



# the Heron



A newsletter from the Islands Trust Conservancy, protecting islands in the Salish Sea | [islandstrust.bc.ca/conservancy](http://islandstrust.bc.ca/conservancy)

FALL 2022

## Introducing Link Island Nature Reserve *p.3*



Link Island  
Inset: The Swift Family PHOTOS: C. SMITH

For links and additional media, visit the Heron newsletter online.

[www.islandstrust.bc.ca/conservancy/heron-newsletter/](http://www.islandstrust.bc.ca/conservancy/heron-newsletter/)



SCAN ME

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# Link Island

a family's conservation legacy



Drum detail. PHOTO: L. WILCOX

Islands Trust and Islands Trust Conservancy respectfully acknowledge that the lands and waters that encompass the Islands Trust Area have been home to Indigenous peoples since time immemorial and that their deep connection to the islands continues to this day. We are committed to reconciliation, to upholding the rights of Indigenous peoples, and to working together to preserve and protect this ecologically, culturally, and spiritually significant region in the Salish Sea. The Islands Trust Area is located in the treaty and territorial lands and waters of the BOKEĆEN, Cowichan Tribes, K'ómoks, Lyackson, MÁLEXEL, Qualicum, scəwáθən, səlilw'ətəl, SEMYOME, shíshálh, Sḵwǝwú7mesh, Snaw-naw-as, Snuneymuxw, Songhees, Spune'luxutth', STÁUTW, Stz'uminus, Iəʔəmen, Ts'uubaa-asatx, Wei Wai Kum, We Wai Kai, W JOLELP, WSIKEM, Xeláltxw, Xwémalkwu, Xwsepsum, and xʷməθkʷəy.

## How does a family agree to give up ownership of an island in favour of long-term conservation?

When the Swift family came together to discuss donating Link Island (21.45 ha) to Islands Trust Conservancy (ITC) Betty Swift and her three adult children agreed it was the right thing to do. The decision was based on shared values that have deep-seated roots. Since 1910, their grandparents and parents were inspired by Aldo Leopold's land ethic philosophy. The family has valued and embodied conservation across generations.

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**“When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect.”**  
– Aldo Leopold

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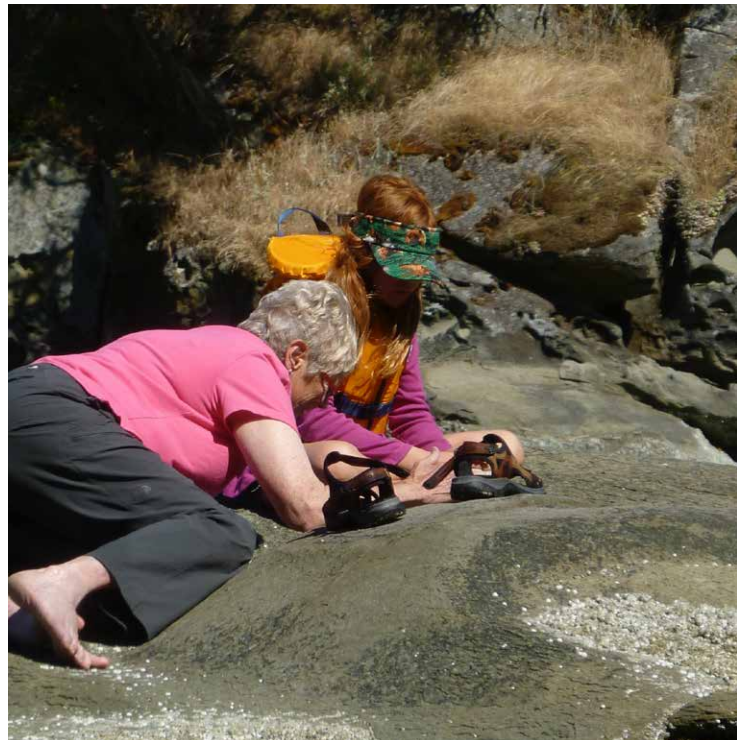
In 2019, Betty Swift made an ecological gift and placed a conservation covenant on the island with ITC and Nanaimo & Area Land Trust as a first step in securing her dream to protect the island. Before Betty passed away in 2021, she left instructions that the island be transferred to the ITC with a condition that her children and grandchildren maintain right of use for Link Island for the duration of their lives. Gabriola Land and Trails Trust was invited to co-hold the new covenant going forward. The family will continue to steward the island throughout their lifetime knowing that Betty's vision has been achieved.

**Life Estate & land ownership:** A donor can give away land but retain a life interest (such as the right to live on it or for someone else to live on the land for life). An agreement with the Swift Family allows for the right of use and enjoyment of the land for the lifetime of all the members of the family - including Betty's 12-year old grandchild.

The family's collective dream is that Link Island will become a foot-hold for climate-change research in the Salish Sea. They realized that gifting the land to a greater conservation community would open up possibilities for the kind of impact they plan to achieve.

Betty's daughter Barbara Swift shared her advice to others contemplating a gift of land. “There are moments when you fear the loss of the land and wonder if this is really what you want to do. That process is valid. It takes time to sift through values and emotions. It's heavy lifting to create a bequest like this one.” She advises that, once committed to the decision, you lean into the process, and get the best professional advice possible on estate planning and conservancy objectives. The Swift donation was particularly complex since they are American and this donation involved both Canadian and American tax law.

Ultimately, the Swift Family wants you to know that the end result of this life estate has been profoundly gratifying. “This gift is about the future”, says Barbara, “a gift for us all”. 🌿



Betty Swift and granddaughter Eleanor on Link Island  
PHOTO: BARBARA SWIFT

## Create a lasting legacy

Link Island was protected as a Nature Reserve through an end of life gift from Betty Swift. Our website provides information and resources to help you determine what options are available when it comes to leaving a conservation legacy for you and your family in your Will.

Visit <https://islandstrust.bc.ca/conservancy/how-you-can-help/planning-your-legacy/> for more information.



# Nature Stewardship gets a boost thanks to ITC Opportunity Fund grants

## Gabriola Land and Trails Trust Nature Stewards Program

Gabriola Land and Trails Trust (GaLTT) received a \$6,000 Opportunity Fund grant from Islands Trust Conservancy this summer to help them meet an overwhelming demand from islanders wishing to take action to care for nature on Gabriola Island.

This funding supports GaLTT's booming Nature Stewards Program. Since launching the program in 2021 GaLTT has received a hugely positive response from Gabriola residents – including Gabriola property owners Mike and EJ who spoke with us about what it is like to participate in the program.

### **Q: How did you first hear about the program?**

*We have a bit over five acres, with most of the development confined to one end of the property, so we always liked the idea of keeping the rest of it as natural as possible. The typical conservation covenant route didn't work for us for a few reasons, so when we saw the nature stewards advertised in the paper we thought 'why not?'*

### **Q: How did you join the Nature Stewards program?**

*It was a fairly simple process. We reached out and GaLTT came with a few people and did a walk around the property for a few hours with us. It was a good sharing experience – they knew some stuff we didn't and we knew stuff they didn't as well. They sent us a summary report of what they saw and some suggestions for ways we could steward the property and a pledge that we signed. Once we signed our pledge*



Mike and EJ's sign at their property on Gabriola

*they gave us some signs to put up on our property, so we've got one on either end of our property to show that we are participating in the program.*

### **Q: What stewardship advice did they provide you?**

*Specific recommendations were to put up some nesting boxes for native bird species and have an arborist come every few years to check the trees. They also have lots of general pointers for nature friendly properties – like creating habitats, removing invasive plants, preserving native trees, avoiding pesticides, etc.*

### **Q: What motivated you to join?**

*We were already doing a lot of the activities encouraged in the program, so for us it was more about encouraging these behaviours in our community. Since putting up our signs we've noticed others popping up around us. We don't know for sure if we inspired our neighbours, but it is encouraging! The more people that can take these actions the better.*

**Q:** What do you say to folks who aren't sure about joining?

*You know, there's no big onerous steps to participate in the program. You don't have to pay to get a survey or any of that. You can just start with where you are at, and do what you can.*

Almost 40 ha (100 acres) are being cared for by dozens of private landholders on Gabriola through voluntary pledges to keep the trees and protect habitat on at least 30 percent of their properties. With the ongoing support of the Islands Trust Conservancy and partners, GaLTT hopes to secure 350 acres of habitat pledges by the end of 2023.

Residents and property holders on Gabriola who are interested in learning more about this program are encouraged to visit

[www.galitt-naturestewards.com](http://www.galitt-naturestewards.com) 




Mike and EJ PHOTO: A. LOWREY

## ThINC to launch Nature Stewardship program on Thetis

Thetis Island Nature Conservancy (ThINC) has received a \$5,400 grant from Islands Trust Conservancy to help launch a new Nature Stewards program for islanders wishing to take action for nature on Thetis Island.

Since launching the program in late 2021 ThINC has collaboratively developed their program with the Habitat Acquisition Trust and the Gabriola Area Lands and Trails Trust. Grant funds will enable ThINC to train program volunteers and to conduct site visits in collaboration with Traditional Ecological Knowledge holders from Penelakut First Nation and members of the Structural Protection Unit Thetis Island Volunteer First Department.

More than 90% of land in the Thetis Island Local Trust Area is privately owned or managed - making voluntary actions critical for conservation efforts to succeed.

Residents and property holders on Thetis who are interested in learning more about this program are encouraged to visit [www.thetislandnatureconservancy.org/nature-stewards-program](http://www.thetislandnatureconservancy.org/nature-stewards-program) . 



Volunteer training for ThINC Nature Stewards program.

**“We are immensely grateful for the financial support from Islands Trust Conservancy for our Nature Stewards Program, which encourages residents to play an active role in stewarding and regenerating the land through habitat restoration, rewilding, and preservation,” says Ann Eriksson, Board Director for ThINC.**

“In particular, our Opportunity Fund grant will support the sharing of knowledge which has been passed down for thousands years from Indigenous elders and other knowledge holders.”

### **Generosity of donors to the Opportunity Fund has kick-started conservation on islands of the Salish Sea.**

100% of donations go to our partners in support of important conservation projects.

To learn more about the Opportunity Fund visit:

<https://islandstrust.bc.ca/conservancy/supporting-local-conservancies/opportunity-fund-grants/>

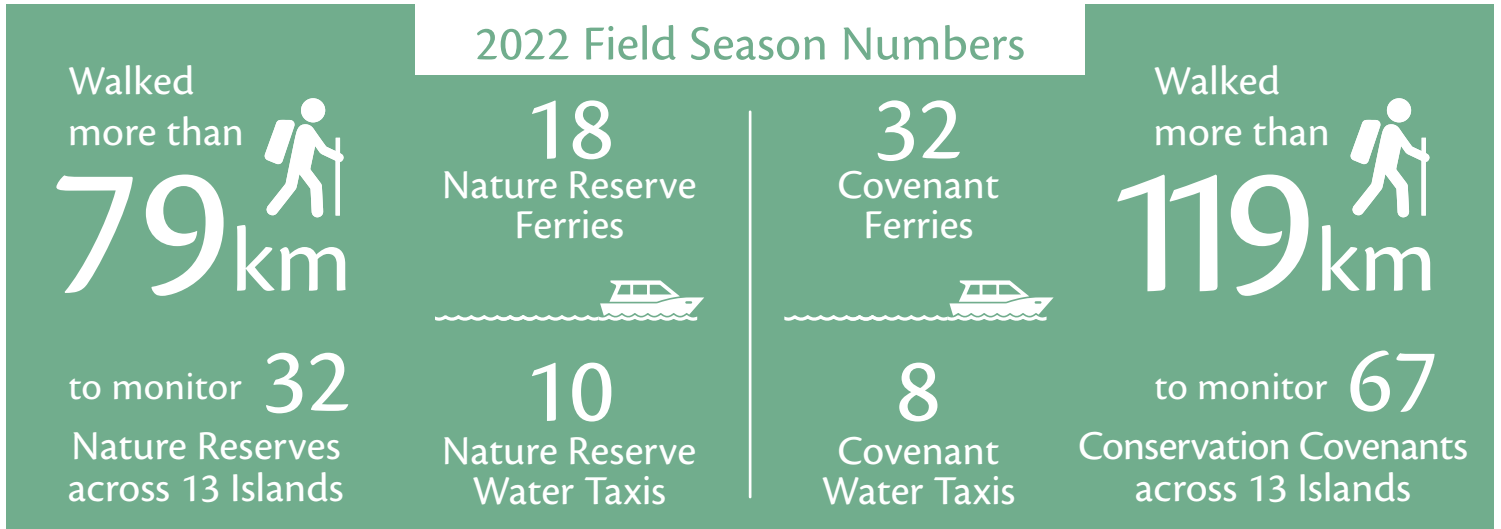


1. A very wet field crew following a day on Link Island  
2. Windthrow Covenant, Sidney Island 3. Nuala (ITC staff) at Coats Millstone Nature Reserve, Gabriola 4. Jemma (ITC staff) monitoring at Keough Covenant, Salt Spring 5. Wendy (ITC staff) monitoring a path less traveled on Saturna 6. Banana slug eating an Amanita mushroom 7. Parasitic groundcone, Gabriola 8. Nootka rose, South Pender 9. Aislyn (ITC staff) monitoring on Salt Spring PHOTO: W. TYRELL 10. Winter Wren Woods, Denman 11. Nuala, Aislyn (ITC staff), and partners landing in water taxi PHOTO: A. LANDRY 12. Jemma (ITC staff) and Corlynn (ITC staff) on route to Little D'Arcy 13. Jewel beetle hitches a ride 14. Link Island Nature Reserve ALL PHOTOS: A. KING except where noted.



# Highlights from a busy field season

Islands Trust Conservancy currently cares for 113 properties across more than 19 islands in the Salish Sea. Protecting land is only the first step – annual property monitoring for Nature Reserves and conservation covenants are a huge part of the work we do. Field season usually runs May to October each year.



## Getting to know our Summer Co-op Student Student, Aislyn

Many of the photos shown in this edition were taken by our Conservation and GIS Technician Aislyn King this summer. We caught up with her to ask how she found her experience:

**Q: Did you have a favourite job or task?**

*My favourite part was monitoring and having the opportunity to meet many of the wonderful covenant landowners and conservation partners. I had a great time seeing how each piece of land was unique.*

**Q: Did you have a favourite site you monitored this summer?**

*Although I really enjoyed visiting all of the sites, I think my favourite one was Little D'Arcy Island. This is because of all the wildlife we observed on the island and that we had the time to have a beach clean up. Removing three large bags of garbage from the island felt like we were really doing our part.*

**Q: Is there anything you'll take away from your experiences with ITC going forward?**

*A major takeaway from working with ITC for the last 8 months is how fortunate I feel to have been able to work on the islands and with such a driven and kind-hearted team. 🌿*



Aislyn, Jemma, and Corlynn with garbage from a beach clean-up on Little D'Arcy Covenant.



# Thanks to outgoing Board Members



## Kate-Louise Stamford, Outgoing Chair of ITC Board, Gambier

As an elected trustee for the Gambier Island Local Trust Area, Kate-Louise has served as the Chair for the Islands Trust Conservancy Board for four years, and as a member of the ITC Board for eight years. Her leadership in the creation of Islands Trust Conservancy's Strategic Fund Development Strategy and her guidance during a time of growth leaves us with a stronger foundation. In addition to being recently re-elected as a trustee for the Gambier Island Local Trust Area, she has also been elected as a Regional District Director for the Sunshine Coast Regional District and will be giving up her role on the ITC Board to make way for these added responsibilities. We wish her the best in her new endeavours and will greatly miss her diligence, leadership and enthusiasm.



## Doug Fenton, Outgoing ITC Board member, Thetis

As an elected trustee for the Thetis Island Local Trust Area, Doug served on the Islands Trust Conservancy Board for four years. Doug championed reconciliation with First Nations and was a strong supporter of the ITC Reconciliation Declaration. Doug was also a keen defender of protected areas, offering his expertise as an Environmental Practitioner where appropriate and needed. We will miss his input and wish him all the best!



## Sue Ellen Fast, Outgoing Vice-Chair, ITC Board, Bowen

As an elected trustee for the Bowen Island Municipality, Sue Ellen served on the Islands Trust Conservancy Board for four years and as Vice-Chair for two years. Sue Ellen is a passionate nature educator and brought an environmental communication lens to connecting people's hearts and minds to conservation. Sue Ellen was re-elected to Trust Council as a Bowen Island Trustee and continues as a Bowen Island Municipal Councillor. We look forward to working with her in that capacity.

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Your donations of \$20 or more will receive an official donation receipt for income tax purposes.\*

### Questions? Contact us!

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[islandstrust.bc.ca/donate-to-conservancy](https://islandstrust.bc.ca/donate-to-conservancy)



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