thousands of little sprouts germinated, only to be buried under the January snow. Fortunately, these hardy plants evolved here, and they take the changing temperatures – including snowfall and summer drought – in stride.

The meadow was first planted back in the fall of 2022 and as those who attended the Pollinator Meadow *Passport to Nature* event last June can attest, it attracted a wide array of native bees, butterflies, and other pollinators in its first year of bloom. Open ground between the plants filled in over the summer months, with farewell-to-spring (*Clarkia amoena*) and woolly sunflower (*Eriophyllum lanatum*) overflowing into all the open spaces.

Fall brought an unexpected bonus, as flocks of hungry juncos, chickadees, and sparrows came to feast on the bounty of seeds. I was counting forty or more birds gathered in the meadow, while adjacent areas of the yard held only one or two. Fortunately, the seeds were so abundant there were plenty to share with my feathered friends. It has truly been a joy to see how quickly nature responds to the replanting of native species.

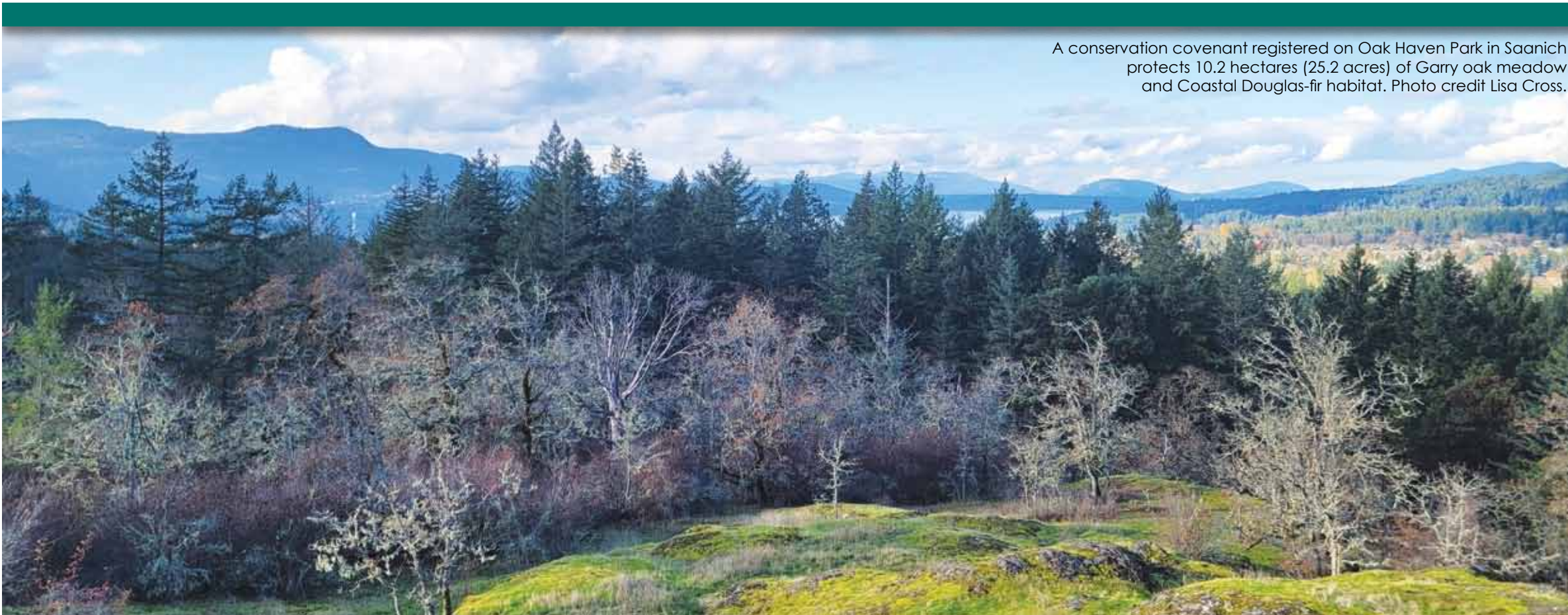
Speaking of seeds, TLC was fortunate to be part of the West Coast Seeds fundraiser in early February. Many folks took part, purchasing vegetable and herb seeds to get an early start for their home gardens. Thanks to all who supported TLC with your orders!

Finally, if you are looking for plants for your ornamental garden beds, check out our ongoing plant sales at TLC's Abkhazi Garden. **Plant sales start April 27 and run to October 14**. As always, consider mixing in some native plants to help support the local pollinators in your region. If you have any questions, I'm always happy to help! ■



Left to right, Laurie, Diana, Jacqui, Sandra, and Penny at Abkhazi Garden preparing for the festive market sales.

You can track Lisa's progress in creating a native pollinator meadow in her backyard – and pick up some tips that can be applied on your balcony or windowbox – by viewing her articles in the Fall 2022, Spring 2023, and Fall 2024 *LANDmark* newsletters at www.conservancy.bc.ca/LANDmark or in hard copy by request to membership@conservancy.bc.ca.



A conservation covenant registered on Oak Haven Park in Saanich protects 10.2 hectares (25.2 acres) of Garry oak meadow and Coastal Douglas-fir habitat. Photo credit Lisa Cross.



welcome
maya

Maya Irwin is the most recent addition to our team, having joined in January to cover Torrey Archer Anderson's maternity leave and help oversee TLC's extensive conservation covenant portfolio as Covenant Coordinator.

A transplant from the traditional territory of the Kanien'kehá:ka Nation in Tiohtià:ke (Montréal), Maya has been calling the coastal waters of B.C. home for the last four years. While her background in International Studies led her to work with Doctors Without Borders in both Montreal and Toronto, and to several years of travel, it was a pivot to organic farming which really ignited her passion for the natural world. With four years of experience living and working on farms on the beautiful Gulf and Discovery Islands, her desire to be a better steward of those lands prompted her to enrol in the Restoration of Natural Systems diploma at the University of Victoria. With most of that degree under her belt, she took a contract as a Field Restoration Technician with Habitat Acquisition Trust last fall and is now excited to delve into land protection with TLC.

Maya is also a happy graduate of the 2023 *Deertrails Naturalist Program*: an unforgettable experience which helped shape her relationship to our protected natural areas. The opportunity to learn and interact with seasoned naturalists provided a wonderful complement to her school studies, especially given the artistic and poetic lens through which it was guided. She is looking forward to being a part of the 2024 *Deertrails Naturalist Program* running this May 14 through 19 in the Clearwater River Valley. ■



Covenant Coordinator Maya Irwin (top, 2nd from right) was introduced to TLC at the 2023 *Deertrails Naturalist Program*.

Good Things Take Time: A Reflection on the Covenant Registration Process

By Emily Francis
Communication Coordinator

“Good morning, this is Emily from The Land Conservancy of B.C., how may I assist you?” I inquire, picking up the reception phone at my desk in the TLC office. An animated voice answers: “Hi, I have a place up in the Kootenays that is 320 acres. Half of it is forested and in my thirty plus years here I’ve seen grizzlies, elk, moose...” I listen and take notes as the unknown property is painted to life by the landowners’ powerful memories. It is a privilege of this job to learn the intimate relationships that strangers have with the places they love. The narrative dwindles, “Anyways, I’m not getting any younger, and with my place being near the lakefront, I’m worried that it’s going to be subdivided into vacation cottages once I’m gone. Can TLC help

ensure that does not happen?”

Land protection requests have been more frequent this year than in most of TLC’s history. The trend marks the beginning of a wave of legacy planning by baby boomers who comprise the majority of Canadian homeowners (41.3% in 2021 according to Statistics Canada). During these calls most landowners express a dire urgency to place a conservation covenant on their property. From climate change-driven disasters to unpredictable real estate markets, it is no wonder it’s a recurring theme.

Faced with the same realities, we at TLC also feel a rising pressure to save B.C.’s critical ecosystems quickly. However, creating a conservation covenant that adequately protects an ecosystem in perpetuity requires time and effort by the landowner and the

land trust alike.

Registering a new conservation covenant can take upwards of a year. During this time, TLC and the landowner engage in a complex information gathering dance that involves back-and-forth communications, ecological mapping and monitoring, legal document procurement, fundraising, and visits to the offices of lawyers, financial advisors, and land registration authorities.

Once all the information is (often quite literally) on the table, TLC evaluates the covenant’s worth. This process also takes time because ranking the ecological importance of a covenant on a provincial scale in a time of climate change is complicated. For example, we were recently approached with a request to covenant a 25-acre

undeveloped property that featured endangered Coastal Douglas-fir forests and a wetland. Through adjoining watercourses, the wetland was connected to the region’s only potable water source. A second request was submitted for a 20-acre forest lot that would connect two large ecological reserves on an island, if protected. The lot also had an existing interpretive trail that has been stewarded and cherished by generations of local youth and community volunteers. A third proposal featured a 60-acre mature forest on an inactive 100 year-old farm. The forest was known to house federally and provincially listed species-at-risk such as northern Pygmy owl (*Glaucidium californicum*), red-legged frog (*Rana aurora*), and great blue heron (*Ardea herodias*). Could you rank which of these covenant proposals is more worthy than the others?

Most of the covenant proposals TLC receives have undoubtable ecological value, but it is often exceptional circumstances that delay or prevent the registration process. Funding may fall through, the desired covenant may contradict local bylaws, or an estranged aunt who has a stake in the property may need to sign off. Whatever the situation is, from my desk at reception, I witness TLC’s covenant staff and Board members’ determined efforts to push the proposal forward. The road to register a conservation covenant may be long and windy, but there is something to be said about good things taking time. ■



Emily Francis joined TLC in early 2023 with a BSc in Environmental Science.

Sowing Seeds of Renewal at Fort Shepherd

By Frankie Mawss
Environmental Technician & Land Manager

At this time of year, the rocks on the banks of the Columbia River at TLC's Fort Shepherd Conservancy Area are drying off from the mornings mist. Tracks from ducks, coyote, deer, and otters decorate the sand between the round cobblestones like postcards from visitors past. Next to me is Brenda Beckwith, ethnobotanist, field biologist, and environmental educator, who is part of the Kootenay Camas Project led by the Kootenay Native Plant Society. In my hands I'm holding someone I've met before but am only now starting to build a relationship with.

Alongside folks from the community, I stood on the shore caressing the little bulbs in my hands while Brenda introduced us to this important community member, their name is ḴiḴxwā? or common camas (*Camassia quamash*). Once prolific under the tender care and stewardship of the Sinixt peoples, these beautiful spring flowers have struggled to thrive in the settler landscape.

As Brenda shared the life history of camas including their relationship to the land and Sinixt people, I started to admire what I was holding in my hands. I learned how

smart they are, using a specially modified root – called a contractile root – to help dig themselves deeper into the soil if needed. In five to seven years vibrant blue flowers show off their hard work, and all they need is our support to let them grow.

It is the story passed on from First Peoples that helps me further understand the importance of stewardship to these living beings. A dozen of us gingerly dug holes, bulb by bulb, as we aimed to heal the shores and our relationship to the living world. We too are the primary custodians of our environment. Ultimately, the involvement of people in conservation efforts creates a more informed and engaged community, leading to more effective and inclusive approaches to preserving the natural world. This connection promotes stewardship and sustainable practices, crucial for addressing challenges like climate change.

And the ḴiḴxwā? camas are not alone. Over the weekend we also welcomed back monarchs to our growing pollinator way station. Returning for a third year, the Rotary EClub of Waneta Sunshine planted shrubs and flowers grown from seeds, some collected from their relatives

at Fort Shepherd.

With the support of twenty-five community volunteers, over 1,000 camas bulbs and 300 pollinator supporting plants and shrubs were set in the earth. This only happens when we gather to sow.

I welcome everyone to visit Fort Shepherd to learn more from the land. You can register for our **Passport to Nature event on October 5** to join in planting this year to help bring back our important pollinator family this fall. ■



Frankie Mawss has been part of TLC since 2017 when she started as a summer intern while completing her Diploma in Environmental Technology. Her work in property and covenant management at the TLC takes her across the province to steward incredible habitats through restoration, education, remote fieldwork, and land management. She also contributes her illustrations to TLC's Tribute Cards and Naturalist Activity Books for Kids.



Volunteers join TLC and the Greater Victoria Green Team at the Alston-Stewart Estate in the Blenkinsop Valley for invasive species removal.



By Emily Francis
Communication
Coordinator

In the heart of the Blenkinsop Valley lies the Alston-Stewart Estate bequeathed to TLC by the late Joan Alston-Stewart in 2022. The trio of properties span 8 acres and contain endangered Garry oak, Coastal Douglas-fir, and wetland ecosystems that connect to the greater wildlife areas of the Blenkinsop Valley such as Blenkinsop Lake and PKOLS (Mount Doug).

In March 2023, I joined TLC's Biologist Torrey Archer-Anderson and Environmental Technician & Land Manager Frankie Mawss to conduct an invasive species inventory of the properties. This mapping process establishes an understanding of the diversity, density (volume), and spread (area) of invasive species onsite. During our visit, we observed the "usual suspects" to Southern Vancouver Island: spurge-laurel (*Daphne laureola*), Scotch broom (*Cytisus scoparius*), and Himalayan blackberry (*Rubus armeniacus*). However,

one invasive stood out more than the rest. What should have been a patch of verdant Coastal Douglas-fir habitat, was a very different sea of green. Emerald vines washed over the forest floor: masking mosses, blanketing bushes, and swallowing stones. Trees were engulfed by heavy, leafy cables coiling 40+ meters for sunlight. We were surrounded by a forest of English ivy.

English ivy (*Hedera helix*) is a sneaky and rigorous invasive that can creep up rapidly. Vines can grow up to six feet a year. Ivy stems that have broken off can re-root. Just when you thought you'd rid yourself of it, a bird may impart you with a seedy surprise from the skies, and the cycle begins all over again.

Combating invasive species is an arduous task even for the most proactive landowner. I have observed that it is a collective effort that really makes a difference. In October 2023, TLC began invasive species removal efforts at the Alston-Stewart Estate with support from the Greater Victoria Green Team, 66 community volunteers, and friendly neighbour to the estate, Phil. With only two events, we managed to remove 15 cubic metres of invasive plants; a volume equivalent to 93 full bathtubs! 1,350 square



Volunteers remove more than 15 cubic metres of invasive plants from the Alston-Stewart Estate in October.

metres of the forest floor was uncovered to the great satisfaction of underlying native dull Oregon grape (*Berberis nervosa*), trailing blackberry (*Rubus ursinus*), and oceanspray (*Holodiscus discolor*). I couldn't tell whose smiles were bigger at the end of the day, the volunteers or the dozen or so trees who were freed of their stifling ivy scarves.

Be sure to join us for continued invasive species removal efforts at the Alston-Stewart Estate during the **2024 Passport to Nature event on Saturday, October 26 from 9:45 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.** Snacks will be provided! Register for our *Passport to Nature* events online today at www.conservancy.bc.ca/passport. ■



Volunteers at TLC's Fort Shepherd Conservancy Area wash common camas (*Camassia quamash*) in the Columbia River.

creating your green legacy



By Lisa Cross
Donor Relations
Manager & Grants
Coordinator

Habitat loss is the biggest threat to species-at-risk in B.C. TLC works to protect vital habitat throughout the province, supporting biodiversity for over 25 years.

As you know, many people spend a lifetime contributing to a cause that's close to their heart, but they may not realize when making bequests in their Will, that they can **take care of family first**, and still donate a meaningful legacy gift to the charity of their choice.

Percentage gifts can be an easy way for donors to feel assured they are placing their families first. Gifts to charity of 5%, 3%, or even 1% of an estate can **make a significant difference** to the causes that matter to them - while ensuring that 95% or more of their estate is passed on to their loved ones. In addition, the charitable tax receipt issued for these gifts will help reduce any taxes owing for the estate.

As part of this year's national **Will Power**

campaign, I wanted to provide you - supporters of B.C.'s critical ecosystems - with TLC's most recent planned giving information. For those interested in protecting land and biodiversity in B.C., TLC may be a good fit to help **realize your legacy conservation goals**. TLC's "creating your green legacy" booklet can help donors understand how they can partner with TLC to protect wild places, through gifts in their Will.

When people remember **TLC The Land Conservancy of British Columbia** in their Wills, they are supporting TLC's ongoing efforts to preserve invaluable natural areas throughout our beautiful province, improving life for the flora and fauna of B.C., and helping to mitigate climate change.

You can view TLC's "creating your green legacy" guide online at www.conservancy.bc.ca/legacy. If you would like a print copy, or if you have any follow up questions or would like more information about any of our programs, please contact me at (250) 479-8053 or via email at lcross@conservancy.bc.ca.

Thank you for your part in helping to save wilderness for wildlife across this beautiful province! ■

TLC is honoured to be the recipient of donations in the memory of:
**Donald Berger, Edmund Cline, Loretta Dodsworth, Robin W. Edwards,
Rebecca Godfrey, Connie Hannah, Neil Laughlin, and Eva Orme**
To remember your loved one with a special gift call 1-877-485-2422

TLC Board of Directors: Paleah Black Moher ■ Tomas Cimolai
Penny Crawford ■ Georgina Delimari ■ Kelly Fretwell ■ Mel Lehan
Jeff Sheldrake ■ Fran Sloan Sainas ■ Andrew Stewart ■ Sara Wickham



VOLUNTEER LEADERS WANTED

Have you considered giving of your time and talents by joining TLC's Board of Directors or serving on a volunteer committee?

TLC has been very fortunate to have new volunteers join the Board of Directors this past year, but the work continues. Recent retirements have meant that we have volunteer positions to fill that support our objectives, and provide guidance and support to our hardworking staff team.

We are on the lookout for new members to add to our Board team, and we would welcome volunteers to support our Board committees.

For more information, please email admin@conservancy.bc.ca or call TLC's office at 250-479-8053 or toll-free at 1-877-485-2422. If you know someone who has a special interest in what we do and is looking for a way to support conservation initiatives by donating their expertise, please spread the word! ■



Jeff Sheldrake
Board Chair