Fall 2024

LANDmark

TLC
The Land Conservancy of British Columbia

TLC staff take a retreat to the Admiral's Forest Park in Otter Point B.C. with Juan de Fuca Trail Society members.
Photo:Emily Francis

Over the last year, TLC's Board of Directors and staff have worked together to create our new Strategic Plan. Guiding our work through April 2029, the Strategic Plan is designed to strengthen our program delivery efficiency and efficacy. The plan identifies eight areas with specific goals for refining our operations. Goals and objectives relate to our continuing reconciliation journey; developing and facilitating our educational programming; fundraising to meet our annual and long-term needs; employing technologies to advance monitoring and decision making; deepening our partnerships to magnify our impact; engaging TLC's support network and collaborators to increase our capacity; enhancing our covenant monitoring, enforcement, and registration procedures; and recruiting and retaining the team members necessary to meet our conservation goals. As you read this LANDmark look for "Strategic Plan" decals to learn how we are already applying these concepts. With member, donor, volunteer, and partner engagement and support, the implementation of our Strategic Plan will make a difference in our efforts to protect critical habitats in the province. I encourage you to review the Strategic Plan and consider how you could see yourself getting involved. You can view the PDF on our website at www.conservancy.bc.ca/strategicplan or request a hard copy by calling 1-877-485-2422 or emailing membership@conservancy.bc.ca.

2025-2029
STRATEGIC PLAN

Since our Spring LANDmark, staff have had a very full field season, managing the 15,000 acres of critical habitat within our 250 protected areas across B.C. Read more about our recent covenant monitoring, ecological restoration and partnership building ventures on Pages 4-5 and 8 of this newsletter.

In this edition of the LANDmark you'll also read articles from our team featuring recent events, a sustainable approach to maintaining Abkhazi Garden, and upcoming volunteer opportunities and fall *Passport to Nature* events.

If you're looking for additional ways to get involved with TLC, I encourage you to explore our volunteer opportunities, new planned giving resources, and Education Hub on our website. Together, we can continue to make a difference in protecting B.C.'s biodiversity. ■

Dianna Stenberg

Dianna Stenberg
Executive Director

Keeping the Garden "Green"

by Jacqui Paulson, Abkhazi Garden Head Gardener

Photo Alline Corimer

Abkhazi Garden is truly a horticultural gem in the heart of Victoria, but for a small public garden of just over an acre, it has a lot to maintain. How do we accomplish garden upkeep in an environmentally responsible way? The basic principles and practices of the three "R's" – Reduce, Reuse, Recycle have been introduced and utilized progressively by garden staff and volunteers in the last few years. We reduced the consumption of water, fossil fuels, and chemicals; we reused and recycled onsite materials to make our own compost and organic fertilizers; and we even repurposed fallen Garry oaks into pieces of art, benches, and habitats for beneficial insects and fungi.

However, this is not to say we have not had our challenges. Since its inception, water management has proven difficult at Abkhazi Garden. The garden's natural foundation of exposed, sloping bedrock creates conditions for erosion and water pooling after rainfall. In the 1940s, garden founders Prince and Princess Abkhazi attempted to solve this issue by building hidden drains and channels along concrete paths to carry the rainwater off the property. What was once ingenious engineering, is now the exact opposite of what is needed in a time of climate change. The only historically helpful structure in this regard is the rainwater catchment system on the roof of the Abkhazi's heritage home (now the Teahouse) that fills the pond. Just as they did, we too must continue to renew our practices to preserve this unique, urban sanctuary.

I have observed immense progress in environmentally conscious landscaping methods at Abkhazi Garden since beginning my position as Head Gardener five years ago. Started by previous gardeners, producing our compost and mulch on-site has been the task of a dedicated volunteer crew for many years. The introduction of microclover to the lawns in 2019 has, over time, reduced our use of water and fertilizers, and the need to mow as often. In 2020, our irrigation system was audited resulting in reduced water consumption of approximately 20%, a good start! The switch to battery powered equipment that same year was a true indicator of our dedication to "going green". This year, I have begun transitioning to planting drought-tolerant, pollinator-friendly plants such as the new "river" of Wall Germander (*Teucrium chamaedrys*) that has been a big hit with our honeybees and visitors alike. In the future, I am hopeful for your support in fundraising to replace the garden's driveway with a mobility-friendly, permeable surface that allows water to flow downward into the soil rather than off onto the street. One thing is certain, gardens are ever evolving, and Abkhazi Garden will do so too, but with a conscience, because we all want to keep this loveable place green in a "green" way. ■

Jacqui Paulson received Red Seal certification in Landscape Design & Horticulture from the Pacific Horticultural College in Victoria with a specialization in permaculture. Through her subsequent career in nursery work, her landscape design and installation business, and as Head Gardener at Abkhazi Garden, Jacqui has kept permaculture practices evident her work and hopes to instill them in others.

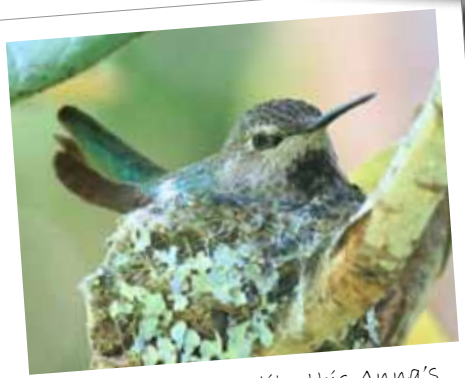
Support Abkhazi Garden

Help TLC fundraise for special projects at Abkhazi Garden, like the new accessible, water-saving driveway. More information on our website: www.conservancy.bc.ca/abkhazi-garden/

2025-29 STRATEGIC PLAN
FUNDRAISING

Volunteer, David, mixes up compost from organic materials onsite.
Photo: Cherie Miltimore

Head Gardener, Jacqui, tests out Abkhazi's new electric lawnmower.
Photo: Cherie Miltimore



Native pollinators, like this Anna's Hummingbird (Calypte anna), call Abkhazi Garden home.
Photo: Helena Jacobsen

Rainwater Management

by Sherry Beauvais, Accounting Coordinator

There is a finite amount of fresh water on the planet. By being mindful of our practices at home, and in our community, we can help protect this valuable natural resource.

Nature efficiently recycles fresh water, ensuring it is perpetually available for plants, animals, and other living organisms. Water from the atmosphere is released to the earth through precipitation. As it falls it is slowly absorbed by plants and the soil, allowing for replenishment of surface and groundwater storage areas. Water then returns to the atmosphere through evaporation and transpiration to start the cycle again. In a natural setting, up to 90% of rainwater ultimately reaches the groundwater systems. However, in developed landscapes, without effective rainwater management, this figure can be reduced to as little as 10%.

Excess water from rooftops or other impervious surfaces, like driveways or sidewalks, is often deemed problematic. Large volumes of rainwater are disposed of through our stormwater systems without consideration of the environmental consequences. This practice not only diverts rainwater from our aquifers, but often contaminates our lakes, rivers, and oceans. We can help protect our precious freshwater resources by returning to a more natural approach for rainwater management.

There are several creative and beautiful methods to manage rainwater in an environmentally responsible way:

- Redirecting gutter downspouts into a cistern or rain barrel to be used for irrigation to reduce the strain on our watersheds and aquifers.
- Redirecting downspouts into a raingarden, rock soak-away pit, or pond (with adequate overflow measures) will allow excess rainwater to be temporarily contained until it can be slowly absorbed and returned to the ground water.
- Reducing impervious surfaces wherever possible and increasing trees, plants, and soil rich in organic matter will help absorb rainwater by mimicking a more natural environment.

Join me on October 31st for our online *Passport to Nature* "Rainwater Management" video release to learn more about how to sustainably manage rainwater on your property. To receive a direct link to the video, please sign up on our website at www.conservancy.bc.ca/passport-to-nature/ ■

BEFORE

Invasive common periwinkle (*Vinca minor*) covers the forest floor at Ayum Creek Park Reserve.

Mulch Madness at Ayum Creek

Story By Maya Irwin, Covenants Coordinator
Photos by Emily Francis

The sweet and memorable smell of cedar overtook my senses as I watched the woodchips flow from the back of a massive dump truck at Ayum Creek Regional Park. TLC and Habitat Acquisition Trust (HAT) have co-held a conservation covenant protecting this parcel of land since 1998. The woodchips have been a key part of our ongoing invasive species removal efforts here. Our main target is common periwinkle (*Vinca minor*), an especially prolific ground cover species that was likely introduced to the park through the dumping of garden waste. Unfortunately, it has now spread to cover much of the forest floor.

Ayum Creek is within the traditional territory of the T'Sou-ke Nation, and whose traditional use also extends to the Scia'new (Beecher Bay) Nation. The park is a historically significant traditional harvesting site. Elders recall harvesting large runs of chum, coho, steelhead, and trout, while nearby shell middens are full of native oyster shells. Ayum Creek is now a public Capital Regional District (CRD) park reserve that contains forest, riparian areas, an intertidal zone, and a small estuary. Much of the damage to Ayum Creek's ecosystems is attributed to its use as an industrial zone in the mid-20th century. The impacts of this legacy are clear in the multitude of introduced species in the park, of which periwinkle is but one of the most obvious examples. English ivy (*Helix hedera*), daphne laurel (*Daphne laureola*), Himalayan blackberry (*Rubus armeniacus*), and English Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) are also scattered throughout.

In collaboration with the CRD and HAT, and with generous support from TD Friends of the Environment Foundation, TLC has been working to contain the spread of periwinkle since 2017. ***Continued on next page.***

SHEET MULCHING 101

Step 1 - Lay down the cardboard.

Step 2 - Add LOTs of mulch.

Step 3 - Rake it until you make it (even).

TLC staff Maya, Emily, and Michelle stand on top of this year's restoration area.

AFTER

Due to periwinkle's growth patterns, manual pulling stimulates regrowth and can cause more spreading. Instead, we perform a technique called "sheet mulching". This involves covering the periwinkle with a layer of cardboard, followed by a thick topping of cedar mulch to starve out the introduced species. Over time the mulch will break down, adding an organic layer to the forest floor and making room for native plants to recolonize. The positive results of this hard work are already visible as maple seedlings and ferns have taken root in previous treatment areas. Last spring, TLC engaged a total of 70 community members in two separate restoration events at Ayum Creek. The first was in collaboration with Edward Milne Community School students and teachers, providing us with both a teaching opportunity as well as some much needed helping hands. Competitive wheelbarrow races kept things moving along as we covered a significant area over the course of the day. Students also took part in removing English ivy from trees. Notably, a large English ivy vine exceeding 15 years old was severed from a big leaf maple after a concerted effort, a crowning achievement for the day!

Our *Passport to Nature* event on April 20th brought out a wonderful show of support from the community. Twenty volunteers contributed their time, energy, and enthusiasm. One of the biggest challenges was getting the mulch layer thick enough to fully block out all light penetration and prevent regrowth, but much muscle power and wheelbarrowing later, we feel confident with our results. Nevertheless, we plan to monitor the area closely over the coming year. We are very grateful to all the volunteers who came out to help!

Promoting volunteerism to support our covenants is at the forefront of our "Human Resources" goals in our new Strategic Plan. Volunteers are critical to furthering the self-sustainability of our covenants and to us meeting our conservation goals now and into the future. Our next restoration event at Ayum Creek will be in the spring of 2025, so stay tuned! If you can't wait until then, check out our next *Passport to Nature* restoration event on October 26th or consider one of our other upcoming *Passport to Nature* events. We hope that you will join us in making our Strategic Plan a reality at an event near you. ■

Maya joined TLC in 2024. In addition to monitoring TLC's 250 conservation covenants, she manages restoration efforts at Ayum Creek.

PASSPORT TO THE BLENKINSOP VALLEY

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 26TH @ 9:45AM - 1PM

We need your help to restore our Alston-Stewart property in the Blenkinsop Valley. In 2023, we removed 1,350 m^2 (a volume equal to 93 bathtubs) of invasive plants; let's set a new record this year! Snacks, tools, and good company provided. This event is held in collaboration with the Greater Victoria Green Team. Please register for this event in advance on our website www.conservancy.bc.ca/passport-to-nature/

Get the Tech Outside!

by Lisa Cross, Donor Relations Manager & Grants Coordinator

In July, we explored a new method of online delivery for our *Passport to Nature* program by launching a Nature Scavenger Hunt mobile app. Today we are chatting with our Scavenger Hunt collaborator and app designer, Michelle Morry of Michelle Morry Development.

Q: Hi Michelle, thanks for being here with us today. Can you tell us more about what inspired you to create the app?
A:Tech is becoming more and more integrated into our daily lives. I love the idea of marrying simple technology, like a mobile app, to a fun adventure outdoors.

Q : Who this app is for?
A: The app is for anyone. Adults, families, teachers and kids, you name it! It's a great way to notice and learn more about the plants and aniumals around us.

Q: Can you tell us a bit more about how it works?
A: You download the app to your phone and you're ready to go. The app consists of a list of search items, with photos and tips on where to find them. You check off and take photos of the items you've found.

Q: Why do you feel resources like these are important?
A: I think it's important we make a conscious effort to connect to the world around us and free resources allow anyone with a phone to take part.

Q: Do you have plans to create more educational apps in the future?
A: It's something I'm exploring. I think we need more reminders and resources to connect us to the natural world.

Q: On a more personal note, do you have a favourite place to hike/get outdoors?
A: East Sooke Regional Park. I'm lucky enough to have this amazing park in my neighbourhood.

Q: What's your most exciting interaction with nature?
A: A few weeks ago, I was up island and witnessed a young Gray whale swimming by a few feet off the shore – it was a rare and amazing experience!

To celebrate this new nature-based learning tool we included a prize draw for our list of registrants. Congratulations to Olivia, the winner of our prize which included a TLC reusable shopping bag and 3 packages of native seeds including Nootka Rose and Oregon Grape (both Scavenger Hunt items).

"Thank you to The Land Conservancy for the door prizes. I'm excited to plant the native seeds to add to my slowly growing collection of native plants in my garden! My partner and I enjoyed completing the scavenger hunt while out walking at a local park, and slowing down to find and observe the specific native plants and animals."
- Olivia

Nature Scavenger Hunt winner, Olivia, poses with her prize.

With the majority of British Columbians having access to cellphones, the Nature Scavenger Hunt app is an example of how TLC can leverage technology to provide accessible opportunities that enable people of diverse backgrounds and abilities to connect with nature; a goal within our 2025-29 Strategic Plan.

You can download the Nature Scavenger Hunt for iPhone or Android mobile devices for free by scanning the QR codes below or by visiting the Education Hub on our website www.conservancy.bc.ca/education-hub/ ■

Seagulls look for a quick meal within the intertidal zone at Cattle Point in Victoria, B.C.

Story and photos by Helena Jacobsen, TLC Communication Officer

"Have you ever seen a brittle star before?" I ask Emily, TLC's Communication Coordinator, as we sit in the trunk of her car waiting to begin our Intertidal *Passport to Nature* event.

"Only in a touch tank. It would be so cool to see one in the wild!" she responds.

We browse my marine invertebrate ID book, admiring vibrant anemones, many-legged sea stars, and flamboyant nudibranchs. Our excitement builds thinking about what we might find while exploring Cattle Point in Victoria during an exceptionally low tide.

This year marks an expansion of *Passport to Nature* events to the sea. With new programming, we hope to spread awareness of the importance of shoreline ecosystems similar to those found on TLC protected areas like the recently covenanted Sandy Beach on Keats Island. As a TLC summer intern, this was my first time assisting and participating in a *Passport to Nature* event. Having grown up exploring the B.C. coast, I've always exhibited a fascination and curiosity for the hidden worlds contained within each tidepool and below every rock. The opportunity to nurture that same curiosity and learning for others through an exploration of these ever-changing worlds brought joy to the little explorer in me. Participants arrive, and the anticipation is bubbling inside me. It's time for action. Forever the best explorers, kids start immediately finding animals. Flipping over rocks, purple shore crabs and isopods scurry from within the muddy pools of water. Participants enthusiastically check off critters from their intertidal bingo card.

"Look what I found, what is this?" a young explorer calls me over.

In their small, sandy hands they hold a sprawling, long-limbed star. "Wow, that's a brittle star! What an incredible find!" I exclaim giddily as I stare in awe at this creature that I have longed to meet. Two minutes later, they find another. I start to think maybe I just got worse at finding things as I grew up.

The curiosity and excitement that the kids exhibited at our intertidal event has made me hopeful about the next generation of environmentalists. Experiences that connect people to nature can spark a passion to protect these aquatic members of society. To guide your little ones on nature-based adventures, check out the Education Hub on our website for free, printable resources like intertidal and bird bingos, and various activity books! Visit www.conservancy.bc.ca/education-hub/■

BINGO! I found a purple shore crab hiding under a rock.

Long arm brittle star (Amphiodia occidentalis).

Red sponge dorid (Rostanga pulchra) is a small sea slug whose colour comes from eating red velvet sponge.

Helena Jacobsen filled TLC's seasonal Communication Officer role this summer, where she contributed to the delivery of TLC communications, Passport to Nature events and covenant monitoring. Helena grew up in Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish) territory and recently earned a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Studies & Geography at the University of Victoria.

View from Sandy Beach looking North-West toward Gibsons
Photo: Joshua Berson and Wayne Kaulbach, Islands Trust Conservancy

Partnerships and Covenant Monitoring on the Sunshine Coast

by Michelle Thompson, Property & Covenant Manager

This year, our covenant monitoring season was filled with traveling to many regions across the province. From watching humpback whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) breaching on our way back from Cortes Island, to witnessing a cinnamon bear (*Ursus americanus cinnamomum*) climbing a tree in Oliver, to spotting prickly pear cactus (*Opuntia fragilis*) in its natural habitat on Texada Island. It's been an action packed summer. Field season not only brings opportunities to witness B.C.'s stunning flora and fauna but also enables relationship-building.

June marked our first annual monitoring visit to TLC's newest conservation covenant established in 2023: the *Hoak-pus*/Sandy Beach Nature Preserve on *Lhe̲k'tines*/Keats within the traditional territory of the *Sḵwx̱wú7mesh Úxwumixw*/Squamish Nation. The Preserve is 3.55 hectares in size and comprises 0.4 hectares of coastal bluff and 3.1 hectares of closed canopy conifer forest. The covenant involves several players: the Island's Trust Conservancy (ITC), owners of the property, the Sunshine Coast Conservation Association (SCCA), covenant co-holders, and, finally, contracted land managers, Keats Island Conservation Society (KICS).

Initial site visits can be tricky. An abundance of care must be taken to gather relevant ecological data and to establish repeatable monitoring procedures unique to the covenant. Fortunately, our first visit to Sandy Beach started off on the right foot thanks to guidance from covenant co-holders, Sunshine Coast Conservation Association (SCCA), and contracted land managers, Keats Island Conservation Society (KICS), who joined us onsite. The SCCA led us to the preserve's most ecologically sensitive areas and informed us of its' long history. Having fought 40 years to protect Sandy Beach, their expertise fast-tracked our understanding of the Preserve's best management practices. Meanwhile, KICS showed us invasive species treatment areas and trail enhancement plans. With a small group of regular volunteers, KICS has already restored an impressive expanse, removing English holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), Himalayan blackberry (*Rubus armeniacus*), common laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*), and garbage.

Another monitoring visit took us to Texada Island to visit a 141 hectare privately protected area, where we met with the Malaspina Land Conservancy Society. Although not a covenant co-holder, the society has been monitoring this covenant on behalf of TLC for over 10 years. It was a great day filled with plant ID, hiking, and lots of laughs. During our visit we came across western maidenhair fern (*Adiantum aethiopicum*), birds nest fungus (*Nidulariaceae sp*), and puffballs (*Agaricaceae sp*). The Malaspina Land Conservancy Society started in 2009 and is entirely volunteer run.

These trips are representative of how TLC is implementing the new Strategic Plan by putting a high importance on relationship building with local partners. While annual monitoring may appear as a top-down approach, our chief responsibility is to listen, learn, and offer support to those who live in, experience, or care for protected areas on a day-to-day basis. Time spent with local partners is filled with dreaming up future conservation projects, discussing systemic issues in land protection, and learning from each other's successes and mistakes. Diverse perspectives, reciprocity, and community engagement are critical to furthering the protection of B.C.'s critical habitats. Visit our website to learn more about TLC's partners. ■

TLC is honoured to be the recipient of donations in the memory of:
Harold Beck, Patrick Chu, Helen Margaret Hays, Philip Sawkins, Susan Tennant, and the Estates of Elizabeth Mary Lindsay Milnes & Kenneth Allan
To remember your loved one with a special gift call 1-877-485-2422