



ISLANDS TRUST CONSERVANCY



News Release

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Link Island donated to Islands Trust Conservancy - highest valued land donation in Conservancy's history

Lək̓ʷəŋən, METULIYE/Victoria, B.C. — Late conservationist Betty Swift has donated Link Island, a 21.45 hectare (52.5 acre) island between Gabriola Island and Vancouver Island, to Islands Trust Conservancy. The Link Island Nature Reserve, valued at \$3.73 million by BC Assessment, is Islands Trust Conservancy's largest-ever land donation and the largest complete island managed by Islands Trust Conservancy. The Reserve has the added protection of a new conservation covenant held by the Nanaimo & Area Land Trust and the Gabriola Land & Trails Trust.

Located southeast of Nanaimo, Link Island is nestled between Mudge Island and DeCourcy Island and is connected to both islands at low tides. It has a wealth of biodiversity, with over three kilometres of undeveloped shoreline, coastal cliffs, wetlands, intricate sandstone formations, tidal flats and mixed forest ecosystems such as threatened coastal Douglas-fir, arbutus, and prairie oak meadows. The island is home to threatened species that are vulnerable to human disturbance, including Western Screech-Owl, Barn Swallow, and Great Blue Heron. **The island will continue to remain closed to the public so it can provide sanctuary to the rare and threatened ecosystems and species that reside there.**

Before Betty Swift passed away in 2021, she left instructions that the island be transferred to Islands Trust Conservancy. Her gift reserved the right of use of Link Island for her children and grandchildren for the duration of their lives. The Swift family's dream is that Link Island will become a location for climate-change research in the Salish Sea.

"This gift is about the future", says Barbara Swift, Betty Swift's daughter. "It is a gift for us all."

"We feel so honored that Betty and her family have entrusted us with this island," says Linda Adams, Islands Trust Conservancy Chair. "It is our intent to manage Link Island in a way that recognizes and protects both its cultural and ecological values."

Link Island Nature Reserve has the added protection of a conservation covenant held by the Nanaimo & Area Land Trust and the Gabriola Land & Trails Trust. "Having an entire island set aside for conservation is an incredibly rare thing," says Paul Chapman, of the Nanaimo & Area Land Trust. "I'm excited to see what we do with this unique opportunity, and to work together to find innovative ways to steward the island in the face of climate change."

Gabriola Land & Trails Trust President, Rob Brockley, had the pleasure of meeting with the Swift family shortly before the title to Link Island was transferred to Islands Trust Conservancy. "Many of us aspire to show generosity when opportunities arise, but the Swift family has actually done it, and on such a grand scale," said Brockley. "Link Island is an incredibly generous gift for conservation, and the Swifts are a truly remarkable family."

Protecting Islands in the Salish Sea

Islands Trust Conservancy is currently developing a management plan, and is initiating conversations about its management with First Nations whose territory and interests include Link Island. Link Island is located within the territories of several First Nations including the Cowichan Tribes, Xeláltxw (Halalt) First Nation, Lyackson First Nation, Spune'luxutth' (Penelakut Tribe), SEMYOME (Semiahmoo) First Nation, Snuneymuxw (Nanaimo) First Nation, Stz'uminus (Chemainus) First Nation, and Ts'uubaa-asatx (Lake Cowichan) First Nation.

About Islands Trust Conservancy

Islands Trust Conservancy is the conservation land trust for over 450 islands of the Salish Sea and is a part of Islands Trust. Since 1990, Islands Trust Conservancy has protected more than 113 properties, covering more than 1,375 hectares of island ecosystems. This success is thanks to the vision, support, and generosity of donors and partners. Learn more online at islandstrust.bc.ca/conservancy.

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Quick Facts

- Currently only 12% of land in the [Gabriola Island Local Trust Area](#) is protected, despite its high biodiversity values.
- More than 65% of land on islands in the Salish Sea is privately owned – meaning that individual landholders' voluntary conservation actions are critical to protecting biodiversity and addressing the impacts of climate change in the region.
- British Columbia is the most biologically diverse province in Canada– but it also has the largest number of species under threat of extinction.
 - Nearly 300 species are listed as being at risk of extinction in the Islands Trust Area, representing 25% of rare species found in BC. Protecting habitat is one of the best ways to prevent species from becoming extinct and aids in the recovery of those species currently at risk.

Press Assets

High resolution images have been made available for download to support this news release. You can [access these assets here](#).

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