



ISLANDS TRUST CONSERVANCY

News Release

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Species and ecosystems at risk in the Salish Sea get federal funding boost

Lək̓ʷəŋən, METULIYE/Victoria, B.C. — Islands Trust Conservancy has received a three-year funding boost of \$660,000 from Environment and Climate Change Canada to address biodiversity loss in the Islands Trust Area. This additional funding begins in April 2023 and will ensure that the Islands Trust Conservancy's Species at Risk program continues over the next three years.

British Columbia has some of the highest biodiversity in Canada, with the majority of this diversity concentrated within the southwest coastal region. It is also home to some of the most threatened ecosystems, such as the Coastal Douglas-fir and Garry Oak ecosystems, and iconic threatened species like Southern Resident Killer Whales, and Western Screech-Owl. The southwest coastal region is also where people prefer to live, with large cities of Vancouver, Victoria, and Nanaimo putting increasing human pressures on the fragile island ecosystems in the Salish Sea.

Islands Trust Conservancy initiated its Species at Risk Program in 2021 with a three-year grant of \$643,000 from Environment and Climate Change Canada's *Canada Nature Fund*, Species at Risk Stream for Priority Places. In total, Islands Trust Conservancy has been awarded \$1.328 million from Environment and Climate Change Canada for its collaborative species at risk work over six years.

"We are grateful to have received additional funding to continue the exciting work that has been underway for the past three years," said Linda Adams, Chair for the Islands Trust Conservancy. "We are so lucky to work alongside fabulous local partners and researchers in this work."

"Getting the opportunity to continue to build on the program's momentum is so rewarding," says SAR Program Coordinator Wendy Tyrrell. "Addressing the data gap for species and ecosystems at risk is so important. Initial surveys and projects have helped us to discover species at risk in places we had never recorded them before. By working collaboratively we can better inform management decisions, increase awareness, and support local efforts across the islands to preserve and protect species and ecosystems at risk of extinction."

In the program's initial three years of funding, Islands Trust Conservancy has worked with partners to deliver a range of projects and educational events. Some highlights include:

- Restoring a Garry Oak meadow in the Mt. Tuam Conservation Covenant on Salt Spring Island. Deer and rabbit-proof enclosures are working to provide refuge to plants like the federally threatened yellow montane violet – a key food source to **the only population of Zerene fritillary butterfly (*Speyeria zerene bremnerii*) currently found in Canada**. More than 11,000 native plants and two million seeds were planted at this site in 2021. Since the project began, 90 new yellow montane violet plants have been observed at the site in 2022.
- Installing nest boxes for threatened Western Screech Owls in the Link Island Nature Reserve.
- Supporting researchers exploring new survey methods using environmental DNA (e-DNA) to survey for Common Sharp-tailed Snake and forage fish on some of the 113 Islands Trust Conservancy protected properties.
- Supporting research on Chá7elkwnech/Gambier Island to identify suitable habitat and confirm the presence of endemic Coastal Tailed Frogs (*Ascaphus truei*) and threatened Northern Red-legged Frogs (*Rana aurora*) using e-DNA techniques. Project partners include local biologists, the Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation), Howe

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Sound Biosphere Region Initiative Society and Gambier Island Conservancy, with additional support from Environment and Climate Change Canada and Habitat Conservation Trust Fund.

- Hosting a gathering in March 2022 for more than 60 professionals, researchers and volunteers working to protect species and ecosystems at risk from extinction in the Salish Sea.
- Reducing impacts to rare plants through the removal of invasive and exotic species from conservation covenants and/or nature reserves on Salt Spring, Bowen, Gambier, Mayne, Thetis, Lasqueti, Denman, Galiano, and Gabriola Islands. This included over 6,400 lbs. (approximately three tonnes) of invasive English holly on Bowen and Gambier islands alone.

Islands Trust Conservancy is currently hosting an online speaker series. The series covers a wide range of topics and is open to anyone interested in working to address conservation of species and ecosystems at risk in the Salish Sea. More information on this speaker series and SAR program updates can be found online at

<https://www.islandstrust.bc.ca/conservancy/species-at-risk>.

Quick Facts

- 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 one of the most biologically diverse provinces in Canada– but it also has some of the highest numbers 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.

About

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](https://www.islandstrust.bc.ca/conservancy).

Press Assets



High-resolution images featuring species and projects highlighted in this release have been made available for download. has been made available for download to support this news release. You can [access these assets here](#)

[More info on the Coastal Tailed-Frog project.](#)

Contacts available to speak with media:

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